



I don't know about you, but I found the announcement from Government this week outlining the plan for emerging safely from lockdown has given me a lift.

The idea that we could be completely free of social distancing measures by summer is exciting and perhaps something we had not dared to really dream about during the pandemic as a whole and these difficult last few months in particular.



It feels surreal to think we can return to any kind of 'normal' and, indeed, I do wonder what is 'normal' now and what will it now look like in the future.

But for those in the community who have faced a long period of home schooling whilst trying to work, whose businesses have been closed for a protracted period of time, who have lost their livelihoods in a damaged economy, the news of how we'll emerge from all this cannot have come soon enough. I cannot begin to imagine how hard it has been.

Likewise, for those key workers who have continued to go to work whilst wrestling with the same issues as others in their personal lives, it is time for hope. Not just in the NHS, but everyone who has put their own fears and issues aside to help the country function as effectively as possible during this incredible period in our history.

The NHS has undoubtedly led the charge in the most magnificent way and, whilst I am proud to have played my part in the global response to Covid-19, I'm prouder of colleagues everywhere whose contribution can never truly be quantified.

We have seen things we can never now unsee. We have hit the bottom and then discovered that, actually, there was still some way to go. We have found energy in the face of exhaustion and despair. It might sound dramatic but the experience of colleagues cannot be underestimated and I have said a number of times it really is going to take some time to recover.

I appreciate also that for those who have lost loved ones to this cruel disease in the most terrible, unthinkable circumstances, returning to 'normal' remains forever out of reach. We have registered the deaths of over 700 people at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals from Covid and continue to admit people who are very poorly indeed with the virus and won't return home. It is utterly devastating and my thoughts are with everyone who has faced

bereavement during lockdown. Unless you have been through it I suspect you cannot truly know how difficult that must be.

My message now though is clear. We have a way out of this, but we must continue to play our part. By and large that involves following the rules and restrictions, respecting the plan to relax constraints in a planned and measured way and doing everything you can to support the UK in reaching the targets which will make it all possible.

In addition, please – please – when you are called to have the vaccine, take it up. This week we have seen stark and inspiring research results that demonstrate how effective all of the approved vaccines are and we are seeing this in a drop in hospital admissions too.

Country-wide data from Israel in particular, which is leading the world in vaccinations, shows that the vaccine has sharply reduced infections in the community. The results showed that the vaccine was 89 per cent effective in preventing infection of any kind and 94 per cent effective against symptomatic infections. The new data provides the first real world demonstration of the vaccine's effectiveness and offers hope that those immunised will also help to stem the spread of infection.

I know there are those in our communities and in the Trust itself who are hesitant to have their jab.

I want to reassure you that as with any medicine, the vaccines have progressed through strict approval processes. Some of our greatest clinical and scientific colleagues have worked around the clock carrying out extensive trials to deliver the Pfizer and Astra Zeneca approved vaccines, with a third approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA) expected to be available later in the year.

The MHRA has assessed and approved them for use because they have a good safety record and are highly effective, with both offering a high level of protection from illness from two weeks after the first dose. The vaccine will protect you from severe disease should you catch Covid. Evidence is also emerging that they can help prevent transmission of the virus too.

All have undergone months of rigorous testing, including with people from a range of ethnic backgrounds and health conditions, and are recommended for the vast majority of people.

There is clear evidence that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are more vulnerable and have suffered more from the disease with higher rates of infection and higher rates of serious disease and mortality. By getting it you can protect yourself from the virus.

The Trust has worked with partners right across the community to provide as many vaccination appointments to as many people as possible as quickly as possible in recent months – and this has been a huge success with high numbers of people receiving their first dose already.

We continue to do this in line with the national NHS vaccination 'cohort' approach which is working through age groups and the most vulnerable first.

But please, when it's your turn take up the opportunity to be vaccinated and, especially if you are from a BAME background, where uptake rates are currently lower amongst both staff and local people.

If you have any concerns about the process for developing the vaccines or need information about cultural or religious implications, side effects in the short or long term or general safety and effectiveness, check our Frequently Asked Questions [here](#). These should help answer your questions to help you make an informed decision and feel confident about being

vaccinated. The Trust's medical director Jim Gardner has also produced a video providing reassurance of vaccine safety and effectiveness [here](#).

An effective and efficient vaccination programme is our best defence and the key to returning to normal life. Along with following the restrictions and guidelines as outlined this week, it is the way we will hit the milestones needed to progress. It is safe and it is the right thing to do.

I sincerely hope we have seen the worst that Covid has to offer and this is all coming to an end. Thanks for everything you are doing.

Take care,

Kevin McGee

Chief Executive, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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Positive

CLIFTON HOSPITAL APPOINTS FIRST PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT SISTER



The Trust's Clifton Hospital has welcomed Donna Hargreaves as its first Practice Development Nurse.

Donna has worked at the Trust for 30 years in a number of roles and is looking forward to making an impact in her new job.

She said: "I successfully applied and took up post as Clifton's first ever PD nurse where I have now been for a few weeks. I support staff full time, Monday to Friday.

"I want to entrench the 'Teaching Hospital' ethos firmly within Clifton, making this a supportive, nurturing highly sought after place to work, where learning is every day, progression is a given and where talent is free to flourish."

Donna started her career as an auxiliary nurse on a female medical ward at Blackpool Victoria Hospital while waiting to start training in 1989.

She went on to nurse within the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) before becoming a Medical Devices Training Sister in Critical Care - the first in the country.

Her other roles have included being a clinical advisor for the 111 service, a recovery theatre practitioner and working in the community with people with learning disabilities before returning to Critical Care.

DR GARDNER'S WEEKLY VIDEO UPDATE

You can view the latest episode of Dr Jim Gardner's popular COVID updates [HERE](#)

Dr Gardner, Medical Director at the Trust, reflects on the current situation where the number of inpatients has reduced slightly over the past few days although there has been a reduction in inpatients aged over 60 which is a promising sign in terms of the vaccination programme.



On another positive note, the reduction in community infection figures across Lancashire, as shown on the latest chart, has continued.

Although decreasing, the figures still remain above the national average however and still higher than they were in the summer months when the average rate of infections were below 100 per 100,000 people, so Dr Gardner once again stresses the importance of remaining vigilant and following the hands, face and space safety messages and seeking a Covid test should anyone have any flu-like symptoms.

FYLDE COAST RESIDENTS URGED TO RECOGNISE HEART ATTACK SIGNS

Doctors at a leading cardiac centre are urging Fylde coast residents to recognise the signs of a heart attack so they don't miss out on potentially life-saving treatment.

Dr Billal Patel, consultant cardiologist at the Lancashire Cardiac Centre based at Blackpool Victoria Hospital believes a significant number of heart attack cases are going untreated as patients are not recognising the symptoms or are staying at home so as not to be a burden on the NHS.

Dr Patel says that by doing this patients could be risking significant long-term damage by not coming to hospital and getting symptoms checked over.

"We noticed a trend early on" Dr Patel said. "Our own in-house data showed that there were fewer patients presenting with heart problems, and this trend was repeated up and down the country and around the world.

"At first we thought it might be because there were fewer heart attacks occurring, but we now understand that people are still suffering heart problems, but they are just not coming into hospital."

Symptoms can include:

- Chest pain – the chest can feel like it's being pressed or squeezed by a heavy object, and pain can radiate from the chest to the jaw, neck, arms and back
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling weak or lightheaded, or both
- An overwhelming feeling of anxiety.

Dr Patel's plea comes as cardiology teams across the UK are aiming to raise awareness of heart disease and heart attacks as part of National Heart Month through February.

His team has put together a video of advice for spotting a heart attack <https://youtu.be/mPgCylYszT0>. For more information on National Heart Month and for support in maintaining a healthy heart lifestyle, go to the official website of the British Heart Foundation www.bhf.org.uk

Compassionate

TRUST HANDS OUT 1,500 WELLBEING SUPPORT PACKS TO STAFF



In an effort to support staff and thank them for all their hard work over recent months the Trust's Well Team has given out more than 1,500 wellbeing packs to help encourage colleagues to take time to rest, reflect, reconnect and take stock of their own wellbeing.

The packs contain a variety of treats including biscuits, hot drinks, tissues and mints, and have been warmly received by staff teams across the Trust.

One manager said: "The staff have worked very hard during the past 12 months and have seen their roles change considerably whilst adapting to the needs of the service and patients."

PARKING FREE FOR BLUE BADGE HOLDERS

With effect from Monday, March 1, parking will be free for Blue Badge Holders parking in designated bays at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

The system in the main entrance car park has been upgraded so that blue badge holders will not be required to exchange their token at the car parking office. They will be required to scan their blue badge at the pay station prior to leaving the car park which will then validate their token for free parking.

Patients/Visitors parking on the external car parks will also receive free parking when parked in a designated disabled parking space and their blue badge is clearly displayed.

NEW UNIT IS SUPPORTING CANCER PATIENTS

A new unit helping care for cancer patients at Blackpool Victoria Hospital has helped hundreds of people since opening during the pandemic.

The new Acute Oncology Triage Unit, within the Oncology and Haematology Unit, is a dedicated facility for supporting local patients who are going through – or have been through – treatment for cancer.

These patients are often especially vulnerable because of compromised immune systems due to their treatment, and previously would have had to attend the Emergency Department.

Now the dedicated unit is up and running, thanks to fundraising efforts from Rosemere Cancer Foundation and Blue Skies Hospitals Fund, the Trust's own charity.



It is estimated it will help more than 500 cancer patients annually, and since opening has already helped almost 300 people who would previously have needed to attend the Emergency Department.

Amanda Singleton, Oncology and Haematology Matron, said: "This is a wonderful facility that will benefit so many patients. Patients can attend and be cared for by staff who know them, and who also specialise in this area of treatment."

Excellent

NURSING TEAM GOES THE EXTRA MILE

Nursing staff on Ward 34 at Blackpool Victoria Hospital have received a Going The Extra Mile award for their 'outstanding care and attention.'

The staff have been nominated by colleagues in the Acute Response Team who praised them for their care and compassion.

Sister Elizabeth Walsh of the Ward 34 nursing team, said: "It was lovely to receive the award – it's really encouraged people and lifted them."

The nomination reads: "Ward 34 Nursing staff should be recognised for their outstanding care and attention over the last few months."



"They have regularly looked after acutely unwell medical outlying patients, many of whom have Covid. They have coped well under tremendous pressure and are quick to recognise deteriorating patients, escalating them appropriately."

POSITIVE COMMENTS

New mum Emma wrote in to praise the staff:

"I would just like to thank those on delivery suite who helped bring our baby Ariana into the world safely on Friday the 19th.

"She made a very fast appearance upon arrival to the hospital everyone acted so quickly but calmly.

"Forgive me for not remembering names of the midwives and students who made our visit a great experience, we couldn't have done it without you."

Tracy sent us this message about her experience:

"I was diagnosed with Follicular Non Hodgkin's lymphoma last March and had my treatment through the first lockdown onward and I'm having my preventative treatment on the Oncology unit.

“All I can say is how absolutely fabulous the staff are from the fabulous Aimee on reception to HCAs Ulla, Brian, Adele to my lovely kind caring nurses Steph, Debbie, Karen and Barbara and Dr Mina

“The care provided by this fantastic team of fantastic lovely dedicated people is second to none.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Sharon sent us this message after a visit to the Emergency Department:

“Please can you thank the staff in A&E on Sunday night. My daughter went in and was scared - the staff reassured her and took the time with her. Even the lovely doctor went out of his way and got a nurse in so he could assess her as she was scared.

“The staff were lovely and amazing. Made a scary night for a little girl into a much happier experience.”

Thank you for reading this bulletin. If you have any comments or questions, or would like to know more about any of the work the Trust is currently undertaking, then please get in touch by emailing me Chief Executive, Kevin McGee, at kevin.mcgee1@nhs.net