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Sent on behalf of NHS Basildon and Brentwood, NHS Castle Point and Rochford, NHS Mid Essex, NHS Southend and NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

Good afternoon. This is the ninth briefing for our external stakeholders to update you on the Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership response to COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). If you have any feedback on the briefings please get in touch on [meccg.essex.incident.comms@nhs.net](mailto:meccg.essex.incident.comms@nhs.net).

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## Key messages

As part of the united NHS response to COVID-19, our teams have been supporting a rapid increase in how we help patients access NHS services through smart devices, computers and over the telephone. To inform people of these options, the NHS has launched a new phase of its Health at Home campaign that can signpost our residents to useful information about how to contact their GP, order repeat prescriptions and manage their wellbeing and existing conditions from home.

If you would like to share this Health at Home information with your networks, information is available for download from the [Public Health England \(PHE\) Campaign Resources Centre](#). A login is not required to download materials related to the pandemic response and the site includes [other COVID-19 materials](#) to explain current social distancing guidance and the new Test and Trace programme.

The NHS website offers further guidance for people contacted by the Test and Trace service:

- who have [tested positive for the coronavirus](#)
- who have [come into contact with someone who tested positive](#)

As we make plans to reset services for non-urgent health and care, it would be helpful to hear from people who have had NHS consultations by phone or video call. Please share [this SurveyMonkey link](#), which has questions about remote care that should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

The NHS remains available for the people who really need it. A [series of YouTube videos](#) offers reassurance that the NHS is still there for us if we really need it. Each video includes a British Sign Language interpreter. **People should still call 999 in a serious or life-threatening emergency.** If they are not sure what help they need, advice is on hand from [NHS 111 online](#) or by phoning 111.

These [videos with British Sign Language interpreters](#) explain how people can access our services.

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## Easy Read and plain English advice on accessing NHS services

Two new documents about accessing NHS services during coronavirus are now available. One is in [Easy Read for people with a learning disability](#) and the other in [plain English](#) for people with autism and language challenges.

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## New NHS Diabetes Advice helpline launched

NHS England and NHS Improvement have launched a new Diabetes Advice helpline for adults living with diabetes who use insulin to manage their condition and need immediate advice.

The helpline offers clinical advice for people who cannot access their usual care teams, whether due to a member of their household testing positive for COVID-19 or the pandemic response disrupting routine care disrupted. The helping supports people to effectively manage their diabetes but is not designed to replace the routine care they receive.

The helpline is staffed by volunteers who are all health professionals with expertise in diabetes. Anyone who needs the NHS Diabetes Advice service can access it via Diabetes

UK's support line on **0345 123 2399**, open Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm.

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## Step-up admissions at Brentwood Community Hospital

To ensure we can safely meet patients' needs during the COVID-19 outbreak, we have reconfigured and brought together some services across our community hospital settings as noted in previous briefings. These changes mean step-up admissions are now being accepted from across south and mid Essex at Brentwood Community Hospital.

Step-up admissions are for people who have a care need that cannot be managed or treated in their own home or in a care home. These people may benefit from being "stepped up" into a community hospital bed, avoiding the need to visit A&E or a potential admission to an acute hospital.

There are 158 beds usable for both step-up patients and those who have been "stepped down" from an acute hospital ward. We have put together a short video showing how partners worked together to convert Brentwood Community Hospital office space into a new ward. You can watch the video below and are welcome to share it with your contacts and channels if you wish.

If you cannot see the video above in your email, you can also [watch it on YouTube](#).

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## Preparations for summer

Now it is June the NHS is preparing its usual summer campaign about staying cool and safe during any heatwave conditions. We will be sharing more details as and when they are needed, but the overall national plan is unchanged from last year. You can read the plan and download some materials to share from the [gov.uk website](#).

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## National Volunteers Week moves into National Carers Week

Thank you to all our partners who sent stories for us to share as part of National Volunteers Week between 1 and 7 June, and shared the messages about it that all five Mid and South Essex CCGs publicised. It was a great opportunity for us to recognise some of the ways that many of our residents are doing their bit to help their community and support health and care services.

It is National Carers Week from today until 14 June, which we will again be promoting on our social media channels and would be grateful for your support with. We would also be pleased to hear stories of how carers in your network are coping during the pandemic and the support they are receiving from their communities. Please [email us with details](#).

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## Further support for health and care staff

A new national service to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to GP practices and other NHS providers has been launched. This allows all our surgeries to order a free top-up of PPE every week if orders through their usual suppliers are not sufficient for their needs. New guidance for domiciliary carers in their use of PPE while providing care has also been released in the past week.

The Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership has now contacted all 307 care homes in our footprint, with more than 75% of them engaged in the training programme we are offering in COVID-19 infection prevention and control.

Antibody tests that show whether a person has been infected with the virus and recovered from it are now available for NHS staff in mid and south Essex to book. All provider, CCG and primary care colleagues have received communication from their organisations with details of how to book an appointment at a designated phlebotomy centre to have the blood test. The testing is part of a national research project and will give Public Health England a better understanding of how many people across the country have already had the virus.

NHS staff are being advised that the test will confirm whether they have had the virus – but if they do have antibodies detected, it's important to remember that they are still required to observe all national guidance as there is no clear evidence that they will be immune from either catching the virus again or from passing it on.

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## "Telehealth" technology support for local care homes

The Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership is providing new health monitoring technology to all care homes across the area to support remote consultations and delivery of "telehealth". The system is called Whzan Digital Health and has already been piloted within our healthcare system with excellent results. If you would like more information about the device you can read more on the [Whzan Digital Health website](#).

Along with providing each home with one of the Whzan devices we will also be offering care home staff the training to take clinical observations that can then offer significant assistance to NHS healthcare professionals during an online/video consultation.

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## Contacts and thank you

As always, the most up-to-date national guidance about the pandemic is online at [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) and [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus). Thank you for sharing the vital messages that help to keep us all safe. If you have any urgent information that should go out to GP practices, care homes and other care providers, or receive any contacts from the media you think the local NHS should know about, please email us on [meccq.essex.incident.comms@nhs.net](mailto:meccq.essex.incident.comms@nhs.net).

Very best wishes,

**Mid and South Essex CCGs**

