

To:

- BSW ICB General Practices
- Medvivo / 111 Providers
- Trust Medical Directors (for dissemination via Divisional Directors)

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the work you and your colleagues have continued to undertake to support access to COVID treatments for highest risk individuals. We are writing to provide some important updates in this area.

Key information you must know:

- Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are implementing new routine local pathways for COVID treatments following the publication of final [NICE guidance](#). The way patients access COVID treatments will therefore change after 26 June 2023.
- With the closure of the national digital infrastructure, **patients will no longer be contacted directly** if they test positive but instead should contact local services, as per local pathways.
- To ensure patients access treatment promptly, BSW ICB has already implemented a local clinical pathway for oral antivirals and IV treatments. Pathways may differ within local systems.

Further information on the transition from pandemic-specific arrangements to ICB-led commissioning

COVID Medicine Delivery Units (CMDUs) were set up in December 2021 under pandemic-specific arrangements to provide access to COVID treatments under interim UK-wide clinical commissioning policies.

Under these interim arrangements, national digital infrastructure has been in place that allows CMDUs to proactively contact potentially eligible patients once they report a positive test and then arrange an assessment for treatment.

Following the publication of the [NICE guidance](#) on COVID treatments on 29 March, ICBs are implementing the guidance in full to ensure access to treatments through routine local pathways. As a result, the way in which a patient enters the pathway for obtaining COVID treatments may change.

This includes the closure of the national digital infrastructure on 26 June that currently enables patients to be sent letters confirming their potential eligibility and supports CMDUs to proactively contact patients when they report a positive test.

Potentially eligible patients who are digitally identifiable will receive a letter in June from NHS England that updates them about this change. This letter will inform them that they will no longer be proactively contacted and will instead need to contact their

local NHS services if they test positive, which could include **their GP practice, NHS 111 or hospital specialist.**

GP practices should therefore be prepared to receive enquiries from patients about COVID treatments and understand where they need to direct a referral for an assessment for treatment if they feel unable to assess and prescribe directly.

The role of GP practices in new local pathways

To ensure patients can access treatment promptly, it is important that all staff are aware of the referral process which has not changed.

In BSW, CMDU services for triage and assessment have been provided in Primary Care via BEMS+ since 1st May, taking over from Medvivo and Acute specialist colleagues.

We are not expecting BSW GP / Primary Care services to prescribe directly, please continue to refer patients [eligible](#) for covid treatment ONLY to the CMDU unit as previously.

Please email bswicb.cmdu@nhs.net providing the following details:

- date of onset of symptoms
- the date of a positive Covid test (if there is one)
- any additional clinical information that is relevant to the referral

Oral antivirals are now available through community pharmacy, so patient representatives will be able to collect their medication from their usual pharmacy in most cases.

Healthcare teams across NHS settings will also need to tell patients (upon new diagnosis of a qualifying condition and treatment) that they may be eligible for COVID treatments and what to do if they get COVID.

Please ensure this letter is shared among your staff including all those triaging patients, and administrative and reception staff who these patients may engage with when making contact.

Access to lateral flow tests

Eligible patients will continue to have free access to lateral flow tests via [GOV.UK](#) or 119. They can also now use tests purchased from a pharmacy or shop. They will not be able to report the result of privately-bought tests but this will not affect access to an assessment for treatment.

From 1 October 2023, the way patients access tests may change. Patients will be able to check www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments for more information closer to the time.

Further information

The national webpages at <https://www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments> will be kept up-to-date with new information after 26 June. ICBs may also be making information available for patients on their own websites.

For more detailed information about eligibility, please refer to the [NICE MTA](#).

An e-learning module on community-based COVID treatments is available on <https://learninghub.nhs.uk/catalogue/Covidantiviraltreatment>. This will provide an education and training resource to support safe and effective prescribing decisions.

Thank you for your ongoing work in supporting these patients to help ensure they can benefit from COVID-19 treatments.

If you require any further information on these arrangements, please contact alex.goddard@nhs.net.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Barry Coakley

Deputy Chief Medical Officer to

Dr Amanda Webb

Chief Medical Officer and SRO CMDU

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