

Spring 2020

HELLO



Dr Sarah Humphery

I wanted to get in touch with you all at this exceptionally challenging time to update you on Whittington Health services since we have had to adapt some of our day-to-day procedures following the outbreak of COVID-19.

I understand that whilst you are working in your surgery, you and your team need to feel informed about the continually changing situation and so this update will aim to answer some of your questions. I would like to reassure you that the situation is being monitored daily and any communication that is being sent to you is in accordance with national guidance.

We appreciate the support and understanding from primary care as I am aware of the pressures you all are facing but together we will get through this and we hope be a stronger integrated community of staff and patients.

Whittington Health, like many other trusts, has had to prioritise the need to safely test, isolate and treat suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. Below you will find updates for some key areas that may be useful to know about now.

Temporary changes to services due to COVID-19

Surgical Electives – As I'm sure you will be aware, at this time we need to prioritise the most sick and vulnerable as well as cancer patients. In order to free up space, we stopped elective activity and will only be doing urgent or cancer (day case or inpatient) elective surgery from 16 March onwards. This frees up space in recovery for more ITU capacity and allows us to train more people in ITU skills and management of acutely sick respiratory patients. We are maintaining emergency and trauma theatres.

Outpatients – Outpatients are continuing and have changed to telephone clinics, with clinical triage if a patient requires a face-to-face appointment.

Referrals

We are working on increasing advice and guidance and I would suggest using this in the first instance if considering a non-urgent or non 2ww referral. Moving forward the capacity for this will depend on clinicians' availability given current COVID-19 situation.

Maternity and Paediatric Services

Due to the impact of the pandemic on maternity staffing, the trust is temporarily suspending home birth services. This suspension is likely to remain in place up to end of August 2020, at which point it will be re-assessed to determine if it may need to be extended.

If pregnant women contact you with concerns about visiting us for antenatal or other care, please reassure them that we have put measures in place to ensure their safe care. However, to help us help them we are asking that all maternity patients come into the building via the Labour Ward entrance, which is accessed via the Emergency Department Entrance to our site located on Highgate Hill.

The Whittington Health paediatric inpatient ward – IFOR has moved patients to Great Ormond Street Hospital. GOSH is a world leading paediatric facility and patients will continue to receive excellent care there, patients and their families will get the support they need to ensure no disruption to their care.

Please also tell your maternity patients that they should attend all appointments alone unless it is absolutely necessary to have a visitor with them. This supports government advice to reduce the transmission of the virus and aims to keep you, your family and staff well.

For any COVID-19 related queries please call our Specialist Maternity Helpline on 07831 122271 between 08:30- 18:00 Monday to Friday.

Our Paediatric Emergency Department remains open with children in urgent need of care continuing to receive the same high standard of safe and compassionate care that we always provide.

NCL Approach to e-RS through COVID 19

Cancer two-week referrals are to continue through RAS (Referral Assessment Services) using e-RS:

- Urgent services that are currently either directly bookable or set up as a RAS will be maintained.
- For routine referrals the polling range will either be set to 0 or set so that the booking window exceeds the polling range so that all routine referrals are transferred to the Appointment Slot Issue (ASI) list.
- Routine referrals will revert to the RAS approach as capacity becomes available (in a co-ordinated approach across NCL).
- Clinical triage of ASI list to be maintained to ensure all urgent referrals is captured.

Principles used to arrive at the e-RS approach

- Maintaining visibility of all patients requiring future treatment (urgent and routine).
- Maintaining the order of treating people in line with clinical need.
- Equity of pressure across the system.
- GPs to refer in as necessary for visibility of backlog of work and to prevent a stockpile of referrals being released into the system at a future point.
- The above in the context of trusts about to cancel 2-3 months of routine work by 15 April at the latest.

Community Services

Community rehab REACH, podiatry (for high risk patients) and district nurses are all continuing home visits for patients requiring them after telephone triage.

All face-to-face clinic appointments have been replaced with telephone appointments for services such as dieticians, MSK, IAPT and non-urgent podiatry.

Community matrons are joining rapid response teams for additional support.

Imaging

Imaging is closed to all but clinically urgent and cancer imaging. If you do refer for routine imaging these patients will be put on a 'planned' list until such time as we can resume the usual service. Please ensure any referrals for urgent or suspected cancers are clearly marked as such.

Phlebotomy

All community blood clinics are closed. We have made arrangements for community phlebotomy patients to be triaged so that urgent patients are prioritised. These patients will be seen on the Whittington Hospital site so should not be attending health centre. Only refer to Whittington Hospital for urgent blood tests. See the attachment for how to arrange a blood test on ICE without the need to give patient a paper blood form (temporary arrangement).

For any questions please contact Rebecca Edwards r.edwards1@nhs.net

Emergency Department

We are streaming people to self-care at the front door if they are well. We are not testing for COVID-19 unless patients are being admitted. Our advice is in line with government self-isolation guidance.

Please use ambulatory care for both advice and referring patients who are unwell and need to be assessed and do not send directly to ED. Call the switchboard on 020 7272 3070 and ask to speak with ambulatory care.

GOOD NEWS – CQC INSPECTION REPORT PUBLISHED 20 MARCH

The Care Quality Commission has rated Whittington Health as 'Good' overall and our community health services have been rated as 'Outstanding', which is fantastic. We continue to be rated as 'Outstanding' for caring. The inspectors found that staff went the extra mile to make sure that their approach was friendly and inclusive. Trust

staff also said that they felt supported and valued. This will help during these challenging times. You can read a [summary here](#) and find out more in-depth [information here](#)

PAEDIATRIC SERVICES

The paediatric service at the Whittington hospital have re-opened the AskPaediatric email service askpaediatrics.whitthealth@nhs.net to support GPs and Clinicians. This is an extension of current advice and guidance that can be used through choose and book, and will enable you to communicate directly with an experienced paediatrician, with a response within 24-48hours. Please note this service is for clinicians only and is not for use by the public.

FINALLY...

If you have any general questions about the ongoing situation, the best place to direct these is to the dedicated NCL Incident Coordination Centre Covid-19 email inbox. You can contact them via ncl.covid-19enquiries@nhs.net

Thank you for your ongoing support for your patients and colleagues. I understand that communication is very important at a time like this and so we will be working with the Whittington Health team to ensure you are kept updated.

Keep well.

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