

Response

In response to the deputation from North Central London NHS Watch and members questions, Rob Hurd (System Lead, North Central London Integrated Care Systems) made a verbal statement at the meeting. The below response provides more detail and clarifies a few points that we weren't able to cover at the meeting:

- We acknowledge that the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 has put additional pressures on health and care services.
- Frontline staff have been working extremely hard during this period to ensure that we can continue to provide safe, high-quality health and care services under challenging circumstances.

Temporary service changes made in response to Covid

- All changes that have been made to services in response to Covid are temporary. These changes were clinically-led and made as the NHS responded using emergency powers put in place to address the challenges of a national major incident. Many of these service changes have since reverted to pre-Covid arrangements.
- Should any permanent changes to services be proposed we have a legal obligation to consult with staff, stakeholders and the public and we remain committed to fulfilling these obligations.
- North London Partners have previously presented and discussing in detail a list of the temporary changes at a JHOSC meeting at the end of July. The paper is available on our website: <https://www.northlondonpartners.org.uk/ourplan/Areas-of-work/information-to-the-public-about-changes-to.htm>
- Since the JHOSC meeting in July, additional temporary service changes have been made to children and young people's emergency and inpatient services to ensure the NHS can continue to deliver the best emergency and planned care across north central London during the winter and ongoing pandemic.

Barnet Hospital children's emergency department has already reopened following a temporary closure.

The changes follow a review of children and young people's health services across north central London, and include the following temporary changes:

- **University College London Hospitals' (UCLH)** children and young people's emergency department (at University College Hospital) will remain temporarily closed over winter. UCLH specialist inpatient and day-case services, including cancer haemato-oncology and complex adolescents, will remain open.
- **The Royal Free Hospital's** children and young people's emergency department will temporarily close as will its children and young people's inpatient beds.
- **Barnet Hospital** children and young people's emergency department and inpatient unit has reopened and will include child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) crisis support

- **Whittington Health's** children and young people's emergency department and inpatient unit remains open and has expanded to meet forecast demand.
- **North Middlesex University Hospital** children and young people's emergency department remains open with additional capacity. Inpatient services continue.
- To ensure maintenance of access to elective services, **Great Ormond Street Hospital** will provide more room for urgent elective inpatient and some – but not all –
- We have been working hard to communicate with stakeholders about the temporary changes and we will continue to do so, we are also working with our partners, including JHOSC, councils, NHS trusts and local communities to keep them informed of the changes.

Ongoing response and recovery for services in NCL

- It is impossible to predict what the impact of the pandemic on health and care services will be, so in NCL are modelling and planning for a range of scenarios. This is aligned to planning for the already challenging period of winter pressures, and includes modelling for potential increases in demand due to Covid-19 surges. Plans have recommended some temporary changes and escalation points which aim to ensure that our services can remain resilient and can support emergency and planned care over the winter period.
- Infection Prevention and control mechanisms have been put in place to ensure safe care of patients and protect health and care staff.
- While we don't expect a Covid-19 vaccine to be widely available until 2021, the Government has asked the NHS to be ready to deliver a vaccination programme for England from December, so that those who need it most will be able to access vaccinations as soon as they are available.
- Detailed planning has been underway, building on the expertise and strong track record the NHS already has in delivering immunisations like the annual flu vaccination programme, to ensure that a Covid-19 vaccination programme does not impact on other vital services.

Access to primary care

- Primary care is 'still open for business', but continuing to make full use of remote triage, telephone, video consultations in the first instance and use of face to face consultations only where clinically appropriate and safe to do so.
- All our practices are seeing patients face-to-face where people need it (like childhood immunisations, smear tests or monitoring long term conditions). How practices organise this does vary depending on the size and layout of the practice and their workforce. Practices have had training in IPC to enable this to happen safely.

Planned elective care,

- There have been extreme pressures on the waiting lists for planned care following national guidance in March to suspend planned care due to the increase in demand due to Covid. Elective services were restarted in June in NCL, and we are planning to keep those services

running throughout the winter, if at all possible, so that we are able to provide care for both Covid and non-Covid patients.

Digital appointments/consultations

- GP services are open for the delivery of face to face care for those patients with a clinical need. We have also developed alternative digital tools for GPs so that they are able to provide ongoing care for patients and maintain infection prevention and control. GPs can offer telephone and video consultations in addition to face to face appointments.
- A formal commitment was made to commission an Equality Impact Assessment around access via digital mechanism into GPs and other health care settings. NHS partners would be looking to learn and reach out how to mitigate the risk. This Equalities Impact Assessment is being commissioned in November and NLP will update the Committee on progress.

Urgent and Emergency Care

- For residents who have urgent and emergency care needs, we are able to offer additional support through NHS 111. Our NHS 111 provider can already book appointments with GP surgeries and urgent care treatment centres. We are gradually introducing the ability to book A&E appointments at NCL hospitals through NHS 111 to patients who have an urgent clinical need. North Mids was the first hospital to offer this with Barnet Hospital also now using this approach.
- This is an additional ability of NHS 111, so that we can minimise the number of people waiting in A&E waiting rooms, it will reduce the risk of infection from Covid if residents are advised when and where to attend for a booked appointment.
- If patients continued to make their way to urgent or emergency care units they will still be treated or directed to an appropriate service, depending on their clinical need. NCL's NHS 111 service has employed more health professionals to meet the expected increased demand.

Testing

- Test and Trace had been set up nationally. A lot of work had been done locally to enhance local arrangements led by borough Directors of Public Health (DPH) and Council Health Protection Teams and linking in with the national testing systems.
- There had been work on-going to support testing since April. This included LA's providing support for testing in care homes and other care settings considered to be at risk and not eligible to access the national testing portal.
- Pillar 1 capacity tests had been set up for patients and health and care workers with over 6,000 swab tests being done in care homes. This was supplementary to the national testing regime.
- There are now mobile testing units (MTUs) taking place across NCL including in Islington. The location of these is directed by borough directors of public health based on need.