

## **Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update      15 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 latest update from Hertfordshire's Local Resilience Forum, a multi-agency partnership of local public services working to coordinate our approach to COVID-19.

### **Looking ahead in Hertfordshire**

Following the Prime Minister's speech on Sunday, the LRF's organisations have been reviewing the guidance documents and supporting information which have since been published.

Our focus is on safety, clarity and reassurance, providing additional support for our local population, staff, businesses and schools where this is needed. During this time of adjustment, it's important that we continue to stay at home as much as possible, acting responsibly and being mindful of the needs of others. We know the infection rates are down and thankfully we are seeing fewer deaths, however, the situation remains serious in our own county and across the country.

Changes in our communities will need to be gradual. Hertfordshire County Council is working collaboratively with district and borough councils across Hertfordshire. Together they are identifying how and where they may need to make temporary changes to roads and footpaths, in order to support social distancing and make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to get around safely.

The initial focus will be on main shopping areas, such as town centres, where we expect to see an increase in people visiting shops and using bus and train stations. There will be a phased introduction of changes from Monday 18 May, led by public health guidance.

### **Policing update**

As public health regulations change, so too do police powers, and whilst Hertfordshire Constabulary recognises the distinction between legislation and guidance, their role in the pandemic is firmly focused on public safety.

Hertfordshire Constabulary's policing style will remain the same, with officers using common sense and discretion to determine what is reasonable. In the first instance, they will engage, explain, and encourage – with enforcement only as a last resort.

This approach has served the police well to date. By engaging with the public in this way, they have rarely had to enforce the government regulations. The constabulary still has a role where people are gathering in groups with those not in their household – as this is not legally permitted in the regulations. However they expect the vast majority of people to follow the regulations, making personal sacrifices to do so, and thank our communities for continuing to act so responsibly.

### **Supporting the safe return to school**

Schools and some early years providers have been open to the children of key workers and those classed as vulnerable since the pandemic began, although the number of parents taking up this offer has been low. Hertfordshire County Council is now providing comprehensive advice and support for schools to enable them to re-open more widely in early June for priority year groups as identified by the government. The safety of children, their families, teachers and support staff will be paramount.

### **Economic resilience and business support**

Within the LRF, the Hertfordshire Economic Resilience Cell has two groups so that it can focus on both:

- the 'here and now', by collating business intelligence and analysis and feeding this back to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy each week
- wider strategic issues focusing on Hertfordshire's longer-term economic recovery.

Both are multi-agency and include business support, membership organisations, local government as well as higher education and social enterprise sectors.

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has launched a £3.28m package of measures to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19, including:

- [Crowdfund Hertfordshire: Small Business Innovation Fund](#): for small and micro businesses within the tourism, leisure, hospitality, retail, arts and cultural sectors;
- [Hertfordshire Business Expansion Grant Scheme](#): grants for SMEs (subject to eligibility) ranging from £10k - £100k;
- [Volunteer Business Support Scheme](#): managed by the University of Hertfordshire to provide peer-to-peer advice and support.

### **Guidance on using face coverings**

The government is advising the public to wear a face covering in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible, for example on public transport or in smaller shops. If people are not aware that they have contracted coronavirus and are going out and about, a face covering may provide some protection for others they come into contact with.

Official advice on making your own '[no-sew](#)' [face coverings](#) can be found here. Face coverings however do not protect people from contracting coronavirus. If you have symptoms (a temperature or cough) you must self-isolate and follow the [stay at home](#) guidance.

A face covering is not the same as a protective clinical facemask used by health and social care workers and is not a substitute for social distancing and handwashing. Supplies of specialist PPE must be reserved for those at particular risk who need them to provide safe care.

Guidance on the safe use of face coverings is available on the Hertfordshire County Council website [here](#).

### **'Stay safe' campaign**

Watford Borough Council's 'stay safe' campaign has been praised for its clear messages in public spaces. Their work has been cited in the recent government publication: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Safer Public Places - Urban Centres and Green Spaces.

These posters have been in place since before the lockdown and they will remain in place, alongside messages on high street re-opening and recovery.



### **Testing**

Drive through COVID-19 public testing for those who meet the national criteria will be underway again this weekend in Hertford, Watford and Stevenage. Bookings can be made via the national website at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus). Alternatively, people without access to a vehicle or those who are too unwell to drive can order a mail-order test. LRF organisations which employ key workers can now join a national scheme which enables their employees with suspected symptoms to book a test more easily, helping them to get back to work more promptly if their test comes back clear.

### **Focus on care homes**

The rate of new infections and deaths in the county's care homes is now thankfully showing signs of reducing. The clinical commissioning groups' infection and prevention control teams have increased their resources to provide expert advice on the use of PPE and infection control standards. This includes virtual and if necessary, face-to-face visits from social care and health professionals to offer training and answer any questions that staff may have.

This week the Department for Health and Social Care launched a new system which will enable elderly care homes to register their staff and residents for COVID-19 tests even if they don't have any symptoms. Hertfordshire County Council's public health team is continuing to lead on activity to mitigate the risks of outbreaks as much as possible.



Adult Care Services at Hertfordshire County Council are confident that they have sufficient capacity in the community to support people to stay in their home or are supported to recover from the virus with access to rehabilitation services. This is being kept under review to ensure that the available capacity meets the demand for beds in the community. Further modelling has been done to ensure that the ongoing support for care homes is available throughout the pandemic; this will form part of a countywide strategy for supporting care home residents and staff to respond to the ongoing challenges caused by COVID-19.

### **Round the clock access to mental health support**

People experiencing a mental health crisis can now access support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By calling Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HFPT) either on 0300 777 0707 or by phoning NHS 111 and selecting 'option two', people can speak to a mental health professional about their worries.

A clinician specialising in children and young people's mental health is also available on the helpline number to provide advice to families and health care professionals who need advice for a patient. Follow up assessments can be arranged if required.

### **West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust**

The trust is continuing to plans to open a new Orthopaedic Outpatient Centre at St Albans. All fracture clinic appointments were transferred there to free-up space at Watford General Hospital to treat COVID-19 patients. Following initial treatment, consultants have been able to do virtual follow-up consultations to decide whether a face-to-face appointment is needed or the patient can be discharged. The centre has also enabled minor hand operations to be carried out.

A new CT scanner has been installed within the A&E department at Watford General which will allow for faster diagnostics and therefore faster treatment. The new software also reduces the negative health impact of the scanning process, without comprising on the quality of images.

The trust is also continuing with its hospital redevelopment plans, with locations due to be shortlisted in autumn. There will be a greater focus on the use of technology following the trust's experience of treating patients during the outbreak.

### **East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust**

Non-COVID 19 activity has been increasing over recent weeks and now exceeds COVID-19 activity. As a consequence, ENHT is now actively planning for how and when it re-starts our normal contracted service provision.

The trust is designing service re-starts to allow maximum flexibility to deal with any new surges in COVID-19 activity. Staff have responded magnificently to this crisis and have demonstrated that they are able to work with great flexibility and innovation in very challenging circumstances.



The trust is confident that it will re-introduce the most vital services for those patients who have the most acute clinical need, in a way that is accessible and responsive, and minimises risk to both patients and staff. It will of course be working with system partners to ensure all efforts are planned and coherent.

### **Our community services**

Our two community NHS trusts continue to deliver all essential and urgent services in line with national guidance and both continue to run testing for NHS and key worker colleagues as well as care home residents.

At the end of April, Central London Community NHS Trust (CLCH) launched red and blue community teams to reduce risks for non-COVID and shielded patients. The red teams work with possible or confirmed COVID-19 patients and operate from separate bases from the blue teams.

CLCH and Herts Valleys CCG have rolled out a 'train the trainer' programme for care homes in west Hertfordshire. The programme enables care home staff to take swabs from symptomatic care home residents and use PPE appropriately.

Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust is working with the county council to provide support and virtual ward rounds with clinicians for the dedicated care homes in Hatfield and Buntingford that are caring for patients who are well enough to leave hospital after they have been treated for COVID-19.

### **Ensuring vulnerable people in Hertfordshire are supported**

As of 7 May, over 40,000 people were considered to be 'extremely vulnerable' in Hertfordshire and therefore within the scope of 'Operation Shield'. Residents who have received a food parcel are being called to confirm if they need further support. This process helps keep track of the ongoing needs of service users and can also identify additional social care needs. Where further support is needed, people are referred to HertsHelp. To date, over 250 residents have advised they no longer need support with food deliveries.

### **We need you**

Whilst the restrictions are gradually easing, we would like to ask for your support to remind people to stay at home as much as possible and act responsibly. The opportunity for additional exercise is positive and many people will be keen to get back to work or some sense of normality. However, for others, this is a worrying time, particularly for those classed as vulnerable and those who need to continue to 'shield' themselves with their families.

I would welcome your support over the coming weeks and would be happy to help if I can with any concerns or queries that you might have.

Thank you.