

Virtual appointments enable patients to access healthcare and advice during COVID-19

Both patients and healthcare professionals are benefitting from a modified Outpatients appointment service now in operation across Surrey Heartlands.

To reduce all unnecessary face-to-face contact during the Covid-19 outbreak, Outpatients appointments now take place – where clinically appropriate - over the phone or through the Attend Anywhere or AccuRX video call platforms.

AccuRX provides a solution for GPs and practitioners in primary care, and Attend Anywhere is a secure web-based platform which is being used at all acute hospitals within the Surrey Heartlands geography: Royal Surrey County Hospital, Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals, East Surrey Hospital and Epsom and St Helier Hospitals, as well as through our community and mental health services.

Initial feedback has been positive; here are just a few of the comments from patients who have used the Attend Anywhere platform:

“Found it really easy and it saved so much time travelling and parking”

“Consultant was exactly how I would have thought it would have been face to face”

“A time and facility saving exercise to be commended and should be used to triage all NHS appointments. Well done!”

“I have to say that I was a little anxious about the video call as I have never done this before, but I will definitely be happy to do it again when needed, it was so east and so much less hassle, and the physiotherapist was absolutely brilliant! Definitely a 10/10 from me for this service. Thank you!”

Health professionals, including Consultants are also finding it beneficial. Dr Mohamed Aldik Respiratory Medicine Consultant at Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust, said: “It worked like a charm. I think the service is amazing. I’ve also used it for the post take ward round to minimise exposure and it worked well.

“We recognise that not everyone has access to a computer or smart phone so phone appointments will also be available for those able to communicate by phone. We are carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment on this urgent service change to ensure that we take all steps possible to make reasonable adjustments for people with protected characteristics.”

Surrey Heartlands CCG Clinical Chair Dr Charlotte Canniff said: “Not only do phone and video consultations help to prevent transmission of the disease, they enable both patients and clinicians, including those who are in at risk groups or who need to self-isolate, to continue with the appointments they need.

“While it’s really important we try and offer as much care virtually as possible to prevent the spread of the virus and reduce anxiety amongst our patients, anyone who doesn’t have

digital access can still use a phone for their appointment. We will continue to support our local communities however we can and ensure they can safely access the health advice and care they need.”

A reminder that the NHS 111 online coronavirus service should be used for urgent advice on COVID-19 and patients are encouraged to only call NHS111 if help cannot be obtained online.

Note

Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership

Surrey Heartlands is a partnership of health and care organisations working together – with staff, patients, their carers, families and members of the public – to transform local services and support people to live healthier lives.

Together they are known as an ‘Integrated Care System’ – partnerships where health organisations, the local authorities and others take a collective responsibility for improving the health of the local population, managing resources (including money) and making sure services are high quality

Surrey Heartlands now covers the majority of Surrey; those areas currently looked after by East Surrey, Surrey Downs, North West Surrey and Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Groups but the partnership encompasses all local NHS organisations and Surrey County Council.