

Primary Care Commissioning Committee

Questions received from the public with responses from the CCG

MEETING DATE: 14/05/2020

Question #1
from a member
of the public in
Lewisham

What action is being taken in Primary Care to MITIGATE the unequal outcomes of Covid 19?

1 Will you be taking any action for staff in Primary care as set out by NHS Somerset FT for BAME staff?
<https://somerseft.nhs.uk/?news=supporting-our-bame-colleagues>

2. Will you be taking any action in line with letters from NHSE?

3 Will you be taking action on supporting provision of appropriate PPE or Local Testing for local staff and patients , especially for people who are disabled or who do not have cars or cannot afford transport?

4 Are there are other specific actions you are taking or planning to mitigate adverse outcomes For local people due to the range of health inequalities and the digital divide?

Many of the causes of this are well known, and are of course linked with structural inequalities.

What the public wants, is leadership so that action is taken now to put into place measures to mitigate this.

Response #1
From south
east London
CCG

What action is being taken in Primary Care to MITIGATE the unequal outcomes of Covid 19?

Covid-19 is an entirely new virus that only emerged a short few months ago. In that time, scientists across the world have been studying this new virus to understand more about it, the threats to health that it poses and developing new vaccines and treatments.

One of the research findings emerging is around how the virus appears to affect parts of society differently, especially in relation to age, ethnicity and gender. Whilst the reasons for the different impacts may be becoming more clear, the reasons why this is so are far from clear – and it is the latter that informs the actions that need to be taken within the NHS to mitigate the virus' impact on people's health, irrespective of their ethnicity, age or gender.

Like all health and care organisations in south east London, NHS South East London Clinical Commissioning Group follows guidance issued nationally by Public Health England and NHS England/Improvement that aims to protect people's lives. To impact Primary Care, the CCG shares all such guidance with GP practices across south east London so that it can be followed quickly and consistently. The CCG also supports a primary care clinical leads forum that meets weekly to consider what additional help and advice should be provided to GP practices to combat inequalities.

The government has identified people at particularly high risk due to underlying health conditions and advised these patients to 'shield' or be particularly stringent about social distancing depending on their risk group. General practice teams have reviewed the government list to ensure that all the patients who should be on these lists are included and are contacting all shielding patients by telephone or video to ensure their health condition is optimally managed, that they have access to medication and refer to volunteer teams if needed. GPs and practice nurses undertaking these patients contacts are also discussing how patients would like to be cared for should they become unwell.

Teams are now looking to how best to manage all patients with long term conditions, and how to best prioritise those most at risk, using the emerging evidence of risk factors including underlying illness and other factors including ethnicity and deprivation.

All general practice teams have moved rapidly to telephone and video consultation to be able to consult safely with their patients. Importantly, however, they are still undertaking home visits for their most vulnerable patients when they are unwell.

General practice teams are working with hospital and community care colleagues to develop a pathway of care for patients who have had coronavirus, aiming to deliver the best, joined up care possible for this group of patients.

As more guidance regarding how to mitigate inequalities in relation to COVID-19, the CCG will ensure that these are implemented locally, as well as continuing to consider measures which can be implemented locally, working with partners.

Additionally, with a new director position is being established between King's Health Partners and the South East London CCG during May (director of health inequalities) specifically to look at what can be done as a system to address these important matters.

Will you be taking any action for staff in Primary care as set out by NHS Somerset FT for BAME staff?

(<https://somerseftt.nhs.uk/?news=supporting-our-bame-colleagues>)

The emerging evidence that health and care staff from a BAME background experience poorer outcomes is being addressed. An independent group of clinical academics and other doctors, led by Professor Kamlesh Khunti from Leicester University, has reviewed current evidence regarding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities.

The Somerset paper, which has been shared widely across the NHS, was a good early example of communication with BAME staff and included several similar actions that are now being rolled out such as emphasising the support of the organisation to their staff and conducting risk assessments.

Provider organisations in south east London have been working with their respective local staff support networks and a risk assessment has been developed for staff to complete. These assessments have been carried out with support from occupational health teams, the provision of specific tools and webinar-based training for line managers, as well as webinars for staff from a BAME background.

[There is now a nationally endorsed paper](#), published by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine with the support of NHS England/Improvement, is intended to help inform the risk assessments undertaken by health and care organisations (including primary care) in supporting them in considering the particular risks and concerns of staff from a BAME background. It will be used alongside guidance issued recently by [NHS Employers](#).

Will you be taking any action in line with letters from NHSE?

It is not clear from the question which specific letters are being referred to.

NHS South East London CCG works to take action following guidance or instructions issued by NHS England/Improvement. On this agenda, we have already commenced by sharing good practice amongst our key providers. All major NHS organisations in south east London are working with people from a BAME background and staff groups (including unions) to ensure that vulnerable individuals are as well protected as possible.

Awareness of the potential risks is being raised, and risk assessments are being undertaken with staff from a BAME background. Occupational health services are engaged, and early testing in symptomatic BAME staff is undertaken. PPE is provided as required in line with the National guidance. Once staff groups for antibody testing are identified, individuals from BAME groups will be prioritised for such testing. We are working with general practice to provide support for equivalent approaches regarding vulnerable staff to be taken in primary care.

Will you be taking action on supporting provision of appropriate PPE or Local Testing for local staff and patients, especially for people who are disabled or who do not have cars or cannot afford transport?

The provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) is overseen nationally, with regional hubs developed some weeks ago to ensure that all local health and care organisations can access the support they need. The CCG has taken a co-ordinating role in this work, ensuring that the needs of south east London are addressed – notwithstanding some of the well documented challenges that the country has faced around PPE. Through a combination of effective planning and mutual aid, the availability of PPE and getting it to the right places on time, while improved, remains a top priority for the CCG.

With regard to testing, the CCG continues to provide guidance and leadership locally in what is a nationally managed programme of work, as well as supporting to coordinate any additional local provision. The CCG supports locally in ensuring that health and care organisations in south east London have the information they need to ensure that their symptomatic staff can access testing quickly, and works with leads in each boroughs to ensure this is managed effectively to support our health and social care staff. The national introduction of mobile and home testing kits has been designed to assist those who may have difficulty accessing transport, and recently those eligible to access testing is now anyone symptomatic over the age of 5.

4 Are there are other specific actions you are taking or planning to mitigate adverse outcomes for local people due to the range of health inequalities and the digital divide? Many of the causes of this are well known and are of course linked

with structural inequalities.

NHS South East London CCG is acutely aware of its responsibilities, working in partnership with NHS providers and local authorities, in addressing the causes of health inequalities. Out of necessity, the level of partnership working in south east London has risen considerably during the current Covid-19 outbreak, which bodes well as we work together in the next phase – recovery.

Much has changed over recent weeks, with far more people accessing their health service remotely – online and telephone consultations, as well as ensuring that those who need to be seen face-to-face do so safely. Planning now is turning to how the benefits accrued through new ways of working are not lost, but at the same time ensuring those who may not be able, or want, to engage in more digital means of providing care are not disadvantaged.

An example of this approach has commenced already in that we are now actively encouraging patients to use NHS services ‘in person’ if they need to. Good infection control arrangements and use of PPE will give patients the further confidence to use services. The NHS has always been, and will continue to be, there for everyone. Addressing the causes of health inequalities will, of course, remain at the heart of this work.

What the public wants, is leadership so that action is taken now to put into place measures to mitigate this.

The CCG is working with its partners in order to make as much positive impact as possible on this important agenda.