

Covid Protect

A new initiative to support people with most medical need in Norfolk and Waveney

Summary



Covid Protect is a pioneering initiative developed by the NHS in Norfolk and Waveney which aims to support and protect people with the most medical need in our communities. Around 28,000 patients who are at higher risk of developing complications from coronavirus (Covid19) received letters from NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in April asking them to report their health and symptoms on a daily basis via a dedicated, secure NHS portal www.nhspatient.org using a unique code.

Patients are asked if they or anyone in their family is currently experiencing any coronavirus symptoms such as a cough or a fever. They are also asked if they have sufficient medicines and essential supplies such as food and whether they need any additional support. These daily updates help doctors identify quickly which patients are in need of additional medical or social support. Patients without access to the internet have been asked to encourage a family member or friend to do this for them over the phone if they are not isolating with them.

CCG staff are phoning those people who are not using the portal. They may be unable to use the service or be experiencing technical problems – or they might not wish to participate. In any case, the staff callers are there to help.

Identifying people who would benefit the most



The CCG has sent letters to patients in high risk groups, including those who have received an organ transplant, patients with severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or severe asthma who have been admitted to hospital in the last 12 months, and those taking immune suppressant medications.

The people chosen were identified as part of the Government's coronavirus shielding initiative together with some identified by their GP as being in most need. This is happening across most GP practices in Norfolk and Waveney.

Alongside the letters, patients were sent a brochure explaining that they have been identified as being at greater risk of becoming unwell if they catch coronavirus. The brochure provides useful information about how to self-isolate, the importance of hand washing and social distancing, support with daily living and the importance of keeping in touch with friends and family and accessing medical care.

Patients are also reminded that help is also available from: www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable or by calling 0800 028 8327, the Government's dedicated helpline.

The CCG letters are in addition to the letters that patients may have already received from either local councils or the NHS. It is another way that the local NHS and local councils are working together to keep people as safe and well as possible.

Staffing



Due to the coronavirus pandemic, most staff at the CCG have been redeployed to support frontline clinical services. More than 80 staff have volunteered to support a new virtual call centre set up to support the Covid Protect initiative. Staff have been making telephone calls on a daily basis to high risk patients who are unable to access the online survey. Feedback has been very positive, with many staff delighted to be able to support local people during this challenging time.

Jo Maule, the CCG's Integration and Partnerships Manager in west Norfolk said: "It has been great to be part of this project to create a whole new support service from scratch and switch our day to day work so we can make a contribution, however small, to supporting our frontline colleagues in protecting our local population through this pandemic."

Unique project to support people in Norfolk and Waveney



Dr Anoop Dhesi, Chair of NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), says: "This initiative is unique to Norfolk and Waveney and uses technology designed by one of our local GP practices.

"The letters ask patients who the Government and local GPs have identified as being more likely to become unwell if they

become infected with coronavirus to report their health and symptoms on a daily basis. This allow GPs to focus on patients who are most at risk from complications from this virus and enables them to quickly identify those who are in need of additional medical or social support.

"We are tremendously proud of this pro-active and innovative approach which aims to support and protect the most vulnerable in our communities."

Howard Martin, one of the CCG's Directors who is leading the project, said: "Through the pro-active Covid Protect work we have identified almost 50 people who were in need of food within 48 hours. We have built a really strong process with our local authority partners in Norfolk and Waveney who have ensured that the needs of those residents were met very quickly."

Covid Protect:

How it has made a difference

As of May 23, 2020:

- **16400** people had signed up to Covid Protect .
- **116000** health updates had been logged by patients.
- **1475** patients have had issues or problems that they have raised with us, or which were identified during a phone call by one of our members of staff. These have been passed on to our partners in local councils to help resolve.

Clinical feedback

GPs say patients have been appreciative of the calls:

"The patients and carers I spoke to today were hugely appreciative of the call. I was able to give them reassurance as to the efforts being undertaken and all of them found that of great comfort."

"The Covid Protect search picked up a lady who had not been found on the central search, she had received a kidney transplant and was pregnant. She was not aware that she should be shielding and was added to the list/ sent the shielding letter."

"A 60-year-old picked up (via the daily check in process by the practice manager) with symptoms. Contacted proactively by the practice. Was becoming increasingly unwell and was admitted to hospital by ambulance."

Patient case studies

Our CCG call handlers have reported this:



"Called to speak with a male patient in their mid-70s to find out that he was living at home with dementia and I spoke with his wife, also in her 70s, as his caregiver.

"She explained that there were four people living in the same household - including her father in his 90s and her son. The wife had cancelled the care support agency that was previously helping with the husband about the end of Feb 2020 because she was worried about the transmission of the virus to her husband, so the wife had taken on all the care for her husband's needs and the needs of her elderly father. She was very anxious about going out to get shopping and medications.

"I was able to record that she needed support for these to be delivered to the home as there were two vulnerable adults in the household and I also gave her the council number to ring if she came across any other non-health related issues. She said that she found the conversation really useful and felt reassured by the support that was on offer.

"She also said that she would not have asked for help as she 'didn't like to bother people' and felt that she should be able to manage to look after her husband with dementia and her elderly father on her own. I felt that the conversation helped the lady and she was clearly very grateful for the call."



"Called to speak with a female patient in her early 60s. Through the conversation she explained that she had several conditions that made her shielded including COPD and severe asthma. I could hear her raspy

breathing over the phone and asked if she would prefer me to ring off rather than continue, but she said that she was happy to talk.

“I found out that she was still going out with her husband to do the ‘big shops’ as he was unable to drive, so she was driving him. I explained the guidance about shielding and suggested that it might be better if I send a request through for assistance with shopping as she really would be best to stay at home.

“She was very accepting of this idea and I recorded a request for assistance on the questionnaire.”



“Called to speak with a male patient in his early 70s, no answer on either of his phones so I left a message explaining why I was calling and said I’d ring back as I thought he might be screening his calls.

“When I rang again he answered and put me on speakerphone so his wife could also hear. The patient explained that he was currently having chemotherapy for cancer so understood why he had to stay home and shield.

“When I asked about his supply of medications, they said that the hospital was sending some meds straight out to him but his other meds came from the local pharmacy. His wife said that she had rung the pharmacy about getting their meds delivered as she was very worried about bringing the virus into the home due to her husband’s condition. The person at the pharmacy told her that she would have to ‘wait in line like everyone else’. I recorded this in the questionnaire as an issue with the supply of medication. We are working with colleagues to ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place.”



“Called to speak with a female patient in her early 70s. Her husband answered the phone and explained that his wife had had a stroke and was unable to move independently.

“I spoke with him as the caregiver which was fine and then when I asked about the internet he handed the phone to his wife, which I didn’t expect to happen.

“She spoke to me from her bed and I checked several times whether I should ring off but she said that she wanted to talk with me. Her speech was pretty poor due to the stroke but I could understand her.

“She was extremely worried that her husband was having to help move her and that they had been told that a ceiling hoist would be installed but had no knowledge of when this would be. They did have carers coming in to help throughout the day. She asked if I could do anything to help to find out when the hoist would be coming.

“I recorded this in the questionnaire. We are working with colleagues to ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place.”

