

Sussex NHS Commissioners

Public Involvement Fortnightly News Briefing on COVID-19

23 October 2020

This briefing will be produced bi-weekly, and is aimed at **patient leads, public members, voluntary and community sector (VCS) leads and community group leads in Sussex.**

The NHS is committed to keeping our people informed, ensuring that communities have the information they need, in the right format, and at the right time. We know that our patient leaders, VCS and community organisations are all working exceptionally hard to support local people, and that they are key to working together to make sure that our communities have the support and information they need.

Local Focus

Keeping Sussex Safe

As with elsewhere in the country, we are seeing the numbers of COVID-19 infections starting to increase in Sussex. The latest position in terms of confirmed cases of COVID-19, broken down into total UK cases and local areas, is updated daily [here](#).



The government has recently announced a new COVID-19 alert level. The alert level in Sussex is medium. Find out what

restrictions are in place if you live in an area where the local alert level is medium [here](#).

You can also find out the coronavirus restrictions in the rest of England by entering the postcode of the place you want to find out about [here](#).

For more information on how you can protect yourself and others, please visit [Keep Sussex Safe](#) which provides a simple summary of key advice and guidance.

Free flu vaccine protects during pregnancy



The local NHS is urging pregnant people to get their free flu jab now, as during pregnancy there is a higher chance of developing complications from flu and can include bronchitis, a chest infection that can become serious and develop into pneumonia.

The Influenza Virus can also impact on unborn babies being born prematurely, with a low birthweight, and even lead to stillbirth or death.

Studies have proven it's safe to have the flu vaccine during any stage of pregnancy, from the first few weeks up to the expected due date. Those who have had the flu vaccine while pregnant also

pass some protection on to their babies, which lasts for the first few months of their lives.

The vaccine does not contain any live viruses, so it cannot cause flu. Some people may get a slightly raised temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards, and may feel some soreness where injected.

Those who had the flu vaccine last year, either because they were pregnant or were in a vulnerable group need to have it again this year - the viruses that cause flu change every year. This means the flu and the vaccine this year may be different from last year.

Allison Cannon, Chief Nurse Officer for Sussex NHS commissioners said:

“Flu can cause harm to both mother and baby. The free flu vaccine is the very best protection for you and your unborn baby from the harms of flu.

“However fit and healthy you might feel, if you are pregnant you need the flu vaccine now. The flu vaccine is the safest way to help protect you and your baby against the flu virus. It’s free because you need it. Pregnant people can get their vaccine from their GP, pharmacist or through their maternity service.”

“For any new mothers who are now in one of the eligible groups, please also make sure you receive the free flu jab this year. It is just as important now that your baby has arrived to protect you and it is safe if you are breastfeeding.”

GP practices and pharmacies are receiving batches of the vaccine during the flu season, and flu vaccination clinics are scheduled to coincide with these deliveries. This does mean some may have to wait longer than they would wish to attend flu clinics ([leaflet on why people may have to wait longer](#)). The local NHS is reassuring those eligible there is plenty of time for everyone to book and get their flu jab.

Big Health and Care (Socially Distancing) Conversation

As part of the [Big Health and Care \(Socially Distancing\) conversation](#), we are asking the public and local community groups to help play a key role in helping us understand people's experiences of care during the COVID-19 pandemic.



We want to make sure that we understand what it has been like for people if they have needed to use health and care services during COVID across Sussex – what has worked well, and what could have been better? If you didn't access services when you thought you needed to, why not? What changes should we maintain, and what needs to go back to normal as much as possible?

This is **your chance to tell us your experiences**, ask questions and share your ideas as we move towards restoring services.

To feed in your views and experiences, you can:

- Visit [the website](#) and share your experience, ask questions, and more!
- Email the team at sxccg.involvement@nhs.net or call us on 01903 708411
- Write to us at: FREEPOST RTUZ-ECYG-ERRK
 Attn: Public Involvement Team
 NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical
 Commissioning Group
 Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Brighton,
 BN3 4AH
- Invite the Public Involvement Team to your (virtual) group meeting for us to hold a discussion to gather feedback – please do get in touch!

Big Debate

The NHS and local authorities in Sussex would like to know about your experiences of health and care during the COVID-19 pandemic so that they can improve the way services are provided in the future.

Delayed care: Have you been affected by delays to your care, either because your appointment or treatment was delayed or postponed or because you decided to wait until the pandemic had eased before having your treatment or appointment? **Click [here](#) to tell us about your experiences and any decisions or changes you have made as a result.**

Wellbeing: Since the lockdown period due to Covid-19 began, people have made many changes to their lives and what they saw as “normal”. We would like to know more about the changes you made due to Covid-19, whether you think they are good for your wellbeing, or not.

- What have you STOPPED doing since the start of lockdown?
- What have you STARTED doing since the start of lockdown?

What do you feel about these changes? Will there be things you will carry on? How has the easing of lockdown rules affected you?

Click [here](#) to share your experiences.

Share Your Views on NHS Interpreting Services

If English is not your first language or you have sensory communication needs you can ask to have an interpreter to help if you have an NHS appointment with a dentist, pharmacist or optician.

Having an interpreter present can help you to communicate with healthcare staff and make informed decisions about your care and treatment. This includes people whose first language is not English or who are deaf/blind and who might use British (or another form of) Sign Language.

We'd like to hear your views on the following services so that we can find out what is most important to you to help to make improvements to services:

- Face-to-face interpreting for patients whose first language is not English
- Video interpreting services
- Non-spoken face-to-face interpreting for deaf and hard of hearing patients
- Telephone interpreting and
- Written translation of clinical documents

You can share your views by completing an online survey. If you speak a community language and English is not your first language [please provide your feedback here.](#)

If you use sign language or lip reading [please provide your feedback here.](#)

You can either complete the survey yourself using online translation services or ask someone you know to complete it on your behalf.

“Turn Information into Action” say new reports from local community organisations

Three new reports have been prepared by three Sussex community-based organisations to help “Turn information into action” and provide a more independent view on what people are really saying and doing about COVID-19.

These organisations, Trust for Developing Communities and Partners (Brighton and Hove), Citizens Advice Bureau (Crawley) and Hastings Voluntary Action (Hastings), have presented their findings and recommendations and are being reviewed by the Sussex Health and Care Partnership (SHCP) Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Disparity Programme and will result in a list of short- and long-term actions to form part of the legacy of the programme.

You can read more information [here](#).

Sussex plans unveiled to celebrate Black History Month

The [Sussex Health and Care Partnership \(SHCP\)](#) continues to [hold a range of activities across Sussex](#) for October with a call to action that asks people to use this opportunity to further reduce disparities and inequalities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Communities in Sussex.

A BAME SHCP Staff Conference was held on 15 October 2020, where BAME staff across the health and social care in Sussex came together to talk to leaders and help plan the next phase of activities to reduce racial disparities.

The key activities remaining are:

Our Colourful Voices

A kaleidoscope of videos from our BAME staff talking about what Black History Month means to them and their hopes for tackling racial inequality.

BAME Community Event

A series of Community Webinars across Sussex for members of the public over the next 4 months. The first is on 28 October 2020, where we will be reaching out to the community and asking how our health services could be more accessible and effective.

For more information about the activities and to see what our partners are doing visit the [website](#).

Families and Friends of Care Home Residents Webinar – staying connected during the coronavirus crisis

Are you a family carer trying to stay connected to your relative or friend living in a care home?

We know lots of care homes have gone that extra mile to keep families connected over the last few months...What have been your experiences? What can we learn from the past six months?

Healthwatch (East Sussex) are holding a webinar on staying connected during the coronavirus crisis at 17:00 – 19:00 on Tuesday 10 November. You can [register here](#).

You will hear from other families about their experiences, and from care home managers. There will be lots of opportunities to ask questions relevant to your experiences as well as have your voice heard.

Also joining the event will be NHS staff, representatives from local Adult Social Care and Public Health Teams and support available from Carers groups and charities.

If you would like to join this event but do not feel confident in using the Zoom platform, please contact us as soon as possible, and we may be able to arrange some support around this:

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Call: 0333 101 4007

British Sign Language interpreters will be available for this event.

Community Matters – Frequently Asked Questions

The Public Involvement Team have been answering questions from our communities in Sussex about accessing health and care services at this time through the Frequently Asked Questions.



You can read the Frequently Asked Questions via the Clinical Commissioning Groups websites.

- [NHS Brighton and Hove CCG](#)
- [NHS East Sussex CCG](#)
- [NHS West Sussex CCG](#)

Community Hubs

Community Hubs are run through our Local Authorities, District and Borough Councils, and voluntary and community sector partners in East and West Sussex. Community hubs are the contact point that people can turn to if they need extra help in coping with the effects of coronavirus or know someone else who needs help.

The Hubs have been supporting those who are on the [“shielded”](#) list by ensuring people have access to food and other support. The Hubs are also a key contact point for other residents who are vulnerable, in order to access wider community support, which may include help with shopping and money advice, but also support with reducing isolation through access to services such as telephone befriending.

Community Hubs also provide a place for people to find out about local volunteering opportunities.

- [Brighton and Hove Community Hubs](#)

Brighton and Hove Community Support
Telephone: 01273 293117

- [East Sussex Community Hubs](#)

- [West Sussex Community Hubs](#)

West Sussex Support Team Telephone: 033 022 27980 (Lines are open 8.00am - 8.00pm)

NHS Guidance

Access to NHS Services During COVID-19 Guide

Sussex NHS Commissioners has produced a [guide to support you to access NHS services that are still here for you during COVID-19](#), which includes helpful information explaining how you may need to access services in a different way to stay safe.

This guide is also available in different languages and British Sign Language (BSL) on request by contacting the Public Involvement team on 01903 708 411.

You can find more information on getting the care and treatment you need [here](#).

Do you have a learning disability? Don't miss out on your free annual health check!

Speak to your GP practice receptionist about being added to the Learning Disability Register.

Your GP practice will send an appointment for your Annual Health Check.



At your health check, a Doctor or a Nurse will talk to you about staying healthy and you will have time to talk about anything that is worrying you.

Ask if you need extra support; like having more time, or easy read information. These are called reasonable adjustments.

You can find out more about having an Annual Health Check – [Easy Read Guide \(click here\)](#)

Look out for the Thumbs Up sign in Sussex GP Practices, which shows they are Learning Disability friendly.

If you or someone you care for has a learning disability, telephone your local doctor's surgery to find out more about Annual Health Checks.

National Updates

The latest position in terms of confirmed cases of COVID-19, broken down into total UK cases and local areas, is [updated daily](#).

Clinically extremely vulnerable people in England [will receive new guidance](#) to help them reduce their risk from coronavirus, tailored to where they live.

The government has produced a [Frequently Asked Questions on flu vaccine supplies](#).

Information on the [legal duty to self-isolate](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 includes details on fines for those breaking the rules.

The NHS COVID-19 app is available to download for free in England and Wales. Download it [here](#).

Information on face coverings, when to wear one and how to make your own, can be found [here](#).

Safer travel guidance for people using public transport can be found [here](#).

Travel advice: List of countries and territories from where you can travel to/from England and may not have to self-isolate can be found [here](#).

Local restrictions: List of areas in England with additional restrictions in place can be found [here](#).

Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Team

In April 2020, the Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement team were repurposed as COVID-19 Community Connectors to support our people and communities across Sussex in accessing health and care services at a time of crisis. The COVID-19 Community Connectors team have now returned to the Public Involvement team, where the team will be working with partners in the Sussex Health and Care Partnership to support the [Big Health and Care Conversation](#). The Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Weekly News Briefing and Frequently Asked Questions will also now be sent out bi-weekly.

You can contact the Public Involvement Team using the **contact details on page 14**.

Healthwatch

You can also raise issues through Healthwatch, which is an independent body responsible for gathering people's views of health and social care services. Contact details are below:

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove:

Telephone: 01273 234 040

Email: info@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

Website:

<https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/contact-us/>

Healthwatch East Sussex

Telephone: 0333 101 4007

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsex.co.uk

Website: <https://healthwatcheastsex.co.uk/contact/>

Healthwatch West Sussex

Telephone: 0300 012 0122

Email: helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Website: <https://www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk/contact-us>

Contact Details

If you have any questions, or if you need this brief in an alternative format, please contact the Public Involvement Team:

Email: sxccg.involvement@nhs.net

Telephone: 01903 708411

Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users can use a Video Relay Service (VRS) called [SignLive](#) (a free app which connects deaf people to a qualified British Sign Language Interpreter before connecting you to one of the Public Involvement Team). This service is currently available every **Thursday from 14:00-16:00**. Please contact the Public Involvement team using the details above if this is not convenient.

Let us know what you need to see in this briefing, give us feedback on services and support related to COVID-19 and let us know about issues you are picking up from your communities.

