

**Briefing for Referrers to Radiology at York Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust -– June 2020**

The Radiology Department is working hard to restore imaging services. The Covid pandemic continues to impact as measures to ensure staff and patient safety limit the number of scans that can be performed. The suspension of all but essential services during the pandemic has created a significant backlog that will take months to address.

Capacity in all areas is reduced due to constraints of scanning Covid patients involving subsequent cleaning, extra staffing and the need to comply with social distancing. Moreover, scanning ventilated patients is particularly problematic and time consuming.

The Trust has committed to ensuring that Fast Track and Urgent referrals will be restored to pre-Covid levels by the end of June. The Radiology Department will continue to prioritise these patients.

Non urgent referrals, either new referrals or those already accepted, will be scanned when capacity allows but unfortunately they will be significantly delayed.

We anticipate a rise in Fast Track and Urgent referrals as lockdown eases. It is clear that for the foreseeable future, the Radiology Department will not be able to meet the level of demand that we experienced prior to Covid. We ask that referrers carefully consider any new requests for imaging and consider if pending requests are still required.

We are unable to restore the open access service for Xrays due to the need to maintain social distancing in waiting areas. **Patients must have a booked appointment before arriving at the hospital otherwise they are likely to be turned away.**

**Summary of Radiology Services**

**Plain film**

Capacity is approximately 50% of normal. Please only request X-Rays that are urgent e.g. chest X rays and X rays for trauma, foreign bodies, infection or tumour.

**Open access remains suspended. Please use the email system to book an appointment. Do not send patients directly to the hospital for X- ray. To make an appointment email:**

York: yhs-tr.yorkradref@nhs.net

Scarborough: yhs-tr.scarradref@nhs.net

Bridlington: yhs-tr.bridradref@nhs.net

Malton: yhs-tr.maltradref@nhs.net

Whitby: yhs-tr.whitbyradiology@nhs.net

**Ultrasound**

The largest backlog is within the ultrasound department. Current capacity is approximately 40% of pre– Covid levels. Patients face lengthy delays, with some routine scans waiting up to 30 weeks.

We are currently scanning urgent and fast track patients. Ante-Natal scanning continues as normal, however in order to comply with social distancing, patients are asked to attend alone.

We are working with the CCG and Yorkshire Health Solutions to generate additional capacity. We are also opening up sessions in Selby and Malton and utilising Clifton Park for MSK imaging.

Steroid injections require careful consideration and appropriate consent prior to referral. Recent advice from the British Orthopaedic Association advises caution.

**CT**

Capacity is significantly reduced at present with current output approximately 50% of pre Covid levels. Additional capacity has been generated using the Nuffield Hospital at York and increasing the usage of a mobile CT scanner at Scarborough Hospital between 8am-8pm.

We are exploring the option of working with Harrogate District Hospital to utilise some CT capacity at the Nightingale.

**MRI**

Capacity was significantly impacted by Covid 19. Capacity has increased recently due to the reduction in Covid positive inpatients. Additional capacity has been generated using the Nuffield Hospital at York.

**Summary**

During the pandemic, scan capacity overall was reduced by approximately 70% and as such we have a significant backlog. Although we have restored some capacity, we are unable to return to pre-Covid service levels. Currently we are prioritising Urgent and Fast Track referrals and endeavour to scan them within 2 weeks. The Radiology Department has taken steps to ensure patient and staff safety. Staff and patients are wearing masks, screening questions are asked on arrival and numbers in waiting areas a kept to a minimum to maintain social distancing.

We ask again for your help and patience.

**Please use imaging judiciously and consider if pending requests are still required. Please advise patients to expect long delays for imaging of non- urgent referrals.**

If you have any concerns or queries regarding your patients, the advice line remains open: radiologyadvice&guid@york.nhs.uk

For cases requiring discussion, the Duty radiology service is available Monday – Friday 9am-5pm (01904) 722792.

We continue to work very hard with our partners to provide an outpatient imaging service during this difficult time and value your collaboration and support.

Best Wishes

**Dr Victoria Birkett**

**Clinical Director, Radiology, YHFT**