

## Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update – 8 December 2020

**A message from Darryl Keen, Director of Community Protection,  
Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the strategic coordination group of the LRF**



Dear stakeholders,

With the start of another national lockdown in response to the very real rise in cases of coronavirus, I know the vast majority of residents will be doing the right thing and following the [‘stay at home’ instruction](#) to protect the NHS and save lives.

Hertfordshire’s case rate is consistently high, with the new, more contagious variant accounting for a large number of positive test results, and it is clear that we all need to act now to stop the spread. The more we do now to support the lockdown, the sooner it will be over.

The health services in Hertfordshire are doing an amazing job to treat so many people and to roll out the vaccination programme at speed, but I can assure you that the risk to the community is very real and there is immense pressure on the health system. My advice to all is to act as if you and everyone you meet has coronavirus. Please encourage your communities to take the lockdown rules seriously.

### Health update

**NHS services under extreme pressure:** Our local NHS hospitals remain under significant pressure right now, due to high attendances and admissions combined with reduced staffing numbers due to the virus. Staff are working incredibly hard to keep patients safe. We are asking people to please follow these steps:

- Only attend A&E in an emergency. If you need help, visit [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or call 111 to be guided to the best care you need
- Do not enter hospital sites other than in exceptional circumstances. Please check hospital websites for details on their strict visiting restrictions
- When on a hospital site (not just in the buildings) face covering must be worn by everyone except those who are exempt. 2 metre social distancing must be observed
- Attend all your booked appointments unless you have received a cancellation note. Your appointment letter will say whether it is a virtual, telephone or face to face appointment.

For anyone experiencing a mental health crisis, the quickest way to get help at any time of the day or night is to call NHS 111 and select option 2 for mental health services. Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust also has a live webchat service available Monday-Friday, 7am until 7pm, if you'd prefer to speak to someone online.

To access this, please visit their [website here](#) and click on the on the 'SPA Need help now?' red button. A range of other sources of mental health support available can be [found here](#).

### **COVID-19 vaccination programme**

The vaccination programme is off to a strong start. More than 1.3 million doses have now been delivered across England, helping to protect almost one in four people aged 80 or over 80. Some of our GP practices and community health providers are already starting to use their first batch of the recently approved [new Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine](#) , which can be stored and transported more easily than the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine.

Today we have also heard the positive news that a third Covid vaccine, made by US company Moderna, has been approved for use in the UK. 10 million doses of this vaccine have been ordered and supplies are expected to arrive - but not before the spring.

A national NHS website has been established which is currently being updated on a weekly basis to show the number of vaccinations administered in England. Regional and local figures are not currently available. [Statistics » COVID-19 Vaccinations \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

### **GP-led vaccinations**

In Hertfordshire, the vaccination programme is progressing at a rapid pace with 20 out of the 23 GP-led primary care vaccination sites now up and running. The remaining few are due to open next week, ensuring widespread access across the county.

GP-led vaccinations are currently taking place from the following bases:

- **East and North Hertfordshire:** Welwyn Garden City (x2), Hertford, Hoddesdon, Ware, Bishops Stortford, Stevenage (x2), Cheshunt, Hitchin, Hatfield.
- **West Hertfordshire:** Watford (x 5), St Albans, and Rickmansworth, Hemel Hempstead and Borehamwood.

### **Residential homes**

Residents and staff in more than **85** residential homes and those who care for them have now been vaccinated – this is a great start to the process of protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our communities and will almost certainly save lives.

### **Hospital vaccinations**

Since 9 December, as one of the first 50 hospital vaccination hubs, East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust has provided first dose and some second dose vaccinations to thousands of people aged over 80 and care home staff, and also higher-risk NHS staff. Following amended national guidance, vaccinations at the hospital are now also being offered more widely to NHS staff.

West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust began the process of vaccinating staff from the trust, Herts Partnership NHS Trust and the East of England Ambulance Service this week. The vaccination programme is running from Watford Football Club's stadium and in four days nearly 1,700 people have been vaccinated.

### **Large-scale vaccination centre**

As announced by the Prime Minister earlier this week, a new large-scale regional vaccination centre is due to open in Stevenage on Monday 11 January, which will increase vaccination capacity significantly. More details about who will be vaccinated there and how they can book in will be released nationally at the weekend.

This will be the first large-scale vaccination centre in the whole of the East of England. As usual, people should wait to be contacted before attending any vaccination site – anyone without an appointment will not be able to be vaccinated.

### **Second doses**

Updated guidance for the NHS on the second dose for both vaccines currently in use means that they can be safely offered up to 12 weeks apart. Residents in Hertfordshire who have already received their first dose are being reminded to attend their booked appointments, unless they have been contacted to re-schedule.

It is also important that anyone who has had the vaccine continues to follow government guidance:

- hand-washing thoroughly and regularly
- wearing a face covering in line with guidance, unless you are exempt
- maintaining social distancing
- observing the 'Stay at Home' guidance.

### **Volunteers**

Following a call out to medically-trained professionals to come forward and support the COVID-19 vaccination programme, a number of retired or former clinicians, or those with time to offer, have already put themselves forward by emailing [hct.covidimms@nhs.net](mailto:hct.covidimms@nhs.net)

On top of this, more than 100 volunteers have provided over 1,300 hours of support for community vaccination sites so far in roles ranging from admin to stewarding. Communities 1<sup>st</sup> and partners have been busy recruiting volunteers to support both the vaccination centres and school Covid testing with over 1,000 volunteers currently signed up.

It is expected that a further 3,000-4,000 volunteers will be needed over the coming weeks and months to support the vaccination programme as it increases capacity. Anyone who would like to volunteer for support roles can sign up here: [www.communities1st.org.uk/covidsteward](http://www.communities1st.org.uk/covidsteward)

### **Scams warning**

We continue to see examples of scams, including a recent fake text message offering a COVID-19 vaccine in an attempt to trick people into handing over personal and financial details. Please continue to remind people the NHS will never ask for payment for the vaccine.

### **Keeping up to date**

There is a great deal of interest in the progress of the vaccination programme. With everything moving at such a fast pace, a new hub is being created on the Integrated Care System's 'Healthier Future' website with all the latest information. Details will be circulated in next week's LRF bulletin.

### **Adult Care Services**

We have seen a sustained rise of cases in care settings over the past week. Whilst many of the cases are still asymptomatic staff members, there has sadly been a significant increase in the number of deaths of care home residents. The outbreak has been made worse with the new variant of coronavirus being more transmissible. The Adult Care Services team has written to care providers to remind them of the support available to them, including financial. Learning from other outbreaks continues to be shared as well as the importance of remaining vigilant with infection control procedures and in particular paying attention to informal contact between staff. Certain groups of frontline staff have been contacted in anticipation of the wider roll-out of the vaccine next week.

### **Supporting our communities**

**Hertfordshire Volunteering and People Assistance Cell:** As part of the national lockdown, the Government is advising all clinically extremely vulnerable people to take extra measures to protect themselves during this period. The current expectations are almost exactly the same as during the November restrictions, and in Tier 4, which is to recommend that people who are clinically extremely vulnerable should follow shielding measures such as not going to shops or pharmacies, and not attending work if they cannot work from home. People are advised to exercise outside with care or to attend health appointments. A letter will be issued shortly from the Government to all those who are clinically extremely vulnerable in England to act as a formal shielding notification and sets out the expectation that this shielding advice will apply until 21 February 2021 (TBC). If the advice is to continue beyond that date, the Government will write to this group again with further information.

In response to this announcement, Hertfordshire County Council is continuing to support residents who request support via the [National Shielding Support Service website](#). The website allows users to ask for priority access to supermarket deliveries, or to ask for their local authority to contact them to talk about any local support that may be available. This is being supported by our voluntary sector organisations across Hertfordshire to help provide crisis intervention, care, medication and food support where required. HertsHelp is also continuing to support users who do not have access

to online services whilst also prioritising contact with those who received support during the November lockdown or are newly added to the shielded patient list.

Alongside the support for those shielding, VPAC is continuing to work with partners to upscale and deliver services to non-shielding but vulnerable residents across Hertfordshire. This includes the promotion of crisis intervention services across Hertfordshire to those in need of support utilising the Winter Scheme Grant funding assigned to the county council.

VPAC will also be assisting with the COVID Information Champion scheme, which will launch imminently and aim to help Hertfordshire residents receive regular information updates which are clear and consistent about COVID-19. This will occur by utilising the strong local networks established with the community by the voluntary sector to identify and train COVID information champions and peer educators to share key messaging with friends, families and local communities to help embed clear information and behaviours within our communities.

### **Policing update**

Additional police patrols continue and Hertfordshire Constabulary is working with council COVID marshals, environmental health and trading standards officers to ensure that our communities are behaving responsibly.

Officers will respond where they identify breaches of regulations. They will continue to engage with people, explain the rules and encourage adherence, and anyone found to be knowingly breaking the rules can expect to receive a fixed penalty notice.

You should only leave home or travel for one of the permitted reasons set out in the [‘stay at home’ instruction](#). Support and childcare bubbles continue and people can meet one person from another household for outdoor exercise, but exercise should be local and limited to once a day.

If you believe someone may be breaching the COVID-19 regulations, you can [report information online](#), speak to an operator in our Force Communications Room via our [online web chat](#) or call the non-emergency number 101.

You can ask your local council to investigate a business or organisation for not following the Government's [COVID-19 regulations](#) by reporting it to them online.

### **COVID-19 communications survey**

Hertfordshire County Council is encouraging people across the county to complete a [short survey](#) and share their experiences during the pandemic. The findings from the survey will be used to develop the approach to communications across the county. Please complete the survey [here](#) and share with your networks: <https://surveys.hertfordshire.gov.uk/s/HertsCovid21/>

## EU Transition

Following the end of the EU transition period on Thursday 31 December, the SCG is maintaining a watching brief and updating a local risk register.

New rules apply to things like travel and doing business with Europe and citizens and businesses should [check the guidance](#) and make the changes required.

The Herts Better Business for All partnership has created an [EU Transition web page](#) to support Hertfordshire businesses to understand actions they need to take and where they can access support in the county.

Hertfordshire Growth Hub's EU Transition Advisors are also on hand to support businesses by providing:

- Support to understand what EU transition means for their business and the steps that they need to take to operate under the new rules;
- Tailored guidance for industry sectors;
- Signposting to live and on-demand webinars and videos to help businesses navigate their way through the changes;
- Access to a host of fully funded support programmes delivered by Hertfordshire Growth Hub and its Partners.

Contact Hertfordshire Growth Hub for support with EU Transition by emailing [enquiries@hertsgrowthhub.com](mailto:enquiries@hertsgrowthhub.com). The Growth Hub will aim to respond to enquiries within three working days. Alternatively visit [www.hertsgrowthhub.com](http://www.hertsgrowthhub.com) to view 'News and Blogs' and register or sign in to view further information in the Knowledge Bank.

Thank you

Darryl