

Dear colleague,

Thank you to all our primary care contractors who have continued to provide services to our patients during what we know has been a worrying period for many following the scenes of violence and disorder across the country over the past week. We know that yesterday in particular some practices were understandably concerned for their staff and patients in the context of reports and messages on social media about protests in their area.

Within the ICB, our operational response structure is well established, and our primary care team is part of ongoing meetings with the police and other local agencies as part of continuing monitoring and preparedness. If there is a confirmed intelligence threat that needs to be acted on, we or the police will notify primary care services as a matter of urgency.

Continuity of service and decisions to close

We ask primary care contractors to continue to operate on a business-as-usual basis unless you are contacted by the ICB or a verified police contact and advised otherwise, and not to act solely on rumours spreading on social media or in local communities.

The safety and wellbeing of your staff team and your patients is paramount. If you or anyone in your practice has specific concerns about the safety of your staff or patients, please raise issues or concerns with your locality manager in the first instance and they will escalate them further into our ICB response structure if necessary.

In the event of staffing numbers falling to an unsafe operational level, please carry out a risk assessment and enact your business continuity plan to maintain services for patients where possible. In the exceptional circumstances of you needing to close your service (or close early) please notify your locality team to confirm this and to agree communications with patients.

Communications to patients or the public in relation to any closure need very careful handling to avoid increasing public anxiety or further promoting gatherings or civil unrest. Please contact the ICB's Primary Care team to discuss communications so that we can work with you to get the message right and make sure that communications go through the correct approvals.

We apologise for the lateness of this advice but hope that you find this useful for any future instances of civil unrest.

Kind regards,

Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB

 ICB/ICS website: hertsandwestessex.ics.nhs.uk



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