

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance COVID-19 Bulletin for Primary Care

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“Dear Colleagues, the latest cancer statistics indicate that during week ending **26 July**, the total number of 2WW referrals across Thames Valley was 1,522. This means we have maintained a **77%** return to baseline (1,987) which is good news! There are still several cancers that continue to be slow to return to baseline levels such as urological (prostate) which is currently at 69% of baseline levels and skin which is currently at 63% of baseline.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment through this difficult time. Working in primary care has been a challenging experience for us all as gatekeepers to wider NHS services. As we continue to innovate, use technology to help and carry out virtual or remote consultations, we must ensure that serious pathology is ruled out – hence, face to face assessments and examinations may be essential using PPE – and that patients are safety-netted appropriately.

Please continue to communicate and reassure patients, encouraging them to come forward, should they be concerned about their health needs. And let’s take care of ourselves We hope that you find this bulletin a useful resource.” **Dr Anant Sachdev – Clinical Lead for Prevention & Early Diagnosis at Thames Valley Cancer Alliance, CRUK Strategic GP for Thames Valley and GP Partner at Ringmead Medical Practice, East Berkshire**

Remember all the latest Cancer related guidance/documented information for Primary Care and referenced in this bulletin is hosted on the [Futures NHS Collaboration Platform](#), under the TVCA portal. The portal can be directly accessed [here](#).



You can also follow the TVCA on Twitter via [@ThamesV_Cancer](#)

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

On **31 July**, Simon Stevens (NHS Chief Executive) and Amanda Pritchard (NHS Chief Operating Officer) wrote out to the system setting out the next (3rd) phase of the response to COVID-19. The [letter](#) provides an update on the latest COVID national alert level, sets out priorities for the rest of 2020/21 and outlines financial arrangements heading into autumn. Fortunately, COVID-19 inpatient numbers have now fallen nationally. The current level of COVID-19 demand on the NHS means that the government has agreed that the NHS emergency preparedness, resilience and response (EPRR) incident level will now move from Level 4 (national) to Level 3 (regional).

As we move into **phase 3** of our response, the Thames Valley Cancer Alliance along with stakeholders, is committed to supporting primary care deliver on national requirements of the PCN DES for Early Cancer Diagnosis with clinical commissioning groups. We absolutely acknowledge that we are working differently and redouble our efforts to focus on the needs of our patients.

Primary Care Updates

- With the holiday season now upon us, please note that as from **31 July**, there is updated [guidance](#) around **self-isolation of health and care workers travelling to the UK from high risk countries**. The guidance brings health and care professionals in line with the general public and further protects the NHS and social care system from the spread of coronavirus from overseas, as signs of second waves begin to show in other countries.



- [New recommendations](#) for **primary and community health care providers** in England were announced on 23 July. Providers of primary and community health services should ensure that measures are in place so that all settings are, where practicable, COVID-secure, using social distancing, optimal hand hygiene, frequent surface decontamination, ventilation and other measures where appropriate. Where a setting cannot be delivered as COVID-19 secure through all other means, a local assessment may conclude that primary and community healthcare staff (both in clinical and non-clinical roles), when not otherwise required to use personal protective equipment, should wear a face mask; worn to prevent the spread of infection from the wearer. Where a COVID-19 secure environment cannot be maintained, patients and members of the public entering primary and community healthcare premises should be advised to use face coverings in line with [government advice](#)
- The **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulation Authority (MHRA)** issued an [alert](#) on **20 July**, to all NHS and social care providers, asking organisations to destroy affected lots of the type IIR face masks from Cardinal Health. This must be completed by **3 August**. If you are in shortage, you are advised to contact your local resilience forum (LRF) in the first instance, who may be able to assist you or advise you to contact the [National Supply Distribution Response](#).
- NHS Digital has [announced](#) that COVID-19 test results are now being automatically sent to **GP systems**, as well as being communicated to patients, giving GPs visibility of which of their patients have had COVID-19 tests and whether they have tested positive or negative for the virus. Patients who use online patient services such as the NHS App and who have requested full access to their GP medical records will now be able to access their results themselves, as well as receiving their results via communication from the NHS Business Service Authority as before.
- [GatewayC](#) now has over 5,000 registered users with 24% of practices across England now having at least one Healthcare Professional registered. As mentioned in previous editions GatewayC is an online cancer education platform developed for GPs, practice nurses, GPs in training, health care assistants, physician associates and other primary care professionals across England. Further information about their latest news can be found in [July's](#) newsletter. Use this [link](#) to register for any of their courses. To register for GatewayC's upcoming webinars or to watch those recently recorded, including **effective telephone consultations** please [click here](#).
- [Open for Business Campaign Resource Centre](#); Please continue to use the digital adverts, posters and social media featuring NHS staff, encouraging people to contact their GP or the 111 service, if they have urgent care needs, or 999 in emergencies and to attend hospital if they are told they should. Details of the campaign strategy can be found [here](#).

Secondary Care Updates

- The latest [NICE COVID-19 rapid guidance](#): details the process around arranging planned care in hospitals and diagnostic services.
- [Updates to shielding guidance](#); as from **1 August**, shielding advice to those who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable is being relaxed and the national shielding programme is being paused. Individuals considered clinically extremely vulnerable will not receive another letter from the government to confirm these changes. The relaxation of shielding measures was communicated to everyone on the Shielded Patient List (SPL) in a letter from the government on 22 June, or more

recently via their shielding letter if identified as clinically extremely vulnerable since then. As per the [letter to the NHS](#) on 8 July, the Shielded Patient List will still be maintained while the shielding programme is paused, as the government may advise people to shield again if there is an increase in transmission of coronavirus in the community. Clinicians should continue to identify people who may be considered clinically extremely vulnerable based on the existing criteria and add them to the SPL and practices should support the process of reviewing and, where appropriate, removing children and young people previously identified as clinically extremely vulnerable from the SPL in line with [new advice from RCPCH](#). The actions required must take place before the start of the new school term in September 2020.

- The [rollout of 'Covid-friendly' cancer treatments](#), that are safer for patients during the pandemic, will be expanded and extended through a £160 million initiative, Simon Stevens (NHS Chief Executive) announced on **3 August**. The funding will pay for drugs that treat patients, without having such a big impact on their immune system or offer other benefits such as fewer hospital visits. Thousands of patients have already benefitted from almost 50 treatments approved for use as 'swaps' for existing drugs and more will be available, thanks to a series of deals struck between the NHS and pharmaceutical companies. Some of these new options mean that patients can take tablets at home or receive medicines with fewer side-effects instead of undergoing hospital-based treatment that can leave them more susceptible to coronavirus and other infections.
- **Nationally the total treatment activity** for week ending **26 July** stood at 2,048 patients, an increase of 13 patients (+0.6%) compared to the week before. Cancer 2WW bookings increased slightly to 73% of pre-Covid volumes. Upper GI referrals increased to 83% of pre-COVID volumes (1,927 bookings) and lower GI referrals decreased by 1ppt to 70% below the baseline (4,856 bookings).
- Treatment activity in the **Independent Sector** increased 380% for Chemotherapy and 1200% for Radiotherapy treatments, however decreased 12% for Surgery. The large increase seen in Chemotherapy is being driven by some IS providers within the SE and is thought to be the result of backdating previously unrecorded activity.
- The **34-62 day waiting list** increased +9.4% compared to last week (equivalent to 2,382 patients). The number of people waiting over 62-days (with or without a decision to treat) continues to decrease. The south East region saw a decrease in their 62-day waits (-6.1%) equating to 176 patients

Charitable Partner Updates

- Latest guidance by [Cancer Research UK](#) and [Macmillan](#) to support people living with cancer, or those who think that they may have cancer, during COVID-19, can be found using the above links.
- **Cancer Research UK** are hosting a live online "**Talk Cancer**" workshop on **20 August** to help people feel more confident talking about cancer and health as part of their role. The workshop offers knowledge, tools and confidence to have supportive conversations about how people can reduce their risk of cancer, the importance of spotting cancer early and making healthy changes in general. The workshop is interactive and free to join from any laptop/computer and runs for 2 hours in total. Use this [link](#) to register.
- **Cancer Research UK** have published their [early diagnosis of cancer support guide](#) to support GP practices and primary care networks to deliver the [Network DES](#) service requirements. GPs play a pivotal role in diagnosing cancer earlier and supporting the NHS Long Term Plan ambition to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage 1 or 2 by 2028. This material should be viewed alongside the [NHSEI guidance](#) for delivery of the Early Cancer Diagnosis service.
- **Macmillan Professionals** are hosting a new series of virtual best practice forums, covering a range of topics in providing information and education opportunities, with a live panel of experts sharing their experience and knowledge and best practice examples. The upcoming events include; **Emotional Health and Wellbeing** on **17 August**, **Communication Skills** on **11 September** and **Personalised Care** on **30 September**. To find out more information, who the panellists are and to register click [here](#).

Useful Links and National Guidance

- On 17th July the government published [guidance](#) for local authorities and local decision-makers on containing and managing COVID-19 outbreaks at a local level. This document sets out how NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) will work with local authorities, Public Health England (PHE) and the public to contain and manage local COVID-19 outbreaks. New regulations give local and national government [additional powers](#) to stop local transmission of the virus. These will allow them to restrict local public gatherings and events, and close local businesses premises and outdoor spaces.
- COVID-19 has affected the whole country; for almost everyone, life has had to fundamentally change. It has also prompted many people to reflect and think more seriously about their health. Public Health England has launched a **major new adult health campaign** to seize the opportunity for a national reset moment.

Nearly two thirds (63%) of adults in the UK are overweight or living with obesity. This extra weight causes pressure to build up around vital organs, making it harder for the body to **fight against diseases like cancer**, heart disease and now COVID-19. By reducing weight within a healthy range, can help cut risk of being critically ill with COVID-19. The [Better Health campaign](#) will kick off by supporting individuals on their weight loss journey, the first week highlighting the links between weight and COVID-19. Resources in the [Campaign Resource Centre](#) includes a partner toolkit to help support everything you need to start conversations with patients.



- Evidence shows that a significant proportion of post COVID-19 patients are likely to have significant ongoing health problems, notably breathing difficulties, tiredness and cough, reduced muscle function, reduced ability to undertake physical activity and psychological symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and reduced mood. [Your COVID Recovery](#) is a new NHS website designed to help people recover from the long-term effects of COVID-19 and support them to manage their recovery. It includes information from rehabilitation experts about how to manage ongoing symptoms and health needs at home, and signposts to sources of support.

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NHS People Plan

The next part of the NHS People Plan has now been published. [We are the NHS: People Plan for 2020/21 action for us all](#) sets out what NHS people can expect from leaders and each other. This plan is practical and ambitious, setting out the focused action that NHS people have raised that they need right now and for the rest of the financial year. It includes; building a compassionate and inclusive culture, growing the workforce and training staff our people, finding ways to work together differently, to deliver patient care. Published alongside the People Plan for 2020/21, [Our NHS People Promise](#) challenges us all to make the NHS a better place to work. Its themes and words come from colleagues who work in the NHS, who have told us what would improve their working experience.

Contact Us

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