

COVID-19 - Staff Bulletin - Keeping in Touch

27 March 2020

We aim to keep all staff updated through a regular bulletin, which will provide advice and guidance around the key issues affecting the way in which our local services can continue to be delivered during the national Covid-19 crisis.



Updated advice and information Covid-19

An updated FAQ is included at the end of this bulletin which provides the most up to date guidance (at the time of sending).

If you have any questions that are not covered here, you should direct these to HR Adviser aileen.wright@cbchealth.co.uk.

If you have any specific concerns about your health and any particular vulnerabilities, for example pregnancy, please email Aileen to organise a one-to-one discussion,

Pharmicus

Pharmicus has rapidly reconfigured their medicines optimisation and on-site pharmacy support in practices, working instead to deliver flexible and responsive support to the evolving needs of PCNs and practices. The team is working from bases at Queens Park and Grange Road or a reduced number of practices, with a small number from a base at home.

IT solutions to allow the team to move to full home working are being reviewed daily and we will implement this as soon as is practical.

Huge thanks to the team for rising to the challenges and changes to ways of working and taking everything in their stride, including welcoming and inducting a new member to the team (Michelle).

Catherine and Gary

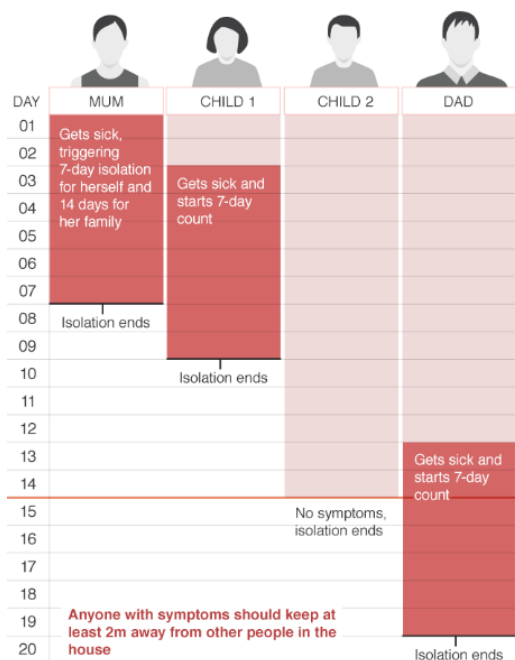
Working together across the Gateshead System

CBC senior managers and executives are in regular contact with each other and CBC representatives are also in regular contact with commissioners and other primary, secondary, local authority and voluntary sector colleagues across the region, to ensure as far as possible a coordinated approach to tackling Coronavirus.

CBC's approach to managing our own organisational response to Coronavirus will continue to follow national and regional guidance and be continuously updated.

Handy guide to self-isolation

What happens if someone in your family gets sick?



People may be able to pass on coronavirus without showing any symptoms

Source: Public Health England advice



GP Federation - Supporting Practices

The Federation is providing support to Gateshead Practices and PCNs as they develop resilience to cope with the current pressures. Steve Kirk is leading on this, working closely with Newcastle Gateshead CCG. This work includes the following:

Hot Sites: looking to set up hot sites to assess patients who have already been triaged by a GP and are suspected/possible Covid-19. This model will reduce the number of sites Covid-19 patients are assessed in and we are looking to have these operational as soon as possible, opening over 7 days from 10 am – 6 pm. More information will be shared when available on these sites and how to access them.

Home visiting service: We are working with Community Services on a central home visiting service, led by the Rapid response team. Again, there is some detail to work through, and this will be shared as soon as possible. The home visiting team will need to link into the patient's registered practice and operational processes put in place, but the aim is that will be a significant support to Practices during these difficult times.

We are also feeding into work with the CCG on important issues around access to testing for clinical staff, appropriate PPE, helping PCNs on the practical issues as they plan for increased resilience, and in implementing a pressure reporting system that will alert the System to the pressures that individual practices are under. We are grateful to have support from the Community Services Transformation Team for this work.

We have been working with Edberts House, who provide social prescribing link workers across Gateshead, and with Gateshead Council in a Gateshead wide response to helping our vulnerable residents and patients as they self-isolate in the coming weeks. There has been a tremendous response to this work and the hope is that we work together, across all sectors and with charitable and community groups to provide this much needed support.

There is a huge amount of work going on at the moment and we are grateful to everyone for their support.

Home/Remote Working

Things have moved on at quite a pace since our last bulletin a week ago. Big thank you to Catherine and Gary Armstrong have worked tirelessly to ensure that those staff that can readily work away from the main office environment are now able to do so.



For staff normally based at Team Valley (excluding Pharmicus) if you require support with your remote access logins/software, please contact ADNS directly via email at support@adnsgroup.com, or by telephone on 01642 248750. ADNS will provide support in the usual way, however, please note that they too are extremely busy during this difficult period. Please also refer to the instructions previously circulated by Gary as to how to log a ticket with ADNS directly.

Note that staff who are self-isolating and unwell, will not be expected to and should not work from home.

Staff who are newly self-isolating and who are willing and able to work from home should contact their line manager in the first instance.

Bureau Services

Call and recall services have been placed on hold until the next financial year with no date confirmed for restarting. This will of course depend on how the Covid-19 pandemic plays out. In the interim, staff are busy preparing new data sharing agreements and laying down plans for the new financial year. We're also taking the time to build extra resilience and business continuity contingencies within the team

The Spirometry Service has now been suspended until further notice, with all appointments been cancelled and communicated to patients. Lead clinician Lou Lomas and HCAs Lisa and Katie have been welcomed back into the Medicus division, together with Rio and Kelsey who will be providing much-needed admin support at Crawcrook until we have a date for the spirometry service resuming. In the meantime, the Bureau will continue to receive new referrals in from practices in readiness for when the service is back up and running.

Medicus Practice

These are certainly challenging times for all of us not least because of the volume of information and guidance we are trying to sift through every day.

I will liaise with Emily (clinical lead) and will send out information each week with a Covid-19 Plan for the Medicus Practice. This will encompass all the useful questions and suggestions you have sent to me as well as considering the guidance we have been sent externally. I hope this will help us to work more confidently and cohesively as a clinical and admin team. So, keep the questions coming and I will respond as soon as I can.

Thank you all for your continued hard work. I appreciate what a wonderful team of colleagues I have and feel honoured to be working with you all.

Anne



Urgent Primary Care Services

CBC's Urgent Primary Care is rapidly reconfiguring their various WIC, ExtraCare and Out of Hours services in response to local Covid-19 management priorities.

These unprecedented changes have seen the QE's Walk-in Centre – normally sited in the ECC – relocated to the hospital's Jubilee Wing. The Walk-in Centre at Blaydon will also be co-located at the QE. This is in response to a depleting workforce; and the requirement to consolidate fewer staff in one place.

ExtraCare services have been relocated and reconfigured to accommodate additional telephone triage work from Gateshead practices, whilst maintaining some face to face activity.

GatDoc and WIC GPs are responding to a significant increase in NHS 111 telephone triage.

The UPC Team is as always, rising to the challenge and working closely with the GP Federation to support the setup of a Covid-19 'Hot Site' at Blaydon PCC.

Community Services

In line with the national guidance the Gateshead Care Partnership's Community Services have

- Reduced our service to essential care only and postponed clinics and groups which would usually bring older patients together.
- Contacted patients to explain these service changes.
- Strengthened our Discharge Team with staff support from the CCG and Council. This service will now work 7 days per week 8.00-20.00.
- Managed our staff absences by re-deploying staff who are at work and supported staff with childcare requirements.
- Moved to 7 day working for managers and implemented our Major Incident Plans.
- Worked with the CCG and Council to support care providers.
- Deployed staff to work with the PCNs and GP Practices. This has included clinical advice and guidance from Nicola Allen and joint work on creating "hot" and "cold" Covid-19 sites, obtaining PPE and organising staff.

The Trust has also implanted its Major Incident Plan including:


- Cancelling all non-urgent activity
- Restricting visiting
- Ordering and fitting PPE in line with national guidelines
- Increasing laboratory capacity
- Creating more critical care and respiratory capacity and staffing those areas
- Re-training staff
- Increasing Infection Prevention and Control capacity
- Identifying Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 areas in which we can care for patients
- Working with other Trusts and NEAS to prepare for increases in demand

On behalf of the Gateshead Care Partnership and the Trust can I thank CBC staff for their co-operation and support

Michael Laing

Information Governance & Remote Working

Colleagues are kindly reminded that policies and procedures relating to Information Governance, the General Data Protection Regulation and other best practice guidelines in relation to handling information safely and securely still apply when working from home.

- Each member of staff is responsible for the security and integrity of the information they handle whilst working from home, both paper and electronic.
 - Extra precautions may be necessary for confidential / person identifiable information, and all information must be treated with care to ensure it is not lost, damaged or released to anyone unauthorised to have access to the information.
 - Although this may be difficult at times, extra care must be taken to ensure that other people in the household cannot see or access the information. Ensure that usual information security measures in place in the workplace apply in the home environment, e.g. clear desks, locking screens, putting papers in a secure place when finishing for the day etc.
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- When emailing information, it must be sent securely nhsmail to nhsmail. Where this is not available please refer to the NHS Encryption Guidelines or seek advice.
 - Be aware of an increase in spam emails and do not click on links or documents contained within any email you suspect to be spam. Delete them immediately and delete them from your deleted items.
 - If anyone suspects that security may have been compromised, this must be reported immediately to Gary Armstrong and support requested from your IT provider.
 - An incident report must be completed for any data breaches, and submitted to cbchealth.governance@nhs.net. Remember the 72-hour timeframe for reporting breaches to the Information Commissioner's Office still applies to incidents that have occurred whilst working at home so incidents **must** be reported at your earliest opportunity.

If anyone becomes unwell / unfit to work whilst working from home, this must be reported to Aileen Wright and your line manager via cbchealth.sickness@nhs.net

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

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

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.

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.