

Press Release:

12 January 2021

NHS Lanarkshire prepare for increased Covid-19 demand

NHS Lanarkshire has taken the decision to temporarily postpone all non-urgent elective procedures and a targeted range of outpatient appointments. A number of clinically urgent and priority procedures will continue. NHS Lanarkshire will focus our acute service delivery on Covid-19 inpatients and emergency care. Our treatments for urgent cancer care will remain in place and all three acute sites will continue to operate an emergency service for theatres and diagnostics.

The majority of outpatient appointments will be stood down in order to redeploy nurses to support the delivery on urgent and emergency inpatient care.

The change comes into effect on Wednesday 13 January 2021 and will last for an initial period of four weeks. The move comes as the number of patients being treated in Lanarkshire hospitals with Covid-19 is expected to double from the current total of 288, with 16 currently in ICU.

Judith Park, director of acute services for NHS Lanarkshire, said: "The safety of our patients is always our top priority. Winter is always a difficult time for the NHS. However, the current pandemic has had an additional impact on our services.

"The hospitals are full and the numbers of Covid-19 admissions are increasing. As such, there are only 46 beds currently available to new patients.

"We currently have nearly 300 patients being treated for Covid-19 in our hospitals, with additional patients currently waiting on test results. However, we are anticipating this number to double within a week putting our hospitals under severe pressure.

"To ensure our services operate as safely as possible, we have taken the decision to cancel non-urgent outpatient appointments and planned procedures from today at all our acute sites. "The decision to cancel any appointment is not one that we take lightly and I apologise for the impact this will have on patients. Most patients will receive a text message confirming the cancellation of their appointment.

"A small number of appointments will still go ahead as scheduled. Appointments will be prioritised based on clinical need and those patients who are deemed clinically urgent will be rebooked. Patients will receive a letter, text message or voice message giving details of their new appointment."

Maternity and neonatal clinics will continue as normal in the meantime. Appointments for urgent referrals, including cancer referrals, will also continue. It is expected that some community and primary care services, including some GP practice services, will also need to be paused to cope with the number of Covid-19 patients. Details will be shared once any changes are confirmed.

Judith added: "Our staff are battling to save lives every day and I am immensely proud of them. Every single Lanarkshire resident can help save lives by following government guidance and staying at home."

Patients with any concerns can contact our dedicated helpline number **0300 303 0446** .

All patients should consider the latest Scottish government advice, including staying at home if they have symptoms that may be caused by COVID-19 or they live with someone that has symptoms.