

Sheffield Community Contact Tracers

Identify Trace Isolate Support COVID: IT IS COVID

Information on Consent for a Pilot Study

Introduction

The current approach in the UK to COVID-19 has been to identify those who are seriously ill and ensure that they are taken safely to hospital and assessed for further care. The rest of the population has been asked to socially distance and much of the economy has been closed down.

The World Health Organisation approach to epidemics and pandemics is to identify cases and then trace anyone who has been in close contact with them. This means that those at risk of infection will know that they have been in contact with the disease and can take appropriate action to stop further spread of the disease. Also, we know that in China there was a very strong community support element to the management of the outbreak in Wuhan, people were contacted daily to review how they were. They were supported as they progressed through the stages of the illness. At present there is no similar scheme in Sheffield to trace contacts or to support people who have the illness but do not need hospitalisation. This may change but will take time.

This study aims to train lay volunteers to trace the contacts of those who have classical symptoms of COVID-19 and support both those that are ill and their contacts whilst they progress through their illness or their isolation.

What are the objectives of this study

The pilot aims to establish

1. Whether it is possible to train volunteers, who do not have a medical or health background, to offer contact tracing to patients in the community.
2. What the content of the training needs to be to do this effectively using a virtual classroom
3. Whether these volunteers can maintain contact and provide support to both the those that are ill and to those who are traced as contacts
4. Whether these volunteers are acceptable to the public
5. Whether these volunteers can identify and inform a meaningful number of contacts.
6. Whether offering this helps people to move from a rough and ready understanding of the level of isolation that a contact should have to a more complete self isolation approach. This could reduce the numbers infected and hasten society's return to normal.
7. Whether those who develop COVID-19 but are not ill enough to be admitted to hospital will perceive benefit from this pilot project

Why should I take part? (as a patient)

This study will offer regular contact from a volunteer who has been trained to support you in making decisions on when to contact the COVID-19 111 system or your GP / A&E etc. The support is not medical but is by an independent interested local person trying to help you to make the best decisions possible at a challenging point in your life, such as when you are feverish and ill and those in your family are worried about you it can often be harder to make rational decisions. By putting us in touch with your contacts you will be helping to protect others from catching this virus. This is an important part of resolving this epidemic.

Do I have to go on, if I have started on this study?

At the start of each call the volunteers we have will ensure that you are happy to continue to talk to them. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can stop at any time. We would encourage people to stay in the pilot so that we can learn how to reduce the problems that everybody has experienced during this pandemic in future outbreaks.

How many calls will I get?

Volunteers will offer to contact each person who joins as a patient with COVID-19 once a day until they have recovered from their symptoms to ensure that they progress to fitness safely.

All those who are identified through contact tracing and join the pilot will be offered daily contact for the 14 days of self isolation that the UK government advises (unless the UK government advice changes). If a second call is agreed to be helpful by the volunteer and the patient then we will offer a second call. If you want to stop having calls then we'll talk this through with you and carry out your request. Volunteers will also share their own phone number so that you can call them if necessary.

Why identify from symptoms rather than swab tests?

At present it is not possible to arrange testing for many people in the UK for COVID-19 as there are not enough PCR/swab tests to achieve this. Though there is some variability, news reports suggest that swab tests are not perfect and can miss up to 30% of infections. It is well established that if a person has typical symptoms then it is appropriate to repeat a negative test. Since testing is very limited at this point, it is appropriate to identify cases from the classical symptoms of Fever, Dry cough and Loss of taste and smell. Testing may become more available which we would welcome.

What information will I be asked to share as a patient?

You will be asked to share your name and either date of birth or address (so that there is a clear identification process). The patients contacted will also be asked to provide the name and contact details for those with whom they have been in contact since two days before they first felt ill. To make reaching your contact easier, we would request both phone numbers and an email address for her/him.

For all participants, both patients and their contacts, we will be asking daily about fever and cough and change in ability to carry out normal activities.

What will happen to information that I share with this study ?

The pilot managers include people with extensive experience as approved data guardians (so called Caldicott guardians). We will therefore ensure that the data provided is kept secure and used only for the purposes for which it is collected i.e. in keeping with the declared objectives of this pilot.

Identifiable information will only be retained while it's use can benefit the individual concerned, when it will be amended to completely prevent the identification of that individual.

Consent

We will always check with you to see if you consent to continued involvement in the pilot.

Please read this consent information, Government advice at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms-and-what-to-do/> and look at our additional information on our website (in preparation).

If you have enquiries please email xxxxx with a copy to (e-mail address of volunteer).

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