

Oxfordshire NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing: COVID-19

05 May 2020

Oxfordshire health and local authority partners continue to work together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How are we supporting care homes in the county?

Supporting care homes to provide high quality care to some of our most vulnerable residents during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential. Health and social care partners across Oxfordshire are working closely with care home providers to develop and deliver a support plan for homes, their staff and residents. This work is taking place across the system, with a Bronze Cell, including provider representatives, set up to provide oversight and co-ordination. The focus of the work includes preventative and proactive support for all care homes to ensure that education and understanding regarding care for residents, in line with national guidance, is in place; and focused support work with care homes that may be experiencing outbreaks or particular challenges. The themes addressed include:

- **Testing:** The importance of making testing available to care home staff and residents is recognised. Care home staff are key workers and have had access to testing at the static and mobile sites set up in Oxfordshire. OUH and OHFT have been working with Oxfordshire County Council to consider how to roll out a testing programme for care home residents in line with the national models.
- **PPE and Infection Control:** Information and guidance has been provided to services, including via a webinar for care home staff hosted by Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's clinical lead for infection control. The Care Home Support Service will continue to offer support and advice and further webinars with care home staff will offer opportunities to share concerns, ask questions and keep them connected. This theme links closely with Oxfordshire County Council's work to ensure care homes, and other providers, have sufficient supplies of PPE to deliver safe care.
- **Staffing:** Oxfordshire County Council leads on issues relating to staffing in care homes to ensure safe staffing levels are maintained during COVID-19. This includes regular contact with homes to ensure that issues can be identified and support can be discussed at the earliest opportunity. A range of contingency plans have been developed across system partners which are reviewed weekly. Care home providers have welcomed these jointly developed contingency plans.
- **Safeguarding:** This remains a high priority as all care home residents are vulnerable adults. The aim is to ensure that normal safeguarding referrals and management activity are maintained through COVID-19 and to develop strategies with care homes enabling safe care to continue throughout the pandemic, alongside timely reporting procedures.
- **Clinical Support and Patient Management:** ensuring that clinical support for care homes and residents remains in place throughout this period, to meet medical needs associated with COVID-19 and general medical needs is essential. This has included guidance around symptom identification and management and targeted support via Primary Care and community health provision. This area remains under careful review given recently published national guidance which NHS partners are responding to.

GP opening hours - 8 May Bank Holiday

Arrangements are in place for GP practices across Oxfordshire to be open on the Bank Holiday on Friday 8 May 2020 for routine and urgent appointments between 8am and 2pm, with all access being by telephone in the first instance. COVID-19 clinics will also be open to

see suspected/confirmed COVID-19 patients in Abingdon, Oxford and Banbury. Out of hours will provide cover for the afternoon of 8 May 2020 from 2pm. Patients are asked to phone first and not visit their GP practice or the COVID-19 clinics unless asked to do so.

'Hand it back campaign' delivers results

In early April an Oxfordshire system-wide campaign asked people to help their local NHS by returning any equipment they had been loaned and no longer needed, as much of this equipment could be recycled and reused. Oxfordshire residents were asked to look around their homes for equipment with an NRS Healthcare sticker on it, from beds and mattresses to walking and toilet frames. The campaign, which was promoted online, on social media and in the media by all the system partners, has been a huge success, resulting in over 1,000 beds back.

International Workers Memorial Day

Staff across the NHS and local authorities paused to hold a minute's silence at 11am on 28 April to pay their respects to all key workers who have lost their lives. Some gathered outside key sites, while keeping socially distant, including the hospitals and clinics. This year, the event was particularly poignant in paying tribute to the sacrifice made by so many workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also thanking all those who continue to do vital work at great risk. Sadly, by the day of the commemoration, more than 90 NHS workers had died since the nation went into lockdown, including staff from Oxfordshire.

Increased swab testing for critical key workers in the NHS, social care and other sectors

As part of the Government's new testing programme, three new Government run mobile testing sites have opened this week in Oxfordshire. They offer testing for key workers and for the over-65s who believe they may be displaying COVID-19 symptoms. They are located in the car park of Cherwell District Council's offices at Bodicote House; in the car park of Bicester Village; and in New Street car park in Chipping Norton. The facility at Bodicote House came into operation on 1 May and council staff worked closely with Ministry of Defence staff to ensure the set-up of the site ran smoothly. We are working with the national team to try and ensure we have earlier notice of the timetables and location for mobile testing sites. These sites are in addition to the regional site at Thornhill park and ride and the NHS staff run testing sites at the Churchill and John Radcliffe Hospitals.

Digital developments across health and social care

While we find ourselves in a challenging and difficult time we must also take the opportunity to recognise the positives in our collective response and the beneficial changes that we have brought about in recent weeks. This includes many things that we will continue, where appropriate, as the lock down is lifted.

One area where we have seen significant change is the use of technology, including digital consultations, remote monitoring and diagnostics. The sections below provide examples of how the Oxfordshire health and local authority partners are using technology in innovative ways to support patients and residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT) has continued to expand new digital ways of working during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes providing iPads so families can safely visit patients virtually; offering consultations via secure video to patients; and clinical meetings with staff. The True Colours app, developed by the University of Oxford's Department of Psychiatry, helps people to monitor and manage their psychological wellbeing, and the effective use of virtual reality to treat a range of conditions including social phobia.

Like many others, the Trust now holds most meetings via MS Teams. The Chief Executive has been holding live video briefings and Q&A sessions on the pandemic response open to all staff using MS Live every two weeks. The first event reached 1,300 people - 800 joined live, 500 viewed on catch-up. Learning from this and early experiments pioneered by the OHFT communications director and the Trust's IT department was shared with colleagues at OUH, OCCG and OCC to inform and enable their live events.

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Digital technology has supported new and different ways of working at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust to improve the experience of patients and staff. The Trust held its first 'virtual' staff briefing on Microsoft Teams Live hosted by its Executive team on 30 April. Eight hundred and seventy staff joined live and a further 250 staff have watched a recording of the briefing on MS Stream; in total 1,120 staff have viewed the briefing. As the NHS moves into the recovery phase, the Trust's priority is to embed these digital developments.

Video consultations transform patient care

Attend Anywhere® is a web-based platform being piloted across 40 NHS trusts in England, including OUH, which enables clinicians to hold a video consultation with a patient rather than a traditional outpatient appointment in a hospital clinic. Patients and staff can access Attend Anywhere® on any internet-enabled device and there is no need to download and install any special software – the patient is simply sent a weblink. Using Attend Anywhere® reduces travel time and costs for patients, enables staff to work remotely, and reduces traffic congestion and car parking issues on hospital sites.

The use of Attend Anywhere® has increased markedly during the COVID-19 pandemic when many face-to-face appointments have not been possible, not least to keep patients safe by reducing the risks of a hospital visit. The Trust has run over 1,900 video consultations with patients, totalling 655 hours of video consultations since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when visiting restrictions and the postponement of routine operations and outpatient appointments were put in place. The number of video consultations undertaken has put the OUH in the top 10 Trusts nationally for the use of video consultations. A key part of the Trust's recovery plan is how to maintain and build on this digital innovation.

Tablets help patients in hospital stay in touch with friends and family

Visiting restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic mean that patients in the four OUH hospitals in Oxford and Banbury are not allowed visitors – with a few exceptions including patients nearing the end of life, children in hospital, and women in labour.

However, similar to OHFT, OUH is helping patients to stay connected with friends and family by providing them with tablet devices free of charge so that they can video call their loved ones. This ['virtual visiting'](#) has been made possible thanks to a partnership between the Trust and its suppliers.

New wearable technology monitors COVID-19 patients

Wearable technology that monitors patients' vital signs is being used with COVID-19 patients on the isolation ward at the John Radcliffe Hospital. The system has been developed by biomedical engineers and medical researchers supported by the [NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre \(BRC\)](#) and went live on 23 March. The BRC's Technology and Digital Health theme, led by Professor Peter Watkinson and Professor Lionel Tarassenko, has been developing and testing the concept of a [virtual High-Dependency Unit \(vHDU\)](#) for the past 18 months. A vHDU is a general hospital ward in which high-risk patients are monitored using a new generation of wearable sensors that measure pulse rate, respiratory rate and blood oxygen saturation, combined with Bluetooth-linked tablet computers and smart alerting

algorithms. This [new wearable technology](#) not only reduces the burden on nursing staff, allowing them to perform vital-sign observations for high risk patients at the same rate as for lower risk patients, but also improves early detection when a patient's vital signs become abnormal.

Technology in GP practices

Ninety seven per cent of GP practices in Oxfordshire are now using online and video technology to carry out consultations with patients who have access to computers or tablets. This is a safe way to provide care to patients, protecting them as well as staff. It helps reduce the number of face-to-face appointments although GPs continue to still see patients in their surgeries if they need to be seen. Online consultations are reviewed and actioned which could include signposting to other services, a telephone conversation with a GP or a request to see a GP.

The Digital Care Assistant is being trialled at a COVID-19 clinic in Oxford. This system, developed by Oxhealth, has been installed in five clinical rooms at the clinic, and relies on an optical sensor to enable GPs to obtain a patient's pulse and breathing rate measurements without being in the room. When patients arrive at the clinic they enter a clinic room for initial assessment without direct physical contact with clinicians. GPs triage patients via the system and then decide whether to undertake a physical examination. The installation is the first of its kind in primary care; its deployment was scoped, installed and went live within 4 working days.

Oxfordshire County Council, District and City Councils

Oxfordshire County Council's Adult Social Care currently supports more than 6,000 people. Social distancing rules may have changed the way care is delivered, but social care workers are using technology in new ways to help support some of our most vulnerable residents. For example, Banbury Day Centre, which supports 52 adults with a learning disability, ageing health needs, physical disability, dementia or mental health needs, is offering a bespoke service through a range of technology platforms to support people's physical and emotional wellbeing. The day care visitors are invited to connect via daily emails or video calls, and a [YouTube channel](#) has been launched so people can log on each day to watch singing, get involved with quizzes and get companionship.

Online platforms are also playing a key role in supporting communities across the county. Two online community hubs in particular are being widely used to give and find support for those who are at high-risk or self-isolating: [Oxford Together](#) for those in Oxford City, and [Oxfordshire All In](#) for those in the rest of the county. The latter now includes a partial food access map and database, thanks to Good Food Oxford, which signposts a range of community food services across the county, such as the Witney and West Oxfordshire Food Bank, which deals with referrals from residents who are struggling to buy food. The City and Districts continue to work directly with the food banks and larders in their areas and are working collaboratively with the County Council and a range of food providers to develop, at pace, an evidence based food strategy and are working with a range of agencies, including Good Food Oxford, on this.

Online video and live-streamed events are also proving an effective way to keep residents and businesses informed and connected. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) has recently launched a series of online Q&A events to help advise and support local businesses through the pandemic, with panels featuring council and business leaders. The first event is now available on [YouTube](#).

Daily fitness circuit videos are being published by the Families Active Sporting Together (FAST) initiative on Cherwell District Council's [activity and wellbeing hub](#) to help families to stay fit; while Oxford City Council provides access to a wide range of exercise and wellbeing videos via its online [activity hub](#). South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District

Councils are using video with [real case studies](#) to encourage people to ask for help if they need it. They have also launched online versions of their arts centres ([The Beacon](#) and [Cornerstone](#)) and [health and wellbeing programmes](#). Oxfordshire Libraries are hosting online storytelling and poetry readings on their [Facebook](#) page, and online library services have seen a 75% increase in the number of ebooks downloaded, with over 20,600 issued in April. Councillors across the county are using video as a powerful medium to thank volunteers, community organisations and staff for all their efforts during the pandemic.

Please email occg.media-team@nhs.net with any queries and we will endeavour to get back to you.