

# Referrals and transfer of care processes between General Practitioners and Hospital and Health Services for COVID-19



## Summary

This document has been prepared for General Practitioners (GPs) regarding the referral and discharge / transfer of care communication processes for hospital-managed COVID-19 services.

This summary will support the interface between general practice and Queensland Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) for patients accessing hospital-managed COVID-19 services. These principles and processes relate to the safe and timely transfer of care of patients with COVID-19 from general practice to:

- hospital-managed COVID-19 services (inpatient and virtual ward) and from
- hospital-managed COVID-19 services to general practice.

These principles and business processes are designed to support, rather than replace clinical decision-making.

## Clinical Management Guidelines for GPs – HealthPathways

For severe symptoms (such as worsening breathlessness, chest pain or tightness) phone **000** and inform **QAS of COVID positive status** of the patient.

HealthPathways is an online manual that provides clinicians with succinct assessment and management information at the point of care, including when and where to refer patients to local specialists and services. HealthPathways COVID-19 pathways provide point of care management and local referral information and phone contact numbers for the hospital-managed COVID-19 services / HHS virtual ward.

HealthPathways are available at the Queensland portal site URL: <https://qld.healthpathwayscommunity.org/>

- Username: Queensland
- Password: Pathways.

## Communication principles

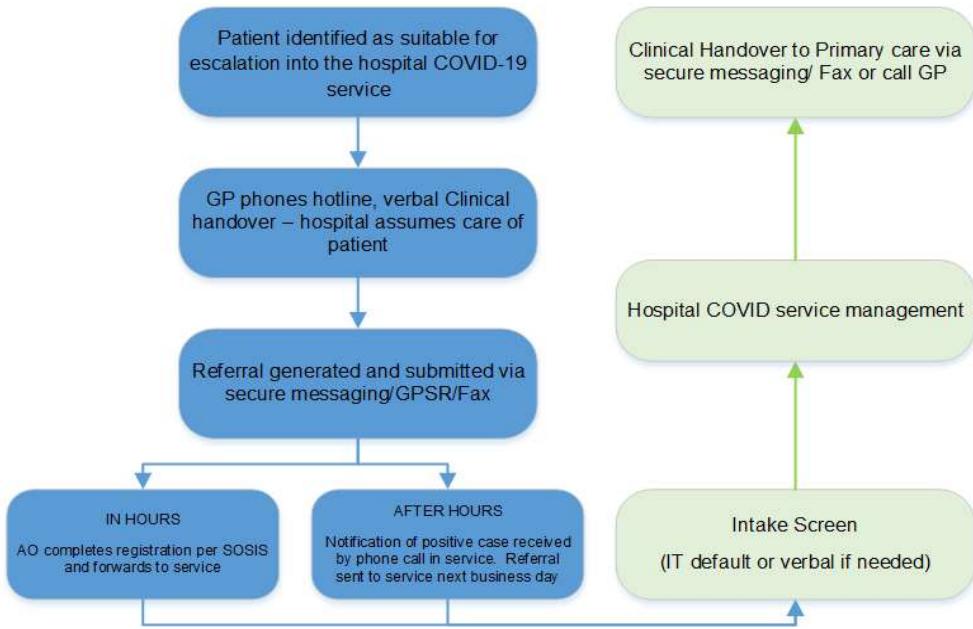
The following principles guide the communication between hospital-managed COVID-19 services and GPs:

- HHSs have established communication channels to support and enable safe clinical handover and respond to requests for urgent clinical advice (i.e., dedicated phone number with 24-hour availability).
- Following completion of care by the hospital-managed COVID-19 service, the transfer of care communication to the GP will occur in a timely manner.
- As a minimum, GPs will receive notification when a patient has been admitted to and discharged from a hospital-managed COVID-19 service.

# Referrals

- Referrals to hospital-managed COVID-19 services will be submitted via existing referral channels. Information must be transferred securely and in line with confidentiality requirements. The process is outlined the Flowchart 1: referral flow.

## Flowchart 1: referral flow



## Referral processes

- General practitioners (GPs) assessment of patient prior to referring.
- GP to phone the Hospital COVID-19 service SMO to provide clinical handover (this is the trigger that sets patient admission on the virtual ward in motion). The phone number for the COVID-19 service SMO is on HealthPathways (see above) and available 24 hours, 7 days. This phone number is not for patients.
- Referrals to the hospital managed COVID-19 service can be submitted using the following mechanisms
  - GP Smart Referrals if available in your practice
  - Secure messaging:
    - include patient name, DOB, contact details, parent/carer contact details (if relevant).
    - reason why escalation to a hospital COVID service is required – clinical symptoms; medical risk factors; social risk factors; other
    - date and type of test, or reason test cannot be performed.
  - Fax if other methods are of secure messaging are not available
- Note that Queensland Health facilities are unable to accept referrals in non-secure email messages.
- Written referrals are required following phone calls for patients referred who have multiple comorbidities and multiple medications to promote safe clinical handover.
- Each HHS has nominated the referral mechanisms being used as noted in HealthPathways.

# GP notification on admission

GPs should be notified by the hospital-managed COVID-19 service where their patient:

- has been streamed as **high risk** and admitted to the virtual ward following initiation of COVID care through the ‘online COVID Care Self-Checker’, ‘Billie the bot’, or the ‘COVID-19 National Coronavirus Helpline 1800 020 080’.
- has been admitted as an inpatient to a hospital-managed COVID-19 service.

These notifications should occur using secure messaging (Secure Web Transfer – SWT) or fax to the GP.

## Transfer of care communication to GP on discharge

Transfer of care communication on discharge from hospital-managed COVID-19 services will be sent via existing channels. Information must be transferred securely and in line with confidentiality requirements.

Secure options for transfer of care communication include:

- Enterprise Discharge Summary (EDS) discharge summary
- Emergency Department Information System (EDIS) letter
- Secure Web Transfer (SWT) letter
- Fax (letter).

The presence of discharge information on the Health Provider Portal (HPP or ‘The Viewer’) does not replace the requirement for transfer of care communication with the GP.

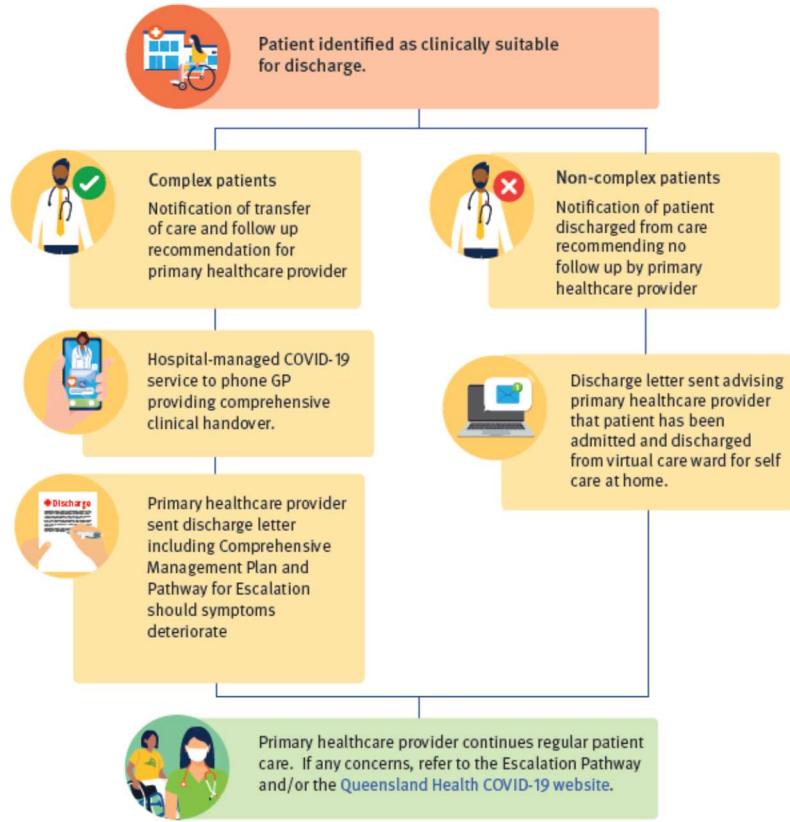
## Transfer of care processes

The transfer of care processes are outlined in Flowchart 2: Transfer of care communication.

Each HHS has nominated transfer of care mechanisms being used as listed in Appendix 3:

- Patient identified as suitable for discharge and streamed as **non-complex** or **complex**.
- **Non-complex** patients: a notification of discharge from care recommending no follow up will be provided via secure messaging.
- **Complex** patients:
  - Hospital-managed COVID-19 service to phone General Practitioner and provide comprehensive clinical handover.
  - Notification of transfer of care and follow up recommendations will be provided including a comprehensive management plan and pathway for escalation should symptoms deteriorate.
  - The notification will be a secure option for transfer of care communication and most likely via EDS as complex patients will most likely be admitted patients.

## Flowchart 2: Transfer of care communication



NB: Please refer patients as required to: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/stay-informed/i-have-covid>