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[for immediate publication]

Local NHS needs public support ahead of unprecedented Easter weekend

The long Easter weekend, coupled with four days of planned industrial action by junior doctors immediately afterwards, has prompted an urgent call to the public to support their NHS in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire.

Urgent and emergency health care teams in the region are expected to be extremely busy over the bank holidays, as families and friends come to the region for their holidays and as many GP practices, pharmacies and other non-urgent services traditionally close or amend their hours.

Local people can play their part in helping to reduce unnecessary demand by using these services only when the need is genuine, and by knowing what other help is available, such as 111 online and community pharmacies.

Dr Amanda Webb, Chief Medical Officer, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, said: “The actions of the public, even those which may seem small, can collectively make a big difference to the NHS during these periods of high demand and intense pressure.

“The support we’re calling for will help our already-stretched frontline teams to continue to provide essential care and treatment for those most in need before, during and after Easter.”

People in need of care over the coming days are asked to seek help from NHS 111 online, which can give person-specific advice on possible treatment options and, where necessary, make referrals to other nearby NHS services.

Similarly, the HANDi app, which is available for free on the App Store and Google Play, can help parents and carers to treat common childhood illnesses, such as high temperatures and diarrhoea and vomiting, safely at home.

Some pharmacies across the region will be open on Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday, and these can be used without an appointment for emergency prescriptions, medication advice and private consultations for minor injury and illness.

Supporting loved-ones to leave hospital when they are well enough to go home or to their place of care is another way in which people can help others to get the care they need.

Andrew Hollowood, Chief Medical Officer at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust, said: “Home is the best place for people to recover, and when patients leave hospital, it means we have more beds available for those who really need them.

“The support of patients’ friends and family is invaluable in helping to speed up discharges, and relatively small actions, such as getting groceries ready, collecting prescriptions or providing a lift, can really cut the time it takes for someone to return home.”

Further details on local health and care services, including Easter opening times for all the region’s pharmacies, can be found online in the Your Health section of the BSW Together website, www.bswtogether.org.uk.

BSW ICB on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram also provide regular information about local services and health care help.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- **Please note: You can download a high quality video clip of an interview with Gill May, Chief Nurse of Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board to accompany this release.**
- You Tube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsNNrmg9fQ8>
- Wetransfer download: <https://we.tl/t-RiXXeyKCjX>
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board is a statutory organisation that is responsible for developing a plan of how to meet the health needs of the local population, managing the local NHS budget and arranging the provision of local health services
- As a sovereign corporate entity, the ICB has a Board made up of representatives from various organisations across the BSW health and care system
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board is part of the wider BSW Integrated Care System, which brings NHS providers, local authorities, community providers and voluntary sector partners together to collaboratively plan and organise how health and care services are delivered
- The local integrated care system is also known as BSW Together, and is home to 87 GP practices, two mental health trusts, three local councils, a single ambulance provider, three acute hospitals, a number of other NHS providers and more than 2,800 voluntary organisations and community groups
- Visit www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk for more information