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[for immediate publication]

We'll be busy, but open, says local NHS ahead of latest industrial action

Ahead of the latest planned strike by junior doctors, the NHS in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire is asking people to still come forward for urgent and emergency care and to attend planned appointments unless told otherwise.

Junior doctors at the Royal United Hospital in Bath, the Great Western Hospital in Swindon and Salisbury District Hospital are planning to strike from 7am on Wednesday 14 June until 7am on Saturday 17 June.

Although significant disruption to normal service is highly likely, the region's leading doctors have stressed that people who become seriously ill or injured should not put off seeking help.

Dr Amanda Webb, Chief Medical Officer, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, said: "The doors to the local NHS will be open during this latest episode of industrial action.

"Our teams will be very busy, and waiting times may be longer than usual, but anybody in need of urgent or emergency care must still come forward.

"We have tried and tested plans in place to ensure that people who are most in need can still access care, as we know all too well that delaying treatment can lead to poorer outcomes."

People who had been expecting to attend hospital for a routine appointment or procedure on Wednesday 14, Thursday 15 or Friday 16 June are advised to attend as planned, unless told otherwise.

Those whose appointments are affected by the strike will be contacted and offered an alternative date on which to visit hospital.

Dr Steven Haig, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: "In the coming days, our services are going to be more stretched than usual and therefore waiting times may be longer.

"People will be seen if they come to hospital as an emergency, however, people should only visit if they really need to be here.

"Please think about the best healthcare option to use over the coming days, as more appropriate treatment is often available from GPs, pharmacies and other local health services."

GP practices, pharmacies and digital-based healthcare services remain open, and people with minor injury and illness are asked to make the most of these options on the strike days.

NHS 111 online, which can be accessed at www.111.nhs.uk, can provide person-specific advice and guidance in real time, suggest possible treatment options and, where appropriate, refer people to other local healthcare services.

Similarly, the region's community pharmacies are also a great way to access quick healthcare, with most branches able to share advice on over-the-counter medicines, as well as details of how to treat simple symptoms at home.

Trained pharmacists can also carry out private consultations in a dedicated private clinic room, meaning people with non-urgent conditions can receive an assessment and diagnosis without needing to phone a GP or visit hospital.

More information about local health and care services, including details of how to find the nearest community pharmacy, is available at www.bswtogether.org.uk/yourhealth.

Notes to Editors

- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board is a statutory organisation that is responsible for developing a plan of how to meet the health needs of the local population, managing the local NHS budget and arranging the provision of local health services
- As a sovereign corporate entity, the ICB has a Board made up of representatives from various organisations across the BSW health and care system
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board is part of the wider BSW Integrated Care System, which brings NHS providers, local authorities, community providers and voluntary sector partners together to collaboratively plan and organise how health and care services are delivered
- The local integrated care system is also known as BSW Together, and is home to 87 GP practices, two mental health trusts, three local councils, a single ambulance provider, three acute hospitals, a number of other NHS providers and more than 2,800 voluntary organisations and community groups
- Visit www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk for more information