

Oxfordshire NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing: COVID-19

19 May 2020

Week nine of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic sees some easing of restrictions but the majority of people remain at home. The pandemic has transformed the way we live and work and the crucial social interactions and routines that keep everyone – from children to older people - mentally resilient have been displaced by lockdown and social distancing. The pandemic is affecting mental health in general - causing disruption, uncertainty and anxiety and creating rising levels of worry and stress.

Mental Health Awareness Week 2020 (May 18-24) got underway yesterday with this year's theme being about kindness and looking out for each other. As part of this week Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT) is urging people to reach out and get [help](#). Early on in the pandemic the Trust launched a 24/7 mental health helpline to provide people with mental health advice during the coronavirus pandemic.

- The number for adults is 01865 904997
- For children and young people, the number is 01865 904998

The helpline makes it quicker and easier for people of all ages in Oxfordshire to get the right advice they need for their mental health and emotional wellbeing. OHFT's mental health advisers can help people get the right help for a range of conditions and symptoms including anxiety, low mood, stress, worry, difficulty with relationships, crying often, feeling helpless, confusion, hallucinations or hearing voices.

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, Oxford City Council has launched an intranet-based campaign focused on boosting staff mental health and wellbeing, from fitness and self-help videos to e-learning modules on topics such as understanding mental health. South and Vale District Councils are running an internal campaign based on this year's theme of kindness, which includes a daily email comprising a positive quote or affirmation along with a task to help improve people's mental health resilience. While Oxfordshire County Council, together with Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Councils, are encouraging members of the public and staff to #Shareyourkindness for Mental Health Awareness Week by sharing acts of kindness that have been taking place across our community. You can read some examples [here](#).

Learning Disability and COVID-19

In the county, the [Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board](#) partnership is committed to ensuring that people with learning disabilities have the same opportunities during their lives as anyone else.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board established a subgroup three years ago to review the deaths of all people with learning disabilities, encompassing the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme. This panel meets regularly and includes service providers, commissioners and representatives of those that use services and family carers; currently this is Oxfordshire Family Support Network (OxFSN). Notifications of all deaths come from any agency, or the public through this link: [LeDeR notification Link](#).

Individual reviews are undertaken including contributions from family and carers with summaries and themes being used to develop learning that can inform how services are developed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic this review process has been enhanced with a rapid (within 2 weeks) review of all cases. Locally this has been completed for every notified individual.

The following points have been identified:

- In the first four months of 2020 there has been no increase in notifications of deaths of people with learning disabilities.
- All those reviewed who have presented with symptoms of COVID-19 have had care and treatment plans with full access to specialist support when this has been needed.
- There have been examples of clear planning between services to ensure that the individual can go home, with any additional support they may need.

Helping patients stay in touch with their loved ones

Visiting restrictions have been put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep patients and staff safe on the four hospital sites run by Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – the John Radcliffe Hospital (JR), Churchill Hospital and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford and the Horton General Hospital in Banbury.

Given this, it is important for the Trust to help its patients keep in touch with their loved ones who, with limited exceptions, cannot visit them at this time. The Trust is doing this in a range of ways:

- Keep in Touch, a new letter delivery service, is being piloted initially at the JR. Family members and friends can email keepintouch@ouh.nhs.uk with messages for inpatients at the JR, including pictures if they choose, and these will be printed and delivered to the appropriate ward. A similar scheme has already been implemented by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.
- Patients can stay connected with family and friends through ‘virtual visiting’ by using tablet devices provided to patients free of charge so that they can video call their loved ones.
- Thanks to OUH partners at Hospedia, who provide the bedside entertainment system on the Trust’s inpatient wards, patients can make free outbound phone calls (including calls to mobiles) from their bedside unit for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patient takes part in research after recovering from COVID-19

An [Oxford man](#) who spent his 60th birthday being treated for COVID-19 at the John Radcliffe Hospital is taking part in research into treating and understanding the virus.

During his treatment, Tim Clayden was put on the antibiotic azithromycin as part of the University of Oxford’s Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy (RECOVERY) trial, which is comparing potential treatments for COVID-19. He also joined another research study to inform future treatments, the Clinical Characterisation Protocol for Severe Emerging Infection (CCP-UK) study, which is led by the University of Liverpool Research. Nurses collected daily samples from him in hospital and visited him when he was back home recovering for a final sample.

Thank You - now more than ever: acknowledging staff ‘behind the front line’

Last week the OUH launched a new website and social media campaign to publicly thank some of the people who have been working tirelessly to support frontline staff at the Trust during the #OneTeamOneOUH response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teams featured so far on the Trust [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) include:

- The [M&S Foodhall and Café](#) at the John Radcliffe Hospital.
- The Trust’s [Chaplaincy team](#) who support patients, their loved ones and staff.
- [Carpenter Catering \(Belota\)](#) whose cafes and food delivery services for staff at the John Radcliffe and Horton General hospitals have provided a valuable service.
- The [Linen team](#) who are responsible for not only the freshly-laundered bed sheets, blankets and pyjamas essential for the daily bed and linen changes that keep inpatients safe and clean but also a staff uniform service for doctors and nurses,

which has been extended to include co-ordinating the provision of clean scrubs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Caring in a crisis: supporting people with sight and hearing loss

The Sensory Impairment Team at Oxfordshire County Council is a small countywide team of specialists working with adults and children who are deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired or with a dual sensory loss. Supporting around 1,000 people every year, the team provides advice, assessment, social work, equipment, information and rehabilitation support. Since the initial stages of the lockdown, the team has been adapting the way they work in order to best support people with a sensory impairment. For example, during the early stages of the lockdown, it was noted the British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters were not used for the daily Downing Street briefings, so the team used social media, email and BSL-relay interpreters to ensure that information was available and accessible. The team has also been making use of Skype, WhatsApp and phone calls to stay in regular contact with people who have a sensory impairment. And if someone cannot hear by phone, they have been contacting them by email or have spoken with relatives or a BSL interpreter. More information is available [here](#).

Oxford City Council supports Grand Iftar event for Ramadan

Oxford City Council has provided financial support, carers and drivers to help with food deliveries for Oxford Homeless Project's Grand Iftar event on 15 May. The Grand Iftar celebrates and connects Oxford's diverse communities, people of faith and no faith during Ramadan over an Iftar (breaking of the fast) meal. This year, because of the COVID-19 lockdown, a city-wide meeting was not possible and so instead 1,500 meals were delivered to people across the city. More information is available [here](#).

OCVA support for the voluntary sector

Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action ([OCVA](#)) is a charitable organisation, supported by Oxfordshire County and Cherwell District Councils, which provides infrastructure support to community and voluntary organisations across the county. During the coronavirus crisis, OCVA has been supporting groups in the voluntary sector across Oxfordshire by providing information on funding, governance and volunteering, and guidance on many issues currently facing charities. They are also working with local and national agencies to provide information to assist groups and volunteers. Groups, charities, trustees or volunteers who need advice and support both in the current crisis and also looking to the future to help groups recover and build resilience, can contact OCVA for help and advice at admin@ocva.org.uk or on 01865 251946.

Boost to Bicester's blue lines

The 5km blue line health routes, which were painted onto pavements back in 2017 to offer Cherwell residents free and easy ways to exercise, recorded their highest daily usage in April. In Langford, pedestrian counters indicate almost 500 people walked the line each day over the Easter period, up 104 percent on the previous year. Meanwhile, the data collected from Bure Park, part of the Bicester West route, showed almost 900 daily users over Easter, up from around 670 people during the same holiday period in 2019.

Delivering digital democracy

Alongside the councils' focus on delivering key frontline services during the COVID-19 pandemic, extensive work has been going on behind the scenes to make sure that councillors are able to meet using online means. In April, the Government temporarily removed the legal requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person, meaning online meetings could take place. Oxfordshire County Council staged its first meeting of all county councillors on 4 May using Microsoft Teams. West Oxfordshire District Council followed on 13 May, with members of full council 'attending' via Webex and the public following the proceedings via Facebook Live, which attracted more than 1200 clicks

and 20 likes. 20 May will see both Oxford City Council and Cherwell District Council hold their first virtual meetings: Oxford City's Annual Meeting of Council will take place via Zoom, while Cherwell will hold an extraordinary Council Meeting via MS Teams, with the Planning Committee meeting in the same way the next day. Planning Committee meetings will be held online for the Vale of White Horse District Council on 26 May and South Oxfordshire District Council on 28 May. Also the multi-agency Growth Board meeting will be held virtually on the 2nd June; the advisory groups supporting the Growth Deal commitments have continued to meet virtually throughout the crisis. The first virtual meeting of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) will take place on 25 June.

Campaigns

Since the beginning of the pandemic we have continued to support the national campaigns and promote advice including the importance of [handwashing](#) and how to socially distance. This is ongoing, and continues to be important as the lockdown begins to get lifted. This has been promoted both online and offline through the media, social media, key community contacts and information has been made available in different languages.

There have been additional campaigns encouraging the public to help the NHS which include the recruitment of staff and volunteers as well as a plea to ask the public to return any NHS equipment they might have at home. Both campaigns had a positive response from the public.

We have been promoting the change of services at GP practices and offering reassurance to the public that their local GP is still there for them should they have any healthcare concerns and that if they do need to have a face-to-face appointment there are precautions in place to make this as safe as possible. This has also included promoting clinics within the community to care for patients with coronavirus symptoms who might need to seek medical advice for another matter.

As part of a wider national campaign we have been promoting that NHS services are still available to those who need them and that if anyone has any symptoms that they are concerned about they should seek advice. The '[help us, help you](#)' campaign has included a focus on [A&E](#), [cancer](#), [immunisations](#), [maternity](#) and [stroke](#) to date. This week the focus will be on [mental health](#) and cardiovascular symptoms. All of these have been communicated on our websites, through social media and in the local media and received positive coverage across all channels.

We are currently looking at how we can further reach groups of people who might be vulnerable or 'seldom heard' and if there is anything more we can do to offer advice and reassurance.

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