

## Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 23 December 2021

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

Dear colleague,

Firstly a welcome from me, I am Alex the Executive Director of Community Protection and the Chief Fire Officer at Hertfordshire County Council. I am now taking on the role of Chair of the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum from Genna Telford. I want to thank Genna for all her work this year since taking over from my predecessor in Community Protection.



My colleagues in the NHS are keen to make sure that our residents know that health help is available throughout the Christmas and new year period. Anyone who needs medical assistance should seek early help and advice - putting off concerns can lead to an avoidable serious illness.

However our hospitals are very busy and so please do consider contacting NHS 111 as you may be able to obtain advice that will prevent you needing to leave the safety of your home. A bit more about this in a below section. Your help to get the information below to your communities would be incredibly valuable.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

### COVID update

Recently covid positive isolation periods changed and people can leave isolation after 7 days if they have a negative Lateral Flow Test on day 6 and 7 more on this <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

A useful guide is in this graphic worth sharing with anyone unclear on the new guidance:

 UK Health Security Agency

#### New 7 day self-isolation rules

The self-isolation period for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 has been reduced in most cases

1.

If you test positive for COVID-19 you must self-isolate for **up to 10 days**

2.

Take an LFD on **day 6** of your isolation and another **24 hours later on day 7**

3.

If both tests are negative and you have no symptoms, **you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result**

## COVID vaccination update

The vaccination programme is going really well with 1,011,614 double vaccinated as of 22 December and the booster programme accelerating at pace.

### Important vaccination reminders

With a large amount of vaccinations being delivered at the moment it is easy for some important messages to be lost about the delivery. The local vaccination programme wanted some issues to be raised that are frequent issues they are seeing at vaccination sites.

Firstly, remember that if you test positive, you can't have the vaccine. You must wait 28 days from a positive test to get a vaccination.

If you can't attend your vax appointment because you have tested positive or for any other reason, please make sure you cancel it in advance. That helps us manage the numbers and make best use of resources. Appointments can be changed via the [National Booking Service](#)

All the information needed is on the Hertfordshire and west Essex website:

<https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/>

### Vaccinations for the immunosuppressed

People who are immunosuppressed are a priority to receive the covid-19 vaccination programme. You might be immunosuppressed either because of a long-standing condition or through treatment you are having. You are being offered an extra dose of the vaccine because of an increased risk of becoming seriously ill. Patients are receiving letters to explain what they should do so that they get the vaccination protection they need.

We want to clarify the position for patients who are immunosuppressed.

Sometimes doses are called 'primary doses' or 'boosters'. The important thing is that if you are immunosuppressed, you will get four doses in total. The intervals are set, but you may need your clinician to advise you if you need to change these timings a bit to fit in with your treatment plan.

Eight weeks (at least) after your second dose, you should have your third dose. At least three months (91 days) after your third dose, you can have your fourth dose.

You can book via the national booking service or go along to one of our walk-in vaccination centres.

When you go for your vaccinations, you will need to take a letter from the hospital that confirms you are a patient who is immunosuppressed and eligible for priority covid vaccinations. You should also be able to have priority access at the vaccination site if the queues are lengthy; please talk to staff or volunteers working at the site to identify yourself and they will help you gain priority access for your jab.

### Second dose vaccinations for 12-15 year olds

The national booking site is now allowing the booking of second doses for children aged 12 -15. This age group will be able to walk to in vaccination centres with no appointment needed where the website confirms this age group are allowed.

### **Vaccination sessions continue to meet end of year target**

Community pharmacies vaccinating on Christmas Day and Boxing day locally with bookable appointments via the [National Booking Service](#) website and will become visible to eligible people searching for venues in the area or calling 119. As at Wednesday 22 December, there were still some vaccination slots available for the Christmas weekend.

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.

A number of walk-in vaccination clinics are scheduled to take place in our area over the Christmas and New Year period as well as a large amount of bookable appointments. 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>

### **Health services prepared to meet winter demands**

NHS services in Hertfordshire need everyone's help to ensure that people get the vital health help they need over Christmas and New Year. The NHS belongs to everybody and in this time of extreme pressure, we can all help by using the right service and looking out for ourselves and others. This is even more important as the local health system faces the triple challenge of traditional 'winter pressures', patients with COVID-19 and speeding up the delivery of the vaccination programme.

To help to protect as many people as possible from serious illness caused by COVID, which also puts huge pressure on health and care services, the NHS nationally has made it clear that we must prioritise the booster vaccination programme. This means that there will be fewer staff to carry out some routine and non-urgent appointments, which have been temporarily suspended, so that we can offer every eligible adult in our area a booster vaccination by the end of December 2021. Urgent or emergency care and other critical services, such as cancer diagnosis and treatment, will continue to be prioritised.

If you have an urgent illness or injury that isn't life or limb threatening and need medical help, go online to [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) or call 111. The trained advisors will assess you and find a local service that is right for your symptoms. That could be a pharmacy, GP or practice nurse, minor injuries unit or urgent care centre. NHS 111 can even make you a timed appointment at A&E if you are assessed as needing treatment there.

Please continue to attend your booked appointments – your practice will ring you if they need to make a change. There is no need to ring them. Everyone is 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.

No one with diarrhoea, vomiting or symptoms of COVID-19 should visit a health setting. Seek health help advice online or over the phone – please don't risk closing down a health centre or making others very ill by arriving at a health setting unannounced

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

Patients who need urgent mental health support can call 111 and choose option 2 to speak to specially trained staff. The Mental Health Helpline provided by Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust (HPFT) is also available 24/7 via freephone 0800 6444 101. If you would rather get advice from a mental health professional online, a webchat service, [www.hpft.nhs.uk](http://www.hpft.nhs.uk), is available from 7am to 7pm Mondays to Fridays.

### **Pharmacies open on Christmas Day**

A number of pharmacies across Hertfordshire will be open for a few hours on each public holiday. Pharmacists are experts in medicines can give advice on minor illnesses and over-the-counter medicines to relieve your symptoms. They are a great way to get help without making an appointment, many have private consultation rooms to discuss symptoms in. You can find the nearest pharmacy open over the holiday period on your local CCG or [NHS regional website](#).

### **GP services**

Following the COVID-19 booster announcement from the Prime Minister on Sunday 12 December 2021, all GP practices and pharmacies are working to provide vaccinations for all eligible adults aged over 18 in line with national timeframes.

To free-up staff to deliver this vaccination programme your local GP surgery have to prioritise GP services and pause some routine healthcare appointments. They will continue to deliver patient care and will focus our support on those most in need as outlined below.

If you have an appointment booked with your local practice please assume that this is going ahead and attend as planned. They will contact you if we need to change your appointment: you do not need to contact them.

While practices will need to pause some routine services, there are some things that we know cannot wait. Please continue to contact them if you (or someone you care for)

- have a serious or urgent health concern that you need to speak to someone about today;
- have worrying symptoms that could be a sign of cancer and need investigating;
- have been contacted about booking cervical and other screening or immunisations;
- have a complex long-term condition that you need ongoing help with;
- have a serious mental illness and need support;
- have a learning disability and need medical help.

If phone lines are busy, please use their online form to seek help.

When contacting please tell the trained member of staff as much as you can about what's wrong so that they can help direct you to the healthcare professional best suited for your health care needs which might be a GP, nurse or another specialist such as a physiotherapist, pharmacist or paramedic. The information you provide will also help them to prioritise your care if it's something urgent.

The priority will be to ensure you receive care quickly and the practice might offer you a telephone, video or face-to-face appointment, arrange a home visit or refer you to another service.

Thank you.