

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum - stakeholder update

29 May 2020

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

Dear stakeholder,

I am pleased to share the tenth update from Hertfordshire's Local Resilience Forum, a multi-agency partnership of local public services working to coordinate our approach to COVID-19.



Testing update

New NHS 'Test and Trace' service

The government has now officially launched a new 'NHS Test and Trace' service across England, which will help to contain and control the spread of coronavirus. From now on, anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 at any of the sites bookable through the national website, or after sending in a mail-order swab, will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace. That person will need to share information about their recent interactions with others, including household members and people they have been in close contact with for more than 15 minutes.

If the Test and Trace service identifies someone as having been in close contact with COVID-19, they must stay at home for 14 days, even if they have not developed symptoms, to stop the potential spread of the virus. During their self-isolation period, if that person develops suspected COVID-19 symptoms, they should book a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119. If the test shows that they have the virus, they must continue to stay at home for the next seven days, or until their symptoms have passed. Even if a person's test is negative, they must complete the 14-day isolation period because the virus may be present in their body but not yet detectable.

You can find out more about NHS Test and Trace and how it works [here](#). Working together, local government organisations in Hertfordshire are developing plans to support the national 'Test and Trace' efforts in our communities. As more detailed information becomes available, we will share news of those plans with you through this update.

COVID-19 antibody testing

NHS staff in Hertfordshire will be the first to have access to the new COVID-19 antibody tests as testing facilities and resources start to become available. The antibody tests will reveal whether or not someone has been exposed to the virus and developed an immune response. However, being exposed to the virus in the past does not guarantee someone immunity from it in future, so despite

your past exposure, it's vital to continue to observe social distancing, hand hygiene and current infection prevention and control policies and procedures.

The aim of the testing programme is to provide information on the prevalence of COVID-19 in different parts of the country and help epidemiologists to understand more about how the disease spreads. Hertfordshire's two NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are working with the public health team at the county council to understand how the programme might work in Hertfordshire and more information will follow soon. You can read a full description of the antibody test and how it works [here](#).

Testing extended to under-fives

This week, the government expanded the coronavirus testing programme to include children aged under five, to help support the phased opening of schools and childcare settings. This now means that everyone in Hertfordshire with coronavirus symptoms will be able to access either a mail-order or drive-through test if they need one. To book a test, go to www.gov.uk/coronavirus and enter your details. People with no access to the internet, or those who might need assistance, can dial 119 to book a test instead.

Highways update

Changes to our high streets

The Department for Transport has issued [new statutory guidance](#) saying that local authorities should act quickly to re-allocate space on our high streets to people walking and cycling.

Hertfordshire County Council has focused on providing space for pedestrians, so that people can queue outside shops and pass each other at a safe distance. A standard pavement is typically 1.8 metres wide, so this approach has meant taking space away from vehicles. Whilst people cannot be made to stay two metres apart, it is important that it is possible for this to happen.

Traffic flows are lower than usual and walking and cycling rates have increased, with many people continuing to work from home. The measures already taken will be kept under review to check they are operating as intended. Where necessary, they will be adapted as our habits change.

So far, measures have been put in place in the following locations: Bishop's Stortford, Borehamwood, Harpenden, Hertford, Hitchin, Knebworth, Radlett, Royston, St Albans, Ware, Watford and Welwyn. Further locations where measures may be appropriate are being considered and a priority action list is being drawn up.

Changes to road and paths around schools

Hertfordshire County Council has been considering how roads and footways near schools, colleges and nurseries need to be adapted to safely support social distancing, once they begin to re-open from June onwards. Schools have been advised to refresh their risk assessments and other health and safety advice for children, young people and staff. They will be encouraging parents, children and young people to walk or cycle where possible, to stagger drop-off and collection times and to plan drop-offs and pick-ups to minimise contacts between adults. To make it safe for children to cycle and walk to school, most of the school crossing patrols in the county will be in operation.

A small number of school sites, in which there is likely to be a high level of footfall and not much room for social distancing to be maintained, will be considered in more detail. Warning signals (where fitted) will operate throughout the day to warn road users of staggered start and finish times and additional social distancing signage will be available. Changes will be made to some pedestrian crossings, to allow more time for pedestrians to cross the road safely without bunching together. The county council will continue to work closely with Hertfordshire schools to encourage and support them to re-open in line with government guidance.

Policing update

Hertfordshire Constabulary officers will be patrolling parks and open spaces as usual and will continue to engage with residents to encourage compliance with the lockdown regulations. If you are concerned that you have seen a large 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. Follow these links to make an online report: herts.police.uk/contact or herts.police.uk/report

Support to residential and nursing homes

Intensive training programme for care home staff

The rate of infections and deaths across care homes in Hertfordshire continues to reduce. As part of work to control the spread of the virus in care homes, East and North Herts CCG and Herts Valley CCG have been working closely with colleagues to deliver an intensive programme of training for care home staff.

Throughout May, the teams have been training in all homes in Hertfordshire including those for older people, adults with a disability and children's respite care. The comprehensive training covers correct infection prevention and control measures, putting on and taking off PPE and correct swabbing techniques. In this way, if an outbreak does happen, homes will be better equipped to stop it from spreading, protecting both residents and staff.

Infection control fund to support care homes

Following the receipt of a letter from the Care Minister to all local authorities, announcing a £600m infection control fund, a multi-agency response has been prepared that outlines all the measures that have already been taken and are still underway in Hertfordshire to support care homes, as well as an action plan for measures we are planning over the coming months. The response reflects the tremendous work by staff in care homes and health and social care organisations to support residents and staff through the pandemic.

Access to the Infection Control Fund is subject to care homes registering with and regularly updating a national NHS 'capacity tracker'. All but one care home in Hertfordshire has completed this action, which is a tremendous achievement. There are some concerns from care home providers that the reporting requirements for this grant are too onerous, and we are raising these concerns with civil servants.

Testing in care homes

Over the coming weeks, local NHS CCGs and Hertfordshire County Council will be rolling out ‘whole home’ testing for residents and staff in those care homes and community care settings that are not covered by the national testing programme - which is for people aged over 65 and those with dementia.

The Adult Care Services team at Hertfordshire County Council has established a local pathway for testing residents with suspected COVID-19 symptoms, which Hertfordshire’s care homes have been using. This pathway uses Herts Urgent Care (HUC) to arrange tests, with results supplied both to the relevant care home and GP. In this way, the local health and care system can offer support to the home as well as helping us to understand the infection rate in care homes.

The local pathway has been extended for testing residents and staff in a community care setting who do not have any active symptoms of the coronavirus, again using HUC as a single point of access. Whole home testing is important as we know that a number of people who have contracted COVID-19 do not have any symptoms and there is a risk that someone could be passing on the virus to others because they don’t realise that they are infected. This local pathway will provide ‘whole home’ testing for other settings, including those for people with learning disabilities and children.

Hospital trust updates

West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust

As the number of cases of COVID-19 continues to decrease, West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust has been working on the detail of their restart plan for routine hospital work. The capacity of clinics for patients who need to be seen face-to-face will be reduced, to allow for social distancing. Fewer staff will be able to work in each area, and PPE will be used to a greater extent than in pre-COVID times. The ‘zoning’ of patients who may have COVID-19 will be applied to all areas. The restart plan will focus on clinical priorities and modelling work will be undertaken to assess demand and capacity.

Community trust services

Urgent and essential services remain accessible to COVID and non-COVID patients. Central London Community Hospitals NHS Trust and Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust have both been providing enhanced support to care homes across Hertfordshire and a testing service for care home residents and staff with and without symptoms is ongoing. The use of ‘virtual’ patient appointments continues.

Mental health during COVID-19 – an update

The COVID-19 mental health group is continuing to co-ordinate and promote information and support for wellbeing and mental health.

Bereavement guides for children and young people, parents and carers and adults are available at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirusbereavement. Help from counselling organisations is now accessible via funeral directors and the mental health single point of access, adding capacity to the existing provision within the voluntary sector. A directory of all the support available in Hertfordshire is being updated so that people can be signposted effectively to the right bereavement support. Training for schools and the police is being commissioned and improved co-ordination of

the voluntary sector is being explored, in order to maximise the availability of formal counselling. The need for formal counselling is expected to increase in the next three to six months. The need for clinical support for those people who experience complex grief problems in the future is also being scoped.

Information and support leaflets about coronavirus are now available for [adults](#) and for [carers of people on the autistic spectrum](#). More information is available via the [Health in Herts homepage](#).

Economic Resilience

Ministerial roundtable

Local business leaders from across Hertfordshire's key sectors have put their views to government ministers on how they are implementing a safe return to work for their employees and helping to build the county's economic recovery. The majority of businesses that took part in the [roundtable](#) were from small or medium-sized enterprises from life sciences, construction and the film and television industry. Questions were tabled in advance on economic growth, digital infrastructure, labour markets, financial support and EU exit.

Support to help businesses

As of Tuesday 26 May, the 10 local authorities in the county have distributed £199.356m of grants to 15,737 eligible small businesses (equivalent to 90% of the total). The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has published [guidance](#) for local authorities on the discretionary grants fund. Small and medium sized enterprises which are not eligible for business rates relief schemes or discretionary funding can find out if they can apply for other funding schemes via the [Hertfordshire Growth Hub website](#). Once registered, they will be able to find more information using GrantFinder –Hertfordshire Growth Hub's online funding portal. More information about the grants available can be found [here](#).

Survey to help businesses emerge from the lockdown

In the first COVID-19 impact survey, businesses told the Herts Growth Hub of the immediate impact the crisis was having on their business. The growth hub is now seeking to understand how businesses have responded to the impact of the virus, the changes that they already have implemented or will implement in order to operate successfully, and areas that they require support with to adapt to the 'new normal'.

Businesses have now been encouraged to take part in a second survey that focuses on helping them emerge from the lockdown - [HGH COVID survey – respond, adapt and strengthen business support needs](#). The growth hub has also produced a [mental health and wellbeing resource pack](#), which may be of interest to many businesses.

We need you

The Community Reassurance Cell at the Local Resilience Forum is looking for more community experts to participate in the [community impact assessment questionnaire](#) to help identify those in Hertfordshire who may be adversely impacted by coronavirus.

Coronavirus is likely to have a lasting impact on our communities for the short, medium and long term. By engaging with your networks and telling us which groups you are aware of that need



support, with a particular focus on those harder to reach groups or 'hidden communities', this community impact assessment will help shape the local recovery.

Thank you.