

21 December 2020

Dear Colleague

Confirmation of Winter Plans and Arrangements for Primary Medical Care Services during the Christmas and New Year Period

First and foremost, we would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all our colleagues in GP practices, Primary Care Networks and GP Federations for the work that you and your teams have done and are continuing to do over this pandemic. The enormous contribution of our local general practice and wider primary care teams should be a source of great pride across the NHS and across our patients and wider stakeholders.

We are writing, as we are required to do every year around this time, to set out plans for access to GP services over the Christmas and New Year period.

We really hope that most of your teams are able to get a well-deserved rest during this period, but we also recognise that the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and delivery of the Primary Care COVID-19 Vaccination Service, will result in a busier than usual Christmas and New Year period for you and your teams.

Our local health and care system partners have been working hard to prepare plans to ensure that there is sufficient capacity across all parts of the system to manage our collective demands and challenges over the holiday period. Included with this letter are:

- a copy of previous communications we have shared on prioritisation of general practice services which is equally applicable during the Christmas and New Year period.
- Some key messages from national colleagues
- Useful information on services available to patients over this period

Please continue to contact your local borough team or email england.selprimarycarequeries@nhs.net if you have any concerns over this time or need any information about local services.

On behalf of primary care borough teams and the SE London Primary Care Team, thank you once again for all of your continued support, hard work and commitment to your patients.

Yours sincerely,



Jill Webb
Head of Primary Care
SE London Primary Care Team

Appendix 1: South East London CCG Position Statement in response to NHS England's request for CCGs to consider how they could support general practice during the pandemic

- SEL CCG recognises how vital it is that general practice continues to meet the needs of their population during the next phase/s of the pandemic
- We recognise all the asks that have been made of general practice, PCNs and GP federations in responding to the pandemic including COVID-19 management and vaccinations. We also recognise that there is a huge amount of primary medical services that have continued and will need to continue to be delivered to our population including flu vaccinations, proactive care for clinical vulnerable, screening, immunisations and cancer.
- On the basis that general practice will need to undertake some clinical prioritisation of services they provide; **the CCG will provide income protection on locally commissioned services for general practice. Each of the boroughs will ensure that local arrangements are in place to enable this to happen e.g. self-declaration/improvement plan.**
- Local arrangements that support general practice/federations and primary care networks to respond to the priorities will be maintained.
- SEL CCG will continue to support the quality improvement methodology that practices have in place.
- SEL CCG boroughs teams are keen to understand any different ways of working that we can support that will help sustainability and relieve pressure on services.
- We propose these arrangements are in place until 31st March 2021 or, if they are superseded by NHS England, guidance in the meantime.

Appendix 2: Key messages from national

Christmas and New Year's Eve:

- Thursday 24th and Thursday 31st December 2020 are normal working days. Please let the SEL contracting team at england.selprimarycarequeries@nhs.net know urgently if exceptional arrangements are required.
- Practices are reminded not to transfer calls to NHS111 during normal working hours.
- PCNs providing Extended Hours on these days wish to move these hours to another day within the Christmas and New Year period to better meet assessed patient demand¹ or repurpose these for the delivery of COVID-19 Vaccination Service.
- PCN provision of Extended Hours over the weekend on the 26th and/or 27th December 2020 and 2nd and/or 3rd January 2021 may again be moved to another day or repurposed.

Bank holidays:

- Friday 25th, Monday 28th December 2020 and Friday 1st January 2021 are bank holidays and normal bank holiday cover arrangements will be in place through out of hours providers and/or extended GP hubs.
- PCNs that would normally provide Extended Hours on these days of the week may wish to move these hours to another day within the Christmas and New Year period to help manage demand or to repurpose the sessions for COVID-19 Vaccination Service.
- Please update your website and phone answering messages.

¹ The DES says that PCNs must make up the cancelled time by offering additional appointments within a two-week period, and appointments can be used opportunistically to provide flu vaccinations

Appendix 3: Further information or Contacts:

- Local Extended Access Hubs service arrangements have already been circulated to local practices; if you are unable to locate these, please contact your PC Borough Lead.
- Please remember to update your patient information regarding accessing out of hours services through NHS111.
- Primary Care COVID-19 Vaccination – public information should have already been shared with all practices via the PC Borough Leads, please contact selccg.communications@nhs.uk if you are unable to locate or via <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/covid-19/> - for the general public.
- Dental out of hours/urgent dental centres – call NHS111.
- [Community Pharmacist Consultation Service](#) including urgent medicine supply services and (as referred via NHS111 and other pathways) assessment of symptoms of minor illnesses or advice about health and well-being.
- London Pharmacy opening hours - <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/news/london-pharmacy-opening-hours-for-christmas-and-new-year-2020/>
- Flu vaccination programme - <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/winter-health/>

Primary Care information (**not for public**) on the COVID vaccination in SEL - https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/covid_19/covid-vaccination/

If contacted by the media re the COVID-19 vaccination during this period, please ask them to contact selccg.communications@nhs.net

Don't forget to take care of yourself:

Resources for primary care staff who need support:

- NHSE: Looking After You Too – <https://people.nhs.uk/lookingafteryoutoo/>
- NHSE: Supporting Our People – <https://people.nhs.uk/>
- NHS Practitioner Health - <https://www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk/>
- RCGP: Wellbeing (including Wellbeing during COVID-19) – <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/training-exams/practice/gp-wellbeing.aspx>
- GMC: Coronavirus: Wellbeing resources for doctors – <https://www.gmc-uk.org/news/coronavirus/coronavirus-wellbeing-resources-for-doctors>
- BMA: Your Wellbeing – <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/your-wellbeing>