e-Bulletin: July 2020 – Restarting Services

Services Re-start
We would like to thank GP Practices for their patience during this coronavirus pandemic. It has been a very difficult and complicated situation but we are now planning to get our services up and running as much as possible over the coming weeks.

Although we have had some staff attending our offices to carry out essential work which cannot be done at home, over recent weeks, we have been working with the Facilities team within NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) to make sure our offices are safe for staff to return in a more structured way, with social distancing measures and other support measures in place. This work is underway and we are planning to restart more services from the week of the 20th July 2020.

NSS has placed strict limits on the number of staff allowed at the same time in each of our offices. Our priority for the coming weeks will be to clear outstanding paper records and get it in to a normal transfer cycle. Practitioner Services has also provided staff to the National Contact Tracing Centre and as we increase our services we may require some of these to return to their normal role.

Paper records
Paper records will resume from the week of the 20th with a return to previous delivery schedules via the same couriers you were used to. We are estimating that it will take 4-6 weeks of courier/van runs to get us all back to a normal routine and we realise this will add work back to GP Practice staff workload so we plan to do this in a more measured approach and not overload GP Practices with records in one go.

We are currently in discussion with our couriers and NHS Board van services and once the paper records service is restarted it is essential that you only pass the driver what they can manage on each run. Please do not overload the drivers and only provide what they can manage on each run as they will have to make sure their load is safe and that they can complete their run and drop off/collect from each practice. The runs also need to be loaded at each of our sites and require significant manual handling by both the courier and our staff, added to that none of our mail rooms are on the ground floor. It will take a few weeks of pickups and deliveries to get back to normal and we are trying to do this safely for all.

Please also be aware that all of our mail bags will be in the network, either with you or coming to you from us. We will monitor to make sure you are receiving bags back in each run so that you have bags for the next again run. Your courier may be able to take records packaged up out with the normal mail bags and this will be at their discretion.

If there is anything we can do to help, please email your local office who will endeavour to help with bags/collection days etc.

Patient Removals
We have now caught up with the patient removals and these should be in the process for those patients who have not themselves registered elsewhere.

Enquiries/Support
We ask that you continue to contact us by email where possible. This allows us to have as many staff as possible working from home and focus our on-site efforts to processing paper records. The more staff we need to bring on site to answer phones etc., the longer it will take to complete the cycles of paper records to clear what is still outstanding.

Future steps
We had hoped that we could have implemented more digital solutions, from replacing the paper record with a scanned version to enabling online support to GP Practices and patients but unfortunately the resources required have had to be prioritised elsewhere. We are also looking at new ways to log ‘calls’ with us via the web and improve ways of working for us all. We will continue to progress these over the coming months and update through the newsletter.