

Coronavirus - LMC Update June 25th 2020

Welcome to our latest update which we are now issuing fortnightly.

Antibody Testing

In response to NHSE's recent undertaking for staff and patients to have access to antibody testing, local CCGs will be inviting practices to provide antibody testing for primary care staff including dental, pharmacy and opticians, as well as GP staff and their patients.

This is not a core service and is therefore not mandatory for practices to deliver. A service specification together with clear funding will be issued to practices shortly. The LMC have provided comments with respect to the service specification and we would advise practices who may wish to deliver this service to consider the following:

- The specification does not limit the scope and frequency of testing and extends to practice patient population. Some practices may have difficulty providing resources to respond to this level of demand.
- Practices may also be invited to test staff and patients of other practices who decline to be commissioned for this service. It is also possible that CCGs may commission this service through another provider to deliver a local solution.
- NHS Resolution have confirmed that where you are appropriately trained and competent to undertake this activity, and you are not covered for this activity under your existing indemnity/insurance arrangements, you will be indemnified under the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Coronavirus (CNSC). More information is available [here](#).
- There will be a significant component of practice time required for briefing and counselling post-test. This should be reflected in the funding rate you accept.
- There have been recent reports of actuarial impact of insurance and finance applications which should be made clear before consenting to a test. The BMA have provided [this information](#)
- The communication and recording of results process requires further detail. It the LMCs understanding that a record of the tests will not be placed on the GP patient record but may be recorded on the occupational health record for staff members.
- The Daily Mail and Pulse reported that NHS England has said that any patient can ask their GP for antibody test when having a blood test for another reason. In response to this GPC said there was no obligation to offer antibody testing and that this could increase inappropriate attendance at surgeries. GPs would use their clinical judgement to decide whether to offer patients COVID -19 antibody tests. The Pulse article can be found [here](#) (registration required).

The LMC will provide any further updates on our COVID web page.

Future of Shielding

The government announced plans for the future of shielding on 22 June. The key points are:

- Shielding guidance will be relaxed in stages, subject to clinical evidence:

- From **6 July**: the guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable will be relaxed to allow shielded individuals to meet up to 5 people from other households outdoors, socially distanced, and to form support bubbles if they live alone or are a lone adult with a dependent under 18.
 - From **1 August**: the clinically extremely vulnerable can stop shielding. The guidance will be updated to allow this cohort to go to the shops and places of worship, while following current social distancing rules.
- The food and medicine boxes facilitated by the National Shielding Service will stop as of **1 August** as individuals are advised they can visit shops and pharmacies. However, other forms of support – such as priority supermarket delivery slots and the NHS Volunteers Scheme, amongst a range of local volunteer schemes – will continue. If an individual is concerned about support after 1 August, they should contact their local authority.
 - The categorisation of ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ will remain in place indefinitely and people in this cohort should continue to follow the guidance specific to them, available [here](#). This is because community transmission and the R number will continue to be closely monitored and the government will tighten advice to this cohort as needed.
 - Shielding guidance has been and continues to be **advisory**.
 - Everybody in the ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ categorisation will be written to from today outlining these steps.

These resources provide further information:

- [Core narrative](#) setting out the changes
- [Clinical guidance explainer](#)
- [Stakeholder Q&A](#) to help you explain the changes
- [Shielding patient letter](#)

PPE – Face Masks and Coverings

Practices should be aware of current guidance on use of face masks and other PPE in primary care, which includes:

- Public Health England [guidance on the use of Personal Protective Equipment in primary care](#)
- Further Government [advice on working safely in non-hospital settings](#)

The PHE guidance recommends that those working in reception and communal areas who are unable to social distance, should wear a fluid repellent mask.

Face Masks – Exemptions

Following the release of government guidance regarding the wearing of face masks in various public settings (including the circumstances where an individual might be exempt), practices are reporting increases in requests from patients for letters of exemption. The [government guidance on exemptions](#) suggests there is no requirement for evidence for exemption, therefore it should be sufficient for an individual to self-declare this. Practices are not required to provide letters of support for those who fall under the list of exemptions.

The responsibility for issuing exemptions is with the transport provider, not GPs. Similarly, practices are under no obligation to provide letters of support for anyone who does not fall under the list of exemptions but considers them to have another reason to be exempted.

Covid-19 Pillar 2 lab results flow into GP records

NHS Digital have now implemented a process to facilitate the flow of [Pillar 2 test results](#) from COVID-19 tests undertaken through national testing to GP systems. These will appear in a patient's record as a laboratory test result. The tests will have the requesting GP as G9999981 and GP Surname of COVIDpillar2; this will ensure they are clearly distinguishable from other test results.

These results do NOT need to be notified to PHE under the notifiable diseases requirement, this has already been done. This will also be clearly stated in the test result. NHS England advise that there is no clinical action required on receipt of these results. See guidance from your supplier in efficiently managing these test results within your system.

Testing for Covid-19 – Briefing and Testing Priorities

Directors of Public Health Humber have released a paper providing local advice which they have developed based on the current evidence. It gives an overview of the different tests and gives practical guidance on prioritisation and managing risk.

[Download the briefing.](#)

New support package to help manage patients with long-term conditions

UCLPartners has launched a [new package of digital resources and practical support](#) to help primary care teams to continue providing proactive care to patients with long-term conditions during and post COVID-19. The support on offer can help stratify care for patients according to level of risk, using new models of care that are virtual by default, mobilise the wider workforce, draw on digital innovation and support patient self-management.

The support package focusses on the management of asthma and COPD, with resources for the management of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease being added soon. Dr Matt Kearney, GP and Programme Director for Primary Care Innovation at UCLPartners, explains more about the support package in a [new blog](#).

NHS Volunteer Responders ready to help health and care frontline staff

Health and care staff working in frontline services can now get help with essential tasks such as shopping and collecting prescriptions from NHS Volunteer Responders. Access to this service will help staff working at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic so that they can continue to support those most in need at this time.

Anyone working in frontline services can ask for help from NHS Volunteer Responders by calling 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm). When requesting support, staff will need to provide an email address, which should ideally be their work email address.

Ensuring and promoting a culture of openness and transparency during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

This is a one page guide which shows how NHS staff who are concerned about something at work can speak up about it, including getting in touch with a local Free to Speak up Guardian. [Download the guide.](#)

Resilience and Wellbeing Webinar

There is a single place remaining on the last of our current run of online webinar workshops. These sessions use effective coach-approach tools to help increase

resilience, reduce stress and anxiety and help to improve thinking. The workshops are open to anyone working in General Practice.

Click for full details and online booking:

[Session 6: Shift your thinking for a more resilient mindset, Tuesday 30th June , 4.15pm - 5.30pm](#)

Free Virtual One to One Support for GPs

We encourage you to take time to look after your own health and wellbeing during the challenges you are facing as a result of Covid-19. The Rapid Access Support Service has been designed to provide short, virtual sessions with a trained mentor who will listen and sign post you to appropriate resources. Please get in touch using one of the following methods:

- by visiting www.gp-s.org and completing the online contact form;
- by email contact@gp-s.org or
- by telephone 0115 979 6917.

You will initially be in touch with a Nottinghamshire based operational lead who will offer you a choice of GP mentor based in the Humberside area.

Our standard mentor offer of four, two-hour mentoring sessions is also still available and being delivered virtually. Please use the same GP-S contact details above.