



## eBulletin Issue 149 April 2020

### 1. Shielding Letters to 'At Risk' patients

Over a million patients have been informed that they are extremely vulnerable and fall into the shielded category requiring such people to remain at home for 12 weeks. These people have been identified from the GP records forwarded to NHS digital. NHS is in the process of identifying many more such patients.

Unfortunately there has been some confusion about whose responsibility – GP or hospital – to identify and notify NHS digital about which patients are vulnerable and whose condition(s) do not fall in the official list. This will include, for example, some rare conditions where patients are cared for in hospital. GPs are not expected to be familiar with all conditions. Many hospitals have assumed that GPs are responsible for notifying NHS digital about patients with rarer conditions, while GPs have assumed that it is the responsibility of the hospital. The enclosed information makes it very clear where responsibility lies. It is very important that everyone knows what they should be doing in relation to corona virus and are supported appropriately.

More info [here](#)

### 2. Reducing the burden of fit notes during Covid-19

Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 or those having to self-isolate due to residing with someone with COVID-19 symptoms can obtain an Isolation Note in line with current guidance.

More info [here](#)

### 3. Understanding people's concerns about the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Academy of Medical Sciences, together with the research charity MQ: Transforming Mental Health, is working with researchers and those with lived experience to ensure that mental health is at the heart of research into the impacts of Covid-19. This [report](#) describes the findings of a consultation undertaken in late March 2020, the week that the prime minister announced the UK lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is also some guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing [here](#)

### 4. Ways in which PPGs are helping support their GP Practice in the current crisis

- PPGs are successfully using Zoom (or similar) to hold virtual PPG meetings. (Zoom offers a free 40 minutes time limit on meetings, other video conferencing apps are available also)
- In some cases, Practice Managers are contacting all local pharmacies to find out which ones are delivering medication and recommend sources of help where there are no deliveries. PPGs are then assisting by co-ordinating volunteers

- Sending out weekly updates to patients on various aspects of their service at this unusual time.
- One PPG has set up a small group of volunteers to check the language being used in updates before these are sent to suggest alternatives to any jargon and to simplify where appropriate.
- At the request of one practice, the PPG is setting up a small group to come together (virtually) with a couple of lead doctors to share ideas about how the doctors might approach seriously ill patients to consider their choices should their condition deteriorate.

**5. Patients now able to nominate pharmacy using the NHS App**

New functionality has been added to the NHS App allowing patients across England to use it to choose a pharmacy to have their repeat prescriptions sent to directly. More info [here](#)

**6. On demand remote BSL Interpreting Service launches for UK's deaf community**

The Deaf Health Charity, SignHealth and online interpreting company InterpreterNow, have launched 'BSLHealthAccess' which enables the provision of immediate, on demand access to British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for communication with deaf people in health settings free of charge during the current coronavirus situation. More info [here](#)

**7. Returning to pharmacy or volunteering**

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society have provided advice on roles or activities for volunteers or those who may wish to return temporarily to the register, based on their skills and experience. More info [here](#)