

COVID-19 Primary Care update 24 April 2020

1. Coronavirus testing

[Coronavirus testing](#) will be carried out for essential workers and their households who are self-isolating.

- Who can be tested? – Essential workers with symptoms, and people who live with essential workers and have symptoms
- Arranging a test – You can book a test directly and select a regional test site for a drive through appointment or request a home test kit (limited availability)
- The testing process involves taking a swab of the nose and the back of the throat
- Essential workers include of all NHS and social care staff including doctors, nurses, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers

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2. Exceeding waste storage limits

The COVID-19 regulatory position statement (RPS) allows Practices to temporarily store more waste than their permit allows if waste cannot be removed from the site because of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions. Practices can exceed waste storage limits without applying for a permit variation if they follow the conditions in the [COVID-19 RPS](#).

However, Practices must carry out a written review of the risks of storing additional waste and how it will affect any plans, for example, the fire risk assessment, and the Environment Agency must be notified by email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk before using this COVID-19 RPS.

3. Individual coaching support for primary care staff

Due to the unprecedented challenges facing frontline primary care, staff are now able to access individual coaching support by phone or online. The service has been developed in collaboration with the Royal College of General Practitioners and will complement the wider range of health and wellbeing resources launched at www.people.nhs.uk.

This support is available to all clinical and non-clinical primary care staff, and you can register [here](#) to book individual coaching.

4. Shielding update

The final Shielded Patient List (SPL) is almost complete, with a further 79k people identified to be at the highest clinical risk nationally. Practices were asked to review and complete a list of patients who self-declared as clinically extremely vulnerable **by COP on Tuesday 28 April 2020**. Practices should review any new patient who self-declares that they are clinically extremely vulnerable and decide, in a clinical opinion, if they meet the criteria to be added to the SPL.

Splenectomy patients – it has been confirmed that splenectomy patients should be included in the SPL, and any patient with splenectomy who has been taken off the list should be contacted to inform them of this error. NHS Digital will be able to identify these patients centrally from 29 April 2020 and will write to practices with this information.

5. QOF year-end

Some practices have seen their QOF year-end actual achievement data that shows lower than normal as a result of Covid-19 activities, but a one-off adjustment will be made for practices who earned less in 2019/20 than 2018/19 as a result of COVID-19 activities.

6. NHS Volunteer Responders

Patients who might need support while self-isolating can be referred to NHS Volunteer Responders for help with tasks such as collecting shopping and prescribed medicines or driving patients to medical appointments. Primary care networks are encouraged to establish networks of volunteers and link with social prescribing link workers.

The scheme will soon be open for self-referrals. People who have been advised to shield can ask volunteers for short-term help by calling 0808 196 3646 between 8am - 8pm. Please pass this number on to your patients who could benefit from this support.

7. Fit notes

Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 or those having to self-isolate due to residing with someone with COVID-19 symptoms can obtain an Isolation Note in line with current guidance.

8. The homeless

This particularly vulnerable group of patients need as much support as possible. Practices should do everything they can to register people who may currently be unregistered; this may be as a temporary registration or accepting them on to the permanent Practice list. As stated in the letter to General Practice on 27 March 2020, Practices should continue to register new patients including those with no fixed address and support local authorities who are providing accommodation for homeless people to make decisions about COVID-19 symptoms and potential referral into acute care.

9. Initiatives

Some Practices are coming up with innovative new ways to treat their patients, such as a drive-through baby care by The Project Surgery, Newham. This has kept the baby, parents and practice nurses safe by minimising face-to-face contact from 10 minutes to 2 minutes. Practices are encouraged to share any inventive ways of caring for their patients in these challenging times. Please contact your CCG in the first instance.