

Frequently Asked Questions from the Community on COVID-19

Accessing Primary Care

1. Can I still have a GP appointment? How should I book my appointment with the GP Practice?

Yes, all patients registered at a GP Practice still have access to appointments with a Doctor, Nurse, Healthcare Assistant or Social Prescriber. A number of GP Surgeries are conducting appointments via telephone or video consultation so you should check their website in the first instance.

For certain groups of patients, such as the deaf community, people with learning disabilities, people whose first language is not English and people who do not have access to the telephone, GP Practices are making alternative arrangements to ensure these patients can access appointments. Please check with your individual GP Practice.

2. I have been asked to attend a face-to-face appointment at the GP Practice. What is my GP Practice doing to prevent the spread of coronavirus?

GP Practices are working really hard to prevent the spread of coronavirus but we need your help. We all have a responsibility to help limit the spread of COVID-19. If you start to experience symptoms and believe you could have coronavirus, do not go to a GP

surgery, pharmacy or hospital as you could pass the infection to others. Visit [NHS 111 online](#) or call [NHS 111](#) if you need to speak to someone.

If you do attend your GP Practice, you should follow any instructions given to you by staff at the practice which will include:

- Using hand sanitiser and frequently washing your hands.
- Avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Maintaining social distancing (making sure that there is at least a metre or two between you and another person).

3. Are clinics still running in GP Practices?

Yes, the majority of essential clinics such as blood taking, wound dressing and baby and child immunisations are still running but you should check with your GP Practice in the first instance.

4. I need to register as a patient at a GP Practice, can I still do this?

Yes, anyone can register at a GP Practice as long as:

- it has capacity to take on new patients
- you live within the practice boundary

Practices will continue to register all patients, including those with no fixed address, asylum seekers, refugees and those who do not have photo identification.

GP Practices are making arrangements so that those seeking to register with a practice do not have to go in physically. For example, you may be asked to send in an application via post or electronically. If a GP Practice conducts online registration, you may be asked to apply online. Please check with the individual GP Practice.

5. I use British Sign Language (BSL), how do I access care?

Where possible, interpreters will be sourced for GP appointments.

However, with the public now being asked to self-isolate where an immediate member of a household presents with symptoms, the pressure to source interpreters will increase, and interpreters themselves maybe unable to support face to face appointments.

To support d/Deaf patients the Clinical Commissioning Group is working to implement a Video Relay Service (VRS) for telephone appointments and Video Relay Interpretation (VRI) for face to face appointments in every Primary Care network.

An NHS 111 British Sign Language (BSL) Service is also available. This is a free service where a BSL interpreter telephones an NHS 111 adviser and relays their conversation with them. [Click here](#) for more information.

6. My GP Practice are only doing appointments via telephone, doesn't this go against the Equality Act (2010)?

A number of GP Practices are seeking to limit the booking of appointments to telephone only to reduce the spread of infection. This change affects a number of patient groups.

Practices have a legal responsibility not to discriminate and to provide appropriate methods of communication. GP Practices are being asked to ensure that they explain to patients how they can access appointments.

Community Support

1. I have suspected coronavirus symptoms, what support will I receive from the NHS?

People self-isolating with suspected coronavirus symptoms will also get regular check-ins from a new NHS 111 online messaging service launched on Saturday 4th April 2020. Once individuals have been through the online assessment, daily texts will be sent to those who have registered their Covid-19 symptoms and left contact details.

Depending on the duration of their isolation, the daily messages will check how people are and ensure that those who need help to get them through that period, receive it.

2. What is a Community Hub, and how can I request support for myself or on behalf of someone else?

Community Hubs have been launched in each Local Authority area across Sussex, and offer additional help in coping with coronavirus.

The Community Hubs will focus their help on people who do not have an extreme medical condition but may be vulnerable because they are isolated from help, too unwell to buy food or have other pressing difficulties because of coronavirus. Community Hubs also provide a place for people to find out about volunteering opportunities.

You request support yourself or on behalf of someone else using the details below:

Brighton and Hove Community Hubs

Brighton & Hove City Council COVID-19 Community Support Hub.

To request support, please use the online easy to use form if you can, or fill it in on behalf of someone else, so we can keep phone lines free for those with no alternative.

Go to: new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/request-help

If you can't get online, you can call: 01273 293117 (it will say you are through to the discretionary health and advice team)

For the latest Brighton & Hove City Council information go to: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/coronavirus

Latest health advice from the NHS: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Latest government advice: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

East Sussex Community Hubs

Contact details for the Community Hubs in East Sussex are below:

[Eastbourne Community Hub Website](#)

Eastbourne Community Hub Telephone: 01323 679722

[Hastings Community Hub Website](#)

Hastings Community Hub Telephone: 01424 451019

[Lewes Community Hub Website](#)

Lewes Community Hub Telephone: 01273 099956

[Rother Community Hub Website](#)

Rother Community Hub Telephone: 01424 787000
(option 4)

[Wealden Community Hub Website](#)

Wealden Community Hub Telephone: 01323 443322

West Sussex Community Hubs

Contact the West Sussex Community Support Team:

[West Sussex Community Support Team Website](#)

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

3. How can I volunteer to support my community?

The NHS Volunteer Responders Programme has been set up to support the NHS and the care sector during the COVID-19 outbreak. NHS Volunteer Responders can be called on to do simple but vital tasks such as:

- delivering medicines from pharmacies;
- driving patients to appointments;
- bringing them home from hospital;
- or making regular phone calls to check on people isolating at home.

Members of the public can sign up quickly and easily at goodsamapp.org/NHS to become. You can read the NHS Volunteer Responders FAQs [online here](#).

ID checks will be carried out for all volunteers. Patient transport drivers will need an enhanced DBS check and will receive additional guidance. Volunteers will receive guidance, including on social distancing rules to ensure the group being asked to shield themselves is protected.

Community Pharmacies

1. How do I get my repeat prescription?

Most pharmacies are still open and repeat prescriptions should be available as usual. It is important to only request your medicines when they are running low (e.g.

one weeks supply left) as you usually would. Ordering medicines too early or ordering more than usual can lead to fewer medicines in the system and potentially, shortages for others.

Manufacturers, wholesalers and pharmacies are working hard to minimise medicine shortages as a result of COVID-19.

It is expected that the recent depletion of paracetamol available to buy over the counter will be replenished soon.

Patients are being encouraged to apply for repeat prescriptions online or using Prescription Ordering Direct (POD) phone service, if this is available with their GP practice. This will speed up the process for repeat prescriptions to be issued.

2. I'm self-isolating so cannot get to pharmacy to collect my prescription, what should I do?

Community pharmacies are extremely busy at the moment and are unlikely to be able to assist with home delivery if it is not normally something you receive.

If you have a repeat prescription and are registered with a medical condition that makes you extremely vulnerable to coronavirus, you can register yourself, or on behalf of someone to get support. [Click here](#) for more information.

If you have a repeat prescription and are self-isolating, see if someone else is able to pick up the prescription for you. If you are isolating, have them drop it off outside your door so that you can avoid face-to-face contact.

NHS Volunteer Responders and local community support can help with delivering medicines from pharmacies, but it is best to check with your pharmacy first.

Community Hubs can also provide support in collecting prescriptions. Click the below links:

Brighton and Hove Community Hubs

Contact details for the Community Support:

[Brighton and Hove Community Support Website](#)

Telephone number for the service will be published shortly.

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3. Can pharmacists prioritise processing the prescriptions of patients who are at a higher risk of catching COVID-19?

No, pharmacists are unable to do this. Community pharmacies are extremely busy at the moment and are trying their best to ensure **all** patients get the care they need.

Emergency & Urgent Care

1. Are Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments closed? What should I do if there is an emergency?

A&E departments are not closed and continue to be open to deal with genuine life-threatening emergencies, such as:

- [loss of consciousness](#)
- acute confused state and fits that are not stopping
- [chest pain](#)
- breathing difficulties
- [severe bleeding that cannot be stopped](#)
- severe [allergic reactions](#)
- severe burns or scalds
- [stroke](#)
- major trauma such as a road traffic accident

A&E is not an alternative to a GP appointment.

If you have a medical emergency and need an ambulance, you should continue to call 999 or the relevant emergency number in your area. You can use the find nearest A&E [here](#).

NHS workers, clinicians and other medical staff are working around the clock to ensure that everyone gets the care they need. The coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and unplanned for, meaning that lots of emergency measures are being taken. Be as patient as you can with staff - they are doing their best at a very difficult time.

2. What should I do for urgent non-coronavirus medical queries?

Less severe injuries can be treated in [urgent care centres or minor injuries units](#). Conditions that can be treated at an urgent treatment centre include:

- sprains and strains
- suspected broken limbs
- minor head injuries
- cuts and grazes
- bites and stings
- minor scalds and burns
- ear and throat infections
- skin infections and rashes
- eye problems
- coughs and colds
- feverish illness in adults
- feverish illness in children
- abdominal pain
- vomiting and diarrhoea
- emergency contraception

You can find your nearest urgent care centre or minor injuries unit [here](#). We advise to check for any local changes before accessing this service.

Alternatively you can go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111, which will direct you to the best local service.

NHS workers, clinicians and other medical staff are working around the clock to ensure that everyone gets the care they need. The coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and unplanned for, meaning that lots of emergency measures are being taken. Be as patient as you can with staff - they are doing their best at a very difficult time.

Hospital Care

1. What are the new hospital visiting restrictions?

The difficult, but essential, decision to restrict visiting throughout hospitals with immediate effect and until further notice has been made.

The only exceptional circumstances where one visitor – an immediate family member or carer – will be permitted to visit are listed below:

- The patient you wish to visit is receiving end-of-life care.
- You are the birthing partner accompanying a woman in labour.
- You are a parent or appropriate adult visiting your child.

Please contact the ward or department in advance to discuss appropriate arrangements.

Your health, safety and wellbeing, that of our patients, communities and individuals and teams across the organisation remain our absolute priority. Please find other ways of keeping in touch with your loved ones in hospital, like phone and video calls.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

1. I feel anxious, worried and lonely and want support with this, where should I access this support?

You might be worried about coronavirus (COVID-19) and how it could affect your life. We have created a dedicated webpage with links to services in the local community. Click the links below:

[NHS Brighton and Hove CCG](#)

[NHS East Sussex CCG](#)

[NHS West Sussex CCG](#)

2. Where can I get further support?

It is quite common to experience short-lived physical symptoms when your mood is low or anxious, for example:

- faster, irregular or more noticeable heartbeat
- feeling lightheaded and dizzy
- headaches
- chest pains or loss of appetite

It can be difficult to know what is causing these symptoms, but often people who experience them due to stress, anxiety or low mood find that they get worse when they focus on them. See advice from the NHS on [managing the physical symptoms](#).

If you are concerned about your physical symptoms, then do contact [NHS 111 online](#).

For advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and any symptoms see the [NHS website](#).

If you are experiencing stress, feelings of anxiety or low mood, you can use the [NHS mental health and wellbeing advice website](#) for self-assessment, audio

guides and practical tools [Every Mind Matters](#) also provides simple tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health. If you are still struggling after several weeks and it is affecting your daily life, please contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111.

In a medical emergency [call 999](#). This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical health emergency.

Myths and misinformation

1. There is a lot of misinformation about coronavirus, how do I know what is correct?

A new GOV.UK WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Service has now been launched to combat the spread of misinformation. To use the service, members of the public simply add +44 7860 064422 to their contacts and send a WhatsApp message saying “Hi”.

2. Are homemade face masks effective?

The use of homemade and fabric masks is not recommended. Inappropriate use of facemasks and use of non-conforming products can lead to a greater risk of self-inoculation.

An effective face mask for use in healthcare must conform to British Safety Standards:

- Carry the CE mark
- Be certified as fluid repellent:
 - **EN 14683 Type IIR performance ASTM F2100 level 2 or level 3 or equivalent;**
 Fluid resistance at minimum 120 mmHg pressure based on ASTM F1862-07, ISO 22609, or equivalent
 Breathability: MIL–M-36945C, EN 14683 annex C, or equivalent
 Filtration efficiency: ASTM F2101, EN14683 annex B, or equivalent
https://www.who.int/medical_devices/ppe Ebola_24nov_en.pdf

Masks must be disposed of when soiled/damp (approximately 20minutes) and immediately following close contact with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

Tell us about your experiences and let us know what you need!

1. Who should I contact if I have a question or want to give feedback about my experiences of health and care services?

The Sussex Covid-19 NHS Community Connectors Team ensure that our people and communities across Sussex can ask questions and give feedback about their experiences of health and care services at this difficult time.

Covid-19 Community Connectors Team are here to help make sure you, and the people you help and support, get the information and support needed. Please do contact the team using the contact details below:

Email: sxccg.involvement@nhs.net

Telephone: 012 73 238 725

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 Community Connectors Team).

Simply [download the SignLive app](#), register your details, and search for NHS Brighton and Hove in the Community Directory. An interpreter will join you on the call before the call is put through to the engagement team.

This service is currently available every **Thursday from 14:00-16:00**. Please contact the Community Connectors using the details above if this is not convenient.

2. I want to raise concerns about NHS and social care services to an independent body, who can I talk to?

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](tel:03331014007)

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](https://www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk/contact-us)