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## **GM MENTAL HEALTH PRIORITIES SUPPORTING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE PHASE**

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COVID-19, and the national measures being announced to delay the spread of the epidemic will inevitably have a significant impact on both demand for and capacity to deliver support for people with mental health needs, a learning disability or autism.

### **Summary**

- GM Mental Health providers have moved swiftly to help protect core services and use risk stratification to ensure those in greatest need receive ongoing support.
- They are establishing 24/7 telephone access and exploring other urgent care alternatives (with a number of facilities in the process of being mobilised across our localities) to strengthen crisis support and avoid placing pressure on A&E services.
- They are rapidly accelerating the provision of digital services including for talking therapies.
- We are expanding the range of online support for people of all ages.
- We are expanding bereavement support services.
- We are strengthening support for staff, particularly those supporting critical care.

### **Action across the GM Localities**

Lots of great work is being undertaken across the 10 localities in GM with phonedlines and support structures being set up in record time. For example, the Spirit of Salford helpline contact centre and digital platform was mobilised within 72 hours and has already had over 1000 contacts which are helping to address people's MH and wellbeing and feelings of social isolation.

Given the COVID 19 priorities context, GMMH has doubled the capacity of the Rapid Access to Alcohol Detox Acute Referral RADAR beds available to Acute Hospitals to divert individuals presenting with complex substance misuse issues.

### **Maintaining Safe, Core Services**

We acknowledge that as we remain in the active response phase and we are to emerge from isolation healthily, there are strains we are all under and need to adopt practical strategies to foster and protect our mental health. As such, we recognise the impact on people's mental health will endure beyond the epidemic and across Greater Manchester are preparing to ensure support will be in place to meet this challenge in the recovery phase.

Our priority now is to support mental health services to operate as effectively as possible, ensuring that those seeking and needing mental health treatment receive the care that they need without adding additional inappropriate demand to our urgent and emergency care system (including supporting our mental health qualified staff with enhanced physical health care skills at this time to strengthen the care that we can provide to those patients with

mental illness that do still need to be cared for in specialist mental health hospitals). To do this we will ensure that all professionals and staff across health and social care are supported effectively and in a timely way during this time with flexible approaches to deployment of workforce across different settings.

In simplistic terms providers' acute in-patient provision, approved mental health professionals' rotas or home treatment teams (alternative to admissions) typically provide safe and therapeutic care for the most acutely mentally ill proportion of Greater Manchester's general population.

In addition, the GM Liaison MH programme that we have significantly invested in over the last few years is actively seeking to divert activity from A&E. It is these services' ability to manage the most unwell of these patients which renders them critical to the wider health and social care system. Trusts are also implementing or exploring options for mental health urgent care provision away from A&E, with a number of facilities in the process of being mobilised across our localities.

The impact of providers losing critical all-age mental health services would have a ripple effect across other sectors of health care, social care, emergency care and emergency response services. This ripple effect would put pressure across the system and add an additional unnecessary burden at a time of public health emergency. As such, ongoing risk stratification and dynamic risk registers are being implemented to determine who may be most-at-risk physically and mentally and how to coordinate care assertively accordingly.

All our GM Mental Health providers are now preparing to be able to provide as much continuity of care as possible and avoid partial or complete closures. For example, services such as IAPT will not simply close to new patients. The role of IAPT services will be critical in managing the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak and in supporting those with anxiety and depression and in particular people with health anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and autism.

There are expected increases in demand for mental health services in the round over the coming months, especially community and crisis mental health services for children and young people, adults and older adults. The COVID-19 pandemic will also have an impact on inpatient mental health services, not just on how they operate, but possible increased demand for more intensive mental health care for particular vulnerable patients. GM mental health providers across the Trusts and VCSE, are ensuring support is released to the right locations where the most critical need is going to be present.

## **Pan-GM Mobilised Response**

### **Expanding Digital Support**

Mental Health services across GM have considered the digital options available to continue to deliver care. We are now mobilising an expanded range of digital support offers across all 10 GM localities from next week to provide that alternative and alleviate pressure in other parts of the mental health system to protect the availability of core for those in greatest need.

These offers cover services across age groups and include:

- **ChatHealth** - a secure and confidential text messaging service for children and young people (allowing patients to easily and anonymously get in touch with a healthcare professional for advice and support)

- **SHOUT** crisis service – a 24/7 Text Service (with trained crisis volunteers who will chat using trained techniques via text responses)
- **Kooth** – an on-line counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people
- **Bluelce** – an evidenced-based app to help young people manage their emotions and reduce urges to self-harm
- **SilverCloud** – Provision has been put in place for all NHS staff and their families and volunteers to be able to access e-therapy via SilverCloud. This offers e-therapy modules in Resilience, Anxiety, improving sleep and potentially a coping with COVID-19 module later this week to again support our employees and the wider community during this stressful time.

We are also working with Health Innovation Manchester to identify additional digital services that could support specific vulnerable patient groups, including: Looked-After Children & Care Leavers; LD & Neurodevelopmental conditions, SEND, Eating Disorders, etc.

This action is being mobilised in line with the work of GM Mental Health Prevention Concordat Teams that is putting in place open and targeted access across the GM population to a wider range of evidence-based resources (e.g. Living Life to the Full, Mental Health First Aid, iHASCO Homeworking / Training for Staff, etc.)

### **Extending Bereavement Support**

The GM Bereavement Service will offer telephone support to those who are struggling with bereavement at this time and in the months ahead.

Those making contact will be offered:

- Information and guidance about support services that are available in GM
- Basic information on grief, mental health and emotional support.
- Signposted to materials on how to deal with disrupted sleep, anxiety and other emotions
- Facilitated referrals where appropriate
- Information about practical related issues such as debt counselling
- A space in which they might express their feelings and be heard

### **Trauma Resilience Hub Supporting Our Staff**

We are confirming the priority areas of multi-agency support the GM Trauma Resilience Hub will offer in addition to their ongoing work supporting victims of the Arena Attack and coordinating psychosocial support across our Safeguarding Teams.

These include at this time:

- Support/supervision to those leading OH/staff support teams working with high risk groups such as: ICU and bereavement nurses; GPs; etc
- Advice and support for families of key workers – this could include age specific elements for parents/carers – and extend into schools linking with our GM Mental Health in Education Teams programme;
- Webinars and other forums for senior managers/leaders and occupational health teams to think about what works to strengthen emotional/psychological resilience,

- keeping people mentally healthy, avoid actions that damage protective factors for individuals and groups, positive “damage limitation” programmes and models;
- Support for the Comms cell on core positive mental health messaging that mitigate inappropriate anxiety-depression-panic spread;

### **Mental Health Trust input to the GM Clinical Assessment Service**

Due to COVID-19 pressures there is an urgent requirement for additional resource within the Clinical Assessment Service (CAS). There is a GM plan to support the 111 and 999 services by managing a larger volume of activity through the GM CAS. This would include the management of mental health presentations. Discussions are taking place with Mental Health Trust colleagues to agree a model that would provide the mental health clinical capability to support online mental health patient triage and advice within the GM CAS. This may be a virtual/remote delivery model, which would minimise the impact on existing mental health service provision.

### **Mental Health Trust input to NHS Nightingale NW**

Mental Health Trust provider colleagues from across GM are working with the NHS Nightingale NW mobilisation team to ensure there is an effective offer of mental health services within the new facility.

***We are all in this together, and we will get through it, if everyone plays their part. The people and services of Greater Manchester came together after the Manchester Arena Attack almost 3 years ago, and we are now stronger for it.***

**Warren Heppolette  
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April 2020**