

COVID-19 - Staff Bulletin - Keeping in Touch

10 April 2020

New Drive-through Swab-testing Centre Available to Staff

A drive through testing centre for health and care staff is now available at the **Ikea** car park in Gateshead.

This testing service is available to all health and care staff working in Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Northumberland.

Eligibility is:

Any key worker (this includes everyone who works for CBC) who has symptoms of COVID-19 and are following government guidelines on self-isolating;

OR

A member of a health and care key worker's household (over 18) who has symptoms of COVID-19, and the key worker is following government guidelines and self-isolating.

Once tested, swabs will be sent to a testing lab and staff will receive their results within 48 hours. Staff are asked to inform their line manager of their results who will advise on the next steps.

It is critical that only eligible individuals are sent to test centers for COVID-19 testing. This is to ensure efficacy of the test itself, and to ensure that all tests are being used to help get key workers who are isolating back to work.

To book a test please email:
necsu.covid19keyworkertesting@nhs.net

You should include the following in the body of the email:

- Name
- Address
- Organisation
- Contact Number
- Email address (which can be accessed from home).

You will then be contacted by phone and the first available appointment booked.

Resilience in General Practice & across PCNs

There is a significant amount of guidance being issued by NHSE to support general practice through this pandemic, and new Standard operating Procedures were issued at the weekend for primary care. This week, the Federation has have worked with Clinical Directors and the CCG to review these and to ensure the measures are implemented. A checklist for Practices has been developed and is due to be circulated today. Alongside this, significant work continues in Primary Care Networks to put in place mechanisms to support individual practices if they experience pressures which mean they would struggle to maintain services. Buddying arrangements have been put in place, and systems developed for escalation.

Hot Sites

The hot site in Blaydon opened last week, to provide face to face assessment of patients who have already been triaged by their home practice GP and are suspected/possible Covid-19. A second hot site opens its doors on Good Friday at Second Street Surgery. We are still looking for clinicians and administrative/reception staff and HCAs who are willing to work shifts at the hot sites, so please do encourage anyone who may be interested in this work. Anyone interested should contact melanie.emery@nhs.net



Top Team - Take a Bow!

We share our space at CBC and eat each other's cakes

Gill Wiggham
Joanne Levey
Emma Elliot

A huge thanks to the project team. On loan from Community Services, this terrific trio is playing a pivotal role in supporting the Federation in rapidly establishing hot services across the patch.

Medicus

Significant work has been done by Medicus teams to develop safe methods as an alternative to seeing patients F2F wherever possible. Arrangements have been made to assess in practice those patients with symptoms of COVID-19 who have been unable to speak to an NHS 111 clinician or because they have been advised to do so by NHS 111. Special consideration is being given to our patients in the SHIELDED group.

Thank you to Medicus administrators, who have stepped in to provide additional support to the Blaydon Hot Site, for the benefit of the wider Gateshead general practice community.

Pharmicus

Huge thanks to the team for pulling together and supporting each other across another busy week; dare we say that it hasn't really felt like the typical week before Easter as you've all shielded us from much of the day-to-day queries.

Home working solutions for those who don't have them have been slightly delayed but should be in place by middle of next week; your patience is much appreciated. Likewise, for those struggling with the IT setup but persevering.

Another final thanks to those who have helped sort out IT problems or put together, at very short notice, a full medicines service for the new Hot Home Visiting Service to use.

Catherine and Gary

Clever Kids

Friends in the community are pulling out all of the stops to help health and social care staff and colleagues across Gateshead. Lots of offers of support have been received from multiple sources.

In particular, we are very grateful to Emmanuel College. Their clever staff and students are producing around 100 disposable visors per day for use by front line clinicians in hot sites & home visiting services, general practices and care homes in Gateshead.



Home Visiting

A 'Red' Covid-19 home visiting service was launched this morning from a base at Bensham Hospital. Staffed by CBC GPs working in close collaboration with nursing colleagues in Community Service's Rapid Response Team, the service will visit Covid-symptomatic patients in the community who are unable to travel to hot sites and are able to be treated within the community.

Experienced NEAS GatDoc drivers will support this invaluable new service using GatDoc vehicles.

PPE

Ordering and receiving PPE continues to be a challenge, especially in our practices, where teams are doing a great job in sharing stock across our sites.

A substantial supply of essential PPE, which has been prioritised for CBC and general practice colleagues working in 'hot' services, will be delivered to Queens Park after the weekend for inward distribution to sites.

Colleagues at the CCG are working hard today to sort these essential supplies.

Spare a thought....

For your colleagues working in Medicus practices today. Instead of enjoying a normal Easter bank holiday weekend, staff are getting behind the Covid cause and keeping their practices open for business as usual.



In keeping with the national spirit of support and outpouring of thanks, please accept a round of applause from all of your other colleagues at CBC.

Thank you!

Stats:

There are 240 confirmed Covid cases in Gateshead, out of a local population of 202,508

Note: Not all those with the virus will have been tested

Source: BBC 10 April 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the symptoms of a possible Covid 19 infection?

The symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a cough
- a high temperature
- shortness of breath

If you have any questions that are not covered, you should direct these to HR Adviser aileen.wright@cbchealth.co.uk. If you have any specific concerns about your health or other vulnerabilities, please contact Aileen for a one to one discussion

But these symptoms do not necessarily mean someone has the illness. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu

Can I get Covid-19 twice?

It is not yet known whether this is the case. Further guidance will be issued on this in due course.

What should staff do if they think they have symptoms?

Following government guidance, it is important for staff to self-isolate at home if you or any member of your household has either:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough

If you are the first in the household to have symptoms you must stay at home for 7 days. If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when their symptoms appeared. Any members of the household who remain well need to stay in isolation for 14 days.

From this point onwards when reporting sick, please notify Aileen Wright HR Advisor (on the first day of absence) by emailing cbchealth.sickness@nhs.net

You **must** also contact your practice or service manager as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be rapidly put into place to cover our essential services

Can I be tested for Covid-19?

If you or a member of your household are showing symptoms and you are isolating in line with government guidelines you are eligible to be tested at a new centre based at the IKEA carpark in Gateshead. The centre is only available for health and care key workers.

To arrange a test please email necsu.covid19keyworkertesting@nhs.net and include in the body of the email

- Name
- Address
- Organisation
- Contact Number
- Email address (which can be accessed from home).

You will then be contacted by phone and the first available appointment booked.

What will happen if an employee turns up to work with a temperature and/or a new cough?

Please **do not** attend work if you are displaying symptoms. The employee will be told to go home and self-isolate for 7 days. Any staff who have been in contact with the individual will be asked to carry on at work as normal unless they start to develop symptoms.

What if I have to care for a patient who may have Covid-19?

In such cases of Covid-19 or possible Covid-19, you **MUST** be trained in appropriate infection prevention measures - including the correct use of PPE e.g. how to put it on and take it off safely 'donning and doffing'.

What if an employee refuses to attend work who isn't unwell and isn't showing signs of the virus and hasn't been tested for Covid-19

There should be a discussion with the employee and in the first instance annual leave may be granted. If this is not feasible it should be treated as a period of unpaid absence from work.

What if I am classed as a vulnerable person e.g. over 70 or someone who qualifies for a free flu jab, do I have to come to work?

In the first instance, please discuss with your line manager about the possibility of amending your duties (e.g. no longer being patient facing) or whether homeworking is possible. Unfortunately, in some cases this may not be feasible and if you wish to stay at home you can use a combination of annual leave or unpaid leave.

I have received a letter from the NHS to say I need to take extra steps to protect/shield due to having an underlying health condition what should I do?

1.5 million people have been identified by the NHS as being at a very high risk of severe illness from the coronavirus and should have received letters by 29th March. If you have received one of these letters, please discuss immediately with your line manager the possibility of working from home or amended duties. Unfortunately, in some cases this may not be feasible and if you wish to stay at home you can use a combination of annual leave or unpaid leave.

Can I work from home as an alternative to attending my work base/department

If the nature of your work allows this AND with your Line Manager's permission this may be possible. Any staff working from home should update their manager on a regular basis of any work undertaken.

I've booked holidays abroad which I now want to cancel.

This would be a personal choice. There may be further government advice in due course that may prevent any foreign travel to minimise the spread of the virus. If you do cancel any foreign travel, you can of course still take your leave but if you wished to cancel your leave to help out staffing you should contact your line manager.

I've booked holidays abroad – can I still go?

You should follow any travel advice issued by the UK Government. Failure to follow this advice may render your travel insurance void and place you at a higher risk of contracting Covid-19.

I've booked annual leave, can I cancel it?

Following normal procedure please speak to your line manager.

The schools have closed what should I do?

If you have no alternative arrangements in place to care for your children employees of CBC are classed as key workers therefore you should be able to keep your children in school. If you would prefer to keep your children out of school and home working is not an option then employees should liaise with their Line Manager and explore the use of unpaid dependant leave or annual leave if possible. Employees in this situation should try and make alternative caring arrangements as soon as practically possible.

If an employee needs to self-isolate (for 7 or 14 days) and can't work from home will they still be paid?

All employees who need to self-isolate will receive contractual sick pay.

Will I still need to provide a FIT Note as part of the self-isolation process

Medical evidence is not required for the week of sickness. However, if an employee needed to self-isolate for a longer period an isolation note would be required. Isolation notes can be obtained from NHS 111 online.

If we have staff who have retired & returned and can only earn a certain amount of money because they're special class - have we any way for them to do extra hours to help with COVID-19 without being taxed/against their pension rules.

The government is currently reviewing this issue and will be looking to introduce emergency employment legislation in the next couple of weeks to allow staff to work additional hours without this affecting their pensions.