

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 21 January 2022

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



Dear colleague,

As you will be aware, the government has announced the easing of a number of COVID-19 restrictions, as England returns to 'Plan A' next week. Some guidance, such as the advice to work from home if you can, has already been withdrawn.

Further [changes](#) which are due to come into force on Thursday 27 January include:

- no requirement to wear a face covering, including in communal areas of schools. However, it is suggested that face coverings are worn in crowded and indoor spaces where people come into contact with others they do not normally meet
- no requirement to show your NHS COVID Pass at venues and events by law.

The changing guidance reflects an improving picture nationally and here in Hertfordshire, although it is important to remember that we are still seeing high numbers of cases and people needing hospital treatment in our county. Please continue to your commitment to making Hertfordshire a safer place, through testing, vaccination and taking sensible precautions when you are out and about.

COVID vaccination update

Protecting clinically vulnerable children aged 5-11

Following a recommendation made by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, COVID-19 vaccinations will soon be offered to 5-11 year-old children in Hertfordshire who are themselves in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed. This would include for example, children who have a parent currently undergoing cancer treatment.

Each vaccine for this age group will be a third of the dose given to older children and adults. Children will need two injections, usually eight weeks apart. Information about this next stage in the vaccination programme will shortly be shared with schools and parents through a number of communications channels. There is also helpful information on the [UK Health Security Agency website](#).

Face covering guidance remains in healthcare and care home settings

Although the wearing of face masks will not be mandatory in shops and on public transport from Thursday 27 January, it is important to remember that everyone accessing or visiting healthcare settings and care homes must continue to wear a face covering and follow social distancing rules.

Infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance remain in place for staff and visitors across all health services including hospitals, GP practices, dental practices, optometrists and pharmacies to ensure patients and staff are protected. Staff, patients and visitors will also be expected to continue to follow social distancing rules when visiting any care setting, as well as using face coverings, mask and other personal protection equipment.

We will continue to support staff who are following the guidance, which is designed to protect everybody's health.

New App helps to improve patient care during the pandemic

Consultant Connect, a clinical guidance service which uses an app to connect clinicians with expert advice, is improving patient care in our area. The secure 'Consultant Connect' app allow GPs to connect with a consultant or other healthcare professional with a particular specialism within an average response time of 30 seconds.

Hertfordshire GPs can enter a patient's NHS number and the app then works to connect them with a consultant from a list of specialities. Introduced on October 2021 with the aim of significantly improving response times, the app is helping to reduce the number of people referred to our busy hospitals' Emergency Departments. Benefits include:

- patients get swift, expert reassurance, helping to avoid stress and worry
- unnecessary hospital visits and the costs and disruption they cause are avoided
- patients get the right care, faster
- consultants spend more time seeing the patients who really need a face-to-face appointment.

Changes to isolation requirements

From 17 January onwards, some people who have tested positive either by using a rapid 'lateral flow' or PCR test are able to end their self-isolation period earlier than under the previous guidance. Individuals will need to take a rapid test on day 5 and day 6, and so long as both tests are negative, taken 24 hours apart and they do not have a fever, they can leave self-isolation as soon as they have the negative result of their day 6 test. More information is available [here](#)

Thank you.