

Sussex NHS Commissioners

Public Involvement Fortnightly News Briefing on COVID-19

06 November 2020

This briefing will be produced fortnightly, and is aimed at **patient leads, public members, voluntary and community sector (VCS) leads and community group leads in Sussex.**

The NHS is committed to keeping people informed, ensuring that communities have the information they need, in the right format, and at the right time. We know that our patient leaders, VCS and community organisations are all working exceptionally hard to support local people, and that they are key to working together to make sure that our communities have the support and information they need.

People are being urged to Keep Sussex Safe in new national restrictions

On Thursday 05 November 2020 Sussex joined the rest of England under new national restrictions.

Health and care organisations across Sussex are all working together to protect and support our local communities.



Everyone can do their part to restrict the spread of the virus. Stay at home if you can, keep a distance and protect each other when you have to go out. People are being urged to Keep Sussex Safe.

How will services change?

Some local council services will change during the restrictions to follow national guidance.

Find out more about any changes to services in:

[Brighton and Hove](#)

[East Sussex](#)

[West Sussex](#)

NHS services remain open and are here for you.

If you have an appointment, please continue to attend as normal. You don't need to call to check that a booked appointment is going ahead. You will be contacted directly if anything changes with your appointment.

All services remain available – GP practices are open, you can call 111 and you should attend any appointment that is booked unless you hear directly from the service.

[Find out more about NHS services at this time.](#)

Where can you get support?

If you are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus (often people who were previously advised to shield for medical reasons) you will soon receive a letter from the Government providing guidance. You can also find this guidance about how to stay safe online - [Guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable](#)

If you are not in this group, but may need help because of ill-health, isolation or access to essentials, there is a range of support available.

Find out about services that can help with specific issues, like mental health support, and what to do if you can't get food, medicines, or are lonely and isolated, on your council's website:

[Brighton and Hove](#)

[East Sussex](#)

[West Sussex](#)

Keeping it simple to stay safe in Sussex

Protect yourself and others

- Take common-sense steps to reduce the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus. You can spread the virus even if you do not have symptoms.
- **Think Hands, Face, Space** – washing your hands regularly, using a face mask in areas where social distancing is difficult, and keeping 2 metres' space between you and others will all help to reduce the spread of the virus.
- If you are experiencing coronavirus symptoms, please use [the government portal](#) to book a test. It is important that you and anyone you live with continue to self-isolate until you get a test result.

Get medical help if you need it

- The NHS is open and here for you.
- Please continue to attend appointments as advised. You don't need to call to check that a booked appointment is going ahead. You will be contacted directly if anything changes with your care.
- If you need medical help from your GP, contact them online or by phone to be assessed

- For urgent medical help, contact NHS 111 online 111.nhs.uk or by phone
- If it's a serious or life-threatening emergency, call 999

Look after yourself

Keeping healthy means you're less likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus.

- Enjoy a balanced diet, exercise regularly and take action to lose weight if you need to
- Get help to go smokefree
- Drink sensibly – no more than 14 units a week over at least three days.
- Get a flu jab if you're eligible

You are more likely to achieve your goals with support. Get personalised support in your area: Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, West Sussex. There is also lots of information and practical advice about keeping healthy on the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/

Look after your mental health

The pandemic is affecting us all in different ways. It is important to look after your mental health and get help if you need it.

- Take time to relax and do things you enjoy
- Stay connected with friends and family
- Try to get enough sleep
- Get help if things are worrying you

Get practical tips and help from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-and-your-mental-health

Please continue to attend flu clinics

During the national restrictions, NHS services are continuing and one important part of this at this time of the year is the free flu clinics.

If you have been invited to your GP practice to have your flu jab, please attend, it really is important this year to make sure you are protected.

This week we are focusing our promotion on carers.

Carers are offered the free flu jab to protect them from catching the virus and stop its spread to those they care for, who could become seriously ill and even die from catching the flu.

The NHS is offering those who are the main carer for another person, or who receive the Carers' Allowance, the free flu jab to protect them from becoming too ill to provide care or passing on the virus.

Flu can easily spread to those who are vulnerable, even without symptoms showing. The free flu vaccine is the very best way to stop carers from passing on the virus to those receiving care - who are at most risk from becoming seriously ill if they catch the flu.

Those who receive a Carer's Allowance are eligible for a free flu jab, along with primary carers for those unable to look after themselves, and carers may still be eligible even if not living with the person they care for.



Unlike other medication, the flu jab is an annual vaccination as the vaccine changes every year to fight the latest strains of flu. Even those who had a jab last winter need another one this year to stay flu safe.

Mandy Catchpole Clinical Programme Lead for Mass Vaccination, Testing and Infection Prevention for Sussex NHS commissioners said: “Caring is an incredibly vital role and all carers provide an invaluable service. If you care for someone who may be elderly, disabled or have a serious long-term condition the free flu jab is vital to help look after your own health, as well as theirs.

“That’s why the NHS flu jab is free for anyone who is the main carer for another person or who is in receipt of Carers’ Allowance. Ask your GP or pharmacist if you’re eligible and book a vaccine now.”

GP practices and pharmacies are receiving batches of the vaccine during the flu season, and flu vaccination clinics are scheduled to coincide with these deliveries. This does mean some may have to wait longer than they would wish to attend flu clinics ([leaflet on why people may have to wait longer](#)). The local NHS is reassuring those eligible there is plenty of time for everyone to book and get their flu jab.

For a full list of priority groups and other information about this year’s flu vaccine, visit www.nhs.uk and search for flu vaccine.

[Easy Read materials for people with a Learning Disability](#)

[Translated Resources](#)

Big Health and Care (Socially Distancing) Conversation

As part of the [Big Health and Care \(Socially Distancing\) conversation](#), we are asking the public and local community groups to help play a key role in helping us understand people's experiences of care during the COVID-19 pandemic.



We want to make sure that we understand what it has been like for people if they have needed to use health and care services during COVID across Sussex – what has worked well, and what could have been better? If you didn't access services when you thought you needed to, why not? What changes should we maintain, and what needs to go back to normal as much as possible?

This is **your chance to tell us your experiences**, ask questions and share your ideas as we move towards restoring services. This fortnight's theme is "face-to-face appointments". If you have had an appointment at your GP Practice, hospital or another healthcare service during the pandemic, did you feel safe attending? If so, what helped you feel safe? If not, why not, and what could make it feel safer?

To feed in your views and experiences, you can:

- Visit [the website](#) and share your experience, ask questions, and more!
- Email the team at sxccg.involvement@nhs.net or call us on 01903 708411
- Write to us at: **FREEPOST RTUZ-ECYG-ERRK**

Attn: Public Involvement Team
NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning
Group
Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Brighton, BN3
4AH

- Invite the Public Involvement Team to your (virtual) group meeting for us to hold a discussion to gather feedback – please do get in touch!

Big Debate

The NHS and local authorities in Sussex would like to know about your experiences of health and care during the COVID-19 pandemic so that they can improve the way services are provided in the future.

Delayed care: Have you been affected by delays to your care, either because your appointment or treatment was delayed or postponed or because you decided to wait until the pandemic had eased before having your treatment or appointment? **Click [here](#) to tell us about your experiences and any decisions or changes you have made as a result.**

Wellbeing: Since the lockdown period due to COVID-19 began, people have made many changes to their lives and what they saw as “normal”. We would like to know more about the changes you made due to COVID-19, whether you think they are good for your wellbeing, or not.

- What have you STOPPED doing since the start of lockdown?
- What have you STARTED doing since the start of lockdown?

What do you feel about these changes? Will there be things you will carry on? How has the easing of lockdown rules affected you?

Click [here](#) to share your experiences.

What do we do with your feedback?

Your feedback is helping us make sure our communications are shaped in different ways for different communities, and that we answer questions and provide information through our [Frequently Asked Questions](#). We also make sure feedback is shared with our colleagues in the NHS and councils, so it helps us shape, change and improve health and care services.

Families and Friends of Care Home Residents Webinar – staying connected during the coronavirus crisis

Are you a family carer trying to stay connected to your relative or friend living in a care home?

We know lots of care homes have gone that extra mile to keep families connected over the last few months...What have been your experiences? What can we learn from the past six months?

Healthwatch (East Sussex) are holding a webinar on staying connected during the coronavirus crisis at 17:00 – 19:00 on Tuesday 10th November. You can [register here](#).

You will hear from other families about their experiences, and from care home managers. There will be lots of opportunities to ask questions relevant to your experiences as well as have your voice heard.

Also joining the event will be NHS staff, representatives from local Adult Social Care and Public Health Teams and support available from Carers groups and charities.

If you would like to join this event but do not feel confident in using the Zoom platform, please contact us as soon as possible, and we may be able to arrange some support around this:

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Call: 0333 101 4007

British Sign Language interpreters will be available for this event.

Community Matters – Frequently Asked Questions

The Public Involvement Team have been answering questions from our communities in Sussex about accessing health and care services at this time through the Frequently Asked Questions.



You can read the Frequently Asked Questions via the Clinical Commissioning Groups websites.

- [NHS Brighton and Hove CCG](#)
- [NHS East Sussex CCG](#)
- [NHS West Sussex CCG](#)

Community Hubs

Community Hubs are run through our Local Authorities, District and Borough Councils, and voluntary and community sector partners in East and West Sussex. Community hubs are the contact point that people can turn to if they need extra help in coping with the effects of coronavirus or know someone else who needs help.

The Hubs have been supporting those who are on the [“shielded”](#) list by ensuring people have access to food and other support. The Hubs are also a key contact point for other residents who are vulnerable, in order to access wider community support, which may include help with shopping and money advice, but also support with reducing isolation through access to services such as telephone befriending.

Community Hubs also provide a place for people to find out about local volunteering opportunities.

- [Brighton and Hove Community Hubs](#)

Brighton and Hove Community Support Telephone: 01273 293117

- [East Sussex Community Hubs](#)

- [West Sussex Community Hubs](#)

West Sussex Support Team Telephone: 033 022 27980 (Lines are open 8.00am - 8.00pm)

Have your say on the Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Fortnightly News Briefing



Since 27th March 2020, the Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Fortnightly News Briefing has been regularly circulated to patient leads, public members, voluntary and community sector (VCS) leads and community group leads in Sussex, to support the dissemination of information on COVID-19 to our wider communities.

We are keen to seek your views on the value of the Fortnightly News Briefing, and would appreciate if you could please complete a [short survey](#) by **Friday 13th November 2020**.

NHS Guidance

Help Us, Help You

Across Sussex, the NHS is working hard to respond to COVID-19 but the NHS is still here for you and it is still our responsibility to make sure you get the right care, in the right place, now more than ever.

While everyone is being told to stay at home, it can be hard to know what to do if you're unwell.

Help and support from a GP Practice

GP practices remain open and are working to keep you safe whilst still providing the care you need.



Please don't just turn up to your GP practice;

- visit the GP surgery's website, or use an [online service](#) to contact your GP – [find your GP surgery](#) to get its website details
- call your GP surgery first

Your GP surgery will then give you advice about what to do.

A phone or video call with a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional may be booked for you.

You'll only be asked to visit the surgery if absolutely necessary.

Your GP surgery may be very busy at the moment and you may have to wait longer than usual to speak to someone if it's not urgent.

Urgent medical help

If you need urgent medical help, call NHS 111 or use the [NHS 111 online service](#).

The 111 online service asks questions about your symptoms to help you get the help you need.

Call 111 if you need urgent help for a child under 5 or cannot get help online.

Dental treatment

Dental practices are open, but they are prioritising vulnerable patients with the most urgent need. Contact your dental practice by phone or email

If you think you need urgent dental treatment:

- call your dentist
- email your dentist
- call NHS 111 or use the [NHS 111 online service](#) if you cannot contact your dentist or you do not have one

Do not contact a GP. They cannot provide dental treatment.



Emergency medical help

For life-threatening emergencies, such as a stroke or a heart attack, call 999 for an ambulance.

Try to avoid going straight to A&E instead of calling an ambulance.

Access to NHS Services during COVID-19 Guide

Sussex NHS Commissioners has produced a [guide to support you to access NHS services that are still here for you during COVID-19](#), which includes helpful information explaining how you may need to access services in a different way to stay safe.

This guide is also available in different languages and British Sign Language (BSL) on request by contacting the Public Involvement team on 01903 708 411.

You can find more information on getting the care and treatment you need [here](#).

National Updates

The latest position in terms of confirmed cases of COVID-19, broken down into total UK cases and local areas, is [updated daily](#).

The government has provided information on the [new national restrictions](#) that came into force from 5th November 2020, including what they mean for working from home and business closures, why they are being introduced and the financial support available.

Updated guidance has been produced for [clinically extremely vulnerable people](#).

The Department of Education has released [new restrictions for education and childcare settings](#), including secondary school

students and teachers wearing face masks when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms such as corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

New guidance to support [safe care home visits during lockdown](#) has been published.

The government has increased support for the self-employed across the UK. [Click here](#) to access the information.

[Updated information](#) has been published for if you're in the UK and your visa or leave expires between 1 November and 30 November 2020.

The NHS COVID-19 app is available to download for free in England and Wales. Download it [here](#).

Information on face coverings, when to wear one and how to make your own, can be found [here](#).

Safer travel guidance for people using public transport can be found [here](#).

Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Team

In April 2020, the Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement team were repurposed as COVID-19 Community Connectors to support our people and communities across Sussex in accessing health and care services at a time of crisis. The COVID-19 Community Connectors team have now returned to the Public Involvement team, where the team will be working with partners in the Sussex Health and Care Partnership to support the [Big Health and Care Conversation](#). The Sussex NHS Commissioners Public

Involvement Fortnightly News Briefing and Frequently Asked Questions will also now be sent out bi-weekly. You can contact the Public Involvement Team using the **contact details on pages 16 – 17**.

Healthwatch

You can also raise issues through Healthwatch, which is an independent body responsible for gathering people's views of health and social care services. Contact details are below:

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove:

Telephone: 01273 234 040

Email: info@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

Website: <https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/contact-us/>

Healthwatch East Sussex

Telephone: 0333 101 4007

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Website: <https://healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk/contact/>

Healthwatch West Sussex

Telephone: 0300 012 0122

Email: helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Website: <https://www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk/contact-us>

Contact Details

If you have any questions, or if you need this brief in an alternative format, please contact the Public Involvement Team:

Email: sxccg.involvement@nhs.net

Telephone: 01903 708411

Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users can use a Video Relay Service (VRS) called [SignLive](#) (a free app which connects deaf people to a qualified British Sign Language Interpreter before connecting you to one of the Public Involvement Team). This service is currently available every **Thursday from 14:00-16:00**. Please contact the Public Involvement team using the details above if this is not convenient.

Let us know what you need to see in this briefing, give us feedback on services and support related to COVID-19 and let us know about issues you are picking up from your communities.