

# Your Health

Update for patients and the public in Berkshire West  
(Includes West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading)



**Berkshire West**  
Integrated Care Partnership

**April 2021**

## Walk in Centre changes

The 'walk-in' element at Reading's Walk in Centre has been temporarily suspended pending a public consultation around new models of access to primary care and the implications of a possible permanent cessation of the walk in element. The move does not affect patients registered at the Centre. The walk in service recently introduced a booked appointment system via NHS 111 but patient numbers have been very low, at around 130 patients a week, and GPs on site say many of those attending could be dealt with over the telephone or within core primary care services.



The public consultation will seek to capture people's views about the wider use of primary care services, determine how, or where, people would opt to access same day care and understand their awareness of the alternative healthcare options available. It is due to start in early May.

## Mental health staff review

The CCG is currently carrying out a survey for staff who provide mental health and emotional wellbeing services to children and young people across Berkshire West.

Niki Cartwright, Interim Director of Joint Commissioning said: "we have analysed a great amount of data from service users and their families over the last year or so but realise we don't have enough information on how staff experience the services. Our survey will help improve our knowledge of what is happening on the ground and the challenges, blocks and issues people might be experiencing in their work. Their responses should show up themes, trends and gaps in services as well as examples of what's working well."

- A free course aimed at volunteers and staff supporting people facing financial difficulties that are leading to mental health issues is being held on 18 and 19 May via Zoom. For more information contact Shaheen Kausar on 07923 138730 or email [rclcshaheen@gmail.com](mailto:rclcshaheen@gmail.com). Deadline to book is Friday 7 May.

## Cancer team pioneer new treatment

Pioneering radiotherapy technology, which will revolutionise the way some cancer patients are treated, was launched at the Berkshire Cancer Centre (BCC) this month.

Studies have shown that SABR – Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy – can be more effective than traditional radiotherapy for some cancers because it delivers a far more powerful, targeted beam of high energy X-rays directly to a tumour. This means the tumour receives a very large dose in fewer treatments and fewer visits to the department for patients.

SABR's higher precision means the very intensive beams are targeted exactly on the tumour. Initially it will be used to treat lung cancer patients but the plan is to then roll it out to treat other appropriate cancers for which benefit has been proven.

In a separate move, BCC has become the first NHS site in the South of England to introduce Surface Guided Radiation Therapy (SGRT). This technology eliminates the need to put permanent markers, like tattoos, on a patient's body to aid treatment. SGRT halts the beam if a patient moves during radiotherapy, which means the tumour is always within the intended treatment area, and minimises the beam affecting non-cancerous surrounding tissue. There's full details [here](#)

### **Stroke pilot rolled out across 39 hospitals**

High tech AI technology, which the RBH piloted last year, is now being rolled out for use by 39 hospitals across five stroke networks in England and Scotland.

The RBH was the first hospital in the Thames Valley to start using the AI software in March 2020, and last month the hospital's lead stroke consultant Dr Kiruba Nagaratnam was interviewed by The Times about the work – read the article [online here](#).

The software is being used in the Emergency Department (ED) to help clinicians quickly diagnose stroke. It analyses CT images of the brain and blood vessels immediately after the patient has a scan and automatically highlights the area of probable damage and the blocked blood vessel. This means it acts as an expert second opinion and helps the physicians make faster treatment decisions and, where necessary, fast forward patients to specialist centres for clot retrieval treatment.

### **Long Covid Clinic**

GP Dr Elizabeth Mottram from Thatcham Medical Practice, Dr Deepak Ravindran, the RBH's Lead Clinician for Long Covid spoke about the symptoms, impact and support around long covid at a virtual meeting organised by Community United West Berkshire.

The RBH was one of the first to set up a long covid clinic last November and latest figures show 263 referrals with 190 triaged and 70 seen at the clinic. A further breakdown of the figures shows 68% were women and 15% from ethnic minorities. The main symptoms are fatigue (95%), short of breath (82%), concentration problems (72%), pain (64%), depression (65%) anxiety (50%).

Dr Mottram from Thatcham Medical Practice said she had noticed many long covid sufferers had a feeling of 'abandonment', which was exacerbated by the closure of support networks during lockdown.

"In Primary Care we are hear and listening. Most people will recover from long covid, it might take a long time but you will recover," she said.

### **Berkshire Healthcare Governor Elections**

These take place in May and June to elect governors for the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - the community health and mental health NHS trust. The governors bring a community view and external perspective to the Trust's work.



**Berkshire Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

There are vacant places (by local authority areas) in Reading (1 place), West Berkshire (2 places), Wokingham (2 places).

Nominations close on 27 April at 5pm and there's more [information here](#).

### Healthcare Science team reach out to schools

The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust is hosting a special live webinar for schools and colleges later this month (22 April) to raise awareness of careers in healthcare science.

It will feature practical demonstrations, video and brief presentations from scientists and trainee scientists talking about the different aspects to healthcare science including Ultrasound, Radiotherapy Physics, Audiology, Cardiac Science, Respiratory Science and Clinical Engineering.

If you or someone you know is interested in finding out more about these careers, please contact [David.Cook@royalberkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:David.Cook@royalberkshire.nhs.uk).

### Vaccine update

Work is continuing around vaccine hesitancy and encouraging people, particularly those from ethnic minority groups, to have a jab.

GPs Dr Rupa Joshi and Dr James Kennedy, Co Clinical Directors for Wokingham North Primary Care Network, helped run a pop up event at the Aisha Mosque in Earley, at which around 200 people were jabbed. It was organised in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council and there's a short film here taken at the Mosque – [watch here](#).

A further 90 people had their first covid vaccinations at a similar session at Christ the King, Whitley which was run by Members of Pembroke Surgery (which manages a PCN site for Reading Central and Whitley PCN residents in South St, Reading) and a team of volunteers from the Church and local Whitley residents.

The sessions were part of a programme of work to encourage as many people as possible to have the vaccine and to address areas and communities where uptake is lower than elsewhere.



Muslim residents are encouraged to get vaccinated if they receive an invitation during Ramadan. The British Islamic Medical Association has published guidance that taking the vaccine does not invalidate the fast. Visit the British Islamic Medical Association website for more questions about getting vaccinated during Ramadan.

And as further work to encourage vaccine uptake, the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust recently teamed up with Reading Borough Council to produce a short video featuring Trust staff nurse Bernice Boore <https://youtu.be/1CqdZ1BTgfk>

### Healthwatch GP phone survey

Reading's Healthwatch has launched a short survey asking people about their experiences when ringing their local surgery. The findings will be shared with local doctors to help identify areas for improvement. Click this [link](#) to complete online, or call Healthwatch on 07786 476 257 to complete over the phone. Closing date is 25<sup>th</sup> April.