

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update

22 May 2020

**A message from Chief Fire Officer Darryl Keen, Director of Community Protection,
Chair of the strategic coordination group of the Local Resilience Forum.**

Dear stakeholder,

Here's the latest update from Hertfordshire's Local Resilience Forum, a multi-agency partnership of public services working to coordinate our approach to COVID-19.



Safer town centres

In partnership with district and borough councils, Hertfordshire County Council will be changing the way Watford, Bishop's Stortford, Borehamwood and Hertford [town centres](#) look from this weekend, to support the public to socially distance as they shop. This is part of the COVID-19 recovery effort and led by public health, the changes to the town centres are designed to support residents, businesses and families to stay safe as high streets re-open in a phased manner. Detailed considerations have been given to the need for access for local residents, public transport, emergency services, deliveries and accessibility for the disabled.

Safety measures will include closing some roads to traffic, removing parking spaces or narrowing carriageways to help pedestrians to get around safely. From Tuesday 26 May, similar measures will be implemented in Ware, Radlett, Royston, Hitchin, Knebworth, Harpenden, St Albans and Welwyn.

GP and pharmacy opening times this bank holiday

Some pharmacies and GP practices will be closed on Monday 25 May. However, Herts Urgent Care, the organisation which provides our county's NHS 111 service, will be running a full service, including mental health and pharmacy advice, over the weekend and bank holiday as usual. If you can, go online to [NHS 111](#) or alternatively free phone 111.

The majority of pharmacies will be closed on Monday, but designated pharmacies in each area will stay open, to dispense essential medicines and give advice. To find a pharmacy that is open near you, follow these links:

- for East and North Hertfordshire: <https://www.enhertsccg.nhs.uk/pharmacies>
- for West Hertfordshire: https://hertsvalleysccg.nhs.uk/your-services/local-services/find_a_service.

Policing update

We are expecting the bank holiday weekend to kick-start a busy period for Hertfordshire Constabulary, as good weather coincides with the start of the school half-term holiday. The vast majority of people continue to adhere to the government's social distancing regulations and the force's approach will see officers engaging with residents to encourage compliance. There will be extra patrols in parks and open spaces around the county and where necessary for the benefit of the wider public, enforcement action will be taken if required.

If you are concerned that you have seen a gathering which contravenes the guidance, please use online reporting methods to inform the police. This will help to relieve some of the pressure on emergency lines

and resources, and allow for a quicker response to urgent 999 calls. The constabulary really appreciates your co-operation and would like to thank everyone for their support so far. Follow these links to make an online report: herts.police.uk/contact or herts.police.uk/report

Supporting our residential and nursing care homes

Last week the Care Minister wrote to all local authorities to announce a £600m fund to support care homes to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within and between homes. The county council has written to all providers setting out the key points and conditions of the funding to ensure that they can quickly access the money. The Care Minister has also asked local authorities, in partnership with health colleagues, to develop and publish a Care Home Resilience Plan that identifies all the current support available to care homes and what actions we intend to take to ensure that they continue to be supported. This is due to be published by 29 May.

Coronavirus testing for staff and residents with and without symptoms is now starting to being rolled out to all older people' care homes across the country. We are working to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for testing in Hertfordshire and a clear prioritisation framework for allocating testing kits.

Caring for 'shielded' residents

As of 13/05/20, there were 41,482 records of Hertfordshire residents on the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's shield list. This number continues to increase as further shielded citizens identified by local health professionals are received. 61,000 parcels of food and household items have been delivered to people who are self-isolating and people helping those in need, as well as over 1,000 prescriptions.

Guiding Hertfordshire's schools

Extensive guidance and support has been provided to primary schools in preparation for the planned phased return of particular year groups from June onwards. Hertfordshire's guidance uses information from the Department for Education as a starting point but is extended and tailored for our county, covering issues such as infection control, the welfare of staff and pupils and planning.

Each primary school has an adviser to help trouble-shoot problems or test out ideas and most schools are expected to progressively extend their offer to pupils from June onwards. Looking further ahead, 'Herts for Learning' (HfL), our county's school improvement company, is planning a range of specific support for schools as they look to re-open to all pupils in future. This will cover training, advice and professional development to address the challenges of re-integrating pupils who have been out of school for a long time, deal with gaps in knowledge, and plan and target- set in a different environment.

Getting more hospital services up and running safely

As the number of coronavirus cases reduces, the county's health organisations are increasingly focusing on resuming a wider range of services. Although health services have continued to see and treat patients needing urgent treatment throughout the pandemic, all routine treatment has been put on hold and a lot of people are waiting for this to resume. We need to open up access to routine healthcare in a managed way and our health organisations are working together to prioritise patients and find ways of meeting their needs safely.

At the same time, we need to continue to provide care for those people currently suffering from COVID-19 as well as those recovering from the virus, and to be able to rapidly step up our response if cases start to increase.

In keeping with social distancing measures, health services will continue to provide virtual appointments and consultations by phone or video where possible. If people need a physical appointment, the safety of staff and patients will be a priority. Visitor restrictions, apart from in exceptional circumstances such as visiting a child, accompanying a woman in labour, end of life care, or when accompanying someone with additional needs, are likely to continue for some time. Potential visitors are asked to speak to ward staff in advance to discuss arrangements for keeping in touch with inpatients.

Allowing extra time for staff to put on and take off personal protective equipment and to check that patients going into appointments have no obvious coronavirus symptoms will reduce the number of people that can be seen in any one session.

Our health organisations are putting in place a recovery management structure to oversee this work and we will continue to update you on their progress.

Coronavirus testing in Hertfordshire expanded

The COVID-19 testing service in Hertfordshire has now been expanded to include even more people who may have developed coronavirus.

From Monday 18 May, the government extended the criteria for COVID-19 testing. Now anyone aged over five years old who is in the first few days of having suspected symptoms can have a test.

In addition, another symptom has been added to the list of signs that someone might have contracted coronavirus. As well as a new continuous cough or a high temperature, a loss of, or change in a person's normal sense of taste or smell has been included.

To help to meet the demand for drive-through testing in Hertfordshire, an additional testing day has been arranged by local NHS organisations and will take place in Watford every Thursday. To book a test, go online to www.gov.uk/coronavirus and enter your details. The booking system will only show you details of test locations which are available in the following 24hrs. Hertfordshire test sites are all open between 10am and 4pm and are now as follows:

- on Thursdays in Watford at the Central Watford leisure centre, WD17 3HA
- on Saturdays in Hertford at County Hall, Pegs Lane, SG13 8DQ
- on Sundays in Watford at the Central Watford leisure centre, WD17 3HA
- on Mondays in Stevenage, off Six Hills Way, SG1 2DF

Positive partnership working with the independent sector

Our Clinical Commissioning Groups and local acute trusts are continuing to work closely with private hospitals to enable patients to be treated on separate sites from those who have COVID-19. Patients who need to use such services are requested to self-isolate for 14 days and to have been tested as being clear of COVID-19 before attending their appointments. Our focus now is on getting through the backlog of patients from the last couple of months and building stronger and more integrated partnership in the future, particularly for diagnosis.

We need you

As coronavirus is likely to have a lasting impact on our communities for the short, medium and long term, the Community Reassurance Cell is looking for experts in our communities to participate in this [community impact assessment questionnaire](#) in order to help identify those in Hertfordshire who may be adversely affected.

By engaging with your networks and encouraging those community groups to take part that might be in need of support, with a particular focus on those harder to reach groups or 'hidden communities', this community impact assessment will help shape our local recovery. Please do share the questionnaire widely and take part in it yourself.

And finally, this bank holiday and half term we are urging people to keep up social distancing and enjoy half term at home. Although some restrictions have been eased, the basic message remains unchanged and we still need to limit contact with other people and keep our distance when we are out and about. Please support this messaging in your local area, and remember that social distancing, hand washing and good hygiene are the most effective preventative measures we have.

Thank you.