

STOP PRESS

Your essential guide to what's going on across our Sustainability and Transformation Partnership



Local authorities publish plans to control coronavirus outbreaks

As lockdown restrictions have been easing across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) and services beginning to restart, local authorities across the area have published plans for preventing and reacting to localised coronavirus outbreaks.

In line with all local authorities across the country, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire councils were tasked by the government with producing a Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) as the response to coronavirus moved away from national lockdowns to a more localised approach to prevention.

The plans focus on having systems in place to identify and suppress possible outbreaks before they gain momentum and reducing the risk of outbreaks occurring.

The plans also detail how councils will ensure testing capacity is used effectively in high-risk locations through working with the NHS Test and Trace Service and other partners and outline support for high risk setting such as care homes.

The LOMP has recently been put into action in Swindon following a spike in cases at a number of local businesses.

Swindon Borough Council has written to residents to remind them of what they need to do to control the virus. In the letter, the Council's Director of Public Health, Steve Maddern, has urged people to protect themselves and others by continuing to wash their hands, cover their faces if in enclosed spaces and to stay at least one-metre apart from people not in their own household.

Councillor Rob Appleyard, cabinet member for Adult Services at Bath and North East Somerset Council has also said people living in BSW must remain alert.

"Coronavirus is still very much with us. If we drop our guard, we could see more outbreaks."



Inside this issue:

- Letter highlights impact of coronavirus-related council deficits on vulnerable
- Services and operations in hospitals restart across BSW
- Local people's concerns about coronavirus revealed in survey

BSW leaders highlight impact of coronavirus-related council deficits on vulnerable

Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Partnership's Independent Chair Stephanie Elsy and Senior Responsible Officer Tracey Cox have written to Health Secretary Matt Hancock to highlight the impact coronavirus related local authority financial deficits will have on vulnerable people across the area.

The three local authorities across BSW have a joint deficit of around £106m - despite receiving emergency government coronavirus relief funding. The financial gap is likely to have a significant impact on the way already under-pressure local authorities deliver services in the future.

The funding shortages have been caused by falling income from areas including leisure centres, car parks and tourism. These have been compounded by a rise in expenditure as part of local authority responses to coronavirus in areas such as managing infection control programmes in care homes, implementing social distancing measures and public health.

The letter, which has also been signed by leaders of B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire councils, highlights how important the relationship between our social care and health system has been during the coronavirus pandemic, particularly in terms of supporting the needs of care home residents and shielded patients.

The letter also asks for support and intervention on behalf of the government in order to prevent major reductions in service provision in the future.

"We are deeply concerned about the profound impact these service cuts will have on our most vulnerable and deprived communities. Coronavirus has illustrated the deep rooted inequalities in our society in terms of its impact on the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) community and our older population," the letter says.

Speaking about the letter to specialist publication Health Service Journal, Tracey Cox said cuts to council budgets were bound to have a significant impact on the types of services that many vulnerable people rely on.

"Services are focused on the most vulnerable individuals, whether they be the frail elderly, children, people with learning disabilities and mental health needs. My personal concern is that the big drive that we are discussing to improve health inequalities is going to be further thwarted and offset by [councils] having to reduce service provision."

New Chief Executives for BSW hospitals

Two hospitals which are part of the BSW Partnership are to have new Chief Executives over the next few months.

Cara Charles Barks has left Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust to take up the position of Chief Executive of the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust in September 2020. Cara replaces James Scott who retired from his position in May. Cara has been Chief Executive of Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust since January 2017 and under her leadership the Trust moved from a CQC rating of 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good' in March 2019.

Cara's position at Salisbury will be filled by Stacey Hunter. Stacey joins from Bradford and Airedale Foundation Trusts where she held the position of Executive Director of Acute Provider Collaboration.

Stacey has held a number of senior positions at Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust, Airedale NHS Foundation Trust and Bradford and Airedale Foundation Trusts.

She was also seconded to Yorkshire & Humber Nightingale Hospital as Chief Operating Officer in response to the coronavirus crisis.

Mental health trust provides support through coronavirus crisis

As demand for mental health support has grown during the recent coronavirus lockdown, BSW mental health service provider Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP) NHS Trust has continued to provide crucial support services to those in need.

The trust recently launched a 24-hour telephone support service offering access to mental health experts and has also produced guides containing useful information about how people can look after their mental health and wellbeing throughout the ongoing pandemic.

Sarah Constantine, Medical Director, for AWP said it was crucial that people living in BSW

struggling with mental health issues had access help and support.

“We know this can be a really difficult time, the way we live our lives has changed dramatically and the way we access our usual help and support may have changed.

Our highly trained and skilled staff can offer professional advice, arrange for mental health advisers and clinicians to provide help and support or direct people to the most appropriate service.

“We are working closely with voluntary sector organisations in order to ensure the right support and guidance is available.”

Services and operations in hospitals restart across BSW

People who need planned treatments are being urged to take up re-scheduled dates for care over the coming weeks as services begin to restart across BSW and return to a level of normality.

Over the coming weeks those people who need important planned procedures – including surgery – will begin to be scheduled for that care, with specialists prioritising those with the most urgent clinical need.

At the same time, clinicians across BSW have moved to reassure people that hospitals and surgeries are safe and they should not miss appointments.

Dr Andrew Girdher, Clinical Chair of Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG, said: “As a practising GP, I know that when a doctor refers a patient to hospital, it’s because there is a genuine need for them to be seen and assessed by an expert.



“Not attending these appointments, especially when it’s relating to something serious, such as a suspected cancer, is extremely risky as delaying treatment, even by just a few months, can have serious implications on future care.

“Coronavirus is now part of our everyday lives, and while our hospitals are carrying out more consultations remotely, there is still a need for some to take place in person.”

Research highlights experiences of coronavirus

Mental and physical health, changes to the way we access services and testing are the main concerns of people living in BSW during the coronavirus pandemic, new surveys have found.

Carried out by the Our Health Our Future BSW Citizen's Panel and Healthwatch - an independent champion for people who use health and social care services - the surveys also highlight the growing acceptance of virtual consultations with doctors and other healthcare professionals.

The Our Health, Our Future Panel is a new way for BSW CCG to engage with local people to get their views on health and care issues. So far the panel has recruited over 700 members who respond to surveys and complete questions as a way of helping to provide feedback on health and care services in the local area.

In line with the CCG's value of "inclusive", the online panel is made up of a representative sample of the population from across our region. Panel members take part in regular surveys throughout the year as well as form focus groups.

The surveys were carried out during April and May and show the main concerns of people living across the local area. The results have been passed onto system leaders in the BSW Partnership and will be used to inform decisions and plan services.

They show people's main concerns over the past months have been their own and their family's physical and mental well-being, worries about how to use services during lockdown and access to coronavirus testing.

They also show that just under two thirds of all BSW residents now report that they would be comfortable with a video consultation with a known GP in the future.

Gill May, Director of Nursing and Quality at Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG, said:

"The Our Health Our Future panel is a fantastic way for us to connect with our local communities and, while it's not our only method of engagement, the fact it's a digital platform means current social distancing rules can't put a stop to these important conversations."

Would you like to join our Our Health Our Future panel and play a part in helping us to shape the future of health and care services across BSW? To find out how you can get involved visit www.junglegreenmrc.co.uk/panel

New campaign encourages people to get symptoms checked early

BSW CCG is launching a campaign to encourage people to get help early if they have worrying symptoms and have been put off visiting their doctor because of coronavirus.

The *Don't wait and worry – we're here for you* campaign will focus on cancer and mental health as part of a bigger campaign to inform the public that services are open and safe.

The campaign, which will run from the end of August to the end of September, will look to address a recent sharp decline in cancer referrals by GPs and a low uptake of screening appointments in secondary care. It will also make use of radio advertising as a way of reaching a wide audience and targeting groups who do not have good access to the internet or regularly use social media.