

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) standard operating procedure COVID Oximetry @home

**This guidance is correct at the time of publishing. However, as it is subject to updates, please use the hyperlinks to confirm the information you are disseminating to the public is accurate.**

## 1.1 Requirement

It is recommended that all clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) should put in place a “COVID Oximetry @home” model as rapidly as possible during November 2020, further to [guidance on the use of pulse oximetry](#) first published in June 2020.

## 1.2 Entry criteria

The COVID Oximetry @home pathway should be available to people who are:

- i. Diagnosed with COVID-19: either clinically or positive test result **AND**
- ii. Symptomatic **AND EITHER**
- iii. *Aged 65 years or older* **OR**
- iv. *Under 65 years and clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID.* (The Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to COVID list should be used as the primary guide. Clinical judgement can apply and take into account multiple additional COVID risk factors; for the most part, it is anticipated that this will already have led to inclusion on the CEV list. National criteria for inclusion on the CEV list are set and updated by the Government.)

The national support offer, including oximeter supply, is targeted at this defined cohort.

## 1.3 Staffing and oversight

The default assumption is that the model is primarily implemented in general practice, e.g. including in hot hubs, working with community teams. NHS England and NHS Improvement has in parallel written to CCGs about supplementary funding arrangements to expand general practice capacity. (£150m of additional funding has been allocated via CCGs to support GP capacity between now and March.) Referrals of the defined cohorts will also come via 111 COVID Clinical Assessment Service (CCAS), NHS Test and Trace and hospital Emergency Departments.

Legal responsibility, including ensuring appropriate clinical governance, remains with the relevant clinical commissioning group. Each CCG should have a named person responsible for the establishment of the service in their area. Clinical, governance and administrative responsibilities included in the pathway can be provided by any appropriately trained person and best use of resources should be made, including asking NHS Volunteer Responders to transport oximeters and patient packs, and the use of standard scripts to enable non-clinical staff (e.g. health care assistants, care navigators or volunteers) to undertake appropriate activities.

## 1.4 Patient journey

### Referral (Stage 1)

- Systems should ensure timely referral of patients that may meet the entry requirements from all relevant providers operating within their area, e.g. NHS 111, Covid Clinical Assessment Service (CCAS), Test and Trace and hospital emergency departments.
- Arrangements will vary depending on how the pathway is delivered, for example, through individual Primary Care Networks or a single Community Health Service.
- Patients should be advised to self-isolate in line with current guidance.

### Triage (Stage 2)

- Patients referred to the service should have a standard assessment (with potential for face-to-face clinical assessment if deemed necessary), with shared decision making prior to entry onto the pathway and a discussion about any support requirements for patients or carers. This should happen as soon as possible, and ideally the same day as the referral.
  - a. If at a hot site, then assessment should be done face to face and a baseline pulse oximetry reading taken; consider home oximetry monitoring if oxygen saturation levels are 95% or higher and proceed to stage 3. If oxygen levels are 94% or less, consider further clinical assessment, or proceeding to stage 3 with the option of more intense clinical assessment and oversight in the community, or hospital admission e.g. if 92% or less.
  - b. If contacted by phone or video, consider virtual assessment using a standard questionnaire and the need for a baseline oximetry reading either by visiting a hot site or home visit.

### Onboarding (stage 3)

- Patients entering the pathway should be provided with a pulse oximeter and supporting information (including a paper diary which is being made available in a variety of languages, or suitable app / regular call mechanism), contact details to report oximetry reading / symptoms, and clear safety netting instructions both in and out of hours. This should be supplied immediately if the patient is seen face to face or within 12 hours if the patient is assessed remotely. Patients should be instructed to attend their nearest emergency department within an hour, or call 999 if their saturation reading is 92% or less, or to contact 111/GP if 93% or 94%. For patients not seen face to face, NHS Volunteer Responders are available to help transport oximeters from a locally agreed location to the

patient's home. Further details on this can be found at:

<https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/referral>

- Patients should be encouraged to record oximetry readings daily, usually three times a day. Through a shared decision making conversation, they are also given the option of a prompt at days 2, 5, 7, 10 and 12, either by (a) text message or (b) by e-mail, or instead (c) a non-clinician led check-in phone call.
- Patients should have clear instructions regarding the recognition of deterioration and instructions on the appropriate course of action, with 24/7 access to advice and support. Contact details must be communicated clearly to patients.
- Patients should agree in advance how they will return the oximeter, e.g. by either the practice or the patient arranging an NHS Volunteer Responder.

#### **Monitoring (stage 4)**

- Patients should receive text or email prompts, or check-in calls, as agreed during onboarding. A model message and phone script can be found on the NHS @home Future NHS platform (link below).
- Check-in calls should confirm that the patient is using the oximeter and diary correctly, and that the readings are 95% or above. The frequency of these calls can be reviewed with the patient if appropriate.

#### **Recovery and discharge (stage 5)**

- Patients who do not show signs of deterioration within 14 days of onset of symptoms should be actively discharged and supplied with leaving information, safety netting and safe advice on how to return the oximeter (e.g. to hot site, by a friend or family member, or through NHS Volunteer Responders). Model advice can be found on the NHS @home Future NHS platform (link below)
- Patients may be on the pathway for a shorter period either if they have been awaiting a test result and this is negative, or subject to clinical review.
- Patients who remain symptomatic at 14 days should receive a further clinical assessment and action taken as clinically appropriate.
- At the end of this stage, a friend or family member, or an NHS Volunteer Responder, collects and returns the oximeter for decontamination and reuse, as agreed as part of the onboarding conversation.

## **1.5 Oximeter supply and safe re-use**

Oximeters for home use must meet ISO 80601-2-61:2017.

Particular care needs to be given to ensuring reliable arrangements are in place for same day oximeter distribution to patients, and their subsequent decontamination and reuse.

A supply of pulse oximeters is available to CCGs based on national modelling assumptions of case demand using the entry criteria in section 1.2 above. If local systems wish to extend the service beyond the defined groups, they will need to resource this locally, including provision of additional oximeters.

CCGs can request suitable oximeters from NHS Supply Chain in batches of 100, to be stored locally as appropriate for anticipated demand. Oximeters can be requested by emailing [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net). Once the order is agreed, delivery to the requesting CCG should be made within three working days. When requesting oximeters it is important to include the population numbers covered and where the service is sited.

Prior to being distributed to patients, and on return from them, oximeters must be decontaminated in line with [infection control policies](#) for reusable electronic equipment. They must be checked that they are functional and safe for re-use prior to being allocated to new patients. This should be done in line with local and national guidance for reusable electronic clinical monitoring equipment.

It is important to note that CCGs must ensure there are wholly reliable local arrangements in place for timely distribution, decontamination, and re-use of sufficient oximeters.

Oximeters must be available for same day distribution to patients, including out-of-hours. Patients should ideally not have to wait more than 12 hours to receive an NHS oximeter.

## 1.6 Care homes

People living in care homes should receive the same standard of care as someone in their own home. This should be facilitated by care home staff and other supporting services. This should include full escalation or emergency admission or potential emergency home oxygen treatment and palliative treatments where appropriate.

Training and support for using pulse oximetry is available and the COVID Oximetry @home monitoring diary has been tailored for care home usage (see NHS @home Future NHS platform – link below). Any further support required in setting up the pathway within the care home can be provided through the care home's named Clinical Lead in the first instance.

## 1.7 Coding, record keeping and data requirements

SNOMED codes specific to home monitoring of COVID-19 patients do not yet exist. We therefore encourage primary care and community teams to use existing remote monitoring codes.

NHS Digital will advise which codes to use for each stage of the monitoring, and a new data set will be implemented to support this initiative. All relevant information should be recorded in the patient record including if a patient declines the pathway.

CCGs will be requested to provide routine information on caseload and return rate of oximeters. The model will be subject to ongoing evaluation and adaptation.

## 1.8 Further support

Details of further advice, guidance and training materials including Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) and Patient Safety Collaborative contacts for bespoke support is available on the NHS @home Future NHS platform:

<https://future.nhs.uk/NHSatH/grouphome>.

If there are any issues accessing the site or for further queries, please email [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net).