

17 September 2020

To everyone in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG)

Latest update on health and care services in our area

Thank you for your continued support in the fight against coronavirus, and for everything you are doing to keep yourselves, your loved ones and our communities safe.

As a group of local NHS and care organisations working on your behalf, our focus is now to get services back to their pre-pandemic levels ahead of winter. This won't be easy - coronavirus has changed the way we run services and how many people we can see in person at any one time.

The new and important measures in place to keep everyone safe from the virus mean that we need to work differently. Please be assured that whatever the setting – from GP surgeries and local hospitals to minor injuries units and community clinics - your safety is our first priority.

We are pleased to let you know that many services that were temporarily suspended at the outset of the pandemic are now returning, including:

- Routine radiology referrals across all sites
- More than 1,500 weekly hospital outpatient appointments taking place online
- Community services including physiotherapy
- Home health visits for new mums
- Cervical and breast screening services
- Child immunisation including additional clinics

Specialty teams, wards, clinics and operating theatres are well on their way back to pre-coronavirus levels, and we are continuously reviewing services so they remain safe for you and our staff. Our local authorities have developed Outbreak Management Plans, which focus on prevention and response arrangements to prevent, protect and respond to outbreaks in places like care homes, schools and communities.

Despite this progress, enhanced safety precautions mean that we have fewer beds in our hospitals than before, and space in waiting areas is limited. We also know some of you have been waiting longer as a result of routine procedures being paused at the outset of the pandemic and we are working hard to address this while ensuring access to services for all. We will be guided by the [recovery principles](#) set out by the National Voices coalition of health and social care charities as we look to enhance the support we offer to people who may be waiting longer than we would like.

The annual 'flu immunisation programme will be essential in protecting vulnerable people this winter. Many people who are vulnerable to 'flu – including older people and people with learning difficulties – are also more vulnerable to coronavirus. We will share details of the local 'flu programme shortly, including how and when to get vaccinated.

We remain committed to providing you with the highest quality health and care services, and working with you to continue with sensible coronavirus precautions in our everyday lives. These include social distancing, regular hand washing, wearing face coverings in some settings, and restrictions on social gatherings of more than six people.

We will continue to share information with you over the coming weeks and months and would encourage anyone with comments or concerns to get in touch [here](#).

Thank you – on behalf of the Executives in Healthier Together

Healthier Together: who we are

Healthier Together is our Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP). The Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) brings together 10 local health and care organisations, including the clinical commissioning group, local authorities and health providers, working together to shape the future of health and care in our area.

Further information is available on our website: www.bnssghealthiertogether.org.uk