

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 17 December 2021

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



Dear colleague,

This week, the impact of COVID-19 has hit very close to home for me. My family members have tested positive for COVID-19, which means that the Christmas plans we were looking forward to so much have had to be abandoned to keep everyone around us safe. With the case rate rising so rapidly in our area, I know that many other Hertfordshire families will be disappointed once again this year, as we follow the isolation guidance to protect our wider communities.

Despite this, I am grateful for the extra protection that my family and I have against the serious illness that COVID can cause, thanks to the vaccinations we have had. I'm acutely aware that there are families around the world who have not had access to vaccines when they needed them – sometimes with devastating results. If you have been hesitating about whether to get your vaccine, please make your appointment today.

COVID vaccination update

Booster eligibility

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday evening (13 December) that the booster vaccination programme would be extended to all eligible adults aged over 18 this week, NHS staff in Hertfordshire and west Essex have been working around the clock to increase the number of people fully protected in our area.

The following eligibility information applies:

- There must be a three-month gap between your second vaccination and your booster jab, otherwise you will not be able to make a booking and staff cannot vaccinate you.
- People aged 18+ who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 must wait for four weeks to have passed after their positive test before having a vaccination.
- People aged between 12 and 18 must wait for 12 weeks after having a positive test before having another vaccination.

Check out your eligibility for a vaccination, see answers to frequently asked questions, or find out how to book your next vaccine here: <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/>

Vaccinations doubled in a week

This week, thousands more vaccination slots have been added and last week's average of 10,000 vaccinations per day has now almost **doubled**. More than half a million (531,819) people in our area have now had their booster vaccinations, and in a positive development, more people are coming forward to have their first or second vaccinations too. Vaccine supply is not the only issue for the staff rolling-out the

vaccination programme. With a target of protecting more people than ever before in a very short time, staffing clinics with suitably qualified professionals is also a major challenge.

Work is urgently underway to redeploy additional staff from across the health service into vaccination centres, without affecting other critical NHS services. Please be patient with staff and volunteers who are working hard to get as many people protected as possible.

GPs playing their part

Hertfordshire and west Essex's GP practices are delivering the majority of vaccinations in our area – currently averaging around 10,000 jabs a day. All General Practices have been asked to clinically prioritise their services to support the vaccination programme, whilst continuing to deliver urgent care and critical services, such as cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Practices are getting in touch with their own patients to invite them in to be vaccinated. There's no need for people to contact their practice, they will contact patients proactively. Calling may prevent someone with more urgent health needs getting through on the phone.

In order to support this work, GP practices are pausing some routine and non-urgent care and redeploying staff to support the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations. Patients should continue to attend their booked appointments – practice will contact individuals if they need to make a change. Practice staff are working hard to protect their communities and meet the urgent national requirement to deliver the vaccination campaign. Your support and understanding would be hugely appreciated.

More community pharmacies joining the vaccination programme

Thirty community pharmacies are already offering vaccinations in Hertfordshire and west Essex and this number is due to more than double over the weeks to come, once quality assurance processes have been completed. At this stage, these pharmacies will automatically appear on the [National Booking Service](#) website and will become visible to eligible people searching for venues in the area or calling 119.

It is important to note that most pharmacies offer vaccinations by appointment only. This system means that the numbers of patients can be carefully managed in these venues, which are often quite small, keeping queuing time to a minimum and helping with social distancing requirements.

Walk-in vaccination clinics

A number of walk-in vaccination clinics are scheduled to take place in our area over the Christmas and New Year period. Walk-in sessions are primarily aimed at local residents – particularly those who are not registered with a GP and are therefore not able to book an appointment online. Staff at the clinics monitor queues and once the capacity of a vaccination session has been reached, queues will be closed to ensure that everybody already queuing can be vaccinated.

Anyone planning to attend a walk-in clinic should wrap up warmly and come prepared for a wait. Those who find waiting difficult or uncomfortable should book an appointment instead. Remember, you will be welcome in a vaccination centre regardless of whether you need your first, second or booster jab. A full list of walk-in clinics can be viewed here: <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/events/vaccination-walk-in-clinic-times>

New fast-track system for pregnant and breastfeeding women

The JCVI has now placed pregnant women in a priority group for vaccines, following the latest evidence which shows that pregnant women with COVID-19 are experiencing more severe disease as the pandemic progresses, with more of those going to hospital being admitted to intensive care. There are further calls [urging people to come forward as soon as possible to get their vaccines.](#)

Babies born to women with COVID-19 are significantly more likely to be premature and to require additional help with breathing after they are born. In order to make it easier for pregnant and breastfeeding women to take up their vaccinations, a new fast-track system has been implemented at all vaccination centres. By identifying themselves to staff when they arrive, pregnant or breastfeeding women and any partner or relative accompanying them can go to the front of the queue.

Testing update

Daily testing for contacts of people with COVID-19 was introduced from Tuesday 14 December for certain groups – primarily all under 18s and fully vaccinated adults. If identified as a close contact of a positive case, these groups do not need to self-isolate and are no longer advised to get a precautionary PCR test. These individuals are instead strongly advised to take a lateral flow (rapid) test every day for 7 days. You can read more details [here](#), under “If a close contact tests positive”. This only applies to close contacts, and does not change the existing [self-isolation guidance](#) for individuals who test positive.

Ongoing national logistical issues may prevent some residents from accessing lateral flow (rapid) home test kits through the usual available channels of [ordering online](#), or collecting from a [community pharmacy](#) or [participating library](#). We have been reassured that there is **no shortage** of home test kits. The situation has already improved substantially compared to the beginning of this week, and we expect that it will continue to improve over coming days.

Thank you.