Oxfordshire NHS and Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing: COVID-19

7 April 2020

National approach and working together locally

The position relating to COVID-19 is dynamic, in terms of national guidance for organisations and the general public. The Local Authorities and NHS organisations in Oxfordshire are working together to ensure our response is effective and coordinated. This briefing is to update you on how we are responding to the challenges and how this is changing the way we all work.

Our local approach is to keep the basic information updated on our websites for the public and to direct people to three national websites with more detailed information:

- www.gov.uk/coronavirus for general information including travel advice etc

- www.nhs.uk/coronavirus for information and advice about the infection, symptoms and advice to reduce risk of infection

- www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/ for information for clinicians

Further information will be available as services develop and change to meet the rising demand as COVID 19 affects more people. In line with responses to emergencies our joint structure comprises:

- **The Oxfordshire GOLD group**, which includes the Chief Executives from Oxfordshire County Council, a District Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG), Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT) is responsible for the strategic response objectives and overall management framework.

- **SILVER groups** (or cells) are mobilising the tactical response, determining priorities in obtaining and allocating resources. Planning and coordinating the response. Some examples of this include:

  - Ensuring coordination and services are in place to support vulnerable residents; including those identified through the national 'shielding' process

  - Primary and community services; Supporting discharge of patients from hospitals

Service Changes during the response

The staff in all our organisations are on the front line in responding to this public health crisis and we are working to ensure services are organised to respond appropriately across the Oxfordshire health and care system. The work of our Oxfordshire carers, clinicians, care providers, Trusts and GP networks has been superb as they face an extensive period of acute challenge, many undertaking further training to extend their ability to respond to the known clinical pressures.

Some changes to current services have been necessary to allow staff to be deployed to support the care needed for COVID-19 patients and to help reduce the spread of infection, protecting patients, staff and the public. The service changes necessary, so far, include the temporary closure of the First Aid Units in Chipping Norton, Wallingford and Bicester and the midwife led unit at Wantage. They also include the cancellation of non-urgent operations and changes to the way appointments in primary community and outpatient services work, reducing the number of face-to-face appointments. Further changes may

be necessary as the pandemic develops, with decisions taken as appropriate and communicated to patients and the public.

Local Authorities

All Oxfordshire Local Authorities are working hard to maintain frontline council services and their websites are updated regularly with information.

The most vulnerable residents across Oxfordshire will have recently received correspondence from the NHS identifying them as high risk and advising them to strictly self-isolate for 12 weeks.

This long term restriction may cause additional concerns for those people without any nearby support. Oxfordshire County Council and the District Councils have worked with volunteer and community organisations to ensure shielded residents without a support network have a simple point of contact for help.

A new, dedicated phone line provides access to a central team to who will be able to offer advice on a range of issues, and is operational from 8.30am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 9pm – 5pm Saturday and Sunday on 01865 897820 or email shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk

For residents in Oxford City the contact line is 01865 249811 between 8am and 5pm or go to www.oxford.gov.uk/CommunityAssistance

For those residents who are not in a high risk category but still need support, there are a number of initiatives taking place across the county, many of which, can be found on Oxfordshire All In or Oxford Together. Alternatively residents can call the city and district councils directly for more information on community support.

Many schools, early years and childcare settings are closed until further notice, but some are staying open for children of key workers and vulnerable children, including during the Easter holidays. If anyone in your area needs help to finding a school place please ask them to email Schoolplaceavailability@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Details of open early year providers are here. If anyone is having difficulty finding a suitable early years place the Family Information Service team on 01865 323332 or email fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Primary Care

There has been a great response from primary care which has radically changed the way GP practices are working. Total triage is in place with all patients instructed to phone their practice first. Appointments are being conducted via video consultations, online consultations and over the phone wherever possible and only those patients who really need to attend a GP surgery in person are being asked to do so.

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) staff have supported primary care to ensure practices have access to the information and equipment they need. Daily bulletins are being issued to practices with key information to support them in caring for their patients. In addition, a primary care portal has been focussed on COVID-19 and is the central repository for all the information and guidance coming from across the Oxfordshire system and nationally.

Primary care and community services

Oxfordshire is also making good progress in the set-up of COVID-19 Assessment, Liaison and Monitoring (CALM) clinics across the county. This programme is known publicly as *Patient Care during Coronavirus*. The CALM programme is bringing together the people and resources of the Oxfordshire GP practices, Primary Care Networks, GP federations, acute and community teams from OHFT and OUH, supported by OCCG, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners, into one co-ordinated team effort.

CALM consists of:

- **Clinics** across the county – sometimes referred to as 'hot hubs'. The aim is to have dedicated sites for suspected COVID patients to minimise, as much as possible, the exposure of patients and staff at other sites
- **Home visiting service** for COVID patients
- **A central access point** to offer support and advice for all the clinics.

Information about how to access GP services appropriately during the pandemic is available [here](#)

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust: Mental Health Services

The Trust's priority is to minimise disruption to patients and to communicate to them how to access services during this very challenging period.

Teams are prioritising emergency and urgent work over routine work. The majority of appointments are taking place digitally or over the phone. This includes new assessments as well as ongoing support and treatment for existing patients. At present, the service is only offering face to face appointments for urgent and emergency referrals (if these cannot be done over the phone or digitally), with appropriate use of PPE where indicated.

The urgent care pathway, which includes liaison services in acute hospitals, Street Triage and Crisis team is operational and Oxfordshire Safe Havens remains open.

The inpatient service is functioning with restrictions on visits and leave.

The Talking Space Plus service's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies groups/courses are being delivered digitally by Microsoft Teams (similar to FaceTime). Individual treatment delivery is using digital channels and/or telephone. No face to face appointments are being offered. Oxfordshire CAMHS pathways for children and young people are operational.

Oxford Health has developed written and video materials for the general public on social isolation, anxiety about COVD-19 and maintaining wellbeing, which are on its website. This website is also regularly updated with essential information.

Community Learning Disabilities (LD) Services

These services are still open for referrals, which are being screened and assessments are being conducted remotely via phone or virtually (dependant on preference) wherever possible. Existing clients have been reviewed to identify those with underlying health conditions - at particular risk due to COVID-19 - and those with limited social supports. The LD team is in regular telephone contact with these people and sharing COVID-19 easy read information in relation to the pandemic.

Telephone support is open for families/carers/providers to advise how to manage behavioural difficulties and change in routine to support with social distancing.

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH)

OUH has been refocusing clinical capacity on the management of the COVID-19 priority patients, establishing separate wards and increasing critical care capacity. By 27 March 2020 all patients who were medically fit to go home were discharged as per national guidance. These patients will be supported in the community by primary and community care colleagues.

As part of OUH's COVID-19 Plan it has stopped all routine referrals into the Trust. Wherever possible, OUH will be moving to 'virtual clinics' for outpatients where clinically appropriate. All routine elective outpatient appointments and routine day case and inpatient elective surgery for adults and children have been postponed. Patients are being contacted to inform them how this affects any appointments they have. [Updates to services are available on a COVID-19 page of the OUH website](#).

To help reduce the risk of spreading the infection among patients, staff and the public, there is limited visiting allowed with more details explained on the [OUH website](#).

COVID-19 testing and NHS staff

The testing priority remains critically unwell patients. This is now being expanded to NHS front line staff as testing capacity increases. There continue to be capacity issues nationally and a Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) consistent approach is being planned for how testing will work with key frontline staff so we gain the biggest benefit. More information about this will be shared as these plans develop.

Staffing is being seriously affected by COVID-19. With more capacity for staff testing, those who have symptoms but test negative will be able to continue working. In addition, accommodation is being made available to non-infected staff who have family members who are infected. A county-wide recruitment campaign has been launched to recruit across clinical and non-clinical roles to support services in the community.

COVID-19 Research

Oxford is also leading the way into research for COVID-19. Please see links to the various research projects responding to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- [Vaccine trial](#)
- [RECOVERY treatment trial](#)
- [New wearable technology that monitors patients' vital signs being used with COVID-19 patients on the isolation ward at the JR](#)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Access to the appropriate PPE for staff seeing patients in hospital and in the community has been raised as a concern both locally and nationally. There are regular updates from Public Health England about supplies and how to access them which are cascaded locally.

In addition, work has been done across the BOB ICS on mutual aid for PPE across health and social care providers to ensure priority services working directly with COVID-19 patients have stock when the normal supply route cannot deliver in time.

Social distancing

We all have a crucial role to play in containing the spread of the virus through social distancing and self-isolation. The Oxfordshire health and care system are coordinating a local public health campaign to reinforce the need for social distancing, explaining what it means in practice and repeating the key messages about how to stay safe.

We appreciate that this briefing is long but felt it necessary to update you on the system wide approach to COVID-19. Please email occg.media-team@nhs.net with any queries and we will endeavour to get back to you.