

Epidemic Policy

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Over the past few years there have been a number of significant outbreaks of infectious disease requiring a response from Primary Care, these have included Covid-19, Swine flu, bird flu, Ebola and others. Public Health England have indicated that there is a significant chance that there will be more significant outbreaks and have asked all NHS providers to be aware and have a process in place for managing an epidemic. This document outlines the principles we will adopt in primary care, though specialist advice will be made available at a national and regional level.

Principles:

Communication. Practices have a responsibility to ensure that they have good communication with other agencies. This will include being aware of information being received from Public Health England, GM Health and Social Care teams, public health and the wider NHS community. Communication methods will be utilised to pass on information to patients, including practice text message system, emails, letters, and social media. Staff will be briefed through cascade methods as to the advice being given out.

Vigilance: Clinicians are asked to be aware of unusual presentations of illness or unusual symptoms. Clinicians are expected to be up to date with guidance as it is released by the relevant authorities and colleges.

Prevention: The prevention of infection is an important part of managing an epidemic and the measures needed will depend upon the nature of transmission. In general the following measures will be taken in all epidemics.

- Good Hygiene – Handwashing, decontamination of equipment and facilities, deep cleaning
- Identification of cases
- Isolation of potential patients
- Trace contacting
- Administering prophylactic treatment

Vaccination/ treatment program

Where vaccination or treatment is recommended by PHE/ DofH practices will ensure that they have capacity to deliver the expected service. Resources will be mobilised through the following ways:

- Increasing staffing by bringing in additional staff or extending hours
- Reducing non urgent services such as annual reviews

PPE

All staff will be expected to comply with any guidance regarding specialist PPE. Monetary budget will be made available for purchasing specialist equipment.

Collaboration

Practices will work collaboratively with the wider health economy to allow co-ordination of provision. This will mean working with CCGs, Acute Trusts, local authorities and other local practices.

Opening up buildings for other service.

HCH will open up any buildings and extend opening hours to facilitate a response, and will be open to premises and equipment being used by other services or staff.

Emergency planning training

Senior staff within the organisation have had additional emergency planning training.