

1st May 2020

Dear Colleagues

Patient and Public Engagement in Norfolk & Waveney CCG during and after COVID-19

We are writing to you as a key local stakeholder who has supported our patient and public engagement activities across the Norfolk and Waveney CCGs over the last few years. We are very aware of all the time and effort you have put in to supporting the various panels, PPGs, events and other activities across the area. We would like to begin by saying thank you for all the support you have given your local NHS in the past, and also now when it is vital that we all follow the guidance on staying safe and stopping the spread of the coronavirus.

As you will be aware, the five NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Norfolk and Waveney merged into a single organisation on April 1st this year. Lockdown arrangements had just begun and our first Governing Body meeting and the public event which was to precede it was cancelled in line with government advice. This enabled the new CCG to immediately concentrate all its efforts into supporting frontline staff and services.

In our roles as Clinical Chair, and as the Governing Body Lay Member for Patient and Public Involvement, we thought the time is right to contact you to introduce ourselves and to underline our commitment to engaging with our local patients and stakeholders. Our positions on the Governing Body will mean we can promote the voice of the patient at the very heart of the CCG.

At the end of January, Coronavirus was declared a Level 4 incident which meant that local NHS activity became subject to command and control by NHS England and Improvement with the Department of Health and Social Care. All routine non-essential work, including engagement, was stopped from mid-March so that the CCG workforce could concentrate on supporting frontline staff and ensuring the system was as ready as possible to deal with the challenges ahead.

The CCG paused all commissioning and transformation work, however CCG staff continue to work hard albeit under realigned or redeployed roles. We are immensely proud of how the CCG staff have risen to this challenge. Here are some examples of the types of work that CCG staff are currently doing:

- **Supporting GP practices** to introduce further online and web-based triage so they can respond to more people in the most effective way; co-ordinating designated surgeries where people with coronavirus can attend for appointments, separated from other patients to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
- **Prescription Ordering Direct (POD)** service – call centre managing the ordering of repeat prescriptions online
- **Covid Protect** – identifying “high risk” patients, offering support via phone or online
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – sourcing, warehousing and delivering PPE for local GP surgeries
- **Discharge planning** – helping get patients home to keep beds clear for pandemic
- **Digital** – getting practices set up for online consultations, including delivering IT equipment

- **Testing** - arranging testing for health, care and other front line staff
- **Care homes** – supporting care homes to cope during COVID-19
- **Clinical roles** - where appropriate staff returning to frontline clinical roles

Many of the projects mentioned above were already under development but the current pandemic has accelerated these innovations. It is likely that we will want to keep some of these changes and we need to start thinking about a process to decide what we keep and what we don't. Sometimes it takes extraordinary times to foster new ideas – as William Blake said “What is now proved, was once only imagined”. So we will be starting a process to map the current changes and work with stakeholders and colleagues across the system to evaluate what should stay and what should go.

We think we have also learnt a lot from this experience about communications, and consequently we shall ensure that we take an innovative approach to patient and public engagement, both to reflect the large area for which the new CCG is responsible, and to extend the reach of engagement activities to as large a proportion of the Norfolk and Waveney population as possible.

If you have not done so already, please do go to the Healthwatch websites in Norfolk or Suffolk and take part in their survey about your experiences of services during COVID-19. We hope to learn about how people feel about the changes in service delivery.

<https://healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk/hwn-covid-19-survey/>
<https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/news/covidsurvey/>

And finally, keep an eye out for an invitation to some online engagement opportunities which we are planning over the next few weeks.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to working with you. Stay safe and stay home.

Best wishes

Dr Anoop Dhesi
Chair NHS Norfolk & Waveney CCG

Mark Jeffries
Governing Body Lay Member for
Patient and Public Involvement

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Dr Anoop Dhesi

Dr Anoop Dhesi is the Chair of NHS Norfolk and Waveney CCG. Having qualified at Cambridge University, he underwent his General Practice training in Norwich, and is a practicing GP at Staithe Surgery in Stalham, where has been a Partner since 1993. He has been involved in local NHS development since 1998 including serving on Norfolk Primary Care Trust Board in a variety of roles. From 2013 to 2020 he was Chair of North Norfolk CCG.



In his spare time, Anoop enjoys cycling and being a gardening assistant for his wife. He is currently completing a Masters in Quality Improvement and Health Care Leadership, as part of a Generation Q Fellowship award in 2018 by the Health Foundation nationally.

Mark Jeffries

Mark Jeffries is the Lay Member for Patient and Public Involvement on the NHS Norfolk and Waveney CCG Governing Body. He is the former senior partner of the national law firm Mills & Reeve LLP. He is also a Non-Executive Director of R G Carter Holdings Ltd, Chairman of Evolution Academy Trust and Norfolk Academies, and Deputy Chair of the Council of Norwich University of the Arts.



Previously Mark was a Non-Executive Director of the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust from November 2011 until January 2020.

In his spare time Mark enjoys cycling and running. He is also studying part time for an MA in Art History at UEA.