

An open letter from Neil Macdonald, CEO, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust to our communities, patients and colleagues

With the New Year upon us I wanted to reflect on what a challenging year it has been. We've been through lockdowns and restrictions that have kept us apart from family and friends and changed the way we work. But we've also seen some of the best of humanity. Our colleagues in intensive care and across the Trust have gone the extra mile to care for patients who could not see their loved ones. They delivered letters for patients and organised tablets to enable them to video call their families. Our adult and children's community services donned their PPE and went to see the most vulnerable in our community.

Our colleagues offered more than clinical care, they offered kindness and compassion. And in return we were overwhelmed with acts of kindness from our local community.

We've navigated our way through one of the worst pandemics any of us will have ever experienced and we could not have done it without our amazing colleagues, our partners across the health and care sector, our volunteers, local businesses and the community. Let's also not forget that while some of our colleagues will be taking a well-deserved break this festive season, many will be working throughout, so a huge thank you to them as well.

You will have seen the fantastic news about the COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough by Pfizer and the rollout of the biggest vaccination programme in NHS history has begun. Nurses, paramedics, pharmacists and other NHS staff will work alongside GPs to vaccinate those aged 80 and over, as well as care home workers and residents, identified as priority groups for the life-saving vaccine. The NHS will contact people in the priority groups when it is their turn to receive the vaccine.

Since the first wave of COVID-19, we have learnt so much more about the virus, how it affects us, how it is transmitted and what treatments can help. Outcomes are better, and vaccination will help reduce case numbers and protect us all in the long run.

However, in the meantime, cases are still rising steeply across Buckinghamshire and we are treating an increasing number of COVID and non-COVID patients. While we have plans in place to care for more patients affected by the virus, we are under increasing pressure. Our hospitals are even busier than at this time in a normal winter and, as well as COVID, we are also looking after patients who are suffering from normal winter viruses like flu and norovirus.

I want to reassure you that we are still here for you whenever you need us – and if you are offered an appointment would urge you to keep it - but we need your help at this really busy time to keep our hospitals for those that need them most and are seriously ill.



If you are feeling unwell and are not sure which service you need, contact NHS111 for advice. They will make sure that you are seen by the right people, in the right place as quickly as possible whether that is your GP, the Urgent Treatment Centre or the Emergency Department (A&E). They can book you an appointment so that you won't have to wait about unnecessarily.

Everyone, including businesses, voluntary groups, and charities has a role to play in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and since the recent rise to tier 4 in Buckinghamshire, following the guidance the government has issued is the best place for us to start. Please ask your friends and family to continue to follow the rules which are there to protect us all and to get this virus back under control. Wash your hands regularly and when you are in a public place, please wear a mask or face covering if you can and make sure you keep your distance from people not from your household.

We know this is tough and we know it is asking a lot but there is a very clear link that more contacts lead to more cases of COVID, which will result in more hospital admissions and, unfortunately, more people becoming extremely sick and requiring intensive support. The truth is the less contact we have with others, the less this virus will spread and affect those we love. By working together earlier in the year, we have shown that we can bring down the rate of transmission and help keep each other safe and take pressure off your hospitals and health services. We now need to do that again.

Thank you once again for your support and I would like to thank all of my health and social care colleagues who will be working tirelessly over the festive break to make sure that they continue to provide safe and compassionate care to the residents of Buckinghamshire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Macdonald', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil Macdonald
Chief Executive Officer
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust