

Update from Alison Jones, GP Engagement

Updated advice for outpatients and visitors to the county's hospitals

NHS Hospitals across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have updated their advice for visitors and outpatients, in line with national guidance, in order to keep visitors, patients and staff safe.

Although specific restrictions on visitors to the county's hospitals are still in place for the time being, from Monday 15 June anyone who is specifically allowed to visit a patient (due to an exception to the current restrictions) or is attending the hospital as an outpatient has needed to wear a face mask during the whole of their visit, in order to reduce the spread of coronavirus. Commenting on the change of guidance, Zena Young, Executive Director of Quality at NHS Shropshire CCG and NHS Telford & Wrekin CCG said: **"We can all play a role in reducing the spread of coronavirus and keeping our hospitals safe. So, if you are coming to hospital either as a visitor or for planned treatment, it is important that you wear a face mask at all times. This is for your safety and the safety of other patients and staff. All visitors to our local hospitals will be provided with an appropriate face mask to wear, and all visitors will continue to be expected to comply with existing social distancing and hand hygiene measures in addition to the face coverings while in the hospital setting."**

Patients who are currently shielding should also have been provided with a surgical face mask for their hospital appointment, and are requested to continue to use this. If patients have not been provided with a surgical face mask prior to attending, they will be provided with one on arrival.

Shropshire and Telford's NHS hospitals are continually reviewing policies and procedures to make sure they are able to allow visitors to see patients, where it is safe to do so. Anyone wishing to visit a patient in one of Shropshire's main hospitals in Shrewsbury, Telford or Oswestry, one of the county's community hospitals or the Redwoods Centre in Shrewsbury should check with the specific hospital or ward area to find out their current visiting arrangements, prior to arriving.

Trust trials video clinics in response to COVID-19 pandemic

Patients at a number of clinics at the Trust will be able to access their appointments from home and attend certain appointments virtually via phone, device or PC. Video clinics can be used for a range of patients and are, in general, suitable for people who do not need a physical examination or test.

Using video clinics supports SaTH's coronavirus response by:

- ◆ Preventing the transmission of the disease by reducing the need for patients to attend hospital in a clinic setting.
- ◆ Allowing clinicians to speak to patients who may be at risk, self-isolating or have difficulties accessing appropriate transport.
- ◆ Improving the patient experience by reducing unnecessary travel, car parking and time taken out of the day to attend a clinic setting.

SaTH is trialling 'Attend Anywhere' video clinics to ensure patients receive a quality experience, ahead of a Trust-wide rollout. Video clinics for follow-up appointments have so far been successfully trialled in Paediatrics, Diabetes, Therapies and Urology, with other specialties to follow.

Feedback from clinicians and patients has been positive. A parent, who used the system for an appointment for her child, said: **"My child found the clinic enjoyable and felt safe due to staying at home. As always, we had great service and I have full confidence in both the service and advice."**

Dr Richard Brough, Consultant Paediatrician, who was one of the first to trial the new system, said: **"Attend Anywhere is a great addition to my clinical toolkit. It has some of the advantages of a face-to-face consultation with the ease of a telephone call for the patients."** For more information, please visit www.sath.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/video-clinics/

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Trust highlights the work of Dietitians during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Trust raised awareness of the invaluable work carried out by its Dietetics team throughout the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic as it marked Dietitians Week from 1 to 5 June.

Dietitians at SaTH assess, diagnose and treat dietary and nutritional problems at an individual and wider public health level. They work to tackle some of the biggest health issues facing the nation, from obesity and frailty to diabetes and cancer.

To mark Dietitians Week, Sarah Thomas, Specialist Dietitian at SaTH (*pictured right*), explained the vital role she and her colleagues have carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic to support patients suffering or recovering from the virus.

Sarah said: **"Good nutrition is crucial in supporting the body to get through and recover from COVID-19, but getting access to the right nutrition in the right quantities can be difficult, and the way in which the body uses nutrients can be greatly affected when a person is unwell.**

"The majority of people with COVID-19 will experience only a mild cough and fever requiring rest and recuperation at home. However, some patients may experience far more severe symptoms, requiring the highest level of medical support available in our hospitals' critical care units, and this includes the expertise of a dietitian.

"When a very ill patient is transferred to critical care they may be sedated and ventilated. In order for them to receive nutrition, hydration and medication, a tube is placed into the stomach via the nose and, for a small number, nutrition and hydration will be delivered directly into the vein.

"The clinical condition of COVID-19 patients can change quickly. Dietitians must be flexible and reactive to these changes to ensure that the patient receives the correct nutrition.

"Patients on critical care often receive medications that can affect their nutrition. Dietitians constantly assess what the patient's nutritional requirements are and take these extra calories into consideration when formulating the patient's feeding regime.

"Some medications can contain calories, whilst other medications can slow down gastrointestinal transit, or make it harder for patients to absorb nutrition. The role of the dietitian here is to recognise these medications and advise on different preparations of feed and alternative methods of feeding when required.

"When a patient is well enough to return to the ward after critical care for COVID-19, they must work hard to regain enough strength to return home. Their nutritional requirements are increased, and swallowing difficulties can also occur after critical illness as the muscles involved with swallowing become weak and tubes used to ventilate the patient can irritate the mouth and throat.

"Dietitians work closely with ward staff including the nurses, doctors, ward housekeepers, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists to ensure that there is a holistic approach to the patient's recovery, and any aspects of their treatment which can impact on their nutrition (such as increasing mobility, swallowing difficulties or periods of nil by mouth for procedures) are accounted for.

"Dietitians are instrumental in providing education and support regarding food choices, and in many instances, will suggest nutritional supplements to help meet nutritional requirements for recovery and rehabilitation. This support does not stop when the patient leaves hospital. At this point, our outpatient team will work alongside GPs and community healthcare professionals to guide the patient as their health and strength return.

"The past few months have felt uncertain and at times, scary, but the outpouring of support and love experienced from fellow NHS workers, patients and the general public has been nothing short of phenomenal. I have never been more proud to call myself a Dietitian."

Maggie Bayley, Chief Nurse at SaTH, said: **"Dietitians and Support Workers provide an invaluable service, both for their patients and for their colleagues. The team at SATH has been flexible and reactive during the COVID-19 pandemic and I'm proud to acknowledge their hard work and tenacity as we observe Dietitians Week."**



Dietitians
Week 1-5 June 2020

Coronavirus: the Trust plays a key role in dexamethasone trial

Patients and staff at the Trust have played a key role in the trial of a drug which has been shown to reduce deaths amongst patients with severe respiratory complications caused by coronavirus.

The Research & Innovation and Critical Care teams at SaTH were involved in the clinical trial, run by Oxford University, of the steroid dexamethasone.

Patients being treated in the Intensive Therapy Units (ITU) and on wards were recruited into the trial.

The drug has been shown to cut the risk of death by a third for patients on ventilators. For those on oxygen, it cut deaths by a fifth. This has been described as a “major breakthrough” in the treatment of COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Sister Helen Moore, Clinical Trials Manager and SaTH’s Lead Research Nurse (*pictured right*), said: **“This is such great news and we are delighted to have played a part in it by recruiting patients to this study and by being able to offer our patients the opportunity to take part.**

“SaTH has been successfully recruiting into clinical studies looking at COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. Over the last few weeks, more than 1,050 patients have been recruited into various studies, one of which is the RECOVERY Trial (Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy) led by the University of Oxford, which looked at the use of dexamethasone.”

Peter Horby, Professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford, and one of the Chief Investigators for the trial, said: **“Dexamethasone is the first drug to be shown to improve survival in COVID-19. This is an extremely welcome result. The survival benefit is clear and large in those patients who are sick enough to require oxygen treatment. Dexamethasone is inexpensive and can be used immediately to save lives worldwide.”**

Martin Landray, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at the Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, one of the Chief Investigators, added: **“Since the appearance of COVID-19 six months ago, the search has been on for treatments that can improve survival, particularly in the sickest patients. These preliminary results from the RECOVERY trial are very clear – dexamethasone reduces the risk of death among patients with severe respiratory complications. COVID-19 is a global disease – it is fantastic that the first treatment demonstrated to reduce mortality is one that is available and affordable worldwide.”**

The UK Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, said; **“This is tremendous news from the RECOVERY trial showing that dexamethasone is the first drug to reduce mortality from COVID-19.**

“This is a ground-breaking development in our fight against the disease, and the speed at which researchers have progressed finding an effective treatment is truly remarkable. It shows the importance of doing high quality clinical trials and basing decisions on the results of those trials.”



Trust celebrates National Biomedical Science Day 2020

The Trust celebrated National Biomedical Science Day on 11 June by shining a light on the vital work carried out by its team of professionals. They may never be seen by a patient, but Biomedical Scientists ensure people across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales receive the best possible, often life-saving, care, and their role has been pivotal in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every blood test, COVID-19 swab, tissue biopsy or other sample taken in hospital and at GP surgeries is examined by a Biomedical Scientist, and 70% of diagnoses in the NHS are based on pathology results provided by laboratory services.

Alan Jackson and Bir-inder Ironmonger, Head Biomedical Scientists at the Trust, said: **“As testing requirements for patient and staff have been increased in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trust has rapidly upgraded equipment and implemented new testing. Our laboratory has been redesigned to accommodate social distancing and to avoid cross-contamination of samples, with designated COVID-19 areas and additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).**

“The team is currently testing approximately 300 samples every day and plans are being made to move to a 24-hour service. We are now also commencing COVID-19 antibody testing to tell us whether our staff and patients have already had the virus.”

Dr Arne Rose, Medical Director at SaTH, said: **“The work of Biomedical Scientists lies at the heart of healthcare, and the vital role they play at SaTH has come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

“As well as detecting the virus, over the past few months our Biomedical Scientists have altered their way of working to ensure people dependent on blood transfusion and cancer diagnosis still receive their treatment during the pandemic. I am extremely proud of the tenacity and dedication displayed by the team.”

Critical care physiotherapists give an insight into their role fighting the COVID-19 pandemic

The Trust is raising awareness of the vital work carried out by its team of physiotherapists in critical care throughout the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

As the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy marks 100 years since being granted royal chartered status by King George V, its professionals have been fighting the biggest healthcare crisis of a century. Claire Good, Clinical Lead Physiotherapist in critical care at the Trust (*pictured right*), explains the invaluable role she and her colleagues have carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic to support patients suffering or recovering from the virus.



Claire said: **“Getting patients moving is where we thrive most in critical care at SaTH. Anyone who can move in some way is encouraged to do so. This ranges from passive exercises or cycling in bed for sedated patients, sitting on the edge of the bed after potentially weeks of immobility, to walking outside in our garden area.**

“The sooner patients move the less likely they are to develop long term problems. People can be profoundly weak after a critical illness, and in some cases they can lose 10% of their muscle mass in the first week alone. As a therapy team our main mission is to assist critical care patients to feel like they are still themselves. We find out everything we can about them as part of our assessment, often involving their family. This means we can plan activities for rehabilitation that are functional, meaningful and individual to the patient.

“Depending on the stability and ability of the patient, they are encouraged to make a plan for the day, join in with their own personal care and move in some way. In the past few weeks we have walked to the garden, played all sorts of board games, listened to singing and sermons and helped patients to find themselves again. This is what rewards and motivates us every day.

“Recent restrictions in visiting have meant we have had to work harder to maintain contact between patients and families. We work alongside nursing and speech and language therapy colleagues to keep patients communicating with their loved ones from the moment they are able. This may mean a wave on a video call or even surprising a family with their first words after being ventilated for many days.

“The rehabilitation journey for a critical care patient doesn’t end with their discharge from the critical care unit. Some may have achieved their goals, but for others there may be a long road ahead. We work hard to provide ongoing rehabilitation and support as the patient moves to the ward and continues their journey to recovery.”

Maggie Bayley, Chief Nurse at the Trust, said: **“The work of physiotherapists is vital to the recovery of patients affected by COVID-19. I’m proud to publicly acknowledge the dedication of this fantastic team at SaTH.”**

Trust and Community Engagement in virtual meeting

The Trust held its first virtual Community Engagement meeting on Wednesday 24 June in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Quarterly public meetings are a regular part of community engagement activity at the Trust and the meetings enable members of the public to hear about different aspects of SaTH, as well as getting up to date information about its performance and improvements.



Due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, the engagement team has found new ways to keep in touch with communities in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales. SaTH’s first virtual Community Engagement meeting took place on the morning of 24 June and could be accessed from any smartphone, tablet or PC.

Kate Ballinger, SaTH’s Community Engagement Facilitator, said: **“We’re really excited about connecting with people again. Everything is going to look a little different in public engagement for some time, and we want to work with our communities to make sure we are still able to listen to what they have to say.”**

With an emphasis placed on topical issues that would be of interest to the public, Wednesday’s virtual meeting included a talk from the Clinical Research team about SaTH’s successful involvement in the national COVID-19 clinical trials.

Julia Clarke, SaTH’s Director of Corporate Services, said: **“It’s brilliant to see the engagement team responding so positively to the challenges of COVID-19 and in such a flexible way. Community Engagement sits at the heart of SaTH and we look forward to hearing from our communities to help us shape our future.”**