

Briefing from University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group

Restoration of services at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB)

Dear colleagues

As some of you may already be aware, there has been [national guidance](#) issued this week, with the aim to restore essential NHS non-COVID services.

Although some numbers may be going down, we are a long way from being free of COVID-19 and it still poses a significant threat to patients and our staff. Any move to the next phase of our local NHS response, we need to ensure that we protect patients and staff, through maintaining the measures that have brought about that reduction. This includes personal infection control via social distancing, hand washing and self-isolation. We need to protect those most at risk, including our staff who are more vulnerable. It also includes working remotely and using technology in ways we haven't before. It also means repurposing healthcare facilities to reduce the risk of transmission.

University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) has made a proposal about such changes to the use of their facilities, in particular in relation to Solihull Hospital becoming a COVID-free elective hospital, allowing patients to access routine care sooner and in a safer environment through being isolated from the other sites managing COVID cases at Heartlands, Good Hope and the Queen Elizabeth.

This is part of UHB working towards implementing phase two of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic; this is the gradual restoration of a number of 'paused' services across their sites.

Back in March, early signs and the stark modelling prompted a change in the NHS approach to COVID-19. In response, UHB ramped up its operational response (phase one). Over the last 10 days, UHB has seen COVID-19 admissions and inpatient numbers begin to reduce and ITU numbers plateau, however they are still at 150% capacity in ITU.

Phase 2 is therefore about balancing these core requirements in a moderated, proportionate and flexible way over the next 12 to 18 months, to handle the prevailing COVID-19 situation, and still ensuring the safety of patients and staff.

For UHB to start to increase access to elective care, it will require:

- Continuing to make full use of the Independent Sector and other NHS providers
- Providing more UHB non COVID-19 theatre, recovery, ITU and inpatient capacity

- From 01 June 2020, creating a COVID-19 free elective hospital for mainstream elective inpatient activity for Birmingham and Solihull patients at Solihull Hospital – which will mean:
 - The temporary removal of the Minor Injuries Unit, Acute Medical Unit and six medical inpatient wards
 - With regards to the removal of the MIU, the CCG is currently exploring options **at pace** to the provision of urgent care services locally. The CCG will be working in partnership with local GP providers to design a solution and ensure that adequate urgent care provision is in place for local people
 - From 8am on Friday 8 May 2020, all acute medical patients from the east Birmingham/Solihull area will be redirected to Heartlands
 - Staff will be able to remain working at Solihull, or another UHB hospital
 - Re-purposing the Ambulatory Care Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital into inpatient facility including theatres, recovery, ward and ITU. A standalone full service surgical unit will be implemented to re-commence the complex and tertiary activity
 - The potential use of Good Hope Hospital for elective care will be kept under close review
 - Clearly, logistical issues such as patient transport, will need to be properly worked through and addressed.

Whilst it seems that this will require some significant change to how the system currently operates, and won't be without its challenges, it may present the local NHS with the opportunity to redesign local services, to meet the needs of patients better.

In partnership with the CCG, UHB has prepared plans to communicate and engage with the public and all relevant stakeholders, at appropriate times. This is in line with NHS England and NHS Improvement's emergency service change protocol.

For more information, please contact University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust: communications@uhb.nhs.uk

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
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