

Sussex NHS Commissioners

Public Involvement Fortnightly News Briefing on COVID-19

25 September 2020

This briefing will be produced bi-weekly, and is aimed at **patient leads, public members, voluntary and community sector (VCS) leads and community group leads in Sussex.**

The NHS is committed to keeping our people informed, ensuring that communities have the information they need, in the right format, and at the right time. We know that our patient leaders, VCS and community organisations are all working exceptionally hard to support local people, and that they are key to working together to make sure that our communities have the support and information they need.

Local Focus

Changes to national measures to address rising cases of coronavirus in England

The government announced new measures to suppress Covid-19 on Tuesday 22 September 2020.

Face Coverings

- Customers in private hire vehicles and taxis must wear face coverings (from 23 September).
- Customers in hospitality venues must wear face coverings, except when seated at a table to eat or drink. Staff in hospitality and retail will now also be required to wear face



coverings (from 24 September).

- People who are already exempt from the existing face covering obligations, such as because of an underlying health condition, will continue to be exempt from these new obligations.
- Guidance stating that face coverings and visors should be worn in close contact services will now become law (from 24 September).
- Staff working on public transport and taxi drivers will continue to be advised to wear face coverings.

Working from home

To help contain the virus, office workers who can work effectively from home should do so over the winter.

Businesses

- Businesses selling food or drink (including cafes, bars, pubs and restaurants), social clubs, casinos, bowling alleys, amusement arcades (and other indoor leisure centres or facilities), funfairs, theme parks, adventure parks and activities, and bingo halls, must be closed between 10pm and 5am. This will include takeaways but delivery services can continue after 10pm (from 24 September).
- In licensed premises, food and drink must be ordered from, and served at, a table.
- Customers must eat and drink at a table in any premises selling food and drink to consume indoors, on site (from 24 September).

- Businesses will need to display the official NHS QR code posters so that customers can 'check-in' at different premises using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details once the app is rolled out nationally (from 24 September).
- Businesses and organisations will face stricter rules to make their premises COVID Secure (from 28 September):

Meeting people safely

- [Support groups](#) must be limited to a maximum of 15 people (from 24 September).
- Indoor organised sport for over 18s will no longer be exempt from the rule of six. There is an exemption for indoor organised team sports for disabled people (from 24 September).
- Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions will be restricted to a maximum of 15 people (down from 30).
- Other significant standalone life events will be subject to the 'rule of six' limits, except funerals (from 28 September).

You can read further information about this [here](#).

For more information on how you can protect yourself and others, please visit [Keep Sussex Safe](#) which provides a simple summary of key advice and guidance.

Covid-19 testing system

You may be aware from recent media reports that the national Covid-19 testing system's laboratories are facing very high demand. As a result, local test bookings may be unavailable at busy times and people are being directed to the nearest site with available slots. In addition, home testing kits are made available in batches and so may also be unavailable at busy times.

Work is ongoing nationally to address the issue and national laboratory capacity continues to expand. However, the government has said that laboratory capacity may be constrained for some weeks. We are very sorry for any inconvenience this causes.

The current challenges are with national laboratory capacity rather than the availability or capacity of testing stations. There is a wide availability of testing sites across Sussex, including at Gatwick, Brighton, Tangmere and Bexhill and the mobile testing units rotating around the county.

While these sites may not appear busy, the number of tests they can carry out is determined by the laboratory capacity available to process tests. Please do not attend a testing site without an appointment.

The latest guidance is that you should only apply for a Covid-19 test if you have symptoms – a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. You should isolate for ten days or until a negative test result is received, only leaving home to get tested. Anyone in your household who does not have symptoms should isolate for 14 days.

In the event that people with symptoms are unable to obtain a local test, it is not recommended that they travel long distances.

Government advice is to try booking again in a few hours. A good time to try is 8.30pm when new slots are made available.

Tests can be booked at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

Locally, NHS hospital laboratories carry out tests for patients. Where there is spare capacity, we are putting tests for health and care staff through our in-house laboratories in order to free up as many bookings as possible for the local public.

Thousands in the Sussex to be vaccinated against the flu virus this winter

Flu vaccination clinics across Sussex are underway and the NHS is encouraging anyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccination to book an appointment with their GP or pharmacist, as soon as they receive an invitation.

Every year the flu virus kills people and hospitalises many more. This year it is even more important people who are most at risk of flu have their free flu vaccination. All clinics will run in line with infection prevention control and social distancing measures will be in place so people can be reassured that these clinics are safe and every step is being taken to protect them and staff

For the first time, children in school Year 7, and household contacts and carers of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List, are all eligible for the free vaccination. These groups are in addition to people aged over 65, those under 65 with long-term health conditions, pregnant women, children aged 2 and 3 and children in primary school.

Allison Cannon, Chief Nurse Officer for Sussex NHS commissioners said:

“This year with both the flu virus and Covid-19 circulating flu immunisation is more important than ever to reduce infections, protect each other and protect the NHS.

“There is an expanded list of priority groups this year and we are offering the vaccine to children aged from 2 to 11, as well as those over the age of 65 and anyone with chronic illness including diabetes and weight problems. So, if you have a Body Mass Index of more than 40 or a chronic illness or learning disability, look after yourself and protect the NHS by having the flu jab.”

People aged between 50 and 64 who are not in a clinical at-risk group may also be offered a free flu vaccination later in the year, providing there is enough vaccine available. This is to ensure that those who are most at risk are vaccinated first. Anyone of any age, including those between 50-64, who is a household member or a carer of a shielded patient, is eligible for the flu vaccination from September onwards and should contact the GP practice they are registered with or their pharmacy to book an appointment.

Flu is a highly infectious disease that is spread from person to person and infects the respiratory system, where it can lead to pneumonia and other complications. The flu viruses are constantly changing and this is one of the main reasons why people should be vaccinated annually. The symptoms, that come on very quickly, include fever, chills, headaches, aches and pains in the joints and muscles, and extreme tiredness. The best way to avoid getting the flu is by having the vaccination. Doing so reduces the risk of developing the illness significantly.

For a full list of priority groups and other information about this year's flu vaccine, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>.

Information on the free flu vaccine is available in [Easyread formats](#) and in a [variety of languages](#).

Big Health and Care (Socially Distancing) Conversation: Your experiences of care

As part of the [Big Health and Care \(Socially Distancing\) conversation](#), we are asking the public and local community groups to help play a key role in helping us understand people's experiences of care during the Covid-19 crisis.



We want to make sure that we understand what it has been like for people if they have needed to use health and care services during Covid across Sussex – what has worked well, and what could have been better? If you didn't access services when you thought you needed to, why not? What changes should we maintain, and what needs to go back to normal as much as possible?

Our third Big Health and Care Conversation theme was... 'Going to A&E', which was held between Monday 24 August – Sunday 6 September 2020. You can learn about what we heard during this theme in the [Twitter Hour](#) from Katie the Divisional Lead Nurse and Lou the Matron at the Emergency Department at Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust

This is **your chance to tell us your experiences**, ask questions and share your ideas as we move towards restoring services.

Over the **next two weeks** (Monday 21st – Sunday 4th October 2020) we would like to hear about your **experiences of dental care during the pandemic**. If you had a dental emergency at the height of the pandemic, did you manage to get treatment? Where from, and how did that work? Are you having difficulty obtaining dental treatment from your surgery now?

To feed in your views and experiences, you can:

- Visit [the website](#) and share your experience, ask questions, and more!
- Email the team at sxccg.involvement@nhs.net or call us on 01903 708411
- Write to us at: **FREEPOST RTUZ-ECYG-ERRK**
Attn: Public Involvement Team
NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group
Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Brighton, BN3 4AH
- Invite the Public Involvement Team to your (virtual) group meeting for us to hold a discussion to gather feedback – please do get in touch!

Patient Transport Services – have your say

Healthwatch in Sussex have extended their survey on experiences of using Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services. These ideas will help inform the commissioning of a future service.



Sussex NHS Commissioners, representing Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Sussex, approached Healthwatch to conduct this important piece of work. This service is currently provided by South Central Ambulance Service.

Once they have gathered patients' views, Healthwatch will be sharing the findings and recommended improvements with the commissioners. Patient's views will help shape the future of the service which is due to be re-commissioned in 2021.

[The survey](#) will be open from 1 to 28 September and people are encouraged to take part by offering a prize draw to win one of five £25 gift vouchers. People are also encouraged to share their individual stories with their local Healthwatch:

- Brighton and Hove
– office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk
- East Sussex – enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk
- West Sussex – helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Community Matters – Frequently Asked Questions

The Covid-19 Community Connectors Team have been answering questions from our communities in Sussex about accessing health and care services at this time through the Frequently Asked Questions.



You can read the Frequently Asked Questions via the Clinical Commissioning Groups websites.

- [NHS Brighton and Hove CCG](#)
- [NHS East Sussex CCG](#)
- [NHS West Sussex CCG](#)

Community Hubs

Community Hubs are run through our Local Authorities, District and Borough Councils, and voluntary and community sector partners in East and West Sussex. Community hubs are the contact point that people can turn to if they need extra help in coping with the effects of coronavirus or know someone else who needs help.

The Hubs have been supporting those who are on the “shielded” list by ensuring people have access to food and other support. The Hubs are also a key contact point for other residents who are vulnerable, in order to access wider community support, which may include help with shopping and money advice, but also support with reducing isolation through access to services such as telephone befriending.

Community Hubs also provide a place for people to find out about local volunteering opportunities.

- [Brighton and Hove Community Hubs](#)

Brighton and Hove Community Support Telephone: 01273 293117

- [East Sussex Community Hubs](#)

- [West Sussex Community Hubs](#)

West Sussex Support Team Telephone: 033 022 27980 (Lines are open 8.00am - 8.00pm)

NHS Guidance

Do you have a learning disability? Don't miss out on your free annual health check!

Speak to your GP practice receptionist about being added to the Learning Disability Register.

Your GP practice will send an appointment for your Annual Health Check.



At your health check, a Doctor or a Nurse will talk to you about staying healthy and you will have time to talk about anything that is worrying you.

Ask if you need extra support; like having more time, or easy read information. These are called reasonable adjustments.

You can find out more about having an Annual Health Check – [Easy Read Guide \(click here\)](#)

Look out for the Thumbs Up sign in Sussex GP Practices, which shows they are Learning Disability friendly.

If you or someone you care for has a learning disability, telephone your local doctor's surgery to find out more about Annual Health Checks.

National Updates

The latest position in terms of confirmed cases of Covid-19, broken down into total UK cases and local areas, is updated daily [here](#).

The NHS Covid-19 app has launched across England and Wales to help control the transmission of the virus. You can read more about this [here](#).

The UK Chief Medical Officers have recommended that the UK Covid-19 alert level move from level 3 to level 4. You can read more about this [here](#).

Information on face coverings, when to wear one and how to make your own, can be found [here](#).

Safer travel guidance for people using public transport can be found [here](#).

Travel advice: List of countries and territories from where you can travel to England and may not have to self-isolate can be found [here](#).

Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Team

In April 2020, the Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement team were repurposed as Covid-19 Community Connectors to

support our people and communities across Sussex in accessing health and care services at a time of crisis. The Covid-19 Community Connectors team have now returned to the Public Involvement team, where the team will be working with partners in the Sussex Health and Care Partnership to support the **Big Health and Care Conversation**. The Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Weekly News Briefing and Frequently Asked Questions will also now be sent out bi-weekly. You can contact the Public Involvement Team using the **contact details on page 14**.

Healthwatch

You can also raise issues through Healthwatch, which is an independent body responsible for gathering people's views of health and social care services. Contact details are below:

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove:

Telephone: 01273 234 040

Email: info@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

Website: <https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/contact-us/>

Healthwatch East Sussex

Telephone: 0333 101 4007

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Website: <https://healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk/contact/>

Healthwatch West Sussex

Telephone: 0300 012 0122

Email: helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Website:

<https://www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk/contact-us>

Contact Details

If you have any questions, or if you need this brief in an alternative format, please contact the Public Involvement Team:

Email: sxccg.involvement@nhs.net

Telephone: 01903 708411

Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users can use a Video Relay Service (VRS) called [SignLive](#) (a free app which connects deaf people to a qualified British Sign Language Interpreter before connecting you to one of the Public Involvement Team). This service is currently available every **Thursday from 14:00-16:00**. Please contact the Public Involvement team using the details above if this is not convenient.

Let us know what you need to see in this briefing, give us feedback on services and support related to Covid-19 and let us know about issues you are picking up from your communities.

