

Factsheet: COVID-19 Virtual Wards

In November 2020, NHS England launched its **COVID-19 Oximetry at Home Standard Operating Procedure**. The aim is to manage patients outside of hospital monitoring symptoms of COVID-19, with clear escalation procedures if they deteriorate. Part of the success of this initial pilot work is due to access to a highly organised and effective Virtual Ward, to allow the close monitoring of patient's progress.

In January 2021, the remit for Virtual Wards was extended to support COVID-19 positive patients attending Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) and step down or early discharge from acute wards to relieve pressure on acute trusts.

There are four key elements to a successful virtual ward:

- Co-ordination of services
- Accessible, senior clinical leadership
- Clear process and clinical pathways
- Clear referral exclusion criteria
- Ability to work within current resources



There are three routes of referral to be considered:

1. Community Services – GPs, ANPs, Community Matrons, Nursing Homes
2. Emergency First Point of Contact – A&E, SDEC, Minor Injuries, Ambulance, 111
3. Acute in-patient settings

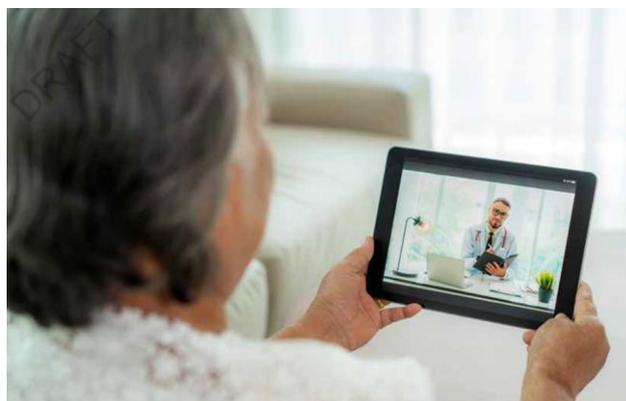


Establishing your Virtual Ward

- You will need a robust system of monitoring your patients whilst in the Virtual Ward
- A coordinator is essential to effective operation
- Depending on your approach, remember to include all key stakeholders
- Agree on referral exclusion criteria, and process and clinical pathways
- Allocate and/or request resources

Implementing your Virtual Ward processes

- Prioritise route one referral – preventing attendance to emergency services
- Start small and rapidly rollout – one GP, one Nursing home etc.
- Meet with stakeholders regularly and manage or adapt quickly to any issues



Maintaining your Virtual Ward

- View this as a long-term solution that can be adapted to any system or condition
- Do not divert resources

Resources

Below are links to webpages and documents you may find useful:

[Letter from NHS England supporting COVID-19 Virtual Wards for discharge from hospital](#)

[NHS England Discharge to COVID-19 Virtual Wards SOP](#)

[COVID-19 Oximetry @home - NHS @home - FutureNHS Collaboration Platform](#)

[NHS England Letter Template to request Pulse Oximeters](#)

[NHS England Clinical guide for the management of remote consultations and remote working in secondary care during the coronavirus pandemic](#)

[Arc Health Remote Consultations Masterclass](#)

For more information or any support with setting up your COVID-19 virtual ward, please get in touch at:

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