

## **Open letter to GP patients in the North Yorkshire and Vale of York CCG areas**

9 April 2020

We have been working hard across North Yorkshire and York to redesign how we provide primary care services to our patients as we work through the COVID-19 outbreak. We are putting in place a new approach and you will see changes if you access services from your GP. This approach will enable us to make sure that we continue to provide the services patients need in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Our approach sees GP practices working together in a new way. We are ‘clustering together’ to form networks and provide services over multiple sites. This means you may receive services somewhere other than your usual practice and may see someone other than your usual GP or nurse.

This is how the new system will work:

- If you have COVID-19 symptoms please see the NHS website for guidance (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>) and, if you need medical advice please use NHS 111 (<https://111.nhs.uk/>). You can call NHS111 if you do not have access to the internet.
- GP practices are now sharing resources across a number of sites to create networks as we work together to provide primary care services. As a result, calls to your usual GP surgery may be diverted to a different site.
- All calls received will be telephone triaged first. This means calls will be returned by a clinician (this may be a GP, nurse, paramedic or pharmacist) who will talk through the symptoms and decide what next steps are appropriate. Calls should only be made to discuss non COVID-19 issues. If you have COVID-19 symptoms and need medical advice please access NHS111.
- This new triage system will enable us to connect patients to the right medical staff at a suitable location (this may be different from a patient’s usual practice).
- If you do need to attend a surgery in person staff may be wearing personal protective equipment, including face masks, aprons and gloves. We ask that you observe the two metre social distancing rule from staff and other patients in the practice to ensure both your safety and theirs.

As you know practices have already put in place a number of innovations which have enabled them to minimise face to face contact, including video and telephone consultations. This approach has helped us:

- reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission;
- protect our most vulnerable patients and staff; and
- enable clinicians to continue to care for those patients who need it most.

As we embed our new approach to delivering primary care for the people of North Yorkshire and York during the COVID-19 outbreak we continue to ask all patients to:

- Follow the current government advice to stay at home and protect the NHS. Advice is being kept under constant review and you can find the latest guidance here. [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus).
- Use NHS111 if the first instance if you have COVID-19 symptoms and would like medical advice. Please use NHS111 online if you have access to the internet (<https://111.nhs.uk>). Phone NHS111 if you do not have online access.
- Do not come to any GP practice unless you have been specifically advised to do so after a phone/video consultation with a local clinician.

We would like to thank you for your patience and cooperation as we put these new systems in place to ensure we remain able to provide the services you most need.