

Dear colleagues

As I am sure you are all aware, COVID-19 is posing a challenge for the Birmingham and Solihull system and of course general practice. I want to reassure you that the CCG has put in place robust incident planning and appropriate governance and escalation measures. This response is clinically led through Helen Jenkinson, Chief Nurse, and Dr Richard Mendelsohn, Chief Medical Officer. I know that many of you are raising queries regarding personal protective equipment and the management of suspected patients; the responses to these specific issues are being coordinated through the above people. As I'm sure you appreciate, guidance is being updated rapidly and we will keep you fully informed.

There are regular communications to general practice; please make sure you are reviewing these emails and regularly checking for updates on the CCG's website: <https://www.birminghamandsolihullccg.nhs.uk/your-health/coronavirus-advice-for-professionals>

If you have any queries you wish to raise with the CCG, please use the following address nhsbsolccg.covid19@nhs.net and our incident room will regularly review and ensure a quick response.

Over-and-above this, as Chair of the CCG, I wanted to also highlight to you the coordinated CCG approach and support to practices to assist you in the management of this situation. The CCG has established a General Practice Planning Group and the following measures have been discussed and taken forward:

- From an IT perspective, the CCG is working with the CSU to support general practice continuity plans – which will include looking at options for remote and agile working, for both clinical and administrative roles (this is led by Tim Atack, Chief Information Officer). In addition, we have agreed to support text messaging costs for patient communication regarding COVID-19, in line with national communications guidance.
- The Primary Care Commissioning and Contracting Team are discussing with the Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC), a number of proposals to ease the contractual burden if the outbreak escalates. This will include the suspension of most aspects of the Universal Patient Offer that don't affect direct patient care. A review of all other Local Improvement Schemes is urgently taking place.
- The CCG is actively engaging with NHSE/I to understand their approach to QOF, Directed Enhanced Services, Extended Access and other transformation targets. Nationally NHSE/I has already advised to change face-to-face appointments booked online, to triage appointments via telephone or video.

- The CCG is in contact with CQC regarding future general practice visits over the coming weeks and months.
- I am keen to ensure that the clinical resources we call on as a CCG are also available to support this incident; I will be coordinating a discussion with Dr Richard Mendelsohn around how we do this.
- I am keen that the CCG do not add to your workload and we will be reviewing all non-essential CCG meetings with clinicians over the next few weeks, or how we can do these virtually to save on travel and time commitments.
- One of the key areas we have identified as support to practices is around your business continuity and ways of working. A draft support tool has been developed and the localities team, working with Paul Sherriff in his provider role, will be spending this week contacting and meeting with you to see what help and good practice can be shared. I feel it is sensible now for practices to consider the method in which they deliver their care.
- I understand that GP provider organisations are coordinating and working together and are meeting on Wednesday; the CCG and I will of course provide help and support through to this group, wherever possible.

Whilst I hope that the measures set out above provide some reassurance of the work that is happening, at pace, I think we would all agree that we need a sensible, pragmatic and proportionate response to this evolving situation, which is likely to escalate over the coming weeks.

This will involve working and thinking in different ways, to ensure that we can continue operating and meeting the needs of our patients. The CCG and I are entirely committed to working with you and supporting general practice to navigate through what will be increasing challenging times. Let's work together, combining our expertise, skills and experience, to ensure a robust and coordinated approach to dealing with this ever-changing situation.

Best wishes, Peter

Dr Peter Ingham

Clinical Chair

NHS Birmingham and Solihull CCG