New measures to prioritise care due to rising Covid-19 cases

As cases of Covid-19 continue to rise across the South-East, we must focus our efforts on those who need the most urgent and life-saving care. New measures include:

- Opening up additional beds within our acute and community hospitals to help create additional capacity for people who need to be admitted. This includes plans to open additional beds at the NHS Seacole Centre.
- Prioritising urgent and cancer care over non-urgent care. This has meant postponing some routine planned elective procedures and non-urgent operations to help create additional bed capacity and free up staff who can then be deployed to support our Covid-19 response.
- Moving to virtual (telephone and online) appointments for many outpatient services to reduce the number of people travelling to hospitals and other sites to reduce transmission of the virus.
- Working together as a system, across health and social care, to discharge people from hospitals as soon as they are well enough to leave, with the right support and the right package of care.
- Working with our independent sector partners (such as private hospitals) to identify any additional bed capacity and any clinical staff that could be deployed to other sites if needed.
- Temporarily suspending home birth services due to ongoing pressures on the ambulance service.

Importantly, patients who have appointments should still attend; if we need to reschedule an appointment patients will be contacted directly. **Primary care services remain open**.

For those who need urgent care which can't be managed via a GP appointment, we would urge people to **contact NHS 111 first, either online via www.nhs.uk or by calling 111**; **please keep A&E for emergencies only.**

Remember if you are showing symptoms of the virus, or are contacted by NHS Test and Trace, then you should self-isolate straight away. Anyone showing symptoms of Covid-19 can book a test by calling 119.

Download the full bulletin here

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