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To everyone in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire,

Thank you and next steps for health and care in our area

We wrote to you a month ago to thank you for all you had done to support health and social care in our area in the fight against coronavirus.

Now we are approaching the next phase in the Government's management of the crisis, we wanted to update you on what you can expect from health services over the coming months.

But first, we wanted to reiterate our gratitude; this weekend marks the 72nd anniversary of the NHS and social care, which represents an opportunity for us to pause and reflect on the past four months.

This has been the most challenging period in our NHS's history. This illness has seen many of us lose loved ones before their time and our thoughts and sympathies are with all who are mourning the loss of friends and family and we will be using the anniversary this weekend to remember those people.

The anniversary is also an opportunity for us to say a resounding 'thank you'. Not just to our dedicated health and social care staff, who have worked tirelessly in challenging circumstances to fight this pandemic, but also to all other key workers and you, the residents of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Alongside this Anniversary, this weekend also marks the most significant relaxation of the rules regarding social distancing and lockdown since the pandemic was declared in March. We thoroughly support the need to reopen services and get our communities thriving again, but the threat from the virus remains.

Please continue to:

- Observe social distancing
- Maintain regular hand-washing,
- Wear face-coverings in **all** health and care settings to protect you and those around you.

Current restrictive measures are causing harm to people's wellbeing, livelihoods and wider health. We must now find a way to adapt to a new reality, one where society can return to normal as far as possible while also continuing to protect against the spread of the disease.

This week, each of our councils has published a Local Outbreak Management Plan. These plans will be the mechanism by which we anticipate, prevent and respond to local incidents and outbreaks and which enable us all to move forward safely. Links to these plans are included at the back of this letter.

Shielding

Although the shielding process will be paused in the coming weeks, we recognise many people who had been isolating during this period will continue to need support to get back to normal life. Help and support for people who are shielding will remain in place over the summer but we also urge you to continue to look out for friends and neighbours.

Your Voice and Your Wellbeing

Through our engagement activity, we have heard that more than half of our population is anxious or worried and, as a result we are prioritising mental health and wellbeing support in the coming months. We have also heard that many of you have embraced the opportunity to access health and care services remotely and we will be building on that as services are reinstated.

Re-opening services and changes to care

Already many of the routine and non-urgent health services that were temporarily paused during the lockdown have begun to reopen and over the coming weeks more will be reinstated. We are looking at this carefully, and prioritising the most urgent cases first. However, we can't simply return to the way services were run before. We now need to work differently to account for the additional pressures of coronavirus.

This means over the coming months you will see changes to the way we work. Your safety is our first priority, and we are working hard to ensure that every health and care setting in our area is well prepared in terms of distancing, protective equipment and other measures. Already there has been greater emphasis on the use of digital tools in healthcare to enable you to get help and advice quickly and remotely, often without the need to attend a physical setting. When you do need to be seen in person, we will ask you to wear a face-covering and you can expect to be treated by clinicians wearing personal protective equipment (PPE).

We remain committed to providing you with the highest quality health and care services. However the changes required to maintain safety and protect people from the ongoing threat of coronavirus, means you may now experience longer waits, or the way we manage your condition may be different.

It is important for us all that you continue to look after your health and wellbeing. We have provided further information, signposting and guidance on the back page.

We will continue to share information with you over the coming weeks and months and if you do come into contact with our services we will inform you about any new requirements put in place. We will publish regular updates [here](#).

We are always keen to hear from you and would encourage anyone with concerns to get in touch [here](#).

Thank you

On Behalf of the Executives in Healthier Together

Healthier Together: who we are

Healthier Together is our Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP).

The Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) brings together 10 local health and care organisations, including the clinical commissioning group, local authorities and health providers, working together to shape the future of health and care in our area.

Further information is available on our website: www.bnssghealthiertogether.org.uk

Thank you for all you've done so far and here's how to continue helping us, to help you

- Follow government advice:
 - observe social distancing (where possible stay 2 metres apart and always aim to maintain the 1 metre plus rule)
 - wash your hands regularly
 - use the hand sanitiser provided in shops and other public settings
 - don't touch your face
 - wear a face covering in all healthcare settings and on public transport, as well as areas where social distancing is difficult.
- If you have a continuous cough, fever or loss of taste or smell, self-isolate and call 111 if you need further advice or help.
- Don't sit and worry – ring 111 for medical help or contact the wellbeing support line run by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership on 0300 303 1320.
- If you need medical help, call your registered GP practice or ring 111.
- Call 999 for all medical emergencies.
- For minor injuries, the Minor Injury Units in Yate and Clevedon and Urgent Treatment Centre in South Bristol are open between 8am and 8pm.
- For minor illnesses, please contact your GP practice or visit a pharmacy.
- If you are receiving care in your home, including district nurses, therapists and support workers, and need to discuss your needs please call 0300 125 6789.
- Only go to A&E if you experience a medical emergency or if 111 or your GP has advised you to do so.
- As rules around shielding are relaxed in the coming weeks, please continue to look out for friends and neighbours.
- Read more about the local Outbreak Management Plans for [Bristol](#), [South Gloucestershire](#) and [North Somerset](#).
- There is helpful advice on how to keep well while shielding, available [here](#).
- If you are isolating or require additional support, you can continue to contact contact the following numbers for community support:

Bristol: We are Bristol: 0800 694 0184

North Somerset: North Somerset Together: 01934 427 437

South Gloucestershire: 0800 953 7778