

Oxfordshire NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing: COVID-19

14 April 2020

The Oxfordshire health and local authority partners continue to work closely together to ensure an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjustments are being made to the way services work as national guidance and information is updated and as plans for responding are put in place.

People at increased risk

COVID-19 can make anyone seriously ill, but some [people are at a higher risk](#) and need to take extra steps to avoid becoming unwell; these people are most vulnerable if they contract COVID-19 and are sometimes called 'shielded' or 'extremely vulnerable'. This includes:

- Solid organ transplant recipients who remain on long-term immune suppression therapy
- People with specific cancers
 - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
 - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors.
 - People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
- People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
- People who are pregnant with significant congenital heart disease

The Oxfordshire list of 'shielded' residents has been created centrally by NHS England & Improvement (NHSE&I). Residents on the list should have received correspondence from the NHS, identifying them as high risk and advising them to strictly self-isolate for 12 weeks. Local authorities along with the NHS across Oxfordshire have worked with the local Voluntary and Community Sector, to develop [a simple point of contact](#) for those who have been told by government that they have been identified as extremely vulnerable, and who have no support network and would otherwise be completely isolated.

Community volunteering

There has been a fabulous response from the public across the country wanting to offer support the local authorities during this time. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), Oxford City Council and the District Councils have received unprecedented numbers of people contacting them offering to help. Along with Oxfordshire's district councils and city council, the county council fully endorses the initiatives led by the local voluntary and community sector. Two online points of contact have been set up for local community groups and volunteers:

- For those living in Oxford City: [Oxford Together](#)
- For the rest of Oxfordshire: [Oxfordshire All In](#)

The county, city and district councils are also directly connecting individuals in need of support, food and other items with local community groups and volunteers. This is undertaken primarily in response to telephone or email contact with an individual, relevant local contact details can be found on each council's website.

Information has also been shared with GP practices and other front line services to help them identify additional support for someone vulnerable and needing help.

New clinics to support patients with coronavirus

New COVID-19 clinics to support patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are now open across Oxfordshire. A home visiting service will also become available soon for people suffering from coronavirus who are deemed suitable for this and need support in their own home. This service is supported by GPs and community staff from Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT).

The clinics and home visiting service will bring together clinicians and resources to support patients with coronavirus in the community. Appointments for the clinics and support are arranged over the telephone either via the patient's GP practice or via NHS111. The clinics are only for patients with a pre-arranged appointment; they are not a walk in facility.

Precautions are being taken in each clinic to reduce the risk of spreading the infection. This is to protect patients, staff and the general public.

Reducing face-to-face contact with services

Public Health England has released a useful set of campaign resources on how to access NHS services from home. It urges patients to access an NHS service online or by phone from home first (unless it is a serious or life-threatening emergency, they feel very unwell, or to attend on-going treatment and have been told to do so). The Health at Home campaign signposts the public to useful information about how to contact their GP, order repeat prescriptions, manage their well-being and existing conditions – without leaving their home.

Technology to support patients care goes live

The Oxfordshire Health Information Exchange (HIE), launched last week, gives clinicians a view of their individual patient's latest record from Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH), together with the GP patient record. This means the most up to date information is available to support direct patient care. For example, following discharge from hospital, GPs will have direct access to test results from hospital rather than waiting for them to be sent. The tool also provides access to the Digital Care Plan and is accessible to GPs working in the COVID-19 clinics.

New 24/7 mental health helpline launched

A 24/7 mental health helpline has been launched by Oxford Health to take pressure off NHS111 for mental health advice in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

With support from Oxfordshire Mind, it will operate during the coronavirus pandemic to provide people with specialist mental health care as NHS111 receives an increasing number of COVID-19 related calls.

The round-the-clock helpline will make it quicker and easier for people in both counties to get the right advice they need for their mental health and wellbeing. It is operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Like NHS111, people can call when they need to find out when and where to get help and to access support from mental health professionals.

- For adults the number is 01865 904997.
- For children and young people the number is 01865 904998

People who already use mental health services should contact services directly using the numbers in their care plan.

The Mental Health Helpline adds to the range of local mental health services people can access directly.

Cancer treatment continues during COVID-19

Cancer treatment at OUH continues to be provided during the COVID-19 pandemic in line with [national advice issued to trusts by NHS England and NHS Improvement \(NHSE&I\) on 30 March](#).

NHSE&I's guidance states that:

- The NHS must ensure that essential and urgent cancer treatments must continue
- Cancer specialists should discuss with their patients whether it is riskier for them to undergo or to delay treatment at this time
- If referrals or treatment plans depart from normal practice, safety netting must be in place so that patients can be followed up
- Following the national securing of independent hospital capacity, consideration should be given to using this extra capacity for cancer diagnosis and treatment

Within OUH, multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) of clinicians for all cancer tumour groups have used this guidance in their work.

Cancer surgery within OUH continues to be carried out primarily within the Oncology & Haematology Centre at the Churchill Hospital, a regional centre of excellence, but also at the John Radcliffe Hospital and at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre for specific tumours.

Additional independent hospital capacity at the Manor Hospital is being utilised and OUH is working closely with other providers within the Thames Valley Cancer Alliance to ensure that cancer patients can have their surgery in as timely a way as possible where there is spare capacity to carry this out.

DIY warning from our eye experts

During the lockdown for COVID-19, Oxford Eye Hospital, based on the John Radcliffe site, has seen an increase in the number of patients needing care for serious eye injuries.

Eye doctors at OUH are urging people to take extra care and use eye protection when carrying out DIY and household tasks.

People are being encouraged to take extra care, particularly when gardening or carrying out DIY, by wearing eye protection when necessary, and locking up household detergents and chemicals away from children as they can cause nasty chemical burns, particularly to the eyes.

[More details are available on the OUH website.](#)

Latest OUH service information

OUH provide the latest information on changes to services as a result of COVID-19 [here](#).

Dedicated hotline to support diabetes care

A dedicated hotline has been set up by healthcare partners to help people with diabetes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Designed for patients who need urgent clinical advice, it is hoped that the hotline will give reassurance to patients who are concerned about their diabetic health during COVID-19, and also ultimately help prevent admission to hospital.

The patient hotline number is 01865 857357, and is available seven days a week from 8am until 4pm. Patients can also email dsnop.ocdem@nhs.net If patients have a query out of hours, they can call 0300 3047777.

COVID-19 testing for staff

All Oxfordshire partners are clear that health and care staff must self-isolate as per public health guidelines if they, or any household contact, develop a persistent cough or fever. However, there are certain circumstances in which prompt exclusion of COVID-19 in a symptomatic staff member or symptomatic household contact would not only provide peace of mind for that individual but also enable the staff member to return to work more promptly.

Staff testing for COVID-19 has commenced across Oxfordshire. As per national guidance, the priority is staff working in critical care, emergency departments and ambulance services, and any other high priority groups determined locally. However as extra capacity is introduced testing is being extended to staff in community services, mental health, GP practices, and the wider NHS family, along with social care.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Availability of PPE has been an issue in Oxfordshire for our frontline services as in the rest of the county. Hospitals, ambulance trusts, GP practices, pharmacists, care homes and hospices have been receiving supplies issued directly to them.

Across BOB (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire) we have put in place mutual aid arrangements to support providers wherever possible. We are using these mutual aid arrangements to ensure providers have access to PPE. We continue to monitor the situation closely to identify and address any specific supply issues.

Domestic abuse support shared by Oxfordshire County Council and partners

Domestic abuse advice is being shared by OCC and its partners in recognition that COVID-19 related movement restrictions will be having a direct impact on many individuals and families. Existing abuse can escalate because of stress, anxiety and other challenges, whilst widespread health concerns and job losses may mean some people experience or use domestic abuse for the first time.

Oxfordshire's domestic abuse services continue to offer support and can help people at risk by finding safe alternative accommodation or by increasing safety measures to enable them to remain at home. The County Council is working closely with partners to ensure those at risk of domestic abuse are able to access the help they need to be safe.

How and where to get help and support:

- Anyone in immediate danger should phone **999**.
- Or if in danger and unable to talk on the phone, dial **999** and then press **55**. This will transfer the call to police, who will assist without the caller having to speak.
- Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Services offers free advice:
0800 731 0055 (Mon-Fri 10am-7pm). Email das@a2dominion.co.uk
- Alternatively, call the 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline:
0808 2000 247.
- Anybody worried about causing harm to the ones they love can get help by contacting [Respect Phoneline](https://respectphoneline.org.uk/) - **0808 802 4040**. <https://respectphoneline.org.uk/>

Appreciation of key workers

Our health and care people are doing extraordinary things in the face of an extraordinary challenge, and so need an extraordinary level of support. This is why nationally and locally a range of wellbeing support has been developed to care for and protect all of our people, whether at the front line or in supporting services.

The appreciation for key workers shown by the public across Oxfordshire has been encouraging for all staff working in health and social care and the other areas of public service that continue to operate. Together we are doing all that we can to support and treat patients with COVID-19.

The public have a key role to play in helping to stop the spread of the virus and our communications with the public will continue to reinforce the government's messages:

- Stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives
- Only go out for exercise, food, health care or to work if you can't work at home
- If you go out, stay at least 2m (6 feet) away from other people
- If you or anyone you live with has symptoms of COVID-19 follow the advice for self-isolation.
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently

Your help in supporting these messages is much appreciated.

Please email occg.media-team@nhs.net with any queries and we will endeavour to get back to you.