

**Hampshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee
14 September 2020**

Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust response to COVID-19

1 Introduction

This paper provides an update on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which remains a priority for the organisation and has a significant influence on our planning for the months ahead.

Local prevalence of COVID-19 has reduced in-line with the national picture. We continue to implement all national guidance as we monitor and respond to emerging evidence about COVID-19, prevalence of the virus and impact. Regular Gold command meetings are ongoing and continue to support our clinically-led decision making. We continue to work closely with organisations across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum on a co-ordinated response to the pandemic and with our partners on plans to support restoration and recovery.

1.2 Risk assessments and support for our staff

We continue to take action to support colleagues identified as being at higher risk from COVID-19.

In-line with initial national guidelines we have carried out risk assessments for groups of staff or individuals who are at higher risk due to pregnancy, age or underlying health conditions.

Mark Cubbon, Chief Executive, has written to all staff from ethnic minority communities to explain support offered by the Trust and has met with colleagues via our Race Equality Network and across the organisation to understand concerns. Following these discussions and in-line with national guidance requirements, colleagues from ethnic minority communities were asked to complete a work health assessment with their manager.

Additional support is being provided to help any remaining members of staff to complete their assessments.

As we continue our focus on supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of colleagues we have extended risk assessments for all colleagues who have not been assessed to date, to date, to understand whether there are additional staff who may be vulnerable to the virus and recommend where further action is needed.

1.3 Health and wellbeing support

We have a range of support available for all our staff covering emotional, social, financial and physical wellbeing. Our staff support line and manager support line continue to be open daily to provide advice, guidance and access to professional occupational health support and welfare services.

Colleagues raised the need for a more suitable multi-faith prayer room and we have created an additional, bigger prayer room with an accompanying wash and change room. We asked colleagues about the support they would find most helpful and are prioritising short and longer term counselling and practical support such as additional locker space, outside benches, cycle storage and a fruit and vegetable stall. We continue to monitor the uptake of the services on offer and modify the support in response to feedback we receive.

1.4 Testing

We have continued to support the national testing strategy, providing antigen swab testing for patients, staff and their families. Our testing programme supports the track and trace strategy to identify individual incidences of infection. Anonymised results from the nationwide testing programme also provide information on the prevalence of COVID19 in different regions of the country and help better understand how the disease spreads.

At the end of May, we also began antibody blood tests for individuals across the Trust and for our healthcare system partners. The blood test demonstrates that someone has developed antibodies as a result of having COVID-19 in the past. In-line with national expectations, all staff have been offered an antibody test and 82% have taken up the offer.

We are recruiting healthcare workers to the national SIREN study, which will help establish whether antibodies indicate immunity to COVID-19.

1.5 Clinical research trials

The Trust is taking part in a number of COVID-19 clinical trials, providing the opportunity for patients to participate and increasing the potential to develop treatments that benefit patients quickly. The RECOVERY trial is testing a range of potential treatments for COVID-19. The REMAP-CAP trial for critically ill patients with community acquired pneumonia uses an innovative trial design to evaluate multiple interventions simultaneously.

In June we saw the announcement of the first positive results from the RECOVERY clinical trial, with the steroid Dexamethasone shown to reduce deaths by one third in ventilated COVID-19 patients and by one fifth in patients requiring oxygen. Our PHT team recruited 117 patients to the trial, giving our patients the opportunity for new treatments and making us the seventh largest contributor of the 176 UK recruiting sites. We have now incorporated the treatment into the clinical care of our patients.

1.6 Support from colleagues, local communities and partners

Throughout the pandemic, the entire workforce across our organisation have been exceptional, changing shift patterns and working practices, undertaking additional training and redeployment, working from home and introducing essential new processes and procedures. Our volunteers continue to support patients, their families and loved ones, while playing an essential part of our work every day. We are extremely grateful for the continued support for our staff from our local communities.

Our thanks go to our local communities for their positive response to the national lockdown measures, a crucial factor in preventing transmission of the virus in Portsmouth and South East Hampshire.

Local co-operation between health and social care partners is also a fundamental part of our collective response to the virus. We appreciate the increased levels of support and collaboration that our partners have provided and this will continue to be key in the months ahead.

2. Phase Three Plan

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have prioritised the delivery of urgent and cancer work. We achieved all of our waiting time targets for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer in

June and have a plan in place to safely increase the volume of elective activity based on clinical need.

We continue to prioritise urgent and cancer services for our patients while increasing capacity for routine elective patients, maintaining patient safety and following all national guidance to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

In this third phase of COVID-19 our priorities include safely increasing our capacity for non-COVID-related health services in-line with our plan, while preparing for winter and maintaining our preparedness for additional COVID-19 patients and potential local outbreaks of the virus. We have contributed to the development of the local outbreak plans created by Portsmouth City Council and its partners, and by Hampshire County Council, and continue to work closely with our partners on plans to support restoration and recovery. Our plan also includes arrangements for supporting the extended flu immunisation programme and the potential impact of EU exit and continued support for individuals and team across the organisation.

We have appointed a Director of Recovery to lead this complex piece of work across all four divisions and corporate areas of the Trust until March 2021.

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