

SEPTEMBER 2020



Dr Sarah Humphery

HELLO

This is my fourth GP Whittington Health GP Connect COVID-19 update that I wanted to share in order to keep you informed as we continue to respond to the pandemic.

We have made it through the summer, which has to be one of the strangest summers many of us will have known. As we come back from our staycations our thoughts will inevitably move to how we will be ready for winter.

Bariatrics	●
Breast Clinic	●
Cancer Services	●
Chemotherapy Services	●
Colorectal Surgery	●

I can reassure you that Whittington Health is nearly there with the return to business as usual with us performing around 65% of our pre-COVID volume of activity. Our [Restart Services page on our website](#) has proven a success and we are keeping this updated weekly.

We are all adapting to new ways of working with our departments and community services. Appointments will be by telephone initially for the majority of patients you refer to us and we are also embracing video and texting to provide care, but patients will always be able to choose to see us face to face if they would prefer this, though it may mean a longer wait. Where it is clinically indicated a F2F appointment will be offered to patients.

We are working incredibly hard to clear the backlog of patients who require our care and waiting times for many of our services are now reducing, but this remains challenged. In many areas social distancing has reduced our capacity to see as many patients which means it is important patients are aware that their first appointment will be a telephone as some patients have thought their OP apt was cancelled and they are just being given a call when the call was the appointment.

Temporary Changes to Children's Services Across North Central London

Our top priority is always to provide safe, high quality services that are responsive to the needs of our patients. This is equally true for our health and care partners across North Central London (NCL). That is why, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary changes were made to children and young people's services across north central London (NCL) to ensure that patients received the very best care.

To make sure we can continue to provide the best care possible throughout the winter and are prepared for a potential second surge in COVID-19 cases, a review of children and young people's services across NCL was commissioned. It concluded that staffing levels are a challenge to being able to maintain safe and resilient services for children and young people and has recommended bringing together a smaller number of emergency departments and inpatient units.

In the coming weeks the following temporary changes will be made to children and young people's services across NCL:

- The emergency department and inpatient unit at North Middlesex University Hospital will remain open.
- Barnet Hospital emergency department and inpatient unit will reopen on Monday 24 August, including child and adolescent mental health services crisis support.
- Royal Free Hospital paediatric emergency department and paediatric inpatient unit will be closed.
- The UCLH children and young people's emergency department will remain closed over winter but will continue to provide specialist inpatient and day-case services, including cancer haemato-oncology and complex adolescents.
- Whittington Health paediatric emergency inpatient department unit will be expanded.
- Great Ormond Street Hospital will provide an enhanced role for elective inpatient services and some – but not all – day surgery, building on existing arrangements.

Whittington Health will act as the Southern Hub for Children's Services across NCL.

Children and young people will also continue to be supported by primary care and community providers working in partnership with hospital services, so that care can be provided closer to home wherever possible. In addition, to ensure continued access to elective services,

Urgent and Emergency Referral Guidance – Helping you to help your Patients

We ask that GPs do not send patients to our Emergency Department without a referral. To support you in ensuring that you can quickly and easily make the appropriate referral, our Emergency Department has put together a really useful one pager for how to refer emergencies to us.

You can view it by visiting www.whittington.nhs.uk/emergencyreferrals.

New Opening Hours for the Rapid Response Team

We are pleased to advise that our Rapid Response Team which provide services in Islington and Haringey have increased their opening hours and are now available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Patients accepted between 22.00-08.00 will receive a rapid response assessment within the 24 hours unless there is a need to visit in response to an urgent nursing intervention e.g. blocked catheter, wound care, PEG management, pain management. In these instances, the overnight RR service will respond within 2 hours.

For referrals between 08:00 – 22:00 please call 0207 288 3670
For referrals between 22.00 – 08.00 please call on 07827232930.

Patients who require a next day visit and are referred between 2200 and 0800, must be discussed and accepted by the Rapid Response overnight team first. Failure to do so will result in the referral not being accepted.

Also, to help us to provide the best possible service to your patients and to avoid as many unnecessary hospital admissions as possible, could all referring GPs please include on the referral how they would like to be contacted by the Rapid Response Team. The team often need to obtain further information from or feedback to GPs so letting them know whether to contact you / your practice duty GP and how best to do so would be enormously helpful.

Imaging Services Update

We have been successful in clearing the backlog of patients requiring routine imaging due to the pandemic and have fully reopened all services and are almost back to pre-covid capacity in a COVID-19 safe way.

We are providing additional support to NCL partners to help clear their backlogs and to support this have two waves of recruitment to increase capacity in November and build more resilience in image acquisition workforce.

We are aware that there are ongoing delays with patients awaiting Ultrasound Steroid Injections following guidance that this procedure may put patients at additional risk from COVID-19. We are therefore in the process of writing out to all affected patients with an information pack and having considered the risks and benefits seeking clarification about whether they still feel that this course of treatment is appropriate.

Phlebotomy Services

Holloway Community Health Centre Phlebotomy Service Delivery site is now fully open. Queenswood Medical Practice, Hornsey Central Neighbourhood Health Centres and Whittington Hospital Level 5 are now open for *urgent* blood tests only.

Please can GPs ensure that an appointment is booked on eRS by your GP Practice or that the patient is provided with the relevant information to book their own appointment. To find out how, [click here](#). Patients should not be put on the Defer to Provide List, [more information is available here](#).

ICAT (Integrated Community Frailty Team)

In an innovation necessitated by COVID-19, the ICAT (community frailty team) have trained all their physios and pharmacists to take bloods so their comprehensive geriatric assessment can avoid further visits by other professionals. This provides more joined up care for patients, is more efficient and helps to keep staff safe!

Learning from our Type 2 diabetic patients with COVID-19 at The Whittington Health

At a recent Grand Round, Dr Karen Anthony, Consultant in Diabetes and Endocrinology highlighted the following key points for GPs to take away in light of COVID-19 affects in Diabetic patients:

- Poor diabetic control Hba1C > 86 mmols (10%) poorer outcomes for DM with COVID-19
- Encourage importance of good glucose control

- Age remains single biggest risk factor with COVID-19
- Importance of social distancing remains
- Atypical presentations of DKA found in Type 2 DM > so consider urine ketone testing for these patients when unwell.
- Encourage wt loss as BMI (esp > 30 risk factor for COVID-19)
- Important to encourage adherence to diabetic medications as several of the DM pts admitted to WH had not been taking their medications which is likely to have contributed to their admission.
- Importance of education for Type 1 "sick day rules" , how to manage inter current illness
- Education with regard self-management.

Join a Grand Round Virtually or Watch Previous Rounds

Whittington Grand Rounds have restarted virtually. These educational presentations happen every Wednesday from 1pm until 2pm and are given by local experts or external speakers discussing various current topics in medicine.

Grand Rounds will be available to watch either live or via a recording. The live sessions will take place on Microsoft Teams and you can book your place [using this link](#). Joining instructions will then be sent to you. If you join the live session you can take part and send questions to the speaker using the slido system (which will be explained to you during the session). Any problems or questions before the session, please email Jana.smith@nhs.net. The presentations will also be recorded so you can watch any time, and these will be available on [Whittington Health Moodle](#) and on the [Postgraduate Medical Education Grand Round page](#).

And Finally...

A special thank you and well done to the integrated discharge coordination team who have done an amazing job of reducing Delayed Transfers of Care to zero and ensured that our patients can be in the right place to get the care they need.

I know many patients are still nervous and some reluctant to attend appointments in our hospital and health centres when it is needed. We have put all necessary measures in place to keep patients and staff safe. Please do [share this safety video](#) to help your patients feel more confident about coming into hospital when required.



Our masks are hiding our smiles

Keep well and do look after yourselves.

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