

## **USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT THE DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICES**

The safety and well-being of our patients will always be our number one priority as a Trust and this is especially true during the current coronavirus pandemic.

During these challenging times we are working hard to reopen services and continue to care for our patients safely. We are still here to help you.

Although people are asked to adhere to government restrictions, if you are already a patient of South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust or are unwell, you should continue to access the care that you need.

If you are a patient with a long-term condition please do keep in touch with your GP, community and hospital services. Please see our services section by [clicking here](#) where more information is available, including the best way to contact us, which may include by email or telephone.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM WORRIED ABOUT MY CONDITION?**

COVID-19 has had a major effect on our services and we're trying to keep you in the picture as best we can. If you have any further concerns, please call the number on your appointment letter or speak to the department directly.

## **MY GP HAS REFERRED ME FOR TREATMENT BUT I'VE JUST RECEIVED A LETTER TELLING ME IT'S BEEN 'PAUSED' – WHY?**

All hospitals, including Warwick and Stratford, were instructed by NHS England to cancel outpatient appointments and routine surgery in March 2020 so they were not overwhelmed by the virus. Many outpatients have been held by telephone or video calls. We reconfigured parts of our hospitals, freeing up beds, changing wards and redeploying clinicians, nurses, admin and support staff to help as COVID-19 became our focus. We're now adapting those plans again, and we aim to restore our services whilst also safely supporting patients who may have COVID-19.

## **WAS IT JUST SURGERY OR OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENTS THAT WERE PAUSED?**

Since March 2020, we were able to continue to undertake life-saving surgery and cancer treatment, and emergencies whilst we paused all planned care.

## **WHAT ABOUT ME? I WAS ON THE WAITING LIST BEFORE THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

If you were on a waiting list before the COVID-19 outbreak, you will still be on our waiting list unless we have written to you to advise you differently. However, you will be waiting longer to be seen and we are really sorry about this. Our clinicians are regularly reviewing our waiting lists and prioritising patients to be treated. Since the lockdown, GPs have continued to refer patients to us and they are also on our waiting lists.

The Trust has now reopened booking for patients needing an outpatient appointment following GP referral (known as e-referrals), for the majority of outpatient services. From April 2021, we have also reopened the majority of theatres on our hospital sites, allowing us to make inroads into our waiting lists.

## **HOW LONG WILL I HAVE TO WAIT?**

Our clinical teams are going through our waiting lists very carefully and patients will be seen depending on the state of their health. In reality, that means those with the greatest need will be seen first. Lists are being reviewed regularly as we know some people's conditions will deteriorate so whereas they might not have been a priority to start, that could change as the weeks and months go by.

## **WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SORT THIS?**

Our clinical teams have been carefully reviewing each and every patient on a waiting list to determine which patients are able to come to hospitals, which can be delivered in other ways, i.e. digitally or in other venues and community settings.

As per government guidelines, we are following social distancing guidelines which means we are limited by the number of people who safely can be in our waiting areas, and some appointments / treatment is taking longer due to the need to wear PPE and follow infection control procedures. For some services, that means we are not able to offer as many appointments / theatre slots as we were before the pandemic.

As the number of COVID-19 positive patients is subsiding in our hospitals, and the vaccination programme is rolled out, our plan is to restore services in the coming months. In some cases, this means reinstating services in the same way we previously provided them. In others, we will use the COVID-19 experience to make ways of accessing them more flexible, including the use of technology, and where appropriate, providing them in the community.

## **HOW DO I STAY UP TO DATE WITH DEVELOPMENTS?**

We're trying to keep everyone informed and we really appreciate your patience and understanding. When we are able to offer you an appointment, either in person or

virtually, we will write to you to confirm this. There's a lot of administration work that is taking place as we restart services and we are aware that patients may receive duplicate letters from the hospital. Please bear with us as we try to ensure this doesn't happen.

We are sharing regular updates with GPs so they can pass on information to patients. We'll also be keeping people informed of important changes and general updates through our Facebook pages, other social media channels and our website. We're also asking the media to help us relay important changes.

Please speak to your clinical teams if you have specific queries and concerns about your condition. When it's time for you to come for your appointment or procedure, we'll get in touch with you. We're here to help you, so we ask you to attend your appointment. Please be assured that our hospitals are safe. If you've got any concerns about coming to hospital, you can call the number on your appointment letter.

## **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET SERVICES BACK TO NORMAL?**

It's impossible to give exact dates. The safety and well-being of our patients will always be our number one priority as a Trust and this is especially true during the current coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 has had a major effect on our services and we're trying to keep you in the picture as best we can.

Whilst we still have to be ready to respond to the ongoing pandemic, our efforts have turned again to restoring services. We have already reopened the majority of theatres on our hospital sites (April 2021), and have reopened booking for outpatient services. The scale of the challenge is enormous, and we understand it will be difficult for patients who might be still waiting.

## **WHY IS IT TAKING SO LONG?**

COVID-19 has meant that NHS has had to change the way it delivers care. Our priority is to keep patients safe, and in line with government restrictions, we are limited by the number of people who can safely be on our sites. Enhanced cleaning of all our areas and the need to wear PPE and follow infection control procedures means that some appointment /treatment will take longer. For some services, that means we are not able to offer as many appointments / theatre slots as we were before the pandemic.

Some of our clinical areas have been temporarily adapted to respond to the pandemic, and work is taking place to return these to their original use before we can safely restore services. Many staff were also redeployed to areas of most need, and therefore for some services, we are not able to offer as many appointments as before.

## **I'VE BEEN CONTACTED BY THE HOSPITAL, BUT MY APPOINTMENT IS NOW WITH A PHYSIOTHERAPIST AT MY GP PRACTICE AND NOT A HOSPITAL DOCTOR/SURGEON. WHY?**

COVID-19 has meant that NHS, in some cases, has had to change the way it delivers care. In some cases, this means reinstating services in the same way we have previously provided them. In others it means using the COVID-19 experience to improve services or to make ways of accessing them more flexibly, including the use of technology for some of our appointments. Many of our teams have also been working differently, and

We are also actively exploring how we deliver more hospital services, where appropriate, in community settings. These innovations will help us reduce the backlog and offer care in different ways where clinically appropriate.