



Coronavirus protection for London general practice

As the only truly independent voice for London general practice, Londonwide LMCs continues to provide constructive challenge on behalf of GPs, nurses and the whole team in each and every practice in the area that we cover. The safety of everyone working in London practices and their ability to keep their communities healthy has been of paramount concern through the pandemic.

Last week NHS England called upon practices to provide more face to face appointments, causing substantial concern among GP practices already working flat-out to maintain infection control measures.

Dr Michelle Drage, Londonwide LMCs' CEO, issued this statement to the press:

"London's GPs and practice teams are dismayed at the media coverage on Sunday and Monday this week referencing pre-released briefings from NHS England about face to face appointments in general practice. Our colleagues have been working flat out to keep their services as safe and accessible as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"NHS England in its Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedure mandates all surgeries to undertake virtual triage of patients as their first point of contact, to minimise the number of patients having to be physically brought into surgeries to be examined, and to operate NHS infection prevention and control measures. Contrary to media myths and over-dinner discussions, London's practices are not closed. To enable safe face to face appointments when clinically needed, necessary entry restrictions at the front door and measures to control footfall and circulation to ensure the safety of our staff and patients – just as in hospitals – do not mean practices are closed. Far from it."

Around the same time, failures in NHS testing capacity meant practice staff could not get timely Coronavirus tests. The following statement was released:

"With demand for GP services growing even as hospitals are further limiting access to specialisms and A&E, it is even more critical that primary care staff are given access to testing to enable them to work and help patients as the second wave of the pandemic begins to grow.

"Increased testing has revealed that coronavirus is circulating widely and escalating, with primary care staff among the most likely members of the population to be infected, and the potential that they in turn become super-spreaders, many GPs and their teams face an ethical situation where going to work with even minor respiratory symptoms may risk infecting countless vulnerable patients.

"As parents and partners, healthcare professionals are equally bound by Government infection control guidelines regarding isolation if possible, Coronavirus symptoms are exhibited in their household. Without adequate fast track testing for healthcare professionals, commonplace winter cold symptoms could lead to the collapse of general practice services. And all that that would bring with it."

You can see these and our other recent media statements [here](#).