

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 7 January 2022

A message from Alex Woodman, Executive Director Community Protection & Chief Fire Officer



Dear colleague,

Welcome to the first update of 2022. It's traditional to take some time to reflect at New Year, but for our LRF organisations there hasn't been much opportunity to sit back and take stock.

The latest figures show that COVID-19 cases – including Delta and Omicron variants – remain high and rising in our area. As of January 6, there were over 13,000 Covid cases recorded in a week in Hertfordshire alone – which means that more than one in every hundred people in the county is known to have the virus – up by 11% compared to the week before.

Regular testing, taking sensible precautions to reduce your exposure to the virus and taking up the vaccinations you are offered are more important than ever. The most vulnerable people in our communities still need extra help from public and voluntary services – and as ever you can either get directly involved or pass on the information in this update to the people you know.

Thank you for your continued support.

COVID vaccination update

Thousands of appointments available – please spread the word

NHS staff in Hertfordshire and west Essex are urging everybody to come forward and get protected against COVID-19, with thousands of appointments available across our area in the next week.

GP practices have been allowed to put aside or defer non-essential and non-urgent routine work to enable them to prioritise the life-saving vaccination programme this winter, and additional vaccination capacity has been opened up in community pharmacies and vaccination centres. Our centres were all very busy over Christmas and New Year, but sadly we're not seeing those big numbers this week. Highly trained and experienced staff are ready and waiting to protect the public – so please encourage the people you know or communicate with to get fully protected.

If you would like to 'walk-in' to a local clinic without an appointment, go to <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/events/vaccination-walk-in-clinic-times>. You do not need to be registered with a GP to get your vaccination at a walk-in clinic. To book an appointment at a large vaccination centre, call 119 or go to nhs.uk/covidvaccine

If you have recently had COVID, you must wait at least 28 days after testing positive before having a COVID vaccination. Booster vaccinations top-up natural immunity levels and give the best possible protection.

Testing update

Changes to COVID-19 testing rules

From Tuesday 11 January in England, people who are not showing any symptoms but who test positive for COVID-19 using an LFT test won't need to take a further PCR test to confirm that they have COVID-19. They will be required to self-isolate immediately and report their positive LFT result through the government portal: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>.

Anyone who develops one of the three main COVID-19 symptoms should stay at home and self-isolate and take a PCR test. They must self-isolate if they get a positive test result, even if they have had a recent negative lateral flow test – these rules have not changed.

Demand for lateral flow test kits remains high in Hertfordshire and across the country. Please only [order online](#) the number of test kits you need for you and your family's immediate use. The website is updated regularly throughout the day so if you get a message to say that no tests are currently available to order, please keep checking back. Some LFTs are available for collection from community pharmacies and participating libraries, but stocks here are limited.

Hospital visiting

Unfortunately, further visiting restrictions have had to be introduced in our acute Hertfordshire hospitals, as they have across most Trusts in the country. This has been a difficult decision and has been taken because of the high levels of COVID infection in the community. Visitors are now only allowed to visit their loved ones in exceptional cases, such as to see patients who are receiving end of life care, or children in paediatric wards.

Please check with your local hospital for more information and details of the current arrangements before you set off to visit a friend or family member.

Additional hospital beds for region to be located at Lister Hospital, Stevenage

As part of NHS preparations for a potential surge in people needing hospital care after becoming infected with the COVID-19 Omicron variant, a new temporary 'Nightingale surge hub' is being planned for Lister Hospital in Stevenage.

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, which runs the hospital, is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement to deliver this additional space for patients who need hospital care but who are not seriously unwell. The Trust's Medical Director, Dr Michael Chilvers and Chief Nurse, Rachael Corser are working hard to ensure that the Nightingale Surge Hub model is safely and effectively implemented if required. For more information on the national plans for surge hubs, please visit: [NHS England » NHS plans new Nightingale facilities in response to Omicron](#)

Change to opening hours at Welwyn Garden City Urgent Care Centre

The Urgent Care Centre at the New QEII Hospital in Welwyn Garden City now closes at 10pm and reopens at 8am every morning. Patients already in the UCC being treated, or waiting to be treated, at 10pm will continue to be cared for appropriately.

The decision to change the opening hours of the centre was made last July by the governing body of East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, with support from East and North Hertfordshire NHS

Trust. The decision allows resources used at the UCC overnight to be better used, for example at Lister Hospital, where demand is far higher.

Emergency overnight care is still available via NHS 111 which can help to make sure you get the right care in the right place. This can be accessed online at www.111.nhs.uk or by calling 111. If a doctor's appointment is required at night, an appointment will be made for the patient to see a GP at a local clinical base, including the Welwyn Garden City base. Residents who are not well enough to travel but do not need to go to hospital can be visited at home by the out-of-hours GP service.

Hertfordshire Volunteering and People Assistance Cell (VPAC)

Household Support Funding this winter

VPAC is continuing to plan and allocate national Household Support Funding (HSF) to support our communities with:

- **financial crisis support** – amending the criteria for those eligible for food and financial support to reflect the increased demand over winter
- **carers' support** – exploring reducing isolation and loneliness such as through helping to improve carers breaks uptake
- **energy and food support** – advertising support available and the distribution process, to ensure that everyone that needs this support can access it
- **frailty** – increased signposting (such as via link workers) to the falls prevention support available
- **getting together clubs** – re-mobilising some organisations which previously hosted lunch clubs but stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions (and adapting in line with guidance)
- **comms campaigns** are planned to advertise all the services above, including leaflets and using social prescribers to help people access services.

NHS Charities Together funding

The Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System co-ordinated a successful bid to be spent with voluntary and community sector charities over two years, with Herts Community NHS Trust Charity as fund manager. The bid is designed to address problems highlighted by COVID, including:

- additional challenges faced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents and family carers
- digital exclusion
- the challenges faced by vulnerable people during winter
- adolescents in crisis presenting at general hospitals.

Call for volunteers

Communities 1st urgently needs more volunteers to help support the booster campaign at vaccination sites across Hertfordshire. Training, ongoing support and DBS checks (where necessary) will be provided and volunteering opportunities are flexible enough to fit around any other commitments you might have. No clinical experience is necessary.

To sign up visit: www.communities1st.org.uk/covidsteward or call 020 3940 4865, Monday-Friday, 9:30am-5pm.