

Issued to: CCG PPEC Chair

On behalf of: Nottingham and Nottinghamshire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group

RE: Preparations in Primary Care ahead of surge in demand for NHS services this month

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to update you on the measures the CCG and Primary Care are taking ahead of the expected surge of Coronavirus cases in the coming weeks.

In particular we would also like to share details of specific new arrangements to establish assessment facilities called 'Clinical Management Centres' that will help GPs maintain safe local services during the outbreak.

Exceptional preparations

I'm sure you will be aware of the pressure Coronavirus will place on local services and workers, especially during the predicted 'peak' of cases which is likely to hit Nottingham and Nottinghamshire this month, around Easter.

That's why all the members of our health and care system – ranging from small GP practices to the acute hospitals – have been working hard to develop plans to maintain safe local services while we cope with the outbreak.

In a short space of time we have seen unprecedented changes as health and social care workers quickly adapt new ways of working, to make local resources stretch further.

This month the number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital has been reduced to a near-record low as our NHS and social care employees work together to ensure no beds are occupied by patients who would be safer in another setting. We have also increased the number of intensive care beds we had available during the peak of winter, while staff working in other hospital departments have undertaken training to provide extra support when it's needed. GPs can now conduct most routine appointments over the phone or via video call, while local primary care networks provide buddying arrangements for surgeries with significant staff absences or unsustainable demand for appointments.

However, whilst we know local practices are very resilient to peaks in demand, we know that the pressure of Coronavirus might in time start to impact on the availability of primary care services. Therefore to ensure that there is no reduction in the service available for patients, we have planned for a network of Clinical Management Centres (CMCs).

On Monday 6th April, we will be activating this plan in three locations in Nottingham City and one location in the Newark area.

Proposed new Clinical Management Centres for Primary Care

NHS systems across the country are rapidly working to introduce similar arrangements in their localities following guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care about how to cope with the surge in cases.

The CMCs can offer a specific location to assess suspected Coronavirus cases, separate from face-to-face contact required for other illnesses or conditions. The CMCs will operate within an existing general practice location but will be dedicated for assessing suspected Coronavirus cases only. The CMCs will also create a system of resilience and mutual support for neighbouring practices should the need arise.

There will be no change for how patients will access their healthcare from general practice – they will contact their usual GP surgery in the normal way and out of hours can use 111 online or phone 111 as needed.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire could have up to 20 CMCs based in existing GP locations. Plans are in place to mobilise all of these at short notice if required but for now we are only activating four of these proposed CMCs. The CMC model will mean that we have an escalation route if local Primary Care Networks are not able to meet the demand from patients in their area. The model will be activated at different stages and times in different areas of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and we will keep you informed about the roll out of centres in our area.

Please note that CMCs will only see people by appointment only, it is not a drop in service and will not have beds. People who have not been referred with an appointment will not be able to access the centres, in the same way that people cannot access GP practices at the moment without an appointment.

This is a new, planned, response to a new and extraordinary threat and will require colleagues across the NHS to work even more closely together to make it a success. But, based on the collaborative work we have already seen, we are confident in this plan to provide continuity of services while we all respond to the next stage of this outbreak.

I hope that you find this note useful and I hope to provide a further update in due course.

In the meantime, if you have questions about plans for the CMCs, please contact Alex Ball, Director of Communications and Engagement, at alex.ball1@nhs.net and we will be happy to help.

Many thanks

Amanda Sullivan, Accountable Officer
Dr Stephen Shortt, Clinical Lead
Dr James Hopkinson, Clinical Lead

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group

FAQ

- Where are the CMCs that you are opening on 6th April 2020?
 - Three CMCs are being established are at Bulwell Riverside, St Ann's Valley Centre and Cripps Health Centre on the University of Nottingham campus in Nottingham
 - A further is going live at Balderton in Newark.
- What difference will patients see?
 - There will be very little difference for patients – for the majority of their care needs they should continue to contact their existing GP practice or if out of hours, 111. If there is an emergency then 999 should be continued to be used.
 - The majority of care is being delivered through phone and video consultations or through the use of electronic repeat prescriptions and this will continue
 - If patients in the areas served by the CMCs need face-to-face care, they may be asked to go to a different part of their usual building or another building close by. This will be clearly explained to the patient when needed.
- Does this mean that GP practices cannot cope?
 - Not at all. These are planned and considered responses to a carefully modelled anticipated peak in demand in the coming weeks and means that the services that patients rely on can continue to be delivered.
 - In Nottingham and Nottinghamshire we have a well-established set of collaborative working arrangements and mutual-aid and this is another example of this joint working
- Is this safe?
 - Yes. All the appropriate clinical and administrative steps will be taken when delivering patient care in a slightly different way.
 - It will mean patients with Coronavirus symptoms will be separated from other patients and that GP practices have additional support.
 - This plan has been developed by the Clinical Leadership of the Clinical Commissioning Group, in partnership with experienced managers and operational experts.