

12 May 2020

Dear Member

Services and Support during the Coronavirus Outbreak

I am writing to you to give you an update on our services and offer some guidance and support during the coronavirus pandemic that the NHS and wider society are currently experiencing.

If you or anyone you know has lost loved ones or are struggling with the effects of lockdown, please know you are in our thoughts during this difficult time. Do reach out and use the support networks available; they are there specifically to help guide you through the current crisis. Details of these resources are in this letter and available on our website www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

A huge amount of work has taken place to prepare and change our services in response to this challenge. I am glad to say that the NHS has coped well with the change in demand – thanks in no small part to our local communities following the Stay At Home measures to stay safe, save lives and protect the NHS. All of us at Southern have been humbled by the outpouring of support from our local communities in terms of volunteers, donations and the simple but powerful act of clapping.

Access to Southern Health Services

I want to assure you that we are working with our staff and patients across the county to ensure our local communities have access to our services, especially those needing urgent or ongoing support. We have adapted our services to ensure we are able to support our patients in different ways, such as via telephone, text messaging or video calls. Face-to-face contact with patients is still taking place where this is important to their safety. In some cases, services and support groups have been temporarily suspended to prevent the risk of infection but alternative arrangements are in place to ensure people can still access care and support, including regular text messages to our mental health service users to ensure they have all the support they need.

Essential measures are being taken to protect patients and staff from the virus during home visits and on inpatient wards. Staff may be wearing personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves and aprons to minimise any risk of infection to both patients and staff. For information and advice on the latest service changes, please visit our website www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Support for Families and Carers

In line with national guidance, we had to take the difficult decision to suspend visiting to all our inpatient wards. We recognise the impact this will have had on families and loved ones, but our priority is to ensure the safety

OUR VALUES



patients and staff. We have, however, ensured that all inpatient wards have access to iPads to help people stay in touch and have set up an email address stayingintouch@southernhealth.nhs.uk specifically for loved ones to email messages of support to their family members during this difficult time. We are also offering emotional and practical support for our carers via Zoom sessions, telephone chat sessions and peer support calls. More information about how to access these is available on our website www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Looking after our Mental Health while Staying at Home

We know that people may be feeling anxious and worried about the current situation, and that social distancing measures can be tough for many. The NHS has launched specific advice for the general public who may be worried or anxious about the current situation, or finding 'stay at home' measures difficult to manage. The advice can be accessed here:

- **Ten tips to manage coronavirus anxiety:** www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/
- **Mental wellbeing while Staying At Home:** www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/

We would encourage you to keep up-to-date via:

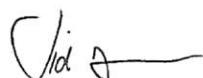
- Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS website: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus
- Our website: www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/coronavirus

We also understand that even after the pandemic has passed, many will still feel its effects. We are already planning to ensure that people are able to access the support they will need in the aftermath of the current crisis. In the weeks and months ahead, we will ensure that our services are ready to support local communities and staff to recover from the effects of this unprecedented event. We will continue to be here to support you.

I will be moving on to take up my new post as Chief Executive at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust at the beginning of June 2020. Southern Health's new Chief Executive, Ron Shields, will be joining the Trust in early June and we are working to ensure a smooth transition. Ron has a wealth of experience as an NHS Chief Executive and is committed to championing the needs of service users. Ron previously led our neighbouring Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust to achieve an 'outstanding' CQC rating and he is an ideal candidate to enable Southern Health to continue its own journey of improvement.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank every patient, service user, family member, colleague and partner who has provided, comments, compliments and constructive criticism during my time at the Trust. Such feedback is greatly appreciated and has helped us to improve as an organisation. It goes without saying that we are absolutely committed to continuing to improve and to provide the best possible care we can to all those who use our services.

Best wishes and stay safe,



Dr Nick Broughton FRCPsych
Chief Executive Officer