

NHS steps up coronavirus capacity with new Nightingale Hospital

A new NHS Nightingale Hospital will be opened in Westpoint Exeter to provide 200 extra beds for patients with coronavirus symptoms if needed.

The NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter, announced today by NHS Chief Executive, Sir Simon Stevens, brings the total to seven confirmed NHS Nightingale Hospitals in a matter of weeks.

The five hospitals in Devon and Cornwall will provide the majority of care for critically ill patients with coronavirus, and have plans in place to increase their critical care capacity up to 500 beds across both counties.

Our new NHS Nightingale Hospital, which is expected to be ready for the first patients, if needed, by early May, will provide a regional resource of 200 beds for Devon, Cornwall and neighbouring counties to meet the care needs for patients who are seriously unwell due to their coronavirus symptoms.

Elizabeth O'Mahony, Regional Director, NHS England and NHS Improvement – South West, said coronavirus was “the single biggest challenge facing our country for generations.”

She added: “We can learn from the work we are doing in Bristol and the other Nightingale Hospitals across the country. We want the NHS in the South West to be as well prepared as possible.”

“The Nightingale Exeter will support our existing hospital network to care for critically ill patients from the south of the region. We are taking steps now to ensure that the hospital is available if required but we hope that it is not needed. We ask everyone in the South West to continue to follow the national recommendations to reduce transmission of the virus, please stay at home, observe social distancing, protect your local NHS and each of you will help save lives.”

The set up of this new facility will be overseen by Phillipa Slinger, an experienced NHS Chief Executive, and currently lead Chief Executive for the Devon Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. She said: “I would like to thank local people for their extraordinary support to the NHS by staying at home. Where people have needed to go out for essential reasons, they have by and large practised good social distancing. These actions need to continue as they are helping us to manage the pandemic.”

“However, our new NHS Nightingale Hospital will ensure we have the right critical care capacity in place to help us manage the expected upsurge in cases. Getting our new facility open is a huge task and will be a real collaborative partnership between all NHS providers, commissioners, partner agencies, the armed forces and contractors.”

The new Nightingale Hospital will be hosted by the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust. It will be run as a system level model to ensure resilience across the Devon, Cornwall and wider South West region, with a sub-structure of geographically aligned clinical networks.

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Notes for Editors

The seven confirmed NHS Nightingale Hospitals will be integrated with and support existing NHS Hospitals in areas across the length and breadth of England.

The Nightingales are part of a nationwide effort to respond to the greatest global health emergency in more than a century. The seven facilities will take the initial number of additional beds to be created by the Nightingale project nationally to more than 3,600, with the ability to add more if local health bosses think they are needed.

All Nightingales will draw on existing NHS staff, as well as the thousands of returning staff and training clinicians who have already begun to swell their ranks.