

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland stakeholder bulletin #3

Issued on behalf of the NHS in LLR

Date of issue: 3rd April 2020



This is the third in a series of regular bulletins to keep you updated on the NHS response to Coronavirus (COVID -19) in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

We will try hard to ensure you have the latest information but, as you are aware, the situation is rapidly changing.

Through these bulletins we will keep you informed of developments and if you have any questions or would like to ask about a topic please email us at: PressOfficeLLRCCGs@leicestershire.nhs.uk.

We are very grateful for your continued support. Please help us to promote the message to stay at home and maintain social distancing. You can also help to tackle misinformation by promoting the official sources of information: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>. The weather this weekend is expected to be pleasant so it will be important to remind people about the importance of everyone doing their bit by staying at home, protecting the NHS and saving lives.

As we move toward our anticipated surge in cases over the next few weeks, the LLR NHS want to take this opportunity to thank all NHS, social care, police, local authorities and other partners for their contribution to fighting coronavirus and delivering a truly system wide response. As this bulletin highlights, coronavirus is impacting all services, and all have demonstrated incredible determination to do the best in challenging circumstances.

Coronavirus cases in LLR

Latest figures show there are 314 confirmed cases in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland local authority areas. A total of 37 deaths at Leicester's Hospitals have sadly been confirmed, whilst 81 patients have been discharged from hospital having recovered from the infection.

We expect peak demand on our critical care facilities over the course of the next two weeks. Our local response and capacity planning is being modelled to reflect this, with all of parts of the system stepping up, working incredibly hard and playing a vitally important role. Co-ordination is led by a Health Economy Strategic Control Group, which brings together senior executives and clinical leaders from all local NHS partners and local government. This group reports directly to the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Gold Command, led by the Police.

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT)

We are implementing national guidance on service prioritisation for community health services and mental health. This does mean that some services will temporarily stop or, partially stop. The latest position for each service is described on our website at <https://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service-update/>.

Our approach is focused on maintaining the delivery of critical services and enabling the Trust to rapidly respond to anticipated surges in demand. Specifically, our surge plans include:

- A 70% increase in community hospital in-patient beds for step down and end of life care through the phased introduction of 75 Independent sector beds and an extra 72 beds on LPT additional wards. Overall community beds will increase from 222 to around 350;
- Home First, community based end of life care and UHL discharge hub: most LPT staff not redeployed to support an increase in bed numbers will be deployed to one of eight community hubs across LLR, and the discharge hub in UHL, to support anticipated increases in demand for these services;
- a new Mental Health Urgent Care Hub to triage urgent mental health patients is in place to reduce emergency department attendances at the LRI; and
- a new Central Access Point for mental health is being established to provide a direct number 24/7 for referrers and service users . This is starting from 6 April 2020.

University Hospitals Leicester (UHL)

We are continuing preparations for the expected surge in demand during the coming weeks. Critical care beds are increasing from 50 to 150, with the potential for significant further increases depending on equipment availability. Clinical staff are having intensive refresher training to enable them to look after the numbers of patients requiring respiratory support and we have received nearly 500 expressions of interest from retirees and leavers who want to come back to help their colleagues. This is a phenomenal response.

Tremendous work over the last few weeks with partners in health and social care has helped transfer patients that are medically fit for discharge and significantly increased the available bed capacity. At the same time, we have seen the numbers of patients attending or referred to the Emergency Department (A&E) more than halve in the last 4 weeks, (4,700 attendances in February down to 2,200 in March). Thank you to everyone in our local communities for exercising discretion over how they use NHS services.

Temporary changes to Adult's and Children's Emergency Departments

To help keep people safe when they need emergency care as well as managing the increase in patients we expect to see, UHL has made some temporary changes to the way patients are seen at the Adult's and Children's Emergency Departments. The departments are now split into two separate areas: The Blue Department - for patients **without** symptoms of COVID-19 and The Red Department - for patients **with** symptoms of COVID-19.

If you would like to know more about the response of UHL to coronavirus please visit <https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/aboutus/departments-services/emergency-department/>

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) new national guidance

The safety and wellbeing of staff and our patients is the top priority and you may be aware of concerns raised about the availability Personal Protective Equipment, (PPE), Nationally there is a huge effort to distribute supplies of PPE to NHS organisations locally.

You may also be aware of concerns raised about the correct use and type of PPE for different clinical settings. Today the Government and NHS leaders from a range of medical and nursing royal colleges have published new guidance about personal protective equipment (PPE) for NHS teams who are likely to come into contact with patients with coronavirus. The guidance is based on the best scientific evidence and the World Health Organization (WHO) have confirmed it is consistent with what it recommends in circumstances and settings with the highest risk of transmission. For further information visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

Primary Care

Primary care too is continuing to play its part and is operating well using telephone triage and, in some cases, online consultations to help mitigate ongoing difficulties with the availability of PPE and the lack of staff testing. Face-to-face provision is being consolidated where practicable in to 'red zones' for those patients displaying possible COVID-19 symptoms, helping to maximise the use of scarce human resources and equipment.

Staff Testing

NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) has written to all NHS Trusts to ensure that we maximise available capacity for staff testing. There had previously been a 15% cap on laboratory activity directed to staff testing but this has now been lifted.

Testing is being focussed on hospital staff involved in critical care, emergency departments and ambulance services. As this is implemented, and as extra lab volumes become available, the testing will be extended to community, mental health and primary care services, along with social care. Locally we are agreeing priority staff and hope to move quickly to testing other key workers in line with national guidance.

You may have read news reports about the shortage of reagents and swabs to support staff testing. Nationally there is a lot of work taking place to secure additional reagents to further increase capacity, recognising that this remains a key constraint for many laboratories.

Keeping people informed

We are continuing to reinforce the messages on staying at home through our social media and other communications channels and ensure that the public is aware of the official sources of information and advice on staying well and looking out for the symptoms of Coronavirus.

New information is continually being made available and you may find this latest information from the Cabinet Office helpful.

- The Cabinet Office has published [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#). This includes answers to questions such as "can I drive to green spaces?" and "can I go to the park?"
- [Guidance for the public on mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [Keeping away from other people - new rules from 23rd March](#)
- [Advice about staying at home](#)

We are being made aware of misinformation circulating on social media so any help you can give to promote the official sources of information through your networks is appreciated.

We have been contacted by several people about the availability of information in other languages and formats. There is now a range of information available from Public Health England to meet different needs and languages. Please visit the PHE website for more details <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns>

Community Radio initiative

We will also be launching a series of messages with partner agencies including the police and local authorities through an initiative with community radio stations. We are very grateful to the radio stations for providing us with free airtime to promote our messages. This will further help us to reach groups in the community through targeted community stations.