

Wednesday 11 November 2020

To everyone in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire,

Thank you for doing everything you can to keep yourselves and each other safe.

We want to thank you again for doing everything you can to protect yourselves and our communities from coronavirus, and update you on some key changes following the second national lockdown which began last week.

Our hospitals are seeing high demand, and we have had to cancel a number of non-urgent routine procedures and outpatient appointments as a result. We are very sorry if you are one of the individuals affected. This is an exceptional step we have taken to manage demand on services as coronavirus cases increase.

We have strong plans in place to manage the pressure on services, and we need everyone to continue to do their bit. Please:

- Observe social distancing and maintain regular hand-washing.
- Wear [face-coverings in all health and care settings](#) and anywhere else you need to, for example shops and on public transport.
- Check-in on and support high-risk family members where you can. Your support can make a huge difference.
- Ensure you are able to collect relatives from hospital as soon as they are medically well enough to be discharged.
- Attend your appointments on time - being early may mean having to wait outside.
- Do not come to see us in person if you have coronavirus symptoms. If you have a booked appointment, call the service and they will support you with next steps.

While we are entering another challenging time, the NHS and care services are still very much open – please do not ignore or put aside any concerns. You can:

- Use 111 to access urgent medical advice when you're not sure what to do.
- Contact your GP (doctors) surgery. GPs continue to provide face to face appointments, as well as offering thousands of online and telephone appointments a week.
- Use your local pharmacy. Pharmacists can offer a range of support for minor conditions, including prescribing some medicines.
- Use the Minor Injuries Units in Yate and Clevedon, and the Urgent Treatment Centre in South Bristol for sprains, broken bones, minor burns and scalds.
- Use A&E or call 999 **only** in the event of medical emergencies.
- Let us know if you can no longer attend an appointment.
- Contact your local council or care provider if you have any concerns about social care.

Some changes have also been made to visiting arrangements across our services to keep you and your loved ones safe. Please check the website of the place you are visiting.

We know it's a challenging time. Our teams are working hard to support you, and while you may be more anxious and concerned than usual, please treat the staff caring for you with kindness and respect. It's important that we all continue to support each other.

Thank you – on behalf of the Executives in Healthier Together

Thank you for all you've done so far and here's how to continue helping us, to help you:

- If you start to experience any coronavirus symptoms, including a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss or change in your sense of smell or taste, you should book a test as soon as possible. You can also get a test for someone you live with if they have symptoms.
- Tests can be booked at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119. You can order a home test kit if you cannot get to a test site. If you're getting a test because you have symptoms, you and anyone you live with must self-isolate until you get your result. This also applies to anyone in your support bubble (where someone who lives alone, or just with their children, can meet people from one other household).
- Having flu and coronavirus at the same time more than doubles the chances of people dying from coronavirus. The flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to protect yourself against catching flu. If you are in an [eligible priority group](#) you can access a flu vaccine free through your GP practice or pharmacy. If you're unable to get an immediate appointment, please keep trying or book in for a later date.
- Your health and mental wellbeing is important, and there is support available for you locally:
 - The VITA 24/7 helpline can help you with emotional support. The line connects you with a mental health counsellor and relevant groups in your local area. Call 0800 012 6549 (textphone users should dial 18001 followed by 0800 0126549). Translators are available.
 - The AWP Mental Health 24/7 response line is there for adults or children under the care of AWP and worried about their own or someone else's mental health: 0300 303 1320
 - SilverCloud is a free online platform offering valuable mental health and wellbeing support: <https://bnssg.silvercloudhealth.com/onboard/>
 - Bump2baby wellbeing helps you find the right support during pregnancy, birth and beyond: www.bump2babywellbeingguide.org
- If you've been notified that you that you have a medical condition which makes you clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus, please register your details at the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support>

You can use this service to get access to priority supermarket deliveries or ask for someone to contact you about other local support.

- If this does not apply to you but you still feel you require support, please get in touch with your local authority using the contact details below. You can also contact them if you have any other questions or concerns:
 - Bristol: We are Bristol: 0800 694 0184
 - North Somerset: North Somerset Together: 01934 427 437
 - South Gloucestershire: 0800 953 7778
- If you are receiving care in your home, including district nurses, therapists and support workers, and need to discuss your needs please call 0300 125 6789.
- Remember: if you are experiencing domestic abuse, household isolation rules do not apply. You are allowed to leave your home and NextLink can provide support and accommodation. Call 0800 4700 280 (24/7) or go to: www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk