



## Western Trust Covid-19 Update to: Public Representatives Friday 20 March 2020

Please note our latest updates on planning and information on Covid-19. This is for your information and please also find attached some resources and information which the Western Trust has published (and will be publishing) on our channels for public viewing in the days ahead.

Please be aware this is a continually evolving situation. As such please check for any daily updates which will be provided on the Public Health Agency website at: [Click Here](#)

The Western Health and Social Care Trust is working collaboratively with our partners in the Department of Health, Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board in respect of preparations and planning for Covid-19.

The Trust have intensified preparations and planning to respond to assessment and treatment needs for people infected with Covid-19 in addition to taking all necessary precautions to protect our patients and staff from Coronavirus.

We have implemented new inpatient pathways for people suspected to have Covid-19. Patients who need admission to hospital during this 'delay phase' will be admitted to specialist facilities and cared for within isolation rooms. We have designated areas on both our acute hospital sites for this purpose.

The Western Trust have in place robust arrangements to test for coronavirus with systems in place for Altnagelvin Acute Hospital and South West Acute Hospital to deal with this.

In respect of the Western Trust Surge Plan to deal with the Covid-19 Pandemic, all announcements and information will come from Health Minister, Robin Swann.

Phase 1 of the Covid-19 Surge Plan for Mid-March to Mid-April can be accessed on the Department of Health site – [Click Here](#). Key points of this first phase Surge Plan are listed on Page 5 and the Plan Summary is attached in PDF format.

With regard to planning in the Western Trust, surge planning groups for (a) Community Planning and (b) Hospital Planning have been established and key areas of planning include:

**Hospital Planning:** Creating Capacity; Workforce; Keeping our staff safe; Pathways; Elective cancellations; Communications.

**Community Planning:** Surge planning for each service area; Protection of vulnerable clients; Protection of vulnerable staff; Redeploying workforce; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); Working with Independent sector providers; Performance implications – lost activity; Multi agency working; Communications.





## Visitor Restrictions to Hospital:

Please note the latest updated guidance in respect of visiting to patients in our hospitals.

Until further notice, the following restrictions will apply in respect of visiting patients to wards with the exception below:

- Only one visitor is permitted for each patient.  
Permission of ward manager for ANY exceptions before visiting.

### Access for visitors is not permitted at this time to:

- North West Cancer Centre, Ward 31 and Ward 50 (Altnagelvin Acute Hospital) and Ward 1 (South West Acute Hospital)

## Update on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

We have been working with Independent Service Providers over the last 4-5 days to enable us to develop a supply line for personal protective equipment (PPE). Whilst it is primarily the responsibility of providers to ensure that their staff have access to suitable PPE, we have established a system to support providers with the provision of appropriate use PPE because of the current circumstances. While we do not presently have sufficient supply to distribute PPE as stock, we are issuing an Emergency Response Action Card setting out a single point of contact for providers. The single point of contact can also advise how to access PPE for staff, when needed.

We will continue to link with providers on issues such as PPE, Staffing and Covid-19 specific questions daily, and this will allow us to plan effectively on how we best support providers during the times ahead.

Please see the attached Video message from Dr Bob Brown, Director, to our Carers, Staff and all those in our Communities who may be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Services will be significantly curtailed due to Covid-19

Health service activity across Northern Ireland will unfortunately have to be significantly curtailed as resources are diverted to care for coronavirus patients.

Following the Minister's statement on Friday 13th March, the Western Trust has moved to reducing the number of non-urgent outpatient appointments, day cases, inpatient and diagnostic work. This will allow us to free up our resources in order to provide hospital care for the most seriously ill Covid-19 patients.

For the moment, all emergency surgery, red flag / cancer surgery and procedures deemed clinically urgent by senior teams will proceed. Ante-natal appointments will not be affected.





For patients who need follow up as outpatients, Trusts are planning for greater use of telephone contact and other digital technology, where appropriate.

Patients will be contacted directly by the Trust with regard to any cancellations or changes to already scheduled appointments. Patients should note that they may be contacted by a 'withheld/private number'. We apologise for the inconvenience this may cause.

The Western Trust will also be focusing sustained attention on ensuring patients who are medically well are promptly discharged from hospital, with appropriate care arrangements, to ensure hospital beds are available for any increase in admissions.

We apologise to our patients who will have appointments and treatments postponed. Unfortunately, this is unavoidable.

## **Update from Trust Board Chairman, Mr Sam Pollock**

“You don’t need me to highlight that the gravity of the issues facing us in the Western Trust is severe but that is true for all the Trusts across Ireland and indeed world-wide. The unsettling dynamic is not knowing exactly the intensity or the extent of the pressures we face. We are shocked at the extent of impact and death in China, Italy and Spain but they are dealing with the tangible to the best of their ability and resources.”

“Directors are doubling or working with deputies to make absolutely sure there is 24 hour/7 day availability in all key areas whether in the community or hospitals. Directors are meeting daily to agree operational priorities and Anne is keeping me well informed.”

“As a Board member I have expressed to Anne our unequivocal support in the weeks and months ahead.”

## **Updates to Public Representatives:**

In relation to Covid19 information and updates, these will be issued to all Public Representatives on a weekly basis, from next week on a Thursday (next update on Thursday 26 March 2020). Any statements will also be issued to all Public Representatives by email as they arise.

With the situation evolving considerably on a daily basis we would also ask that Public Representatives continue to stay tuned to our Social media channels and our Website for regular updates which we would appreciate further sharing to the public and to your constituents.

In light of the considerable preparation, planning and anticipated workload and pressure on all our services in respect of Covid19, we would also ask all our Public Representatives to be mindful of requests, enquiries and any pressurised timelines imposed.





## Contact Information:

Following previous correspondence, please note the following direct contact details to the Western Trust for ALL enquiries:

### Lead Contact:

**Chris Curran, Public Affairs and Communications Manager**

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                                 **Direct Line:**      028 8283 5457

**Email:**            [chris.curran@westerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:chris.curran@westerntrust.hscni.net)

For all **Constituent Enquiries** by email contact please use the following method as currently stands:

**Email:**            Madonna McGinley, Chief Executives Office:  
                                 [Madonna.McGinley@westerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:Madonna.McGinley@westerntrust.hscni.net)

**CC to:** [chris.curran@westerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:chris.curran@westerntrust.hscni.net)



## Health and Social Care (NI) Summary Covid-19 Plan for the Period Mid-March to Mid-April 2020:

A core aim of the surge plans - covering the immediate period to mid-April - is to prioritise essential services and free up capacity across the system (The Summary Covid-19 Plan is attached in PDF format).

- A number of the key actions in the surge plans are outlined below:
- Testing capacity will be expanded to around 800 COVID-19 tests per day. This will enable the HSC to extend the availability of testing to frontline health and social care staff, ensuring that they can continue to deliver vital services.
- Exploring radical ways to enhancing workforce capacity. The Minister announced that third year nursing and midwifery students within the last six months of qualifying will be redeployed to clinical care. This will happen in the next 10-14 days and will provide support of up to 880 senior nursing and midwifery students. Final Year Medical Student at QUB Medical School will join the Medical Register 4 months earlier than originally envisaged and will accordingly become immediately available to assist medical teams across NI hospitals.
- All Trusts have identified specific wards to provide additional bed capacity to respond to the needs of people with COVID-19 who need hospital admission.
- Some 40 additional mechanical ventilators (30 adult units and 10 paediatric units) have been ordered bringing the total available in Northern Ireland to 179 by the end of March.
- Plans are in place to rapidly increase the number of critical care beds as necessary.
- As outlined by the Minister last week, all Trusts are halting non-urgent appointments investigation and procedures. This action is necessary to allow us to redeploy key staff to support the care of people admitted to hospital because of COVID-19. Outpatient appointments, day case and elective inpatient services will be maintained for urgent cases. Similarly, surgery for the treatment of cancer and other urgent procedures will continue.
- All Trusts will apply appropriate restrictions on the number of visitors that are permitted.
- All HSC Trusts will also be focusing sustained attention on ensuring patients who are medically well are safely and rapidly discharged from hospital, with appropriate care arrangements, to ensure hospital beds are available for any increase in admissions.
- Routine GP work will be adjusted or suspended in the first number of weeks of the epidemic. Requests for consultations will be telephone triaged and an increased proportion of patients will have advice provided by telephone consultation.
- Community pharmacies will endeavour to deliver an increased proportion of prescriptions, hence avoiding the need for people to travel to a community pharmacy.
- Services will be prioritised for those most in need i.e. the vulnerable and those at risk of harm. This will include core children's and young people's services, older people's services, mental health services, and learning disability services.
- Detailed information and advice on coronavirus is available from the Public Health Agency