

## Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update – 25 September 2020

### A message from Cllr Linda Haysey, Leader of East Herts Council, and Chair of the community reassurance cell of the Local Resilience Forum

Dear stakeholder,

Following the Prime Minister's announcement earlier this week, myself and Cllr David Williams, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, have written to residents reminding them of the threat that the virus still poses.



**Cllr Linda Haysey**

Since the end of lockdown, the vast majority of Hertfordshire residents have been playing their part, adhering to the guidance to help us all stay safe and doing our county proud. However, we all know of instances where people have been bending the rules to fit their social interactions.

The news from Central Government this week needs to be a wake up call for us all in Hertfordshire. This will involve a change of mindset. We all must follow the hands, face and space guidelines as well as the new 'rule of six' for meeting people. There will also be earlier curfews for pubs and restaurants; increased responsibilities for business owners to keep lists of visitors; as well as others being encouraged to work from home, where they can.

From 28 September, you could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19 or if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate. You can read the [full guidance for households with possible coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) on the government website.

But what we are really being asked to do now is to stop and consider our own responsibilities and question whether we **need** to be having those social contacts that are driving transmission of the virus. This is going to be vital to keep as much of our communities as open and flourishing as possible and to prevent Covid-19 infections accelerating beyond our control.

Thank you for your support. Here is the latest update from Hertfordshire's Local Resilience Forum.

#### **Update on COVID-19 Case Numbers in Hertfordshire**

There have been almost 200 cases of coronavirus recorded in Hertfordshire in the last seven days (as of Thursday 24 September). Hertsmere, which remains on the government's watchlist\* as an 'Area of Concern', continues to have a case rate higher than Hertfordshire overall, while the case rate in the St Albans district also remains high with young people (aged 0-19) affected more than any other age group. As of 24 September, Broxbourne also has a relatively high case rate, with many cases linked to an outbreak at a care home.

\*The government's watchlist is based on Public Health England's (PHE's) weekly surveillance reports, monitoring local authority areas with elevated numbers of cases. It has three categories for local councils – 'Area of Concern', 'Area of Enhanced Support' and 'Area of Intervention'. An 'Area of Concern' is the lowest level requiring targeted local actions to reduce further infection numbers.

### **New NHS App**

The new NHS COVID-19 app has launched in England and Wales to help control COVID-19 transmission alongside national and local contact tracing. Features of the app include contact tracing using Bluetooth, risk alerts based on postcode district, QR check-in at venues, a symptom checker and test booking.

People across England and Wales are being urged to download the app to help control the spread of coronavirus and protect themselves and their loved ones as case numbers rise. It will be available to those aged 16 and over in multiple languages.

The contact tracing element of the app works by using low-energy Bluetooth to log the amount of time you spend near other app users, and the distance between you, so it can alert you if someone you have been close to later tests positive for COVID-19 – even if you don't know each other. The app will advise you to self-isolate if you have been in close contact with a confirmed case. It will also enable you to check symptoms, book a free test if needed and get your test results. The app does not hold personal information such as your name, address or date of birth, and only requires the first half of your postcode to ensure local outbreaks can be managed. No personal data is shared with the government or the NHS.

For more information on the NHS COVID-19 app, visit <https://covid19.nhs.uk/>

### **Meeting the coronavirus information needs in our communities**

How do I know if I have coronavirus or a cold? What should I do if I can't get a test? What help is there if I have symptoms or need to self-isolate?

Unfortunately, as case numbers rise, Hertfordshire residents are facing decisions and dilemmas about coronavirus every day. To help ensure that people get the advice they need, Hertfordshire's lead GPs Dr Prag Moodley and Dr Nicolas Small have teamed to help people safely navigate the wealth of information available with a series of simple questions and answers. Their Q&A information is being hosted on local health organisations' websites, featured in the local media, promoted on social media, and has been shared with organisations across the county. The advice will be updated as required.

You can view and share the questions and answers by following this link to the content via [Twitter](#) or this [Facebook](#).

### **Additional COVID-19 testing capacity added for essential workers**

To help to mitigate the effects of the current capacity issues in the national COVID-19 testing system, and to keep essential public services running in our county this autumn, the LRF's testing cell has commissioned additional COVID-19 testing for eligible essential workers only. The tests can now be booked at sites in Harpenden and Welwyn Garden City, with some additional capacity available for those who live in the east of Hertfordshire, just over the county border in Essex.

### **Seasonal flu vaccination update**

The number of people being encouraged to receive a free flu vaccination this year has been extended, so that more people at a higher risk of flu are better protected.

Adult patients and parents of young children will be contacted directly when vaccination supplies are available at their practices, with the most clinically vulnerable vaccinated in the next few weeks. Letters will also be sent to parents of school-age children about access to nasal flu immunisations in school. Year 7 pupils will be offered the immunisation this year to try and reduce the impact of seasonal flu in children and help the reduce transmission of flu in communities.

A further wave of vaccinations for healthy adults aged 50 and older will be scheduled for later in the season when supplies are available. Flu clinics will look and feel different this year to help ensure that clinicians and patients alike are safe. This year a football stadium and a theatre are being temporarily transformed into Hertfordshire vaccination centres. A comprehensive national and local flu campaign aims to help to reach the ambitious target of 75% of all eligible members of the public vaccinated before the season finishes.

## **Supporting our communities**

**HertsHelp:** HertsHelp currently manage the Crisis Intervention pathways alongside their information and advice service which supports those who are experiencing a range of challenges as a result of the pandemic, such as needing financial or wellbeing support.

In the event of another localised or national lockdown, the intentions are to contact each of the residents identified as shielded by the Government/NHS to ensure their needs are being met, through partnership with both HCC and the voluntary sector. Residents will be required to complete a web-form to request additional support, or contact HertsHelp directly if they are unable to access this form who will then advise of these options available.

In order to also alleviate financial pressures on people accessing the Crisis Intervention service through HertsHelp and utilise the £924k DEFRA grant funding received for emergency provisions, the decision has been made to double up on all current provision provided. This means that people will receive two weeks support instead of one weeks support, whether that be through food parcels for the vulnerable or vouchers for food and energy costs.

## **Economic Resilience**

**Economic Recovery:** Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership has published its [Economy Recovery Plan](#). This has been shared with stakeholders at its [Annual Conference and AGM](#) today (Friday 25 September). Hertfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan builds on the emergency measures which were taken at both local and national levels. Its purpose is to chart a clear route through the short-medium term economic effects of the pandemic and define actions in response. It aims to accelerate recovery over the next 6-18 months and position Hertfordshire for sustained economic growth in the years thereafter. It also aligns with the [LEP Network 5-Point Plan for Recovery](#) that focuses on skills, green investment, and targeted stimulus.

**Cornerstone Employer Group:** Seven leading local businesses including Airbus, MBDA, Morrison Utilities, NHS East and North Herts Trust, Roche, Tesco and Willmott Dixon, and educational charity STEMPOINT East, have formed a [Cornerstone Employer Group](#) to help schools increase the effectiveness of their careers programmes as part of the Hertfordshire Careers Hub. Now with the expansion of the hub, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is seeking additional businesses to join the group to support schools in Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere.

Thank you.