



PPG Briefing – April, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

To respond to the coronavirus pandemic, GP practices have had to work differently and, following national advice, temporarily suspend some non-urgent services until the end of June 2020.

For now, this includes engaging actively with their patient participation groups (PPGs). However, working with practices, we recognise that PPGs continue to have an important role to play during the pandemic and can support practices to get information to patients and feedback ideas. As a result we will be providing you with regular updates on the latest position in the health system. We're keen to hear your views on what information would be helpful so please let us know at: bnssg.communications@nhs.net

GP services during the coronavirus pandemic:

- **Telephone and online triage**

If you need to access GP appointments during this time phone your practice in the first instance or - where available - use their online consultation process via the practice's website. Online consultations are being implemented across all practices over the coming weeks.

GP Practices have moved to a system of telephone, video or online triage in the first instance to help mitigate the risk of patients infected with coronavirus attending practices. If you need to be seen by a GP and your condition cannot be managed remotely you will be advised.

- **Practices working together**

There may be cases when a face-to-face appointment is needed. If this is the case you may be required to travel to a different practice than your own, as practices work together to meet the needs of the local population.

- **Services temporarily paused**

As the pandemic reaches its peak, some routine assessments and services normally provided through your GP may become unavailable.

- **Referrals into hospital**

Referrals to hospital specialists for non-urgent conditions have been paused. You will receive advice about how to self-manage your condition in the meantime, but if their condition significantly worsens please contact your GP.

Urgent referrals are still operating as usual. However, these referrals will be triaged before being accepted. This restriction does not impact cancer referrals (often referred to as 'Two Week Waits') and HOT, or rapid access, clinic referrals as these are being processed as usual.

Digital Support for Practices

A significant amount of work has been done to provide technology to enable practices to work in new ways, including offering online consultations, while maintaining patient safety and confidentiality. Practice staff have been provided with laptops or specialist software to enable staff to work securely from any location, including home. Specialist software has been rolled out to provide secure messaging, teleconferencing, video consultations and online triage. Practices are being provided with headsets and webcams to carry out

video consultations. Clinicians delivering care can securely access the relevant patient records for their own practices and for others when necessary wherever they are.

Improving health and care in Bristol,
North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

Where to get information:

The CCG has updated the health services section of its website to give information to patients on what services are available and how to access them during the outbreak:

<https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/health-advice-and-support/health-services-during-coronavirus-covid19/>

Further information and support for patients:

- **Health at home** – is a webpage that gives an overview of NHS services that are available, such as how to order repeat prescriptions online and get them delivered (<https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral>).
- Public Health England have provided some guidance on **looking after mental health and wellbeing** during the COVID-19 pandemic
- The government has provided advice on **employment and financial support** on their website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- The Bristol Muslim Strategic Leadership Group (BMSLG) has created a series of videos translated into Urdu, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Turkish and Arabic to offer advice on mental health issues during the Coronavirus outbreak. These can be accessed on YouTube, via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOmPQ4lhki6CutgJb68X1sQ>

Shielding patients

Shielding is a public health measure to protect our most vulnerable and those at highest risk of complications or death if infected with coronavirus. Patients who are advised to shield should not leave the house for 12 weeks and should also, where possible, distance themselves from people in their household.

Centrally, the NHS used data to identify who these patients should be and wrote to them directly. Some may also have identified themselves using the Gov.UK website.

Locally clinicians are reviewing these patient lists to ensure that everyone who needs to be on the list is and those who do not need to shield can be informed and taken off the list.

There are limitations in the data held centrally and as such, GPs are now using their clinical judgement to ensure the list is as accurate as possible.

Patients who are vulnerable but not on the shielding list should still continue to stay home and distance themselves socially when they do need to go out.

Help is available for patients who are vulnerable or who need to shield. Information is provided on the attached postcards, including numbers on who to contact:

Bristol – 0800 694 0184

South Gloucestershire – 0333 577 4666



For further information visit your local authority's website:

North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

Bristol: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/crime-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know>

North Somerset: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/community-safety-crime/emergency/north-somerset-together/>

South Gloucestershire: <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-services/covid19/>

[Further information](#)

ReSPECT Forms and recording patient's wishes

Although many patients who get ill with coronavirus will experience mild to moderate symptoms, others will need to be treated at hospital.

In order for clinicians to give the best possible care at this time, GPs are discussing with patients their wishes if they do require emergency care. GPs are using the nationally developed ReSPECT process to guide informed discussion about people's choices and preferences in the event of a medical emergency.

ReSPECT stands for Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and is a record of someone's feelings at the time the discussion took place, and should be a starting point to help clinicians, patients and families to make decisions about effective treatment in an emergency situation.

Due to the current situation with coronavirus, this process is particularly important for vulnerable patients who will not be allowed visitors if they do get taken to hospital.

How the local NHS is responding to the pandemic:

NHS and public sector organisations are working together to manage the response to the coronavirus pandemic across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The CCG, working with the local public health teams, is coordinating the response which is aimed at ensuring health and care organisations are prepared to deal with the peak of the pandemic.

A number of groups have been formed, working across organisations, to manage the demand, analyse the information to predict when demand will be at its greatest and will to provide support to services and local residents during this time.

Nightingale Hospital

As part of the plans to manage the outbreak, a new Nightingale Hospital is being established at the University of West of England's (UWE) conference centre to provide additional capacity for across the South West. This is located at the University's Frenchay campus.

The beds at the NHS Nightingale Hospital Bristol are on top of the additional capacity created across existing hospitals over the last few weeks.

We have expanded testing capacity for health and care staff and other key workers to support the wellbeing and care of our staff and to enable staff who would otherwise be unable to work due to self-isolation to return to work.

Let us know your feedback, comments or concerns

Although the NHS has temporarily suspended its complaints processes during the coronavirus outbreak in order to focus on managing the response to the pandemic, we always welcome comments from patients regarding local health services. If you do have any feedback, comments or concerns about health services during this time, please continue to contact us at: bnssg.customerservice@nhs.net

How you can help?

If you would like to support in the response to coronavirus, consider volunteering. For more information visit: goodsamapp.org/NHS

Other help and support required at this time includes providing PPE and other essential equipment and supplies. If you think you can help in this way, contact bnssg.supportoffer@nhs.net