**Position statement – Covid 19, making the best use of the independent sector and patient choice**

Covid 19 has significantly altered the pressures on the NHS, and some of the choices that were available to patients before the pandemic are not now available.

BSW CCG is working with the acute hospital trusts and independent hospitals to address the numbers of people waiting for care. In order to have the biggest impact and to ensure equity in waiting times, some treatments are only being offered in particular settings, either in the independent hospitals or in the NHS hospitals. This position statement sets out different circumstances and how they will be handled. This position statement applies to all planned hospital care, but not to urgent and emergency care or two week wait cancer pathways. We anticipate that this will be the position across BSW for at least the duration of the direct contract between NHS England and the independent hospitals, which is expected to be in place until at least 31st March 2021.

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| 1. The patients wants to be referred to be seen at one of the independent hospitals |
| The independent hospitals in BSW are not currently being offered as a choice for patients.  As part of the response to Covid 19, the five independent hospitals in BSW have been supporting the NHS under a direct contract with NHS England. We continue to use these hospitals as part of the system so that we can prioritise the most clinically urgent cases. To achieve this, we are not offering those hospitals as a choice on e-RS. Patients can be referred to one of the acute trusts, where patients waiting for treatment will be viewed collectively to make sure that there is equity across the system, avoiding some people waiting much longer than others for the same procedure because of the list they are on. We will continue to keep this under review, but we plan to continue to view the capacity in BSW collectively to have the biggest impact on restoration.  These hospitals are BMI Bath Clinic, BMI Ridgeway, Circle Bath, Devizes Treatment Centre and Ramsay New Hall. |
| 1. The patient (and their household) has been asked to self-isolate before their procedure but is not able to do so |
| Patients will not be discharged because they are unable to self-isolate, they will remain on the waiting list.  In order to ensure safe hospitals and prevent the spread of Covid 19, patients are being asked to self-isolate before any surgical procedure and some diagnostic procedures. Whilst patients should be encouraged to take up their appointments, it is recognised that people’s ability to self-isolate varies widely depending on circumstances. Whilst retaining patients on waiting lists will have an impact on the number of patients at risk of breaching the waiting list targets, to discharge patients on the basis of their ability to self-isolate risks exacerbating health inequalities and is not equitable provision of care. |
| 1. The patient is not contactable to invite them for an appointment |
| Patients will be discharged back to their GP if they are not contactable.  As before Covid 19, if patients are not contactable following reasonable attempts to make contact, they will be discharged back to their GP. If necessary, the GP will need to make another appointment with revised contact details. |
| 1. The patient does not want to be seen at the provider being offered |
| Patients will be discharged back to their GP if they decline to be treated by the available provider.  In order to have the biggest impact, treatment is being offered at the most suitable site and may not be being offered at the provider the patient previously chose. For example, routine elective work that can be carried out in the independent hospitals is not currently being done in the acute sector. To allow patients to remain on the waiting list risks inefficient use of the independent sector. |
| 1. The patient does not wish to have elective surgery at all during Covid 19 |
| Patients will be offered surgery on two occasions before being discharged to their GP.  The NHS will be dealing with Covid 19 for the foreseeable future, but transmission rates are currently low in the South West. Some patients may prefer not to have surgery, in which case they will be retained on the waiting list and offered surgery on two separate occasions. If they still prefer not to have surgery they will be discharged to their GP. |
| 1. The patient asks their GP to write to the hospital to expedite their appointment |
| GPs will only write to hospitals requesting expedition of an appointment if a patient’s symptoms have deteriorated.  Whilst there are longer waits than normal for appointments, patients continue to be seen as quickly as possible according to clinical presentation. BSW GPs are asked not to write letters to expedite appointments, unless there is deterioration in symptoms, or new symptoms or information emerges and patients are asked not to request these. |

These positions will be kept under review and may need to be revised as the Covid 19 situation develops.