

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 6 August 2021

A message from Genna Telfer, Assistant Chief Constable and Chair of the strategic coordination group of the LRF



Dear colleague,

Welcome to my first LRF update, as I take the reins from Darryl Keen, who retired as Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Protection last week. It wouldn't be right not to publicly thank Darryl for his incredible service in coordinating Hertfordshire's response to COVID-19 as chair of our strategic coordinating group for the last 18 months. I take on this role safe in the knowledge that our public sector organisations, businesses, communities and huge network of volunteers are doing their utmost to play an active role in managing our pandemic response. In addition, I do not underestimate the influence you, as one of our valued stakeholders, has on ensuring that the public are kept safe and informed. Please encourage your communities to be cautious, kind and to look out for one another, as well as continuing to do the things they have been doing.

Vaccination roundup

The vaccination programme continues at a great pace. Across Hertfordshire and West Essex 1,032,281 people have had their first dose, and 854,533 their second. For all age groups aged 60 and above, at least 90% have had both doses. Among the most recently eligible 18 to 29-year-old group 65.2% have had one dose and 21.8% have had both. We are keen to make sure that everyone in these younger age groups come forward to get their jab at walk-in clinics across the patch and by using the national booking service: [here](#).

Last week saw the successful vaccination centre at Batchwood Hall near St Albans close at the end of its contracted run, having given over 70,000 doses since it opened in December. The staff and volunteers who made this happen are just one example of the fantastic effort we are seeing across Herts and West Essex to make the vaccine as available as possible.

We have focused much attention this week on urging pregnant women to get the COVID-19 vaccine. There's increasing evidence that pregnant women who catch COVID-19 can be at greater risk of getting severely ill with the virus, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy or those with underlying health conditions. If they get ill they are more likely to develop complications, which may result in admission to intensive care and premature birth of their baby. Local maternity services are reinforcing messages from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Midwives with messages shared on social media and letters being sent to pregnant patients and health and care employees. We would appreciate your support with sharing these messages and pointing to advice and resources on this topic on the Healthier Future website, <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk>.

We're also continuing efforts to reach those in other eligible groups who have not yet had their first dose. This becomes harder the further we go. But the vaccination programme has already had a great impact. The latest national estimate is that the vaccination programme to date has prevented 22 million cases and 60,000 deaths in England, including about 1,000 deaths from COVID of people aged 25-44.

Our focus will now be turning to the 16 and 17-year-olds who, as announced just this week, will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. We don't know exactly how this new group of patients will get their jab, except that they will *not* have access to the national booking system and will need to make use of the many walk-in clinics across the patch. This is not yet available to this group of patients; please be assured that we will let people know as soon as possible when the implementation details are clear.

For the slightly older teenagers – those who are 17 and nine months, and therefore approaching their eighteenth birthday – they will receive a text when the time comes and they can then go ahead and book a vaccination slot via the national booking service.

The next phase after that will be the 'boosters' for the older age groups, and the vaccination of vulnerable 12 to 15-year-olds. Vaccinating large sections of the population against flu will form part of that programme too. Again, look out for more information in the coming weeks on how this next stage in the programme will be implemented.

Changes to self-isolation requirements

We hope that the change to self-isolation rules that come into effect on Monday 16 August will provide a further incentive for people to get vaccinated.

From that date adults who are fully vaccinated, and those aged under 18, will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. People will still be advised to take a PCR test and will need to self-isolate if they test positive to reduce the risk of onward transmission.

The relaxation will not apply to users of the NHS COVID-19 app as if you've been 'pinged' via that app, self-isolation will continue to be advisory rather than a legal requirement. However, fewer contacts of people with coronavirus will be told to isolate by the NHS COVID-19 app following a recent update; the app will now only look back at contacts two days before someone who tests positive, as opposed to the five days of contacts the app was tracking before.

Local NHS under pressure

Urgent and emergency services in this area are facing considerable challenges. A mixture of high demand, staff absences, together with the additional constraints presented by COVID-19 infection control are combining to create significant pressure on all services. This includes ambulances,

nteers are offering companionship and practical support to help people get back to doing the things they enjoy, as those who have rarely left their homes for over 18 months may have lost their mobility, their social networks and, most importantly, their self-confidence. Some 517 people have been helped by project began over the last two years and will continue to be helped as the impact of lockdown remains.

Members of the voluntary sector are invited to a webinar on Friday 3 September at 11am when Prof Jim McManus, Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council, will discuss the latest around COVID, including continuing guidance to help keep safe and well. To book your place, email contact@carersinherts.org.uk with the subject 'COVID briefing'.

The pandemic has been particularly tough for family carers and so VPAC has funded access to the Carers UK digital platform for anyone living or caring in Hertfordshire. The platform includes the Jointly app, which is especially useful for coordination and communication when several friends or members of a family share someone's care. There are also resources for health and wellbeing, planning for the future, using technology and working while caring. Carers can create an account at carersdigital.org using the code DGTL1542.

Communities 1st: The pandemic has highlighted mental health struggles related to digital exclusion. A two-year project, powered by the late Captain Tom's fundraising effort, has been launched to help get people online. An army of volunteer Digital Champions are helping those who are digitally excluded to build the confidence to stay connected through technology. A programme of digital skills training is also available. If you or someone you know needs help from one a Digital Champion volunteer, email: info@communityhelpherts.net or call: 020 8207 5115.

Thank you.