

COVID-19 Primary Care GP update 30 April 2020

1. Bank Holiday Opening – Friday 8 May

NHS England mentioned last week that Practices are to plan for further Bank holiday working using experience of the Easter bank holidays to ensure the right level of cover is provided. NHSE said they would confirm the arrangements in more detail early this week.

At the time of writing there still has not been any further detail.

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2. The second phase of NHS Response to COVID

The NHS Chief Executive and the NHS Chief Operating Officer published a letter yesterday outlining the [second phase](#) of response to COVID-19. Key points include:

- Continue to work on implementing digital and video consultations
- Proactively contact all those in the 'shielding' cohort of patients
- Make two-week wait cancer, urgent and routine referrals to secondary care as normal
- Deliver as much routine and preventative work as can be provided safely including vaccinations immunisations, and screening

It also includes information and actions recommended for urgent clinical services over the next six weeks including:

- Urgent and routine surgery and care
- Community Services
- Mental Health and Learning Disability services
- Screening and immunisations

3. COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Service (CCAS)

Over 500 additional GPs have made it through the onboarding process to work on the COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Service, which supports NHS 111. The timescale for GPs to be deployed into any new roles that they agree to take on will vary, based on local requirements.

4. Online consultation service available via the NHS App

Online consultation is now available within the NHS App with the integration of the eConsult service. Patients can use this forms-based service to request GP advice without booking an appointment.

5. Impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities and health and care staff

The NHS Confederation has produced a briefing on the impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and health and care staff. It looks at potential underlying factors, recommends areas for action and offers practical advice on how to mitigate risks. Read more [here](#).

6. New death in service benefits for NHS staff

On 27 April 2020, the Secretary of State announced a new scheme to provide life assurance benefits for eligible NHS and social care staff who are performing frontline work during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the event of a staff member dying in the course of COVID-19 work, a lump sum payment of £60,000 will be made to their estate.

This is in recognition of the increased risks that staff are currently facing and will be particularly welcomed by those who are not members of the NHS Pension Scheme. The scheme will be administered by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) and further details can be found on their [website](#). This will be updated when more information has been made available.

7. Emergency COVID Regulations – Dispensing Practices

A webinar, hosted by the Dispensing Doctors Association (DDA) this week covered:

- Core opening hours for dispensaries and pharmacies during the 8 May Bank Holiday
- Emergency dispensing to non-dispensing patients – Paragraph 61 of the [NHS Pharmaceutical Services Regulations](#)
- Managing stock levels and delivery process
- Cash flow difficulties due to a rise in dispensing
- Delivery services and NHS payment for deliveries
- Using volunteers
- PPE for dispensary and delivery staff
- EPS

The DDA has a [covid-19 home delivery SOP](#) for use during the pandemic outbreak, available to DDA members. The webinar recording is available [online](#).

8. Using EPS in remote consultations

For Practices who are using EPS, NHS Digital has provided an updated [guidance](#) when using remote consultations, via the phone, video link or online. Nomination should still be used wherever possible. Practices should only use Phase 4 (non-nominated) prescriptions if other options are not suitable.

If the patient cannot collect their paper token, Practices can either:

- provide the patient with their Prescription ID, or
- ensure they know their NHS number or where to find it.

Patients will need to provide their Prescription ID or NHS number to enable the pharmacy to locate and download their prescription and dispense their medication.