

Healthwatch Enfield and North Middlesex University Hospital and The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust online Q&A session

24th June 2020

Presenters:

- Sarah Hayes - Chief Nurse- North Middlesex University Hospital (NMUH)
- Bernie Byrnes - Interim MacMillan Lead nurse for Palliative Care & End of Life (NMUH)
- Alan McGlennan - Medical Director Royal Free London Hospital (RFL)

Questions and Answers:

Q1 - I would like an update on getting blood tests in Enfield

A - NMUH [Urgent blood tests](#) requested by GP's are still taking place. We will also start providing blood tests clinics at Forest Road primary care centre. From mid-July they will be opening at hub for blood taking at Selby Centre to help clear the backlog that wasn't completed during the peak of the Coronavirus outbreak. We are continuing to look at community venues to reduce infection control, and make sure it's as safe as possible to have that test.

A - RFL the adult out-patient services at Chase Farm Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital remain open for urgent blood tests and for those patients who need to come in for regular tests such as medication monitoring. The adult out-patient blood taking services at Barnet Hospital and Edgware Community Hospital remain closed. An appointment must be booked for all tests. Patients cannot walk-in to our hospitals. They must bring their booking confirmation text/email to their appointment as they will not be able to enter our hospitals without this. More details are on our [website](#).

The children's out-patient blood taking service at Chase Farm Hospital is open for urgent and routine tests. The services at Barnet Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital remain closed.

Q2 - What are the procedures to take blood for patients with learning disabilities, especially with challenging behaviour?

A - NMUH have a learning disability team working closely with the community. If someone needs a blood test they will support them to come to the hospital or have the blood test at home. The learning disability team would be part of the appointment to support that. When booking the blood test please ask to get the learning disability team involved.

A - RFL We have learning disability liaison nurses at all of our hospitals who can:

- give advice, support and training to staff about caring for people with a learning disability
- help with planning admissions and discharge meetings

- Link with specialist learning disability services, families, carers, GPs and other organisations

If we know someone with a learning disability is coming in for a blood test, we will ask what reasonable adjustments may be needed. Some patients may be extremely anxious and we will ensure that our phlebotomy teams are aware so that they can be fast tracked through and we usually allocate a particular person to take their bloods. We ask that someone that knows the patient well comes with them and provides support. We have also created easy read information that can be given to patients beforehand to help them understand what is going to happen and what they can expect.

On the adult online booking system for blood tests you are also able to select if any additional support is needed. If an appointment is made via our telephone booking line, our team will ask if any extra support is needed / any reasonable adjustments are required. GPs are also asked to contact us in advance if additional support is needed.

When a blood test is booked for children, similarly to adults, we ask whether any additional support is needed when booking both online or over the phone. If a patient has a learning disability, we prioritise their blood test and encourage the parent / carer to book an appointment in the morning when the clinic is less busy. Alongside those taking blood, our [play specialists](#) play a key role in our children's out-patient departments for children and young people who need blood tests. Our play specialists are skilled at distracting children and ensure that anxiety levels are kept to a minimum.

If the parent / carer has any concerns about their child having a blood test or they would like further advice, they are encouraged to contact the team at the hospital the test is taking place. Contact details are available on our [website](#).

Q3 - There have been concerns around people with learning disabilities dying from Coronavirus - what processes are you following to ensure they are well cared for?

A - NMUH for patients with a learning disability, in terms of visiting the hospital, we have made it clear that they can have support from their carer or family members. The hospital make sure their family members can come to the hospital and they are protected in terms of wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). In terms of health inequalities, they have been reviewing complex cases during the Coronavirus peak via the Ethics Panel, where decisions are made. In terms of the visiting criteria, the decisions made are always about what is beneficial to the patient to give the best outcome. This has been very difficult during the outbreak period and decisions were not made lightly, so feedback is really helpful and important. [North Middlesex University Hospital passport](#)

A - RFL Supporting patients with learning disabilities is extremely important across the Royal Free London. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made changes to ensure that patients with learning disabilities receive the best care and support possible. We have made reasonable adjustments to our visitors policy and people with a learning disability are able to receive one visitor at a time to support them and provide reassurance if they are an in-patient or in our emergency departments. We have also been in regular contact with family/carers to ensure they are updated. We ensure that the patients' [hospital passport](#) is available for staff. The hospital passport is designed to give our staff helpful information that is not only about illness and health.

The passport can include lists of what patients like or dislike. This might be about the amount of physical contact they are ok with, to their favourite type of drink, as well as their interests. The passport helps our staff know how to make patients feel comfortable.

Q4 - What's the policy for visiting for someone at the 'end of their life', when family members are getting a call to say their loved one hasn't got long to live?

A - NMUH -Have been working with other hospital across North Central London (NCL) to make sure they are all following the same guidelines in regards to visiting, as communications nationally and locally have been confusing, though visiting is subject to local discretion by Trusts and NHS bodies. Throughout the pandemic, it became very clear that hospitals had to go on lock down to protect staff and the community. So decisions had to be made to decrease visits to patients which was not easy but we had to prioritise the health of everyone from an infection control perspective. Every decision made about visiting went through the Ethics Panel. Currently, the risk of the virus is coming now more predominantly from the community itself, so we are trying to decrease the amount of footfall that's coming into the hospital, as that increases the risk of passing on the virus. It's important to keep everybody safe, but we know it's very difficult for relatives. NMUH prefer that people do come and visit their loved one at 'end of life', and they try to identify patients early, so they can have some time with their relatives before they really are at the end of their life. They are reviewing the guidance weekly, but do think they need to communicate this much more clearly and are working on that. For non-Coronavirus cases, patients cannot have visitors at the moment, as that person is an unknown risk which they are trying to protect people against. They have put in place technology: tablets and phones, so relatives can communicate with their loved ones virtually.

A - RFL- Across north central London, no visitors are allowed onto our hospital wards until further notice except in exceptional circumstances. We are regularly reviewing these arrangements.

In exceptional circumstances, a visitor pass will be issued for a limited group of patients (one per patient). Visitors will need to present this pass on arrival to the

ward. Please note, only one family member/carer at a time can use the pass, but it can be shared between families and carers to allow them to visit.

Groups include:

- Patients who are receiving end of life care are able to receive one visitor at a time
- People with a learning disability are able to receive one visitor at a time
- For children on our wards, one parent/carer at a time will be able to visit

Visitors who believe they meet the above criteria for visiting will need to report to the security desk at the relevant hospital to collect their visitor pass.

Maternity services - exceptional circumstances

- Women in labour on our maternity wards - one birth partner, who will not be able to stay overnight.
- To help prevent the spread of infection, birth partners will not be able to attend other maternity service visits including scans or antenatal or postnatal ward visits. More information is available [here](#).

We are encouraging visitors to use other methods of keeping in touch with their friends and family members, including phone and video calls. We have introduced relative communicator roles which are dedicated to keeping patients relatives/friends informed. Staff have been using tablets to connect patients with their loved ones. You can find more about what can be expected if someone is admitted to one of our hospitals with COVID-19 [here](#).

Q5 - Are there extra hand washing/hand sanitising facilities around the hospital?

A - NMUH - Yes, the best way to prevent the spread of virus is to wash your hands with soap and water. NMUH have increased the number of hand gel stations, have put in extra sinks and hand washing facilities. All staff are wearing masks. As they plan to open up the hospital a little bit more, they are planning to put in hand wash stations next to every entrance to the hospital.

A - RFL - Hand washing (with soap and water) and using hand sanitiser is one of the main ways to stop the spread of COVID-19. The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust has invested in additional measures to support hand washing and hand sanitising across its main hospital sites since the beginning of the pandemic. Hand sanitising facilities have been increased and are available at all the main hospital entrances. We have also been and continue to encourage frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds as per national guidance. We have additional domestic staff across all of our hospital sites who are cleaning public areas including washrooms more frequently. Cleaning has also been increased for high touch point areas such as door handles, switches, lift buttons, grab rails and self-check in kiosks. This is in line with national guidance.

There has been a cultural change among our staff and volunteers. There is zero tolerance across our hospitals for anything less than the highest of standards. This includes, social distancing, washing hands, wearing a mask and being bare below the elbow. Patients and visitors must wear a face covering at all times when coming to our hospitals. Staff are also required to wear masks in hospital at all times. More information, including how to make your own face covering is available on our [website](#).

Q6 - How are you supporting your Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff at work?

A - NMUH- 64% of our staff are from a BAME background. There have been lots of national discussion about inequalities for those from a BAME background. NMUH have signed up and have been part of a risk assessment for BAME staff in London for all staff. For example, if staff need to work with patients, they also have a wellbeing support officer which includes counselling. We are also running a number of listening events to understand what this means for their BAME staff and how they can be supported.

A - RFL -We have a BAME staff forum which was established in 2014 to support black, Asian and ethnic minority staff, and to provide a safe, supportive and confidential environment for all minority ethnic staff. It is a platform for sharing ideas and experiences, building relationships and promoting race equality.

In response to evidence that there has been a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic communities and vulnerable groups, we are offering all of our staff a risk assessment. This is helping us to support the health and wellbeing of our staff and put appropriate adjustments in place if needed, in line with COVID-19 guidelines.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we introduced a number of initiatives to support staff mental health and wellbeing. These are still in place and include:

- The resilience and emotional support team (REST). REST has been set to help staff facing the demands of COVID-19. A range of resources are available including information about where to go for additional support and daily wellbeing tips.
- The COVID-19 advice line. Members of staff can get advice on topics such as self-isolation, health and wellbeing, training and flexible working.

We have also been sharing details of free access to wellbeing apps for all NHS staff regularly.

Q7 - What is your advice to those who are afraid of coming to hospital for a non-Coronavirus reason?

A - RFL We are still here for patients without COVID-19. We are following national infection control and prevention guidance to ensure that both patients and staff are as safe as possible. We urge those patients who need to access our services to do so. If we have asked you to come to hospital for a test or procedure, this means

our teams have reviewed your care and think that you need it. You must come to hospital for this.

We are taking a number of infection control and prevention measures including:

- separating or physically distancing as much as possible, where we care for patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who may have symptoms of COVID-19, and where patients are being treated for urgent planned care.
- we are following national guidance for infection prevention and ensuring staff and volunteers are trained in how to limit the spread of infection in hospitals.
- Hospital theatres, equipment and wards are deep-cleaned regularly, in line with national guidance.
- the right levels of staffing and equipment - including personal protective equipment - will be in place so that planned care can take place safely.
- All patients and visitors coming to our hospitals will need to wear a face covering at all times.

Q8 - How will NNUH provide Diabetic Eye Check appointments for shielding patients?

A - NNUH have carried on providing the most important appointments which are mostly routine appointments, and we are not able to provide further appointments at the moment. But we are making checks to make sure people who need them are having them. We are also reviewing the services and hope to have more appointments in place quite soon.

Q9 - When will the children's outpatients' eye clinic be open again?

A -NNUH- [Paediatrics outpatients](#) were moved to Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) but we continued to carry on with urgent paediatric outpatient services. We are now coming back online. If you have any difficulties please contact the hospital.

RFL - Across North Central London, we have reallocated the outpatients programme, most of which is virtual or face to face via webcam. We have had to change where we do face to face, most of which is at Chase Farm Hospital. We hope to have Outpatient's services up and running very soon, but will be prioritising those patients most in need.

Q10 - How will North Middlesex make online/virtual health appointments accessible to those with additional digital access needs (i.e. difficulty getting online due to disability or poverty?)

A - NNUH - This is important to NNUH but we don't have the answer. We are not asking anyone to have a digital appointment if they don't have the equipment. If patients receive a letter about a digital/telephone consultation and you can't do it, please contact the hospital to make other arrangements. NNUH will be talking

to Healthwatch Enfield about how they can do to improve this. We don't want anyone to go without their appointment, so please [contact the hospital](#). Most appointments are by telephone.

A - RFL - We are switching appointments to virtual appointments where possible to reduce the number of people coming to our hospitals. If you are not able to attend virtually, please let us know so we can discuss how you will have your appointment. We are working hard to ensure that online / virtual appointments are available and accessible to all our patients. We would like to work together with our communities to explore options and would welcome ideas. Please contact Devinder Degun, senior communications manager at the Royal Free London: devinder.degun@nhs.net

Q11- I've had an appointment cancelled and told I have to go back to the GP. Why can't I just wait on the waiting list? I have had 3 appointments cancelled because of Coronavirus, for an x-ray, echogram and pain management. When will you start having regular appointments again?

A - NMUH during the pandemic had to make a decision to cancel non-urgent appointments to free up staff and resources to care for the increase of patients with Coronavirus. We went through patient lists with their consultants and clinically prioritised who needed to be seen urgently and who could be seen routinely. Now we are going back over this information and organising appointments for people. If anyone is concerned about their appointment and feel a wrong decision has been made, talk to your GP or contact the hospital via the [PALS \(Patient Advice & Liaison Service\)](#) team.

A - RFL As part of north central London's response to COVID-19, NHS trusts made changes to out-patient services. This included switching appointments to a virtual appointment where possible - either by telephone or video, or where clinical teams felt it was safe to do so, rearranging or cancelling appointments. We did this to help us free up staff and resources to support caring for the increased numbers of patients with COVID-19 we were expecting to be admitted. We are now clinically prioritising patients with the most urgent need. If you are concerned about your care / appointment, please contact our patient advice and liaison service at the hospital you were due to have your appointment. You can find contact details on our [website](#).

Q12 - Do you feel the staff have sufficient knowledge about dementia to help in the absence of the carer or family? If not, how can Enfield Dementia Action help as we go forward?

A - NMUH Enfield Dementia Action are on our steering group and have been having lots of discussions.

A - RFL We have been doing lots of work in this area over the last three years. If Enfield Dementia Action Alliance feels that we are not doing enough in this area, the Royal Free London would like to hear from them. We think we have a very

dementia friendly staffing complement so if there is more we can do; we would really like to hear from you.

Q13 - UCL have opened their GP x-ray access service. When will the NMUH and Chase farm do so?

A- NMUH - with regards to infection control it is not possible for us to do as many images as we could before Coronavirus, as we need to clean between each procedure which slows things down.

A - RFL Across north central London, we are prioritising these services according to patient need and making sure we see those patients with the most urgent need first. We will not be able to run these services as we did before the COVID-19 pandemic as we have put in place infection prevention and control measures which includes thoroughly cleaning equipment used after each procedure. We are exploring with our partners how we can provide more of these services across north central London.