

April 15, 2020

GP practices providing extra support and monitoring for vulnerable patients

GP practices in Norfolk and Waveney are providing extra support for patients who are more likely to become unwell due to coronavirus (COVID-19), through a pioneering initiative which will monitor their health on a daily basis.

Around 28,000 patients in Norfolk and Waveney who are at higher risk of developing complications from the virus will receive a letter from NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) asking them to confirm every day that they are well and their conditions are under control.

The letter explains that they have been identified as someone who is more likely to be unwell if they become infected with coronavirus. To help support their health and care, each patient has been allocated a unique 'Covid code' and is being asked to report their health and symptoms on a daily basis via the NHS portal www.nhspatient.org.

Patients will be asked if they or anyone in their family is currently experiencing any coronavirus symptoms such as a cough or a fever. The daily updates will help doctors identify quickly which patients are in need of additional medical or social support.

Patients without access to the internet are being asked to encourage a family member or friend to do this for them over the phone if they are not isolating with them. If patients are unable to do this, they shouldn't worry as they will be contacted by telephone and will continue to be provided with all the usual support services.

The CCG letters have been sent to both the 19,000 people in Norfolk and Waveney who were sent letters as part of a national NHS drive, advising them to shield themselves by staying at home for the next 12 weeks, plus a further 9,000 people that local GPs would like to monitor more closely. This is happening across most GP practices in Norfolk and Waveney.

The letters are being sent 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.

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

"The letters will 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 will allow GPs to focus on patients who are most at risk from complications from this virus and will enable 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."

Alongside the letters, patients will be 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 important 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.

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