

## **Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update – 16 April 2021**

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



Dear colleagues,

Last week's LRF bulletin was paused, in line with communications protocols following the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip. I would ask stakeholders to signpost their networks to online commemorations and to join LRF colleagues in the one-minute silence at 3pm on Saturday as the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral begins.

Monday 12 April saw lockdown easing, with the start of [Step 2](#) restrictions seeing pubs and restaurants welcoming back customers outside, along with other shops and businesses. I thank everyone for playing their part and acting responsibly.

Efforts are continuing to assist and encourage all those who are eligible to take up their COVID-19 vaccination. This week, people aged 45-49 were added to the list of those who can now be vaccinated, and the good news is that there are sufficient vaccine supplies to allow residents in this age bracket to book their appointments now. More than 700,000 people across Hertfordshire and west Essex have had at least one vaccination, and everybody in priority group 1-9 has been offered a vaccination.

As the vaccination programme continues to roll out, some vaccination site locations may change in the weeks ahead as venues return to providing 'business as usual' services - alternative venues will be made available and we will keep you informed of developments.

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

Although vaccine take-up is generally excellent, some individuals and some communities are reluctant to come forward, so a wide range of proactive steps are being taken to listen and respond to people's concerns.

Last weekend, 200 people attended a 'pop up' vaccination session in Watford, with a particular focus on encouraging African and Caribbean residents to come forward for their jabs. The session was supported by the Watford African Caribbean Association with Watford Borough Council, Herts Valleys CCG, One Vision Project and the Afro GP organisation for Herts & Beds. Another session will be held at the Meriden Community Centre in Watford this Sunday morning (18 April), and further one-off clinics are planned for other areas of the county in future.

### **Reports of very rare blood clots**

You will be aware that last week, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) announced the results of a detailed review into reports of a very rare blood clotting problem affecting a small number of people who have had the Oxford/AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine.

It's not yet clear why some people are affected, but the risk is extremely low – around 4 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine given. This condition can also happen in people who have not been vaccinated, and clotting problems are a common complication of COVID-19 infection.

For people aged 30 or over and those with other health conditions which put them at particular risk from COVID-19, the benefits of being vaccinated significantly outweigh any risk of clotting problems and people are advised to continue to come forward for their vaccine. They should also complete their course with the same vaccine they had for their first dose, unless they suffered serious side effects after their first one.

Healthy people aged under 30 without health conditions, who are therefore at lower risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19, have been advised that it's preferable to have an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

Any eligible under-30 year old (in cohorts 1-9) who is yet to have their first vaccine, should speak to their own GP practice to discuss their options. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines are now available in our county and appointments can be arranged for those who need them. People aged under 30 who have already had one dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine are advised to complete the course.

The MHRA is continuing to closely monitor vaccine safety and review any concerns reported to them. This useful [leaflet](#) from Public Health England is a good source of reassuring information for anyone with any questions about the COVID-19 vaccination and blood clots.

The Q&A on our COVID-19 microsite have been updated, and are a good place to direct anyone with concerns about blood clots <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/vaccination-faqs>

### **Walk- in vaccination sessions for health and social care staff**

Eligible social care and health staff aged over 30 who have yet to book their first appointment can walk-in to a number of vaccination centres when they are open without the need for an appointment. Staff must bring their NHS number, proof of ID and vaccination card (if they have already received their first dose). Some staff may have been contacted already to rearrange their second appointments. Health and social care workers who are 11 weeks post their first vaccination and don't currently have a booked appointment will also be able to walk in to any of the large vaccination sites during their opening times and will be able to have their second vaccinations.

### **Unpaid Carers**

Unpaid Carers are being reminded to register with their GP practice as a Carer. This means they can book their COVID-19 vaccine with their GP and also get relevant information, support and advice from healthcare services.

## Contact tracing service

The task of identifying contacts of those residents who test positive for coronavirus in Hertfordshire is now the primary responsibility of teams from the county council and the 10 district and borough councils, with an enhanced local contact tracing service now in operation. [Find out more.](#)

## Rapid COVID testing for people with no symptoms

We know that around 1 in 3 people who catch COVID don't display any symptoms, which means that the virus can be spread to many people unknowingly. Rapid testing sites offering a 'lateral flow test' are now available across Hertfordshire and you can either book an appointment or just walk in. From this week anyone can also now [order rapid COVID testing kits to use at home](#) and either have them delivered to your door or pick them up from a local site, including most pharmacies. Over 7,000 test kits have also been [handed out by COVID marshals](#) in Bishop's Stortford, Hemel Hempstead, Letchworth Garden City, Rickmansworth, St Albans, Ware and Welwyn Garden City to encourage the public to test themselves regularly. Further information about COVID testing in your local area can be found on the [Hertfordshire County Council website](#).

## Hertfordshire Volunteering and People Assistance Cell

The Department for Work & Pensions has announced a further extension to 20 June 2021 of the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG) - formally the COVID Winter Grant Scheme (WGS). The scheme supports vulnerable households and families where children are eligible to receive free school meals. A total of £588k of additional support is being allocated to Hertfordshire.

With the same eligibility criteria as the winter scheme, 80% of the grant is ring-fenced for households with children and 20% for individuals and households without children. The grants must be spent on food, utility bills and other essentials. The joint Steering Group is currently looking into how the existing support schemes can be extended in light of this additional funding and extension.

The Government has now also announced that additional funding will be provided to support residents with self-isolation, including access and communications about support available. In light of this, VPAC are currently looking into how the existing offer can be enhanced, such as proactively contacting all residents who test positive for COVID-19. HertsHelp call volumes currently remain manageable now that shielding has officially paused and so this would allow for all residents to know what support is available to them to improve their wellbeing and to support them to self-isolate.

**Communities 1st:** Communities 1st and partners have continued to recruit volunteers to provide crucial support with both the vaccination centres and school Covid testing. Over 4,600 volunteers have now signed up, and have committed to providing over 70,000 hours of support for vaccination sites in a variety of roles, from stewarding to administration.

## Policing update

Monday 12 April saw the start of [Step 2 restrictions](#) with pubs, cafes and restaurants welcoming back customers outside, using the 'Rule of Six', while other non-essential shops and businesses also reopened.

While council environmental health and trading standards officers lead on investigating reported business breaches, Hertfordshire Constabulary works to support local authorities as necessary.

Additional police patrols continue and officers will investigate and respond to reports of individuals breaching the restrictions. Officers are using the well-established 'four Es' approach of engaging, explaining and encouraging people to comply and using enforcement as a last resort.

So far this month, police have received only a few reports of blatant breaches, for example issuing 18 fixed penalty notices to people attending a Hemel Hempstead house party last weekend.

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.

## Economic Recovery

**Brexit Ready podcasts:** As part of the South East cluster of Local Enterprise Partnerships, Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire Growth Hub have launched a new podcast series to help businesses navigate post Brexit rules. Each episode features experts and local business leaders, who discuss key areas of concern. Find out more [here](#)

**'Powering the UK's Future':** The University Alliance has launched a report forecasting how professional and technical universities can help power the national economic, social and cultural recovery from COVID-19. The University of Hertfordshire is one of 12 mid to large sized universities which make up the University Alliance mission group. Read the full report and find out more about the Alliance [here](#).

Thank you,

Darryl