

To all patients registered with
Harrow CCG Practices

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30th June 2020

Dear Sir / Madam

I hope that you and your families are well over what has been a very challenging time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please be assured that your local health service remains open for all essential services, and I very much encourage you to contact your GP as you normally would if you need them. We are now taking forward plans for how we will re-start all services that you would normally expect to receive.

This has been an unprecedented time of national crisis, though within this we have seen important changes to how your local health care services run. As we return to the “new normal”, we know we need to provide different services in different ways. In this, we are now working with Harrow Council, voluntary and community sector services, patient groups, and other NHS providers to take forward some changes over the coming months.

We are making sure there is additional bereavement and mental health support for residents and staff. Sadly, even our best efforts could not avoid the loss of life in Harrow as a result of the pandemic, or the long-lasting mental and physical effects that will affect some members of our population. As a result, we are working hard to support all those affected by offering additional bereavement and mental health support for residents and staff. If you feel you need this support, you should contact your GP who will be able to sign post you to all local support available. You can also click on this link to [find a psychological therapies service in your area](#) and refer yourself directly to a psychological therapies service (IAPT) without seeing your GP. You can also ring the service on 020 8515 5015 or send an email to: harrow.iapt@nhs.net.

We are increasing our work in identifying and tackling social inequalities and residents that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. We need to ensure we can support people appropriately, pro-actively responding to the needs of shielding residents and their carers, building community services that allow care to be delivered closer to home, and supporting our frontline staff to give the best care they can to patients.

We are making changes to the way that you access your GP now and in the future. Over the pandemic period, if you have needed to see your GP, it is most likely that this has at first been through a telephone, an online or video consultation. It is important that we support this as a change on a longer term basis. Reducing the number of people coming into GP Practices reduces the risks of infection for staff and patients. We have also heard that this new way of working has been a

positive experience for patients; we are very keen to get on-going feedback on this. I want to emphasise though, where you need a face to face appointment, you will be able to book one.

If you do attend your GP Practice in person, you will see changes to the layout and the way it operates. You will see in your GP surgery, and other clinical buildings, marked zones to separate the types of care being offered, with staff in the surgeries wearing PPE and social distancing in place.

We are making sure that health and care staff and teams work better, together on a permanent basis. This has long been an ambition for services providing health care and social care to the local population. The COVID pandemic has seen us come together like at no point before. We are all committed to making sure we stay working in this way, as we know patients want and need us to work in a joined-up way to ensure their health and social care needs are provided.

We have developed an Out-of-Hospital Recovery plan for Harrow to outline what we have learnt from the pandemic, how we are ensuring we are ready if there is another surge in cases, and how we plan to start delivering truly joined-up health and care services in Harrow. This plan can be found as part of the Harrow CCG Governing Body papers for June 2020 here: <https://harrowccg.nhs.uk/news-publications-events-2/publications/policies-meeting-papers/publications/navigate/3597/11861>. If you have any feedback about the plan, please send an email to harrow.ccg@nhs.net.

We will be keeping you updated on progress in the coming weeks and also on how you can get involved through your GP Patient Participation Groups, Harrow Patient Participation Network, Harrow HealthWatch and also other Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

Finally, we would just like to acknowledge the Voluntary and Community Services in Harrow who have been central to supporting our local population over this period, and we are truly thankful to all the volunteers and leaders that made this happen.

We hope that this gives you a good overview of what we are doing, and look forward to hearing your feedback and keeping you informed as our plans take shape.

With best wishes,



Dr Genevieve Small
Chair
Harrow CCG



Javina Sehgal
Managing Director
Harrow CCG