

To: General practices

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the work you and your colleagues have continued to undertake to support access to COVID treatments for the highest risk individuals. We are writing to provide some important updates in this area.

**Key information you must know:**

- Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) is continuing with the local pathways for COVID treatments following the publication of final [NICE guidance](#). The way patients access COVID treatments will therefore change after 26 June 2023.
- **With the closure of the national digital infrastructure, patients will no longer be contacted directly if they test positive but instead patients should contact NHS 111**
- The ICB is working with Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust and United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust, to ensure continuation of local pathways. The proposed pathway is attached.

**Further information on the transition from pandemic-specific arrangements to ICB-led commissioning:**

COVID Medicine Delivery Units (CMDUs) were set up in December 2021 under pandemic-specific arrangements to provide access to COVID treatments under interim UK-wide clinical commissioning policies.

Under these interim arrangements, national digital infrastructure has been in place that allows CMDUs to proactively contact potentially eligible patients once they report a positive test and then arrange an assessment for treatment.

Following the publication of the [NICE guidance](#) on COVID treatments on 29 March, the ICB is implementing the guidance in full to ensure access to treatments through routine local pathways. As a result, the way in which a patient enters the pathway for obtaining COVID treatments will change, due to the closure of the national digital infrastructure on

26 June that currently enables patients to be sent letters confirming their potential eligibility.

Potentially eligible patients who are digitally identifiable will receive a letter in June from NHS England that updates them about this change. This letter will inform them that they will no longer be proactively contacted and will instead need to contact their local NHS services if they test positive, which could include their GP practice, NHS 111 online, NHS 111 or hospital specialist. We will be providing information for the public including a news release to the local media to ensure that patients are aware to contact 111 either digitally or by telephone and not their GP practice.

GP practices should, therefore, be prepared to receive enquiries from patients about COVID treatments and understand where they need to direct a referral for an assessment for treatment if they feel unable to assess and prescribe directly.

### **The role of GP practices in new local pathways:**

Oral antivirals will be available through a number of community pharmacies (to be confirmed) so GPs and non-medical prescribers may prescribe directly, if they feel able, as per GMC Good Medical Practice. If there is clinical uncertainty or further assessment required, then the patient should be directed to CMDU assessment via the existing Clinical Advice Service (CAS) as per the attached pathway.

Healthcare teams across NHS settings will also need to tell patients (upon new diagnosis of a qualifying condition and treatment) that they may be eligible for COVID treatments and what to do if they get COVID. Please ensure this letter is shared among your staff including all those triaging patients, and administrative and reception staff who these patients may engage with when making contact and ensure that they are communicating that all eligible patients should contact 111.

### **Access to lateral flow tests**

Eligible patients will continue to have free access to lateral flow tests via [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or 119. They can also now use tests purchased from a pharmacy or shop. They will not be able to report the result of privately-bought tests, but this will not affect access to an assessment for treatment.

From 1 October 2023, the way patients access tests may change. Patients will be able to check [www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments](https://www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments) for more information closer to the time.

**Further information:**

The national webpages at [www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments](http://www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments) will be kept up-to-date with new information after 26 June. The ICB may also be making information available for patients on their own and partner NHS organisations websites.

For more detailed information about eligibility, please refer to the [NICE MTA](#).

An e-learning module on community-based COVID treatments is available on <https://learninghub.nhs.uk/catalogue/Covidantiviraltreatment>. This will provide an education and training resource to support safe and effective prescribing decisions.

Thank you for your ongoing work in supporting these patients to help ensure they can benefit from COVID-19 treatments.

If you require any further information on these arrangements, please contact the ULH CMDU Service on 01522 307215 / [ulh.cmdu@nhs.net](mailto:ulh.cmdu@nhs.net)

Yours sincerely,



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