

# NHS Coronavirus Support Assistant for London

April 3rd 2020



*A 'connect and deflect approach' to Covid 19: keeping the most vulnerable people safe at home with reliable information and access to non-clinical support*

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# A 'connect and deflect' approach to Covid 19

## Background

We propose a social prescribing-based response to Covid 19, informed by a year of prior development work led by Healthy London Partnership. Over the last year HLP has been consulting care professionals, commissioners and citizens on the digital requirements for the delivery of personalised care, self management and social prescribing. In February we moved into live prototyping and commenced competitive recruitment of core partners, so we were able to develop a new Covid 19 tool very quickly.

## The Approach

The service takes a 'connect and deflect' approach to keeping the most vulnerable people home and safe, through a combination of reliable information, reassurance and above all access to social support from volunteers, the wider voluntary sector, as well as online tools such as the ORCHA app library.

## Our Testing

Over the past two weeks we have worked with experts, including NHSE personalised care team, NHS Digital and NHSX, to rapidly adapt this platform to support the COVID-19 response. A proof of concept Covid 19 support assistant has been tested with experts and target users with highly positive feedback. NEL CSU is the NHS data host and controller.

## Plans for scale

We hope to secure permission from London's Clinical Advisory Group and funding from NHSX to support a London-wide roll-out within the next two weeks, prior to wider use in other regions.

# How the Support Assistant works and supports patients

## PATIENT'S EXPERIENCE



### AWARENESS

A patient who is at heightened risk from COVID19 is sent a text message – either from their GP or ideally a regional service

### FIRST ENGAGEMENT

Patient accesses the support assistant through a link sent in a text or email and accesses through their preferred channel e.g. Facebook Messenger

### AUTOMATED ASSESSMENT

The support assistant asks the patient questions to identify how high risk they are and assess their needs

### RESPONSE OPTIONS

Local Support (e.g community assets)

Someone to chat with by phone

Apps and national phone lines etc

Local volunteers who can get you essential supplies

### FOLLOW UP

Patient receives follow-up messages to encourage resilience and adherence, seek feedback, and also spot people who need to be referred to a link worker

## HOW THE SUPPORT ASSISTANT WORKS

NHS hosted, but no use of NHS data / NHS Number

Engagement channels include GP SMS, 'text this number' and weblinks for any homepage

NHSX symptom checker, risk assessment and support needs

Use of APIs & open directory to auto-connect volunteers and other relevant support



Staying home, safe and well

# What it looks like

The screenshot displays a chat window with a light grey background. On the left side, there are five blue circular icons, each containing the white text 'NHS'. The chat history consists of five outgoing messages from the NHS chatbot and one incoming message from the user. At the bottom of the chat window, there is a white input field and a grey 'Send' button. A blue speech bubble containing the word 'Yes' is positioned on the right side of the chat area, indicating a user response.

**NHS** Hi  
I'm the NHS Support Assistant for Coronavirus  
I'm developed to help you look after yourself and those you care about during this difficult time...

**NHS** I'm not a real person, but have been designed by experts from the NHS to help support you and others during the Covid-19 outbreak...

**NHS** I am kept up to date with the latest guidelines and was last checked at 8 am 21/03/2020

**NHS** If you like, I can help you decide what actions you should take based on your circumstances and any symptoms you may have...

**NHS** Shall we continue?

**NHS** Great. It works like a conversation.  
What shall I call you?

Yes

Send

## What GPs need to do to make this happen



GPs are overwhelmed supporting the highest risk caseload

1

### Target patients in need

Regional use of the I5 risk assessment tool, or GP use of relevant Snomed codes, to target those with heightened vulnerability

2

### Engage with patients

Send a text message or email to target patients

3

### Support evaluation

Receive reports on take-up and user rating

4

### Support scaling

Encourage link workers, community pharmacists, Allied Health Professionals etc. to make best use of community assets

## What Link Workers need to do to make this happen



Link workers are overwhelmed with outbound calls and wider community resources aren't being use to the full

1

### Add to directory

Share support directory link with providers to add new support offers

2

### Mobilise volunteers

Share std phone number for volunteers to call and be connected to the most vulnerable people automatically.

3

### Share Support Assistant

Share chat bot link with current clients to reduce demand pressure.

4

### Focus on complex caseload

Receive referrals for more complex caseload that can't be helped with volunteer or on-line support.

# What are the benefits?



**Patients** receive the support they require through virtual support and the mass mobilisation of community assets and volunteers.

NHSX symptom checker, plus risk stratification and support needs assessment helps us prioritise and automate non-clinical support for those at high risk.



**Link Workers** their volunteer teams, Allied Health Professionals and others can focus on mobilising wider community resources and on the people who need help most.



**GPs and the wider NHS system** can maintain a focus on people with the most acute needs and deflect other vulnerable patients from the NHS