

September 2021  
Media and Communications Team

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## **Briefing note:**

# **Southern Health's response to coronavirus pandemic: update 8**

### **Introduction**

Our aim is to provide our local overview and scrutiny committees with regular updates on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have either done this through Southern Health specific updates or through the system-wide updates which have been provided to the committees over the past year.

This short paper is the latest in a series of Southern Health specific updates and follows a more comprehensive update in June 2021.

### **Overview**

#### Road-map

Southern Health continues to follow the 'road-map' introduced by the Trust's IPC (infection prevention and control) team in April (and outlined in the last update). It includes guidance on:

- patient and staff meetings
- visiting loved ones in hospital
- inpatient activities and communal dining within our units.

The road-map has helped to build clarity for our staff and patients around restrictions – such as social distancing, room ventilation and the use of masks and PPE – which continue, even though national restrictions have now lifted.

Please see attached an example of one of our road-map posters for staff (focused on visiting) to demonstrate the guidance since the 19 July date, when wider lockdown restrictions ended.

#### Prevalence Panel

We are also able to adjust some key infection prevention precautions depending on how many cases of COVID-19 are occurring in each area, so that the correct level of infection prevention measures can be taken.

To help decide how the precautions are adjusted, the Trust introduced a Prevalence Panel earlier this summer, which looks at the national and local data every two weeks to inform our measures across the Trust. Areas are then graded as low, medium or high and appropriate specific precautions put in place.

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## **OUR VALUES**



### Workforce

As a result of the vaccination roll-out, we have been able to administer the first COVID-19 vaccine to 95.8% of our 6500+ eligible substantive workforce and 93.1% of our eligible substantive staff have had their second dose too, as of 6 September 2021. (The figure is slightly higher for our frontline staff). This work to protect our workforce through approved COVID-19 vaccinations continues and we are meeting with those staff who may have previously been reticent to have the COVID-19 jab (i.e. due to pregnancy etc) to increase take-up further.

Also, whilst the process for ordering lateral flow test kits has changed for healthcare staff in recent weeks, we nonetheless continue to test our frontline staff on a regular basis to protect both them and our patients.

We are now preparing for a series of booster vaccinations in the autumn – with details to be confirmed by NHSE/Government.

### Services

The vast majority of our services have returned to 'business as usual' – with some adaptations (i.e. where positive digital innovations like video appointments have proved useful and been well received by patients).

However, as outlined in our previous update, there are a number of pressures that remain to be managed. These include the backlog of routine care appointments, the impact of isolation/stress on the local population's longer term mental health (and the impact of this on our services), and the welfare of our staff. Work is underway to tackle these issues. For example, a review of patient caseloads, increased capacity in mental health services, and longer term support for our staff's health and wellbeing.

### Long COVID

We have secured further funding to expand the 'Long COVID' service, initially until the end of the financial year. We are looking at enhancing the clinics we currently run with group work, support from MSK/pain services, care coordinator roles, additional administrative resource and also additional clinic time.

### **Engagement Activity & Next Steps**

We continue to work closely in partnership with our CCG colleagues and those across the local healthcare and social care system to agree and implement any changes. We have also been working with our local teams to encourage them to share any necessary information with patients and carers as quickly as possible and to offer support and guidance. Additionally, the Trust's communications team continues to share messages regularly on Southern Health's website and across our various social media channels.

### **More information**

If you have any questions, please contact Grant MacDonald (Southern Health's Chief Operating Officer) or Heather Mitchell (Southern Health's Executive Director for Strategy, Infrastructure and Transformation) via email: [grant.macdonald@southernhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:grant.macdonald@southernhealth.nhs.uk) / [heather.mitchell@southernhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:heather.mitchell@southernhealth.nhs.uk).