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Coronavirus update:

Dear colleagues,

This is an extremely fast-moving picture at the moment and what we write today is likely to have changed by tomorrow – particularly in respect of national guidance. However, we thought it would be helpful to provide a roundup of the local position for notable items. We first must pay tribute to all health and care staff not just across Morecambe Bay, but in all parts of the UK, they are working in unprecedented circumstances they pressure is quite relentless and whilst some service are not performing to the levels we've come to expect they nethertheless continue to provide first class care from the GP Practice through to community visits and on the hospital wards. We are all doing our very best to keep all services open and fully operational, but as you'll appreciate we can't guarantee this will remain the case in all areas particular parts of General practice which are very fragile at the moment.

Stay Safe, Stay Home

Regards

Aaron Cummins **Jerry Hawker**

Joint Chief Operating Officers – Bay Health & Care Partners

Hospital visiting

On 12 March 2020, UHMBT took the decision to reduce hospital visiting to one hour a day with only one visitor per patient. Following that decision, we received the government's instruction to stay at home. Therefore, on 25 March 2020, UHMBT temporarily suspended all visiting in its hospitals until further notice. The exceptions to this were for patients who are receiving end-of-life care, birthing partners in our Maternity Units and parents/legal guardians in our Children's Wards. We are mindful of the impact this could have on patients and their loved ones, but it is necessary to keep our staff and patients safe.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

We won't sugar coat it – as the Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock, has spoken publicly about, the distribution of PPE to the NHS across the country is a challenge due to the unprecedented demand. We do have the appropriate PPE for our staff and undertake regular Risk Assessments whenever an issue is presented. We are receiving deliveries but it does remain a challenge across the system. However, we are committed to preserving the safety of our colleagues and patients and will not rest until this is adequately resolved. We are also expecting new national guidance regarding the use of PPE any day now, and will ensure we adhere to these.

Outpatients

Outpatient clinics at hospitals operated by UHMBT have largely switched to telephone appointments where possible. The national guidance is being reviewed and we expect further changes very soon, which may include the suspension of all non-urgent outpatient clinic appointments.

You can find out more and access our Frequently Asked Questions at <https://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/visiting-our-hospitals/outpatients>

Staff support

UHMBT and MB CCG took the decision early on as an organisation that we would test/swab staff who are suspected of having COVID-19 to assist them get on with their lives and to return to work as soon as possible. This process is working well, however we will keep it under review.

- Over 200 colleagues were able to return to work after being swabbed and testing negative for COVID-19 (as of 30 March)

We've supported all staff who can to work remotely from home and their pay will not be affected during this time. This has understandably led to lots of questions about who should or shouldn't be working from home and who should be simply staying at home. The honest answer is that there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Every case has to be assessed on its own merit. However, we appreciate that this is a difficult time and staff want definite answers and we will continue to support them to get the answers they need to their specific circumstances.

We also continue to support staff who need to self-isolate for the next 12 weeks for various reasons with full pay.

Occupational Health support and advice is available for all staff seven days a week.

We've removed all charges for staff parking on hospital sites until further notice, including



for those staff that do not have a parking permit. This will not only assist staff at this difficult time but it will also free up the residential streets around our sites. In Lancaster Ripley High School and Lancaster City Council have both kindly supported the hospital with free additional parking for hospital staff.

It's important that our colleagues stay fit and healthy therefore to help them to continue to have a healthy nutritious meal whilst at work, we have discounted all food and drinks by 50% for hospital colleagues in our restaurants.

Numbers...

If we have a death as a result of COVID-19 and we have family/next of kin consent, we have released this information publicly. We can confirm that we are treating a number of patients at each of our hospitals for COVID-19. As you may already be aware more than 50 patients who tested positive for COVID-19 have sadly died since the outbreak began.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is a major incident, and the situation changes all the time, any numbers of patients being treated are out of date as soon as they are published. Additionally, at any time there are people with symptoms awaiting test results back, some of which confirm they are COVID-19 positive and some which do not.

None of this changes the key message from ourselves, the national NHS and the Government which is to only leave home for one of four reasons: Work - if you cannot work from home; essential shopping; one daily exercise or caring for a vulnerable neighbour.



On a final note, we are incredibly humbled by the response of the public in their support of the NHS - be that letters to wards, offers of holiday accommodation for tired staff through to presents. It is overwhelming at times but without sounding ungrateful, the best thing people can do to help us is to stay safe and stay at home.



Screening programmes

Following national guidance, we have now temporarily paused our breast screening programmes to free up capacity. The national team has also paused the FIT tests for the bowel screening programme so referrals will naturally start to reduce. Endoscopy and cervical screening are ongoing as normal.

Maternity

Due to staffing shortages in a number of areas due to COVID-19, we took the decision on 24 March 2020 to temporarily suspend home births across the Trust and births at Helme Chase in Kendal to enable the staff to be redeployed elsewhere. All expectant mums are receiving advice from a midwife and being given the choice of either the Royal Lancaster Infirmary or the South Lakes Birth Centre in Barrow for their delivery. All clinics and breast feeding support at Helme Chase will operate as normal.



Hospital Trust Operational message

How are the hospitals coping? Quite well under the circumstances. Clearly staff are anxious as they are also affected by the pandemic in their daily lives too but they are working extremely hard in challenging circumstances. The demand is great and relentless and yes, it is hard. We don't want to give you false assurances of 'its all ok' and to 'keep calm' - it isn't all ok but we are managing and the Trust Board is extremely proud of everything our teams are doing for each other and our patients. Those familiar with the workings of our Trust will know that we operate four patient safety meetings a day, every day, where any issues are discussed and resolutions agreed. This has been amended to include an Executive-led Incident Management Team meeting at 5.30pm each day – together with our partner organisations in health and care. This virtual meeting coordinates any changes that need to be made in light of COVID-19.

Where needed, we have commissioned construction of additional ward space which is now nearing completion. More information on this will be shared in due course.

Update on General Practice from MB CCG

We have worked with local GPs, PCN Clinical Directors and Federation Leads to co-produce a series of measures which will enable you to reduce footfall in surgeries and to release time to practices to ensure business continuity. If you are approaching the point that this is not enough, please let us know at an early stage, to see what additional support we can lend.

The following actions have been agreed with effect from 17 March 2020 for a three month period, subject to regular review:

- GP Practices will implement a 'total triage system' whereby no face to face appointments are booked until patients have been triaged either online or via phone. No one is to turn up at the surgery unannounced. Our message to patients will be "phone up, don't turn up".
- Where possible, practices are continuing to deliver local services such as Quality Improvement Scheme (QIS) and Local Enhanced Services, however the CCG will anticipate a significant reduction over time in these services once a total triage

system has commenced. The CCG will ensure that payments are maintained and there will be no financial penalty. We are expecting a similar message to be shared by NHSE in relation to nationally commissioned services and will share this if/when received.

- Baby immunisations, high risk drug monitoring and smears should continue (but patient should be triaged first).
- **The principle remains, that anyone who needs to be seen, will be seen and these measures put patient and staff safety first.**

It has been requested that practices do not increase the length or volume of their repeat prescriptions as we need to prevent pressures

upon availability of medication stock. Practices could consider giving patients post-dated prescriptions where appropriate, and the use of the Electronic Prescribing Service (EPS) is recommended where available.

- Whilst routine patient swabbing/testing has been discontinued due to us moving into the 'delay' phase, the testing of front line health care staff will continue.
- We have asked that practices continue to support other Providers that regularly use their premises. The CCG have been in contact with local Community Service Providers and have requested that they implement similar triage processes of all pre-booked appointments but we recommend that practices have local discussions with Providers on the ground to agree the process for triage of all of their pre booked patients.

- Whilst we are attempting to respond to all practice queries and questions received into the PC@Morecambebayccg.nhs.uk email account via the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) there are a small number of outstanding queries which we are unable to answer until national guidance has been updated and received. These questions relate to the isolation of symptomatic homeless patients and the management of new patient registrations for symptomatic patients. We will provide responses to these queries as soon as we are able to.
- The CCG have postponed all planned practice visits including Primary Care Quality visits which were due to begin in March, this is hoped to reduce the pressure upon practices.
- We have asked all CCG funded GP leads (excluding

CCG Clinical Executives) and ICC GP leads to redirect their funded time back into front line services with immediate effect. It has been left to individual discretion as to how they deploy back into front line services. There may be a time when we have to call upon this funded time, along with our Clinical Executives, to support the wider system but this will be communicated directly to these GPs if/when appropriate.

- We will continue to work with practices to rapidly progress our digital capabilities and enable remote, flexible working for General Practice staff. Clearly, digital capability will be increasingly important over the coming weeks. If you haven't already please do respond to John Glover with your digital needs and the smart card details of your practice staff.

Pharmacy

If a pharmacy is under significant pressure, at the discretion of the responsible Pharmacist, pharmacies may close their doors to the public for up to 2.5 hours a day, including lunch. This provision will apply until further notice from NHS England and NHS Improvement. All pharmacies will be expected, on every day they have contracted opening hours, to be open to the public between 10am and 12 noon and 2pm and 4pm as a minimum (if these are contracted hours). 100 hours pharmacies should be open from 10am–12pm and 2pm–6pm as a minimum. This will help us to



give a consistent message to the public about accessing pharmacies. A sign on the door will provide information about how to contact the pharmacy if urgent help is needed.

Changes to our wards at the RLI

A number of ward changes are currently being made at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary (RLI) to enable the Trust to manage the COVID-19 situation in the most efficient way possible.

The current information on ward changes at **RLI** is as follows:

- The Oncology Unit at the RLI has moved to Westmorland General Hospital (WGH)
- The Fracture Clinic at the RLI has moved to the Oncology Unit at the RLI
- The Minor Injuries Unit at the RLI has moved to the Fracture Clinic at the RLI
- The current Minor Injuries Unit will be used as expansion capacity for the emergency department

- The Clinical Investigations Unit at the RLI has moved to the Ophthalmology Unit at the RLI
- The Pleural Clinical at the RLI has moved to the Ophthalmology Unit at the RLI
- Ward 35 at the RLI has moved to the new RLI Medical Unit 1 Ward 4
- Ward 35 will become a high care respiratory ward for Covid patients when the ongoing works are completed
- The Gynaecology Assessment Unit (GAU) and Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU) Ward 16 at the RLI have moved to Ward 17 at the RLI
- Children's Ward 32 at the RLI has moved to Ward 16 at the RLI on Saturday 4 April
- AFU & AMU are relocating to ward 32

- AFU & AMU will become respiratory wards to support Covid patients
- The Diabetes and Endocrinology Centre at the RLI will move to the Rheumatology Clinic at the RLI on Tuesday 7 April

The current information on ward changes at **FGH** is as follows:

- The Ambulatory Care Unit FGH is expanding to include a COVID clean Emergency Department
- The Acute Medical Unit FGH will become an additional Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

The Discharge to Assess Unit FGH will become an Acute Medical Unit.

Our final updated Covid-19 response plan is nearing completion which details the majority of proposed changes. This will be shared with all staff, governors and stakeholders as soon as it is completed.

Additional NHS bed capacity

Work has taken place to transform four leisure centres and a school into additional NHS bed capacity and has been lead locally by agencies in Cumbria working as part of the Local Resilience Forum.

Cumbria now has an additional 500 beds patient beds for NHS organisations responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In our patch, these will be set up at Kendal Leisure Centre and The Academy in Barrow. Equipment is being installed with the

assistance of Ministry of Defence troops who are supporting preparations in Cumbria.

The additional beds will be available if our hospitals reach full capacity and beds will be allocated by NHS organisations as required. They will not be for general access by the public. The full operational model of how the new facilities would work is still being developed but work now will ensure that the basic physical infrastructure is in place should it be needed.

This is a prudent and sensible approach given how this pandemic has developed in other countries.

We would like to reiterate our thanks to each and every one of the multi-agency teams involved, who by working together have made it possible to establish these additional beds to support our patients during these unprecedented circumstances.

Similar plans are being produced for the Lancaster end of our patch and we will share more information as soon as it is available.

New Emergency Support Helpline launched in Cumbria

Cumbria County Council and partners have launched a new emergency support service for people at high risk of becoming seriously ill, as a result of COVID-19, and who do not have support available from friends, family or neighbours.

The Emergency telephone support line is **0800 783 1966**, or you can email your request for help to **COVID19support@cumbria.gov.uk**


The telephone 'call' centre will operate Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and 10am to 2pm at weekends. The service will also accept referrals from members of the public who may be concerned about people in their community.

The helpline is there to support those at 'high risk' and include

people over 70 years old, pregnant women and those with underlying health conditions who should be protecting themselves by staying at home. The majority of these people will already be receiving support from family, friends or local voluntary groups with tasks like shopping or collection of medicines if they

require it. But we know that a small number of people will not have this support. If they have no alternative, these people will now be able to call the Freephone number to request help with getting food, medicines, essential supplies and home deliveries.

Cumbria County Council has been working closely with District Councils, CVS, Cumbria Community Foundation, community and voluntary sector, private sector and military to establish these new arrangements. To support the new helpline every area is coordinating a supply of essential food, medicines and supplies which can only be accessed via the emergency helpline or email. The requests received asking for help will then be matched with local support and supplies being offered by community groups, volunteers, councils and businesses.

More information can be found at: <https://cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus/helpline.asp> 

Lancaster Coronavirus Support Line

Our Lancashire is supporting people in Lancaster who need help getting through the Coronavirus outbreak. From delivering food and medical supplies to offering support over the phone to people who need it, the volunteers are helping those in need at this time. **For further details, visit [Our Lancashire](#)** 



Business and Economic Response and Recovery Group (BERRG) widens call for businesses to donate PPE

Protect yourself & others

DONATE HERE: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V9L9DT2>



Everybody is aware of the urgent need to make sure that our essential front line services including doctors, nurses and care home workers have the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to keep them and those in their care safe.

Cumbrian businesses, which are renowned for their community spirit, innovation, creativity and ingenuity, are invited to support this widened local call for more PPE.

Jo Lappin, Chair of the Local Resilience Forum's Business and Economic Response and Recovery Group (BERRG) and Chief Executive of Cumbria

Local Enterprise Partnership, asked any businesses with spare Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to get in touch:

She said: "We're very grateful to the organisations that have offered their PPE to protect our healthcare workers. We have been delighted by the response, and are very appreciative of the

businesses that are going out of their way to help.

"However, currently donations are not keeping pace with demand and I would therefore urge any business that can help to get in touch by this web link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V9L9DT2>.

"We welcome donations of any personal protective equipment but would particularly welcome moisture repellent facemasks, which are desperately needed.

"Your donation really can help to protect our most vulnerable citizens and our most precious assets – our health and social care workers."

The spare equipment provided will be issued to key medical and social care facilities across Cumbria, with collection available, if needed.

Keep up to date

We are keeping staff, stakeholders and the public up to date in various ways, including a daily email bulletin for staff, this e-update for stakeholders and regular information for the public. If you want to keep up to date, you can access recent news on our website at:

 www.healthierlsc.co.uk/morecambe-bay 

or on our social media:

 [@MorecambeBHCP](https://twitter.com/MorecambeBHCP)

 [Facebook \(UHMBT\)](https://www.facebook.com/UHMBT)