

Oxfordshire NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing: COVID-19

12 May 2020

As we enter week eight of lockdown, it is heartening to reflect on how much the NHS and local authority partners have achieved during this period, and the huge contribution that staff across these organisations have made in responding to the pandemic. It is essential during this challenging time that we support our staff to prioritise their health and wellbeing.

Oxfordshire local authorities are using online resources to support the wellbeing and mental health of staff, most of whom are now working from home. Across the county, city and district councils there are numerous initiatives underway to support staff during this challenging time. These include the development of intranets to focus on wellbeing, from fitness and self-help videos to e-learning modules on topics such as resilience and understanding mental health.

Weekly activities are being run to support staff and surveys are being undertaken to seek feedback and measure the effectiveness of the initiatives put in place. Online mindfulness sessions, video guides on relaxation techniques and resources to support mental health are also available. Virtual coffee mornings and virtual car sharing initiatives are also taking place in different areas of the NHS and local authorities to connect colleagues who miss the companionship of the office environment and want to buddy up for a chat at the start or end of the working day.

GP practice staff and staff at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT) and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) all have access to a wide range of health and wellbeing support including their Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) which are available 24/7 online and by phone.

All organisations provide additional online guidance on their staff intranets. OUH has a series of videos made by its Lead for Psychological Medicine, Professor Michael Sharpe, and OHFT's Psychosocial Response Group has developed support videos for staff and public. All staff have been made aware of support available both locally and nationally including the 24/7 mental health [helpline](#) run by OHFT, a wellbeing support helpline run by the NHS nationally, and free access to mindfulness apps including Headspace and Sleepio.

Government announcement on easing COVID-19 restrictions

The Government has set out its [plans](#) to begin the safe easing of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions over the coming weeks and months. The steps being taken are designed to safeguard livelihoods, but in a way that continues to protect our most vulnerable residents and the NHS. Oxfordshire's health services and local authority partners will work together to follow the Government's 'roadmap' to resume more services, while ensuring the safety of staff, patients and the wider public. We will be conducting risk assessments and identifying what precautions we need to take to ensure we are operating safely and in line with new national guidance. As our plans develop we will be sharing these. At the same time we continue to respond as a system to the challenges of the pandemic.

Thank you to all nurses on International Nurses Day

Today, 12 May is International Nurses Day – this year marking the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. In Oxfordshire we are marking this special day by thanking our nurses for the outstanding work they do every day, and now during the COVID-19 pandemic. A personal thank you card has been sent to every nurse at OUH with the OUH Chief Nursing Officer highlighting the contribution of nurses and midwives throughout the Oxfordshire health and care system. "[Take time to celebrate and shine a light](#)" is the message from

Oxford Health's Chief Nurse in her personal message to Oxford Health's 1,500 strong nursing workforce.

New Integrated Care System Executive Lead and Joint CCG Accountable Officer Appointed

Dr James Kent has been appointed to the combined role of BOB ICS Executive Lead and Accountable Officer for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). James has over 25 years of healthcare experience as a doctor, management consultant and government adviser. Most recently he has been working with the NHS X leadership team on their priority areas for the recovery COVID-19 phase. He will start work formally on 18th May 2020.

'Help us help you'

We have launched an awareness raising campaign, across Oxfordshire, to support the national 'Help us help you' messaging to ensure that the public continue to seek medical help when they need it during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the coming weeks, this communications campaign will be covering topics such as [cancer](#), [immunisations](#), [maternity](#), [stroke](#), mental health, heart attacks, learning disabilities, elective care, children and young people, changes in primary care and care for shielded groups.

District councils help keep families active

The Active Communities Team at South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils has published a range of [activity sheets](#) for families to download and take with them on a walk. They include an animal finder sheet and urban and nature treasure hunts. Cherwell District Council's sport and leisure team is celebrating after Sport England's recent Active Lives Study found that Cherwell had seen more adults become physically active than any other region in Oxfordshire. Around 12,200 more adults are now doing at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week, compared to the year before. These results reflect a huge amount of hard work by the council's sport and leisure team in attracting residents to take part in physical activity through a range of wellbeing initiatives.

Coronavirus Carer ID scheme

Oxfordshire County Council is continuing to support carers during the pandemic by offering a Carers ID. The [Carer ID scheme](#) is for paid and independent carers who are providing care and support to young people and adults known to OCC Social Care. The carer ID is a simple letter of authority which can be presented while out and about, should the carer be challenged.

Staying safe advice for volunteers

The ongoing COVID-19 situation will mean that community support and volunteering will remain critical for many months to come. To help volunteers stay safe and keep others safe while helping out, Oxfordshire County Council has provided a range of information and guidance on its [website](#). The guidance has recently been updated to include the latest Government advice on how volunteers can help safely.

OxLEP

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) continues to work with the county's business community, signposting them to Government resources and local authority support. They also continue to play a 'convening' role, mobilising the county's private sector to support the local and national response to the pandemic. A series of online Q&A events are being staged as part of this support. The first two, covering business support and the visitor economy, are available to watch on the OxLEP [YouTube channel](#); further Q&As scheduled for this month include events on skills and the rural economy.

COVID-19 research update

The scale and scope of COVID-19 related research activity taking place in Oxford demonstrates not only the Oxford's status as a global centre for research but also the benefits to patients and staff of the strategic partnerships between the NHS and universities.

COVID-19 vaccine development

Researchers at the University of Oxford's Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group [began testing a COVID-19 vaccine](#) in human volunteers in Oxford on 23 April.

Around 1,110 people will take part in the trial, half receiving the vaccine and the other half, the control group, receiving a widely available meningitis vaccine. The researchers, who are supported by the Oxford Biomedical Research Centre (BRC), [started screening](#) healthy volunteers aged between 18 and 55 in March.

At the end of May, the COVID-19 vaccine team will start large-scale Phase III trials which will include trial sites across the UK. If the vaccine prevents the disease, the team hope that millions of doses could be produced by the autumn.

COVID-19 treatment trial

Oxfordshire patients with COVID-19 were among the first to be recruited to a major [new clinical trial](#) to test potential drug treatments.

The [Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy \(RECOVERY\) trial](#), led by researchers from the University of Oxford with support from the Oxford BRC, is the largest of its kind in the world. Data will be regularly reviewed so that any effective treatment can be identified quickly and made available to all patients.

COVID-19 research in primary care

The Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, which is headed by the Oxford BRC's Theme Lead for Multi-morbidity, Professor Richard Hobbs, has joined forces with the Royal College of GPs and the clinical system supplier EMIS Health to urgently recruit as many GP practices as possible to track the spread of COVID-19, develop understanding of the pandemic, and inform government strategy around measures such as social distancing and lockdown. The PRINCIPLE trial is the [first national COVID-19 trial outside hospital](#).

Oxford Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma (OxCADAT)

Oxford Health BRC researchers have been developing guidance for remote working with patients who need talking therapies care delivered by IAPT services (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) including Talking Space Plus in Oxfordshire, as well as supporting other clinicians and services further afield.

They have created a range of online resources on COVID-19 related topics including remote delivery of treatment. All resources are free and clinicians can register on the site to access [training materials](#).

Looking at treating post-traumatic experiences following intensive care unit admissions for COVID-19, there's a newly published paper on Cognitive Therapy for PTSD, a first-line treatment for PTSD developed by Prof. Anke Ehlers and Prof. David Clark of the OxCADAT, for patients who develop PTSD after ICU. It explains how to address some of the distinctive [features](#) of post-ICU PTSD. BRC staff are also being redeployed to support the remote treatment delivery of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire IAPT services.

Oxford Precision Psychiatry Lab

The Oxford Precision Psychiatry Lab (part of the Oxford Health BRC Digital and Informatics, led by Prof. Andrea Cipriani) has summarised the best available [evidence-based guidance](#) about COVID-19 for frontline mental health clinicians. The team is also carrying out a

systematic review to focus specifically on the relationship between COVID-19 (including SARS and MERS) and mental health patients and staff. It will collect available information and data on how to manage and support psychiatric/mental health patients and staff during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adult Mental Health projects in development– two online studies

Oxford Health BRC Adult Mental Health Theme is looking at a plan to use Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to look at COVID-genomics and spread patterns. The work led by Prof. Paul Harrison is one of a range of applications to the University of Oxford's urgent COVID-19 research fund. The Experimental Medicine subtheme is running a randomised study looking at the effects of remotely administered behavioral activation on depression, anxiety and the psychological effects of COVID-19 and a study exploring the relationship between depression, anxiety and emotional bias in a large sample (1,000+) in work led by Prof. Cath Harmer.

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