



# CARE DECISIONS IN THE COMMUNITY: SUPPORT FOR COMPLEX CASES & ETHICAL QUESTIONS

**A pandemic does not change the fundamentals of care planning.**

First and foremost, we are our patient's advocate. Conversations are about access to treatment.

## Five minutes, five questions

When making decisions under pressure, take five minutes to ask yourself:

1.



Am I being an advocate for this person, first and foremost?

2.



Am I starting from a point of providing access to the care this individual needs and would prefer?

3.



Who have I involved in this decision?

4.



Are assumptions about resources or wider system pressures influencing me, and if so, how can I check?

5.



Am I recording this decision comprehensively and appropriately?

## Support for complex cases & ethical questions in the community

GPs in the community can already access a range of existing advice routes, including established on-call palliative medicine, psychiatry, and elderly care consultant teams. In south east London, specialist palliative care advice is available 24/7 through existing local palliative care services.

GPs are now able to access a supportive professional conversation from experienced colleagues through Consultant Connect. For very complex cases, a new South East London Mental Health and Community Ethics Forum has been created.



### 'Call a Colleague' – Primary care: complex/ethical treatment decisions 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week, via Consultant Connect

Most of us will have access to colleagues in our GP practice who can help in the first instance. Where this might not be the case, support with decision-making is available from another designated group of local GPs.

To access this support, select **Primary care: complex/ethical treatment decisions** on the **Consultant Connect** app.

It is the role of this colleague to offer a supportive professional conversation and decision support, not clinical advice. The final clinical decision will remain with the clinician responsible for the patient's care.



### South East London Mental Health and Community Ethics Forum 3.30pm, Mon – Fri

Working closely with SLaM, a South East London Mental Health and Community Ethics Forum has been established that can discuss very complex scenarios with a range of specialists, including legal and lay representatives. Its members are experienced in dealing with very complicated decision-making when there may be concerns about mental capacity, vulnerability and end-of-life questions. It will also support reflection and learning across our community.

This forum meets at 3.30pm daily. Please note: if an out-of-hours decision is required, i.e. it cannot wait until the next day, this means the clinical situation is urgent, and the default position should be to follow your existing out of hours processes, for example assessment in an acute setting.

These new models have been set up in the context of Covid-19 but are designed for all patients where useful.

We expect that these new routes would be used in conjunction with existing support, such as specialist on-call palliative care advice.

The Ethics Forum can be accessed via the Call a Colleague service, by selecting 'Primary care: complex/ethical treatment decisions' on Consultant Connect.

