

Patient Update

Newsletter for Patient Participation Groups

May 2020



New Leader for Integrated Care System.

Dr James Kent, Special Adviser for Health to former Premier Theresa May, has been appointed Executive Lead of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care System (ICS) and Accountable Officer of the three Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) within the patch.



A doctor by training, Dr Kent has more than 25 years healthcare experience, and he starts his new job next Monday where he will take over from Dr Cathy Winfield who has been Berkshire West's Accountable Officer since 2013. Dr Winfield will continue to support the BOB ICS until mid-June when she will take up a role with the National NHSE/I Primary Care Team working on primary care strategy.

Dr Abid Irfan, Clinical Chair of Berkshire West CCG said: "I would like to thank Cathy for her dynamic leadership in Berkshire West since 2007 and as Chief Officer for the CCGs since 2013. Highly respected and with over 40 years NHS experience, she has been committed to partnership working and innovative transformation of healthcare. She is always ahead of the national curve and successfully led Berkshire West to becoming one of the first Integrated Care Systems in the country. We wish her well for all her future ventures."

Further information is available on the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System [website](#).

Public urged to get regular vaccines during pandemic

People are being reminded to attend regular vaccination appointments to prevent outbreaks of deadly serious diseases, protect vulnerable people like children and pregnant women and reduce pressure on the health service.

So, as long as people don't have coronavirus symptoms and are not self-isolating because someone in the household is displaying symptoms, all scheduled vaccinations should go ahead as normal.

This is to prevent serious, and sometimes life threatening diseases like pneumonia, meningitis, whooping cough, diphtheria and measles taking hold.



At Balmore Park Surgery in Caversham near Reading, they've introduced a new way of making sure children can be safely vaccinated with immunisations delivered in the surgery car park whilst the child stays in the vehicle.

And for parents walking to the surgery or during bad weather, immunisations are performed in a specially designated room with a door leading directly into the car park.

Madeleine Farnar, Nurse Manager, said; "During these difficult times, when parents are quite rightly concerned about visiting the surgery, we wanted to reassure them that we could safely administer the vaccines whilst protecting both baby and the nurses. They have been very cooperative and grateful and we have managed to maintain our clinics at the same level as prior to Covid-19 outbreak."

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Here to help you

Doctor leaders in Berkshire West have stepped up a campaign to let people know that surgeries are still open and need to see people who have any serious health concerns.

The pandemic has meant GPs, along with hospital teams, have had to change the way they operate to cope with the outbreak, prevent it spreading and treat many more sick people.

However, there are fears this may have deterred some people from seeking help for very serious problems like suspected cancers, heart problems and stroke. These all need detecting early so appropriate treatment can be put into place.

Dr Abid Irfan, Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Clinical Lead (pictured), said: "There's been a lot of publicity advising people about coronavirus and the need to contact NHS 111 online, self-isolate and stay away from surgeries to prevent the spread of the virus.



"Our concern is that in the midst of all this, people who don't have coronavirus symptoms, but are obviously very unwell, are not getting in touch with their GPs.

"Your local GP surgery, along with the rest of the NHS services, are still here for you - for people with maternity appointments, mental health support and other important health care issues. People are asked to ring and not pop in. They will then be triaged over the phone and, if staff feel it's necessary, they will be called in for a face to face consultation," said Dr Irfan.

Cancer doctor calls on people to still come forward

Cancer doctors are urging people not to hesitate getting checked as research has shown nearly half the public have concerns about seeking help during the coronavirus outbreak.

A survey found one in 10 people nationally would not contact their GP even if they found a lump or a mole which didn't go away after a week. Another third of people would worry about seeking help.

The main concern was getting coronavirus or giving it to their family as well as being a burden on the health service.

Dr Kajal Patel, Berkshire West CCG's Cancer Lead (pictured), said: "This, coupled with a pause in screening programmes as the NHS tackles the virus, means serious problems like cancer could go unchecked. But the sooner we identify these sorts of serious health problems, the more likely they are to be managed and treated.



"So, if people notice symptoms like lumps, changes in moles, blood in their urine and stools, unintentional weight loss, they must contact their GP," she said.

Emergency Department still open to help

A big drop in the number of people, especially children, attending Emergency Department with serious health problems has led to a new campaign by medics to reassure seriously unwell people that ED is still a safe option for medical attention.

They fear some people may be nervous about attending which could lead to serious issues like strokes and heart attacks, slipping through the net. This can seriously reduce recovery rates and even prove fatal.

The RBH has reconfigured its layout and is now operating a 'hot ' and 'cold' ED system so people brought in with suspected coronavirus symptoms are taken through the hot ED route leaving cold ED to operate as usual and deal with other serious medical cases.

Figures for one week in April showed the number of local people accessing ED was halved with 1,158 attending and 462 being admitted compared with 2,288 attendances and 687 admissions for the same week last year.

During that same one week period, there was also been a steep drop in the number of children being seen in ED from 479 in 2019 to 183 last week.

Will Orr Consultant Cardiologist at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust (pictured), said: "our 'cold' ED is open for business and should be the first port of call for anyone who becomes very ill with things like stroke, heart or serious breathing problems.



"Please don't worry about catching coronavirus or being a burden on our staff. We are all still here for people who need our help," he added.

Council teams up with hotel to help residents out of hospital

Health teams have joined up with Reading Borough Council and the town's Holiday Inn to help people leave hospital as quickly as possible.

Thirty of the rooms at the South Reading hotel have been converted into short term care beds for the duration of the outbreak in a bid to free up hospital beds and help ease pressure on the healthcare system.

This will offer an extra resource to support people with care needs who cannot immediately return home after a hospital stay. For example, if a person needs extra support with personal care but their care package cannot be started immediately, or if there are practical issues with their home that need to be resolved - anything which would hold the person in hospital whilst they are fit to leave.

Community Hubs at the heart of helping out

The coronavirus pandemic has put partnership working centre stage – be it neighbours and communities lending a hand, or bigger organisations like those within the ICP taking the lead.

One success story has been the establishment of Community Support Hubs bringing together local authorities, voluntary sector and others complement the work done by health teams and co-ordinate services for vulnerable and elderly residents.

In West Berkshire, the hub makes sure people have access to food, medication and other essentials. It's also supporting the volunteers and community action groups that are providing vital back up for vulnerable people. There are full details [here](#)

The Reading Hub is for people with welfare needs if a family member or friend cannot help them. It works to connect people with the right service or organisation in the area that can provide support. There are full details [here](#)

Wokingham's Community Hub was set up by Wokingham Borough Council and it's support system includes food parcels to vulnerable, isolated, elderly and families in need. There's more information [here](#)

Hard working volunteers sorting out deliveries in Wokingham (pictured right).



A new guide offering support to families struggling during Covid-19

[This new guide](#) has been produced by a group of leading local health and social care organisations.

It signposts people to a range of information and groups in Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire who are experts in dealing with mental health, anxiety, stress, self-care, wellbeing and sleep issues.



The guide called '#Coping' is being distributed via schools, NHS, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations.

The unprecedented nature of Covid-19 and the sudden and massive impact it has had on people's everyday life, has thrown up big challenges for most people.

Feedback from a range of agencies shows parents and carers are finding their changed circumstances particularly challenging. They are often trying to deal with the impact covid-19 has had on employment and finances, as well as coping with concerns about their family's health and the uncertainty about how long the pandemic will last.

Add to that, the problems posed by children off school for lengthy periods and unable to get out and meet their friends, are producing major concerns for many.

Katrina Anderson, the CCG's Director of Joint Commissioning, said: "the last few weeks of lock down have been really hard for a lot of people, especially families who've found themselves having to reassure their children about what is going on, often when the parents themselves don't really have the answers.

"All this, coupled with the usual stresses and strains of everyday family life, can cause a lot of stress and uncertainty for everyone.

"This guide is an easy to access list of the key agencies both nationally and locally, who can offer much needed support and advice," she added.

Five Ways to Wellbeing #5ways5daysNHS Challenge – May 2020

This month we're encouraging children & young people & their families to take part in our online #5ways5daysNHS challenge - to fit the NHS's Five Ways to Wellbeing into their week:

1. Connect
2. Be active
3. Take notice
4. Keep learning and
5. Give

#5ways5daysNHS
challenge
For children and young people

The idea being, that it can help children and young people to look after their mental wellbeing during these unprecedented times, as well as raising awareness so that others can learn simple ways to do the same. Find out more about the challenge here:

www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/5ways5daysnhs

Health apps library

A range of trusted health apps is now available to Berkshire West residents to support them during the coronavirus lockdown – and beyond. We have created a health apps library by partnering with the Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Applications (ORCHA) to provide a bank of apps which have been through an impartial, rigorous review process by health and care professionals.



Covering physical and mental health, the apps include a range of conditions and concerns, from asthma to stress, with support just a click away.

The national lockdown has meant that many people cannot access the same health and wellbeing resources they did before, such as gyms or group exercise or therapy sessions. With everyone having to exercise or care for themselves, alone or in household groups, there is now a greater reliance on online resources. You can visit the library here: www.berkshirerwesticp.org/orcha

Survey to help tackle the coronavirus impact on children & young people's mental health

Researchers in Oxford are asking parents and carers to help them understand the best forms of support for children and young people's mental health during the coronavirus pandemic.

The survey asks for insight from parents and carers of children aged 4-16 years as to what protects children and young people's mental health over time and at particular stress points, and how this varies according to child and family characteristics.

Responses are anonymous and will be used to identify the advice, support and help parents would find most useful, so that the most effective support can be provided

The survey is led by Professor Cathy Creswell, Department of Psychiatry and Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford, which works closely with Oxford Health and its [NIHR](#) Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre, run jointly by the trust and the university.

Further information is available [here](#).

Thinking about going to A&E but unsure?

The Royal Berkshire Hospital, in partnership with Babylon, has launched an online symptom checker - here on their website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/ask.

Register and answer a few questions about your concerns and the symptom checker will signpost to the most appropriate service for your health care need. This will also support patients affected by COVID19 and those reluctant to attend the hospital, but who could benefit from other care services.



All data is anonymised and encrypted in accordance with the Data Protection Act.