

**Tuesday 19 January 2021**

**Play your part in helping your local NHS, as unprecedented pressure prompts united response from all public frontline services**

The NHS in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire is working with its partners from across the region to support frontline health and care staff in caring for patients following an incredibly busy and pressurised start to the new year.

A sustained increase in seriously ill coronavirus patients, set against a backdrop of covid-related staff absences, reduced clinical space due to social distancing regulations and a need to continue providing safe urgent and emergency care, has led to all parts of the health and care system facing significant pressure.

In response, health and care leaders have brought into action emergency response protocols, which include enlisting a heightened level of on-the-ground support from local public sector colleagues and those working in charity and voluntary organisations.

These support measures come after health and care leaders made the difficult decision to postpone pre-planned and routine operations, with the exception of surgery for cancer and other urgent conditions, in an attempt to allow staff to focus efforts on those people most in need and to expand services for Covid patients such as Intensive Care facilities.

Elsewhere, minor injuries units in Paulton and Trowbridge have been temporarily closed to allow for staff to be redeployed to other health and care settings that are in need of extra support.

Dr Andrew Girdher, Clinical Chair, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG, said: "Local partners have answered our request for support and, thanks to them and the selfless efforts of our own NHS staff, we are still able to provide round-the-clock care for coronavirus patients, and those needing treatment for cancer and other life-threatening conditions.

"However, to help us continue doing this, we're appealing for everyone to get behind us and play their part, whether it's being there to take relatives home from hospital in a timely manner, using NHS 111 for non-life-threatening emergencies instead of going straight to hospital, or just following the latest social distancing guidelines.

"Now is also the time for people to think twice about how their own actions, such as exercising outdoors in icy weather or carrying out DIY without the correct safety equipment, could inadvertently put avoidable pressure on the NHS. Even when you are fit and healthy, you can still play your part."

Although incredibly busy, the NHS is still open, and it remains vitally important that any person with an existing healthcare appointment with a GP or at hospital, attends that appointment unless told otherwise.

Missing these appointments not only compromises an individual's health and wellbeing, it can lead to a clinician's valuable time being wasted when it could be used to care for another patient.

NHS 111, which is available online or by telephone, remains open 24/7 to provide people in need of medical assistance with advice, support and, where appropriate, a route into the most appropriate healthcare service.

Additionally, help and support, including advice on medication and minor illnesses, can also be obtained from local pharmacies.

Health and social care teams are also focussed on supporting swift and safe discharges of patients who no longer need to be in hospital. This plays a critical role in ensuring beds are available for emergency patients – whether as a result of Covid or other conditions – should they need it. Families and relatives can help by ensuring their relatives are supported at discharge.

For more information on health and care services across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, visit [www.bswccq.nhs.uk](http://www.bswccq.nhs.uk).