

Summary of UHS response to Covid-19

The response to the Covid-19 has seen exceptional changes in the nature of the operation of UHS.

Our Trust, patients and staff have all been impacted by Covid-19 and the actions necessary to respond appropriately to the pandemic. Below is a summary of the significant changes we have made across areas of our operations, how we have managed our changed workforce and supported those on the frontline of our response.

Operational and clinical:

Within our services a wide range of detailed and complex operational and clinical changes have included:

- We reorganised our total bed base and structure of the hospital to ensure we had separate areas for Covid and non-Covid patients.
- Our first entire month of our response to COVID-19 was April where we saw the number of COVID-19 positive inpatients reach a maximum of 150 in ward beds and 30 in high care/intensive care beds.
- To support this, all of our clinical teams have reorganised the way they work to ensure more senior cover in the hospital during the period of the outbreak including many of our managerial colleagues changing their working weeks to ensure seven day cover is in place.
- The outbreak has been managed through an incident control centre which included daily incident meetings and a seven- day a week hub to manage our incident response.
- We expanded and reorganised all of our intensive care areas and created additional rotas, using staff from other areas of the Trust to cope with the expanded demand. The paediatric intensive care unit was moved to create additional COVID-19 critical care capacity.
- Throughout our response UHS has continued to prioritise urgent care including cancer treatments, urgent surgery and patients assessed as being at high risk. This has been delivered through our partnerships with independent providers across Southampton. Sites at The Spire Hospital, Nuffield and by Care UK at the Royal South Hants Hospital have all received UHS patients for a range of procedures and surgery allowing us to still deliver urgent treatment for the patients who need it most with emergency surgery continuing at the SGH site.
- A range of services have been transformed throughout our COVID-19 response in order to enable us to continue treating patients in innovative ways. We have more than tripled the number of outpatients we are seeing virtually either over the phone or via video consultations with just under 20,000 patients 'attending' their clinics in this way during April. This represents a huge investment in our digital infrastructure.
- Our eye unit has continued to receive patients for vital sight saving treatment by introducing a 'drive-through' style screening service to allow them to still attend their appointments.



- Maternity services have established a dedicated support group for pregnant women to keep them updated on changes to guidance and provide reassurance.
- Testing laboratories increased capacity greatly from the start of the pandemic with the laboratory and pathology teams at UHS responsible for processing samples for the South of England.
- Our emergency department has been completely transformed to deal with patients presenting with and without Covid symptoms. This involved completely reorganising the department into separate and ring fenced areas.
- In addition those patients who have minor injuries are being redirected to urgent treatment centres in Southampton and Lymington.
- To manage Personal Protective Equipment supplies we created a separate team to ensure the hospital staff were supplied with appropriate equipment including daily deliveries to hubs across the hospital.
- Since March we have imposed visitor restrictions on UHS sites, in line with national guidance. This has meant that all but compassionate and carer visitation has been restricted. Since last month face masks have also been made compulsory around the site for visitors, staff and patients (where it does not impede treatment or care).

Patient support:

- Our experience of care team has created a patient support hub, offering a number of ways for family and friends to stay in touch with their loved ones who are being cared for at UHS.
- They have relayed over 1000 messages from families to inpatients. These have been emails, photographs, and poems and the team has also received over 350 patient property drop-offs which have been delivered to patients on the wards and have introduced telephone and virtual interpreting as a standard practice.
- The team has produced over 30 pieces of COVID-19 specific patient information materials for a range of services.
- We are also supporting patients with learning disabilities through a range of virtual and online platforms including a forum dedicated to sharing support and advice.
- More information is available on the [UHS news feed](#) and [Trust Highlights](#) pages.

Workforce:

- Our workforce has also been significantly reorganised with staff being redeployed due to their own health conditions whilst we have enabled more colleagues to work from home where they can continue to support patients who are not being seen face to face through online platforms.



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- Staff testing has been rolled out to include both symptomatic and routine asymptomatic testing along with antibody testing. This piece of work is being expanded as we look towards building up our future capacity.
- A staff support and wellbeing workstream has overseen the creation of a staff helpline, dedicated staff areas for one-to-one support and help. Boost boxes containing donated gifts to wards and departments have been delivered in conjunction with Southampton Hospitals Charity which has led a wellbeing fundraising drive to fund a number of projects to support staff.
- Our BAME staff have been supported in the guidance that has been issued in response to how some communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Our One Voice network which represents staff from across these communities has been highly engaged with the development of our response.
- We are extremely proud of the response by our staff many of whom have significantly changed their working practices and work they do routinely to support our COVID-19 response.

Research and innovation:

- UHS has been involved in a number of pioneering research trials in developing effective treatments for the virus including partnering with Oxford University in the recent RECOVERY trial which led to the availability of the drug Dexamethasone.
- We have also been involved in the city-wide pilot of a saliva test taking a key role in providing the secure data systems needed to handle participant results.
- UHS was also the first UK Hospital to use the PeRso hood which gives staff protection through a fabric hood equipped with a fan pack attached to a belt through which clean air is delivered.
- Researchers in Southampton are leading a study to find out how the virus affects adults and children who are more vulnerable to infections, have helped produce specific national guidance to parents and have been involved in a number of vaccine trials in partnership with other centres. More information can be found here on our [research pages here](#).

Restoration and recovery:

We are now restoring services but this can only be achieved by adhering to strict infection prevention measures to enable us to have more of our patients who are in need of treatments back into hospital. Our goal is to be a hospital where there is zero transmission of COVID-19 within it and we have begun setting set out a number of measures in order to achieve that along with a community-focussed campaign. With the limitations that currently present we will continue to focus on those patients most at risk while we build up services and capacity.

We have made a good start and activity is starting up again so we are working hard to plan for the months ahead with the ever-present threat of a potential second wave. We are seeing increasing referrals now and presentations to our emergency department following a period where that did drop significantly through the initial months of the Covid response. We are restarting as much elective work as we can continuing to use the capacity at the local privately run hospitals and expanding the number of theatre lists at the SGH site. UHS is committed to making sure that patients that need us most are prioritised, focusing on infection free hospital sites and supporting colleagues either back to work where possible or finding suitable alternatives so they can continue to contribute to the quality of our care.