

The role of Primary Care to support Winter resilience and preparedness 2025/26

Primary Care Access

- The implementation of Modern General Practice Access/Total Triage is on-going. From the 1st October 2025 all practices will be contractually required to have their online consultation system open for the duration of core hours for planned/routine/admin requests.
- GP Practices and NHS 111 providers will continue to work collaboratively to further increase the percentage of 111 direct bookings made into practices to support improved access for patients.
- As the Enhanced Access service has and continues to mature, there are a number of PCNs who have or are in the process of changing their Enhanced Access delivery models from a subcontracted arrangement to delivering the service within the PCN. It is anticipated this will increase the utilisation rates of these appointments and therefore further support with improving access for patients.
- Expand access to Urgent Dental Services via NHS 111 to enable patients with an urgent or emergency dental need to access the appropriate care in a timely way.

Prevention

- GP Practices and PCNs were given access to the web-based MiDoS tool from March to July 2025 and will be able to use the tool this winter which will support clinicians and other practice staff to find a suitable health, social, community, mental health or voluntary service that may be able to meet the needs of their patients. BLMK residents will also have access to MiDoS ahead of winter (October 2025) which will also enable them to find a service or services that may meet their need.
- Aim to increase vaccination and immunisation rates from the previous winter with a particular focus on children and pregnant women. Ensure residents are able to easily and quickly book flu vaccination appointments to support with increasing vaccination uptake.
- The ICB are working with Arden and Gem with the aim to develop a personalised care dashboard which will enable easier monitoring of the number of patients in care homes that have personalised care and support plans.

Pharmacy

- An ED streaming to Pharmacy First pilot will take place ahead of winter with Luton and Dunstable Hospital and local pharmacies with the aim to re-direct patients away from ED and to a more appropriate service which will support ED with managing their capacity.
- Continue to raise awareness of Pharmacy First to BLMK residents and increase the number of referrals via all routes into Pharmacy First.

Integrated Urgent Care

- Enhance the integration between urgent care and primary care and minimise the number of patients that are directed to attend A&E or have an ambulance despatched.
- Improve the clinical validation rates of ED and ambulance outcomes following 111 triage.
- Increase the percentage of NHS 111 direct bookings made into directly bookable services across the BLMK system including GP Practices, Urgent Treatment Centres and the Urgent GP Clinic
- Palliative Care Advice line to be made accessible via an NHS 111 Interactive Voice Response (IVR) option (Bedfordshire & Luton only) to enable patients calling NHS 111 to select the relevant option number and be directed straight to the Palliative Care advice service which will be jointly operated by Keech Hospice and Sue Ryder and be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including bank holidays. This will help to improve the patient pathway and is due to be implemented during October 2025.

Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) / Walk in Centre (WiC)/ Urgent GP Clinic (UGPC)

- Review the Directory of Service (DoS) profiles of all BLMK UTCs, Putnoe WiC and UGPC prior to winter with the aim to expand the criteria as well as increase the number of patients directly booked via NHS 111.
- Complete a gap analysis for Bedford UTC, Luton UTC and Milton Keynes UTC against the National UTC Standards and Principles to identify any development areas that could potentially be improved or progressed ahead of winter to support the wider system.