

Issued: 27 March 2020  
Embargo: Immediate



### **Changes to primary care in response to Covid-19 across north Cumbria**

Across north Cumbria all our general practice teams are working together on rising to the challenge faced by Covid-19. This might mean you see a change in the way you access primary care.

We want to reassure you that your family doctor and their wider team are working hard to keep you as well as possible at this challenging time, and explain why things might be different.

There are two main changes that patients might experience. They are:

- You won't be able to have an appointment without a conversation on the phone or on-line – and your query might be dealt with on the phone or on-line. If you are invited for a face-to-face appointment you might be asked to attend a different surgery and see a different healthcare professional
- GPs in your local area are working together to make sure that patients who are likely to have Covid-19 can be seen in one location which will become your area's hub - or red centre - solely for use by invited potential Covid-19 patients

Dr Colin Patterson, clinical lead for NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), said: "The challenges facing the NHS are unprecedented, and we have been working on making sure our environment keeps patients and NHS teams as safe as possible by making use of telephone and online.

"It is important that our general practice teams remain resilient in the face of increasing pressures, and that GPs and their wider healthcare teams and our out of hour's provider Cumbria Health On Call (CHOC) work together at a local level.

"Groups of practices – known as Primary Care Networks – are working together to make sure that they are reducing the risk of infection by consulting with patients as much as possible by phone and digital links.

"They are still seeing patients with health needs and are still offering essential routine appointments, but everyone will have a conversation on the phone before being invited for their appointment which in some cases might not be at your usual surgery.

"We are also planning those patients who need medical assessment and are poorly or potentially poorly with Covid-19 will be seen locally in one place with strict infection control measures in place."

This will be in the local designated hub for symptomatic patients who have been invited by their GP for face to face assessment.

It is not a general public facility, and will only be accessed by appointment after referral from NHS 111 to a GP and telephone triage by a GP.

It will NOT offer community testing.

In Eden this will be at Penrith Hospital. In Copeland it will be Flatt Walks Surgery in Whitehaven. Other areas are developing their hubs.

### **Pharmacy**

Our pharmacy teams are also doing their best during these difficult times to make sure that everyone gets the medicines they need. Help them to help you:

- Follow Government advice and do not visit a pharmacy if you or anyone in your household has a temperature or a new and continuous cough, even if mild.
- Plan ahead where possible. Pharmacies are working hard to provide prescriptions, but please try to order your next prescription seven days before it is due. This will help the pharmacist deal with urgent requests and queries.
- If you are handing in your prescription, please put your contact details on it so pharmacies can let you know when your medicines are ready. That means you won't need to be in the pharmacy for as long. Please don't ring the pharmacy unless it's urgent.
- If you are self-isolating please ask family, friends or neighbours to arrange to pick up your medication for you. If you don't have anyone who can collect your medicine, speak to your community pharmacy for advice about how they can help.
- If you are well and can visit the pharmacy yourself, think about how you can help family, friends and neighbours who are self-isolating by collecting their medicines on their behalf (you may need to take ID with you and will need to know the name and address of the person you are collecting for).
- Do not ask for extra medicine or an increase in prescription duration as this could lead to overall medicines shortages. Continue to request as normal and do not stockpile.

You may have to queue and respect social distancing at your pharmacy. Some pharmacies are closing for part of the day to enable them to respond to demand.

Our NHS teams across Cumbria are working really hard and need your patience and support to keep going.

**Anyone who suspects they have Covid-19 is advised to follow this national guidance:**

Stay at home if you have coronavirus symptoms

Stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home.

Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do at 111.nhs.uk

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Only get in contact with NHS 111 if you feel you can't cope or your symptoms are getting worse and they will give you advice and may refer you to a GP.

Other useful advice:

How long to stay at home?

- if you have symptoms of coronavirus, you'll need to stay at home for 7 days
- if you live with someone who has symptoms, you'll need to stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms
- If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

<Ends>

**Notes to Editors**

NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

*Commissioning primary care, community and hospital services to get the best healthcare and health outcomes for our communities.*

**For more information please contact Julie Clayton – Head of Communications and Engagement at NHS North Cumbria CCG on 07826 918018**

**For more information about Covid-19:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>