



**Welcome to the first newsletter produced by the four Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the Black Country and West Birmingham. As Chief Executive Officer for the four CCGs I wanted to use this opportunity to place on record my thanks to all the key workers supporting the response to Coronavirus and to bring together key information to help you during this time.**

Over the past few months, the Black Country and West Birmingham has seen a large number of cases of Coronavirus, more than many other areas in the country. Many of these people have been cared for and treated by the NHS and have survived. However, sadly we have seen a number of people who have lost their lives to this virus. As the numbers are released daily on these deaths, I always take time to remember that for each number there is a family, friends and colleagues who have lost someone close to them. Just last week, I stood by the side of the road outside my house to pay my last respects to my neighbour who died from the virus and it reminded me, not just how many people are affected, but also how we are not able to say goodbye or pay our respects in the way we would normally do. My condolences are with every one of you affected by this virus.

The NHS was well prepared for this pandemic in the Black Country and West Birmingham, and our teams have responded with tireless commitment, dedication and compassion. Our services rapidly adjusted their focus to ensure the safety of our workforce and those we serve. We mobilised a local Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supply chain, NHS testing facilities and proactive care home testing ahead of most parts of the country. We worked hard to ensure that people knew how to stay safe and how to access healthcare when needed. Through these efforts, together with

our partners, we have made it through the first wave of the virus. Thank you to each and every one of you for your support, compliance and understanding during this time.

We now enter a new phase, one where the virus very much remains a threat, where careful monitoring of cases and mobilisation of increased testing, tracing and treatment will be key. This new phase also marks the restoration of those services which have been affected by the response to the virus over the last few weeks.

Across the Black Country and West Birmingham, we are working with partners in our hospital, community and primary care services to ensure that all urgent services are there for people when they need them, to reassure the public that services are safe and to restore as many services as we can as quickly as possible. Whilst this restoration and recovery is key, we are also taking time to reflect on the transformations that we have made and that people don't want to lose. We want to work with you to ensure we retain the positive ways the NHS has worked for you and with you during the pandemic.

I hope you find this newsletter helpful and I encourage you to share this information within your own networks and communities.

Best wishes,  
**Paul Maubach**

# Meet the Black Country and West Birmingham CCGs' Leadership Team

A newly appointed leadership team is now in place to deliver a single commissioning voice for all four CCGs across the Black Country and West Birmingham.

As part of the NHS-wide response to Coronavirus the team have been working collaboratively to ensure the continued provision of health services to local people.

There remains a number of positions to recruit to within the new team, these are:

- Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) Academy Director
- Deputy Chief Nursing Officer
- Primary Care Director
- HR Director
- Transformation Director
- Chief Medical Officer

We will keep you posted on appointment to these roles.



**Paul Maubach**  
Chief Executive



**Dr Anand Rischie**  
Walsall CCG Chair



**Dr David Hegarty**  
Dudley CCG Chair



**Dr Ian Sykes**  
Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG Chair



**Dr Salma Reehana**  
Wolverhampton CCG Chair



**Rachael Ellis**  
Deputy Accountable Officer



**Matthew Hartland**  
Deputy Accountable Officer



**James Green**  
Chief Finance Officer



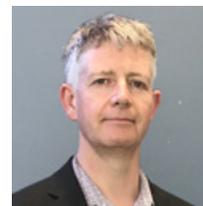
**Sally Roberts**  
Chief Nursing Officer



**Michelle Carolon**  
Sandwell Managing Director



**Neill Bucktin**  
Dudley Managing Director



**Paul Tulley**  
Wolverhampton Managing Director



**Geraint Griffiths**  
Walsall Managing Director



**Pip Mayo**  
West Birmingham Managing Director



**Steven Marshall**  
Programme Director for Mental Health Integration and Transformation



**Donna Macarthur**  
Interim Director of Primary Care



**Mike Hastings**  
Director of Technology and Operations



**Laura Broster**  
Director of Communications

- > Help Us Help You Campaign
- > Coronavirus symptoms

## Help Us Help You Campaign

During the Coronavirus pandemic, it is vitally important that people continue to seek urgent care and treatment when they need it.

New findings show that four in ten people are too concerned about being a burden on the NHS to seek help from their GP.

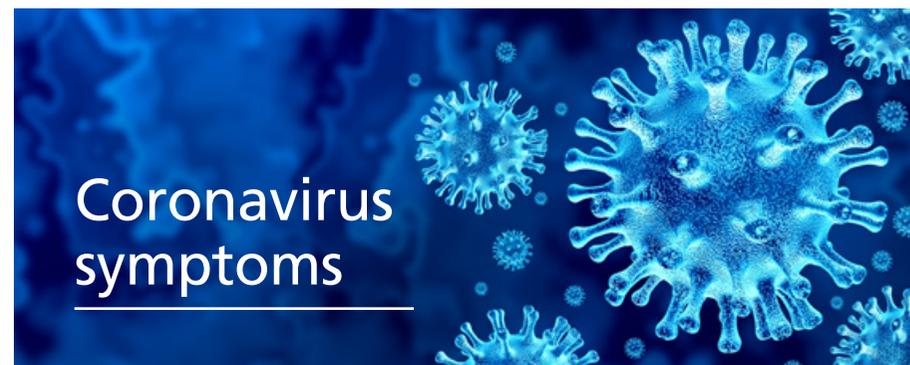
Health leaders across the Black Country and West Birmingham along with GPs, have stressed that the NHS is still there for patients who need urgent and emergency services for stroke, heart attack, and other killer conditions.

Dr Anand Rischie, a GP in Walsall and Clinical Chair at NHS Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group said,

**“GP practices across the Black Country and West Birmingham are working hard to ensure that patients can continue to safely access primary care services and are able to seek advice for any health related issues that patients or their carers may be worried about. It is important that if people have serious conditions or concerns they seek help. Therefore, whether you or a loved one have the symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, are a parent worried about their child or have concerns about conditions such as cancer you should seek help in the way you always would. Ignoring problems can have serious consequences – do not delay seeking help”**

To get these important messages out to the public, a National ‘Help Us Help You’ information campaign has been launched, which includes digital adverts, posters and social media content featuring NHS staff. Overall the campaign aims to persuade people to contact their GP or the 111 service if they have urgent care needs – or 999 in emergencies – and to attend hospital if they are told they should.

Information on [seeking medical help from home](#) can be found online.



### The main symptoms of Coronavirus are:



#### high temperature

– this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)



#### 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)



#### loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

– this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with Coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms.

### Staying at home if you have symptoms (self-isolation)

If your symptoms are mild, NHS 111 will usually advise you and anyone you live with not to leave your home. This is called self-isolation.

- **Anyone with symptoms should self-isolate for 7 days** from when their symptoms started.
- Anyone who **does not have symptoms should self-isolate for 14 days** from when the first person in your home started having symptoms.
- **If you get symptoms while self-isolating** – you should self-isolate for 7 days from when your symptoms started, even if it means you are self-isolating for longer than 14 days.

If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home or your symptoms get worse and you are not sure what to do, use the [111 online Coronavirus service](#). Call your GP surgery or NHS111 if you cannot get help online, or your symptoms worsen.

**Do not go to places like a GP surgery, hospital or pharmacy if you have symptoms.**

- > Shielding - if you are at high risk from Coronavirus (clinically extremely vulnerable)
- > Primary Care changes



## Shielding - if you are at high risk from Coronavirus (clinically extremely vulnerable)

**If you are at high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) from Coronavirus there are extra steps you are advised to take to protect yourself. These extra steps are called shielding.**

This advice is for people who have received a letter from the NHS, local council or their own GP saying they're at high risk. If you're not sure whether you're at high risk, view [who's at higher risk from coronavirus](#) online.

People who are shielding remain vulnerable and should continue to take precautions but can now leave their home if they wish, as long as they are able to maintain strict social distancing.

If you choose to spend time outdoors, this can be with members of your own household. If you live alone, you can spend time outdoors with one person from another household. Ideally, this should be the same person each time. If you do go out, you should take extra care to minimise contact with others by keeping 2 metres apart. This guidance will be kept under regular review so please do check out the guidance on the government website.

## Primary Care changes

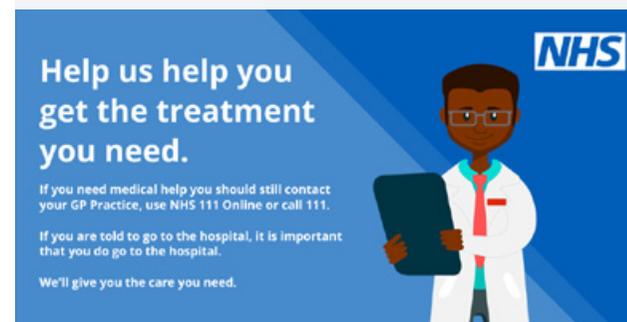
**Across the Black Country and West Birmingham, GP Practices are working hard to ensure they continue to safely provide access to services when you need it.**

To keep patients and healthcare staff safe, GP Practices are having to change some of their services temporarily.

The main changes are:

- GP surgeries are conducting initial patient appointments by telephone or video. This is to keep patients safe. You can book your appointment in the usual way by calling your practice or using your patient app.
- If a clinician refers a patient for a face-to-face assessment, they will be referred to a healthcare setting dependent on whether they have Coronavirus symptoms or have not got Coronavirus symptoms
- Practice Nurses are currently providing childhood immunisations, wound dressings (for non-housebound patients), urgent phlebotomy/patient testing where appropriate and essential vaccinations
- Long-term condition reviews are being completed via the telephone where appropriate, and safe and well checks are also taking place.

To keep patients and healthcare staff safe, please do not attend your GP surgery to request medication or book a routine appointment.





## Pharmacy

**As part of the NHS-wide response to Coronavirus (Covid-19), hundreds of local pharmacies have provided an outstanding response to patients during these challenging circumstances.**

Pharmacy teams are a critical part of the NHS and in the past few months they have seen the demand for repeat prescriptions, over the counter medicines and advice and reassurance soar.

Community pharmacies across the Black Country and West Birmingham, are working tirelessly to ensure that everyone's medicines and healthcare needs continue to be met.

To help pharmacies to cope under the increased pressure, we would like to ask local patients and members of the public to:

- **Avoid pharmacies if you are showing symptoms of Coronavirus:** If you have a high temperature, a new continuous cough, a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. Please avoid entering your local pharmacies as you would any other healthcare setting.
- **Be patient:** All pharmacies are under immense pressure and working around the clock to ensure that you get what you need.
- **Order medicines as normal:** There is no need to stockpile medicines. Ordering extra prescriptions and buying more over the counter medicines than you need will contribute to disruption to the medicines supply chain, which is otherwise robust.

Pharmacies will continue to remain open, but you may see that some are now having to reduce the hours during which they can admit members of the public. This is to ensure that pharmacy teams can carry out tasks such as preparing medicines and replenishing stock so that these vital services can continue safely.

Most pharmacies can be contacted by phone and email, and many have their own websites and social media channels – please use these methods to contact your pharmacies if you are displaying symptoms of Coronavirus.

Stephen Noble, Local Pharmaceutical Committee Chief Officer and Local Pharmacist said:

*“Community pharmacy teams are a really important part of the NHS, and like all other NHS workers they are under immense pressure at the moment. We would like to ask patients and members of the public to take some very simple steps to help protect these teams so that pharmacies can continue to carry out their critical roles and ensure that everyone continues to get the medicines, help and support they need, when they need it.”*

You can find your nearest pharmacy [here](#).

## Urgent Care – A&E usage

**With the latest statistics showing that visits to A&E in April were lower than usual, we have been supporting an NHS drive to persuade local people to seek urgent care and treatment when they need it.**

Local health leaders along with GPs have stressed that the NHS is still there for patients without coronavirus who need urgent and emergency services for stroke, heart attack, and other killer conditions.

Nationally, the NHS has warned that delays in getting treatment due to Coronavirus fears pose a long-term risk to people's health.

The NHS is still open for business and services across the country have been restructured to reduce the risk of patients being exposed to or passing on the virus in hospital. It is vitally important that if people have serious conditions or concerns they seek help.

Whether you or a loved one have the symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, are a parent worried about their child or have concerns about conditions such as cancer, you should seek help in the way you always would.

Local people who are worried should get in touch with their GP, use NHS 111, or in serious cases get to hospital. Ignoring problems can have serious consequences – **do not delay seeking help.**



## Services returning

**In March 2020, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the NHS initiated the fastest and most far reaching repurposing of NHS services, staffing and capacity in our 72-year history.**

Just like the rest of the NHS, our number one priority for the last few months has been ensuring that all those who need urgent care – not just those with Coronavirus – have been able to get it when they need it.

Combined with the need to avoid unnecessary contact to reduce the spread of the virus, this has meant that some non-urgent appointments and surgeries may have been postponed, and others delivered differently using technology.

Locally, we are now preparing to gradually increase some important face-to-face services, but only where this can be done safely – the virus is still circulating and we don't want to put our patients, the public or our staff at greater risk.

Work is already under way to capture the experiences of those using and delivering services in new ways so that we can 'lock in' those areas where we have made great strides towards positive transformation that we don't want to lose.

We'll make sure that we continue to involve stakeholders, patients and the public over the coming weeks and months to ensure that local people know when services have been reinstated, and so that they can have a say in the reimagined and re-energised NHS.

We will keep you up-to-date as this work progresses.

# Getting tested for Coronavirus

One of the most challenging things about Coronavirus is the uncertainty, not knowing who has the infection or when it's safe to return to normal life. Good quality testing can help provide us with certainty – and it's a big part of how we're going to defeat this disease.

Testing is a key pillar of the government's strategy to protect the NHS and save lives. Locally, we've played our part by rapidly mobilising a new staff testing site in Wolverhampton.

If you live in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and have any of the symptoms of coronavirus, you can ask for a test to check if you have the virus through the [NHS website](#). Those unable to access the internet can call 119.

#### You can ask for a test:

- for yourself, if you have Coronavirus symptoms now (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)
- for someone you live with, if they have Coronavirus symptoms.

You need to have the test in the first five days of having symptoms, and it's best to ask for the test in the first three days, as it may take a day or two to arrange.

If you're an essential worker, you can apply for priority testing through [GOV.UK](#). You can also get tested through this route if you have symptoms of Coronavirus and live with an essential worker.

The new NHS Test and Trace service will then support the tracing of anyone who you may have come into contact with, if you test positive for coronavirus.

Anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test & Trace and will need to share info about their recent interactions, including people with whom you have had close, recent contact and places you have visited

The more rapidly we can identify people who may have been at risk of infection and, if necessary, advise them to self-isolate, the more effectively we can reduce the spread of the virus and maintain transmission at low levels.

Those who have been in close contact with someone who tests positive must isolate for 14 days, even if they have no symptoms.



## How NHS Test and Trace works for someone with coronavirus symptoms:



**isolate:** As soon as you experience coronavirus symptoms, you should self-isolate for at least 7 days. Anyone else in your household should self-isolate for 14 days from when you started having symptoms.



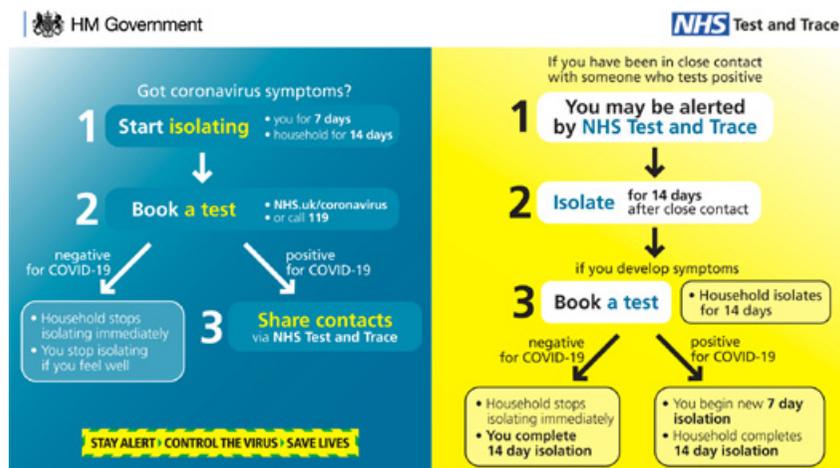
**test:** You should order a coronavirus test immediately at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](#) or call 119 if you have no internet access.



**results:** If your test is positive you must complete the remainder of your 7-day self-isolation. Anyone in your household should also complete self-isolation for 14 days from when you started having symptoms. If your test is negative, you and other household members no longer need to isolate.



**share contacts:** If you test positive for coronavirus, the NHS Test and Trace service will send you a text or email alert or call you within 24 hours with instructions of how to share details of people you have been in close, recent contact with and places you have visited. It is important that you respond as soon as possible so that we can give appropriate advice to those who need it. You will be asked to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of our NHS contact tracers.



## Antibody testing

**Antibody tests are now being rolled out to NHS and care staff, eligible patients and care residents in England to see if they have had coronavirus as part of a new national antibody testing programme.**

- Over the next few weeks all NHS and care staff in the Black Country and West Birmingham will be offered a test, with patients and care residents eligible at their clinician’s request
- Accurate and reliable lab-based antibody tests will improve understanding and data on COVID-19

Tests will be prioritised for NHS and care staff, and clinicians will be able to request them for patients in both hospital and social care settings if they deem it appropriate.

An antibody test can tell someone whether they have had the virus that

causes Coronavirus in the past, by analysing a blood sample.

A positive antibody test demonstrates that someone has developed antibodies to the virus. The presence of antibodies signals that the body has staged an immune response to the virus.

Covid-19 is a new disease, and our understanding of the body’s immune response to it is limited. We do not know, for example, how long an antibody response lasts, nor whether having antibodies means you can’t transmit the virus to others.

Our understanding of the virus will grow as new scientific evidence and studies emerge.

An antibody test result can only tell an individual whether or not they have had the virus in the past. Antibody tests are also being used currently in surveillance studies, to understand what proportion of the population have already had the virus.

## Working together across the Black Country and West Birmingham – Our future meetings

**In response to the Coronavirus, the CCGs have taken the decision to suspend arrangements for public meetings to adhere to Government guidance and keep our system focused on responding to the pandemic. Much of the usual work our committees do, has also been scaled back in line with NHS guidance.**

Members of the Governing Body and partners from the four CCGs met in May to receive an update on the response to the pandemic and on the CCGs financial and quality monitoring activity that had taken place. As part of our continued alignment of the CCGs, this work will be fed into meetings of the new Joint Health Commissioning Board and CCG Governing Bodies ‘in Common’ during June and July. Discussions are taking place on technical arrangements for virtual public attendance at these meetings and at the virtual Annual General Meetings (AGM) in July.

The dates for the AGM meetings for each CCG are as follows:

- **Walsall CCG – 21 July at 6pm**
- **Wolverhampton CCG – 22 July at 12.30pm**
- **Dudley CCG – 22 July at 5.45pm**
- **Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG – 23 July at 6pm**

As we move towards ‘business as usual’, the work to align the governance arrangements for the four CCGs will continue, and we hope that a regular cycle of meetings for new committees reviewing Commissioning, Finance, Performance and Quality will commence in August/September. We will also continue our conversations with stakeholders about the future form of the CCGs as part of the development of an Integrated Care System for the Black Country and West Birmingham - in particular, in light of the way we have worked together during the Coronavirus pandemic.

- › Antibody testing
- › Working together across the Black Country and West Birmingham – Our future meetings

# Engagement

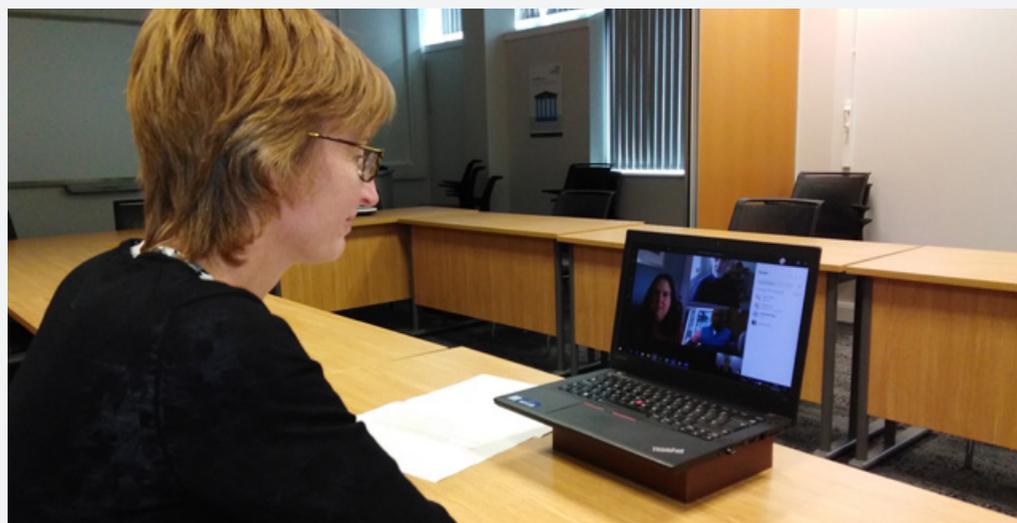
## Going online

An integral part of our engagement approach across the Black Country and West Birmingham, is our patient and citizen forums, where we have the opportunity to listen to the experiences of local people. Since the onset of Coronavirus and the lockdown, we have needed to embrace online engagement tools, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams – and so have our patients and communities.

We have held online forums in each of the five Black Country and West Birmingham localities - with patients, stakeholders and communities, and have also held specific forums on Coronavirus with community leaders, online mental health forums and End of Life Care focus groups. Though not the same as our face-to-face meetings, these online forums have received some really positive feedback and allowed us to continue to engage our population in these difficult times.

One patient commented that,

**“it felt like I was really connecting with the presenter on a 1:1 basis.”**



*Dr Anna Lock (Palliative medicine consultant with the local Connected Palliative Care team) – carrying out an online focus group during “Dying Matters” week with some local people who have suffered a bereavement.*

## Working together

Patient and stakeholder engagement specialists from across the Black Country and West Birmingham have been coming together to share good practice and improved ways of working. They have now begun looking at how they can involve patients, stakeholders and communities to help them come up with a set of shared principles for engagement across the area, whilst keeping a strong sense of identity in each of the five places.

If you’d like to get involved with engagement opportunities, you can contact your local engagement team via the following email addresses:

### Dudley

✉ [dudleyccg.contact@nhs.net](mailto:dudleyccg.contact@nhs.net)

### Sandwell and West Birmingham

✉ [SWBCCG.engagement@nhs.net](mailto:SWBCCG.engagement@nhs.net)

### Wolverhampton

✉ [wolccg.wccg@nhs.net](mailto:wolccg.wccg@nhs.net)

### Walsall

✉ [walsallccg.getinvolved@nhs.net](mailto:walsallccg.getinvolved@nhs.net)