

# Oxfordshire NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing: COVID-19

21 April 2020

As we embark on the fifth week of lock down, the Oxfordshire health and local authority partners continue to work tirelessly to provide an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However we are not doing this alone; our voluntary and third sector partners and local groups are very involved in the effort to support staff and the community during this challenging time. Whilst this briefing is longer than usual, we thought we would share some of this fantastic work with you.

## **Healthwatch Oxfordshire is working to support residents and help them access information on health and social care**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire, the health and social care advocacy organisation which supports local people to influence health and social care in the county, is working hard to support residents who are feeling cut off from their community. Healthwatch has turned its effort during the COVID-19 pandemic to supporting people who don't know where to turn for information or help, or those who don't have access to the internet. They are helping to give isolated people information they need and to put them in touch with support during this challenging time.

People are also being advised to contact Healthwatch to use their language translation facility, to help access information, if English is not their first language; they are also providing links to British Sign Language updates and other formats.

People who require support to access help and services can contact Healthwatch by:

- Calling on 01865 520520 Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm
- Emailing [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)
- Visiting [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)

Healthwatch is also gathering information on how people in the county are managing with accessing health and care at this time, and how coronavirus support is for them. They are keen to hear people's experience either by phoning them directly or filling in a short questionnaire on the front page of the [website](#). Daily information updates from Healthwatch are also available via Twitter [@HealthwatchOxon](#) or the Healthwatch Oxfordshire Facebook page, as well as signing up to the weekly news bulletin [here](#).

## **Volunteering**

Many volunteers are coming forward across the country to support the efforts being taken to beat this pandemic. The term 'volunteers' is being used to describe very different groups of people and organisations:

1. General population/individuals wanting to volunteer. The main route for registering has been through the local authorities but some community initiatives have attracted volunteers to support local residents.
2. NHS volunteers are those individuals from the general population who have volunteered and registered through the NHS route (it is likely that many will have also registered above). This is a nationally run process and there is a referral route to access these individuals for specific tasks.
3. Voluntary/third sector organisations. These are already established and linking in through local authorities and/or the NHS (for example they may already provide services).
4. Businesses offering to help – typically unrelated to business as usual e.g. Harwell offering to manufacture PPE such as 3d printed face shields, Renault Formula 1 offering their PPE.

5. Former NHS health care professionals who have offered to return to practice. There is a national process to process these returners and match them with local NHS organisations.

### **Close collaboration with the voluntary and community sector**

The close collaboration between the County Council, Districts and the City, with the voluntary and community sector is continuing, with over 550 parish and town councils, community groups, organisations and local businesses registered on Oxfordshire All In and Oxford Together. Through these channels there is a collective of over 45,000 volunteers across the county.

There have been some amazing examples of existing voluntary groups adapting to address the current needs of communities. For example, the scout leaders in Witney are running a prescription home delivery service so that people do not have to queue outside pharmacies. In just over two weeks, they have delivered more than 1,700 prescriptions, helping more people stay safe at home.

The Oxfordshire County Council website provides a central hub of information and guidance for voluntary and community sector organisations, including the range of funding opportunities that can be accessed: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/volunteer-support](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/volunteer-support).

### **Working with residents**

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have a dedicated support service for their residents to complement the wider Oxfordshire system's response work. The service:

- Provides support for the thousands of South and Vale residents on the NHS' shielded list, which includes weekly calls to check on their welfare and to address any concerns.
- Provides support for any South and Vale resident that needs help and has nowhere else to turn to.

The councils' support goes beyond simply providing essential supplies such as food and medicine – it includes help with daily activities, transport to medical appointments and a regular friendly chat.

To be able to offer this support to any resident in addition to those in the high risk and vulnerable categories, the councils have built up a huge network of community volunteers. The councils' role is to connect these residents with a local community group that can provide the support they desperately need and on an ongoing basis.

It's through this approach the councils hope to create a long-lasting legacy of active community groups that support vulnerable and isolated residents far beyond this pandemic to build more cohesive and connected communities in the future, which younger generations then model. Sometimes, however, the need for help cannot wait 24 hours or a community group isn't available, so the councils have also put in place a wraparound service to deliver urgent supplies and medicines, through a bank of staff volunteers.

To access help, residents simply need to call 01235 422600 or email [community.support@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:community.support@southandvale.gov.uk). The service mirrors Oxfordshire County Council's and is available Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 8pm and Saturdays and Sundays between 9am and 5pm.

To help promote the service the council has produced a series of promotional videos using real case studies to demonstrate that anyone can find themselves in a situation of needing help and should not to be afraid to ask. This is one of them <https://youtu.be/96ulEMXtu84>

### **Key relationship helps feed residents most at risk in West Oxfordshire**

Since COVID-19 first became a reality, a key priority for West Oxfordshire District Council has been ensuring those at risk are receiving sufficient food.

From the outset, the council team were able to build on their relationship with the Witney and West Oxfordshire Food Bank, an established organisation which deals with referrals from residents across the district who, for whatever reason, are struggling to buy food.

Since the crisis began, council staff have been helping ensure the food bank has enough stocks to meet with spiralling demand. They have also referred residents who have been getting in touch directly to the food bank.

The food bank received 109 referrals in February this year but in the Easter week alone they had 50 in four days. There have been problems with food supplies as the food bank normally receives donations made by people visiting supermarkets but this dried up as individuals have struggled to get food themselves.

Council officers worked with the trustees of the food bank to open an account with wholesaler Bidfood where food in sufficient quantities could be bought using cash donated to the food bank. They also worked closely with Didcot-based SOFEA which, in partnership with FareShare, re-distributes food surplus from supermarkets across the Thames Valley.

The food bank and the district council are working very closely to ensure food parcels are distributed to those in need. The council is also supporting the food bank to access sources of grant funding and helping them write bids which is vital to support the success of the project.

### **Single Point of Contact and Locality Hubs at Oxford City Council**

At the end of March, Oxford City Council launched a city-wide single point of contact (SPOC) for all residents and partners that require support due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SPOC takes referrals from organisations and residents that require support; these needs are recorded and then triaged to the five Locality Hubs for a response and action. Each Locality Hub covers a geographic area that focuses on meeting the needs of the people that require support. The Hubs have responded to 490 referrals up to 7 April. These have ranged from a friendly phone call, picking up urgent supplies to tackling issues related to isolation. A breakdown on referrals shows:

- 91% of referrals were classified as vulnerable
- 55% of referrals had mobility issues
- Seven referrals requested support and a reminder to take their medicines; emphasising the need and importance of prevention work during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly for the most vulnerable residents.

SPOC will also make referrals to the County Council if there are adult social care issues / and to the Locality Hubs if there is a dual need. Nine referrals were made to the County Council due to specific adult social care needs – emphasising that the referral process with the County Council is working well.

Referrals should be made via:

- Oxford City Council Contact Centre / SPOC Number 01865 249 811
- Online Access [www.oxford.gov.uk/CommunityAssistance](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/CommunityAssistance)
- SPOC is a 24/7 hour provision

Through Oxford City Council's work, they will continue to encourage vulnerable people to remain in their homes and have their needs met – thereby reducing pressure on the NHS. Like other organisations, the Oxford City Council response is reminding people to take medicines and helping to pick up urgent supplies and tackling other issues associated with isolation. For more information please visit the Oxford City Council [website](#).

## **Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership**

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) continues to work with the county's business community, signposting them to both up-to-date Government resources and local authority support. In addition, they are also highlighting their own new and existing business support programmes.

More widely, OxLEP are also playing a 'convening' role during the pandemic, helping to mobilise the county's private sector to support the local and national response to the pandemic. For more information, go to: [www.oxfordshirelep.com/coronavirus](http://www.oxfordshirelep.com/coronavirus).

### **Supporting the most at risk residents – the shielded patients list and other vulnerable residents**

In the briefing last week, we talked about the Oxfordshire Shielded patients list. This is a list created centrally by NHS England of people who are most at risk from infection from COVID-19 owing to a specific group of underlying clinical conditions. These people have been instructed to self-isolate for 12 weeks.

There are approximately 13,000 people on the NHSE shielded list in Oxfordshire and of these around 7,200 people have responded to the letters sent by the NHS centrally and have registered for support to help them isolate for 12 weeks. Their details are passed to OCC which in turn checks whether they are already known to social care and pass the details onto the relevant district or city council.

About a third of these people who have registered have said they need help receiving essential supplies. Community pharmacies are responsible for access to prescriptions and local authorities are supporting in terms of food, social and community support. In addition, Government food supplies continue to be delivered to those who have stated they need them.

The 7,200 people who have registered are being called or emailed individually by local authorities to offer a welfare check to ensure they have the support they need. OCCG has also asked all GP practices to ensure that they have a plan for the shielded patients on their practice lists.

Central Government has supplied limited details of the 13,000 to supermarkets to ensure this group can get priority access to shopping delivery slots.

More and more Oxfordshire residents are responding to their GPs' and NHS letters and the list of 7,200 continues to grow daily. The NHS England list was expanded by 5,000 people in the week before Easter and so we can expect a surge of enquiries as this group registers for support. Local authorities and the voluntary sector will maintain their proactive contact with this group as it is added to, identifying those at risk and signposting options for community support. The longer list of 13,000 is known to GPs and health practitioners who are focused on making sure that there are plans in place to support each of them.

In addition to those who are formally shielded under this scheme, there is a much wider group of people who may be vulnerable in terms of their health and welfare at this time. Local authority and health partners are working to identify this wider group which includes anyone over the age of 70, pregnant women, and those at risk of domestic violence, deprivation, food poverty, housing, homelessness, severe mental illness, learning disability and/or autism and social isolation.

Partners across the wider public and voluntary sector system are working with their stakeholders and clients to ensure that all forms of vulnerability are addressed. Work includes signposting funding opportunities for the voluntary sector, joint approaches to communication around opportunities and services that are available, mapping the various activities that are underway to identify and address any gaps in provision.

It is presumed that this support offer will be needed until the formal lock down is stepped down and/or instructions in respect of the 12 week self-isolation programme are amended.

## Support for mental health services

Oxfordshire third sector partners continue to provide NHS services with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT), adapting provision to meet the current situation and support service-users and patients in our communities. Services include Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, TalkingSpace Plus, Oxfordshire Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) model and older adult mental health services.

Third sector partners are also supporting the newly launched Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Helpline launched at Easter to take pressure off NHS 111, specifically with staffing from Oxfordshire Mind and soon Response.

Third sector partners who are continuing to support business as usual include:

- Oxfordshire Mind and PML - TalkingSpace Plus
- Response, Restore, Oxfordshire Mind, Connection Support, Elmore Community Services, Root and Branch, Bridewell – Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership
- Response and partners (Ark-T Centre, Autism Family Support, Sofea, Trax, Oxfordshire Youth, RAW, Synolos, Banbury Young Homelessness Project) - CAMHS Oxfordshire
- Age UK – older adults Oxfordshire
- Young Dementia UK – older adults Oxfordshire

## How Oxford Hospitals Charity is supporting OUH staff during the COVID-19 pandemic

Oxford Hospitals Charity supports the four hospital sites within Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) – the John Radcliffe Hospital, Churchill Hospital and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (NOC) in Oxford and the Horton General Hospital in Banbury.

The charity team is working a rota of 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, doing all they can to support as many staff and patients as possible. They are also working with the hundreds of local businesses, groups and individuals who want to offer to help – and ensuring they do not come into the hospitals unnecessarily.

The charity is particularly grateful to the volunteers who are helping to deliver support and to all those in the local community who have donated or fundraised for their appeal [www.hospitalcharity.co.uk/staffsupport](http://www.hospitalcharity.co.uk/staffsupport) (for Horton [www.hospitalcharity.co.uk/horton](http://www.hospitalcharity.co.uk/horton)).

The charity is co-ordinating offers of support (except PPE and accommodation which go through the Trust) so, if you are asked, please direct people to:

- [charity@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:charity@ouh.nhs.uk)
- 01865 743444
- [www.hospitalcharity.co.uk/staffsupport](http://www.hospitalcharity.co.uk/staffsupport)
- On Twitter @oxhospcharity

A few examples of the support being provided are listed below:

- 350 meals, twice a day for frontline John Radcliffe staff, via [Salute the NHS](#) – increasing to 600 meals, twice a day
- Numerous other meals to wards and departments across the JR, Churchill and NOC
- 250 meals a day, twice a day, for frontline staff at the Horton General
- 150 meals a day for non-frontline staff at the Horton General
- Meals and support for staff staying in hotels and lodgings to be close to the hospitals
- 2,000+ care packs, plus thousands of Easter eggs donated and distributed across all hospitals

- Plans for additional psychological support for staff and creating a number of 'Respite Rooms' for staff to be able to rest and recharge in a comfortable and quiet area
- Practical items such as supplying hundreds of phone chargers to wards for patients' use, and kettles and microwaves, for staff use.

The OUH is incredibly grateful for the work of Oxford Hospitals Charity and to all those businesses, groups and individuals involved in supporting our staff and patients.

### **Tablets help patients in hospital stay in touch with friends and family**

Visiting restrictions are in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep patients and staff safe in the four OUH hospitals in Oxford and Banbury. These restrictions mean that patients are not allowed visitors – with a few exceptions including enabling one visitor for patients nearing the end of life.

However, the OUH Trust is helping patients to stay connected with friends and family and friends, with tablet devices provided to patients free of charge so that they can video call their loved ones. This 'virtual visiting' has been made possible thanks to a partnership between the Trust and their suppliers.

The Chief Digital and Partnerships Officer, at the OUH, set about securing a technological solution and within a week more than 200 Samsung tablets were delivered to the Trust.

The Trust is very grateful to staff at Wifi Spark as this project, from its inception to set up in the hospital, took six days. It is making a real difference to patients and helping them to keep in touch with family and friends. [More information is available on the OUH website.](#)

### **Key workers come together to Clap For Our Carers**

The weekly 'Clap For Our Carers' at 8pm every Thursday helps the public show their appreciation for key workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also an opportunity for us to show our support for key workers in different sectors.

OUH staff were joined by colleagues from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Thames Valley Police on Thursday 16 April when they joined us outside the West Wing at the John Radcliffe Hospital for the 'Clap For Our Carers' [event](#)'.

### **Patient praises OUH staff after recovering from COVID-19**

As of Thursday 16 April, 150 people had been successfully treated for COVID-19 in OUH hospitals and discharged home. Malcolm Airs, 79, from Dorchester-upon-Thames, took the time and trouble to thank the staff who treated him. Malcolm's story and thank you is available on the Trust's [website](#).

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Availability of PPE has been an issue in Oxfordshire for our frontline services as in the rest of the county. Hospitals, ambulance trusts, GP practices, pharmacists, care homes and hospices have been receiving supplies issued directly to them. Across BOB (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire) we have put in place mutual aid arrangements to support providers wherever possible. We are using these mutual aid arrangements to ensure providers have access to PPE. We continue to monitor the situation closely to identify and address any specific supply issues.

### **Staff Testing**

The priority for coronavirus testing has been patients in hospital, to inform their clinical diagnosis, followed by NHS and social care workers having to self-isolate because either they, or a member of their household, have symptoms.

As a next step, there is now the capacity to start to test other frontline workers who are having to self-isolate because either they, or a member of their household, have symptoms. Like with NHS and social care workers, we want to find out if these people have the virus – and, if they don't, they might be able to return to their work that is so

important. This programme will be rolled out over the coming week and an update will be included in next week's briefing.

### **Help tackle the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health**

University of Oxford researchers are asking the public's help to understand the best forms of support for children and young people's mental health during the pandemic. A survey for parents and carers of children aged 4-16 years seeks to gather insight into what protects children and young people's mental health over time and at particular stress points, and how this varies according to child and family characteristics. The aim is to identify what advice, support and help parents would find most useful, so that the most effective support can be given to the best effect. More information is available on OHFT's website [here](#) and the survey is available [here](#).

Please email [occq.media-team@nhs.net](mailto:occq.media-team@nhs.net) with any queries and we will endeavour to get back to you.