

COVID-19 Update

Sheffield
LMC



21 May 2020

*****To All Represented Sheffield GPs & Practice Managers*****

Dear Colleagues

Over the last couple of weeks, we have noted a new rhetoric from commissioners about “The new norm” of clinical activity in primary care and an encouragement to restart routine work. It is also noted that this needs to be done safely. Whilst the change in focus is a welcome recognition that coronavirus activity levels are falling, this does not mean a return to normality and practices need to consider how they can deliver services to patients safely, knowing that asymptomatic coronavirus carriers exist. Practices also need to consider their staff safety and ensure higher risk individuals have greater protection.

We are not, however, entering normal times. Virus mutation and mass movements of people (World War 1) resulted in a far more deadly second wave of “Spanish flu” in 1918, and without an effective vaccine it will be many months before normal, safe general practice can resume.

It remains important that practices and Networks, along with community providers, discuss and develop plans for how this pre-vaccination phase might be delivered to support our patients. Innovative methods may be needed to allow patients to re-access our waiting rooms or book face to face appointments without initial triage. Remember that contractually it is for the practice to decide how best to deliver General Medical Services (GMS) to their patients.

Care Homes

A lot of work in a short space of time has meant that Sheffield remains in a good position to deliver health care into the current Care Homes, and those not covered by the current Locally Commissioned Service (LCS), ready for the Enhanced Health in Care Homes Directed Enhanced Service (DES) from October 2020. We have received reassurances from Sheffield CCG that they are engaging with other primary care organisations delivering care to Care Homes to develop appropriate services. We recognise there is still much work to be done and ask practices covering Care Homes to note:

- Other organisations, such as community services, mental health and pharmacy services, have an obligation in their contracts to also deliver care to Care Homes. We would recommend that all practices / Networks looking after Care Homes under the new contract consider carefully what “wrap-around” services would best fit their patients’ needs. By informing Sheffield CCG Primary Care Team of the requirements from other organisations, this can inform the commissioning decisions around these services (sheffieldccg.primarycare@nhs.net).
- It is to be noted that the service specification requires a “Lead Clinician” that is not necessarily a GP. Again practices / Networks and associated services should think carefully about who the most appropriate member of staff would be to fulfil this role.
- There are some concerns about the responsibility of a “Lead Clinician” but it should be an organisational and coordinating role. It remains that the named / registered GP will be responsible for delivery of GMS care.

Bank Holidays

Practices submitted their claims for covering the Easter weekend Bank Holidays and have recently received their remittance for these openings. We are disappointed that Sheffield CCG has chosen not to pay the BMA recommended rate of overheads for these extraordinary days. We are still of the opinion that significant overhead costs were incurred by practices to deliver these services under emergency legislation, and practices would otherwise be out of pocket for opening. We will continue to ask Sheffield CCG to reconsider their response.

On a separate note we are very grateful to those who gave their time to manage the Sheffield GP Collaborative and Extended Access Hubs over the VE day celebrations, allowing practices to close for the day for a well-earned rest. We thank those again who are allowing similar arrangements over the next Bank Holiday weekend.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Phone Calls

The CQC continues to have a regulatory role over general practice, although this has been suspended during the pandemic. We note that they are commencing phone calls to all practices, separate to the Annual Regulatory Review (ARR) and the Provider Information Collection (PIC), under their [Emergency Support Framework](#). We understand that this is a period of much change and reflection in general practice as to what is new and we would like to keep and develop, what is essential and what we would consider stopping. We hope that these phone calls are, as suggested, supportive and information gathering, but would like to hear from practices if they have had different experiences.

Primary Care Network (PCN) DES

Sign-up for the 2020/21 scheme needs to be completed by 31 May 2020. Any practices not wishing to participate need to inform the commissioners by the same date. Over the last few weeks and months we have provided updates on the changing face of the DES, particularly around the pandemic. This has included the continued funding streams with minimal or no data submission currently. Derbyshire LMC has kindly agreed to share their recent summary of the current PCN specifications, which we have amended and made available [here](#), so that practices can review the ask before submission.

DR ALASTAIR BRADLEY

Chair