

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 31 December 2021

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

Dear colleague,

I hope that you have had an enjoyable Christmas break. This is also a time of year for putting others first and I am sure that you will join me in sending thanks to our dedicated health, care, emergency services, council and voluntary services colleagues and all those who have been working over the public holidays, ensuring vital services are there for people who need them, as well as staff and volunteers in vaccination centres.



Of course, the festive season continues and with New Year's Eve nearly upon us public health and health services are encouraging people to celebrate responsibly and safely as we continue to see high COVID-19 infection rates across Hertfordshire.

Being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and taking a lateral flow (rapid) test before mixing with other people – particularly elderly or vulnerable relatives – remains the best way to protect yourself and others.

We are aware that high demand has led to pressures on accessing lateral flow (rapid) tests and national government are looking to relieve these. Please keep taking other measures like wearing a face covering when required, ventilating rooms and using the NHS COVID-19 app.

The end of the year is a time for reflection and we can certainly look back on a momentous and challenging year. We have seen the roll-out of the Covid vaccine programme, the biggest and most successful in health service history, as well as continuing to support the pandemic response and recovery. Locally the NHS Covid vaccination programme has delivered nearly 2.9 million doses, including 729,000 boosters, helping to keep thousands of patients out of hospital and saving thousands of lives. The pandemic response and vaccination roll-out has been a collective effort with local councils, emergency services, voluntary and community organisations and community leaders all playing a part.

I wish you a Happy New Year and look forward to continuing to work with you to keep our communities safe and healthy in 2022.

COVID vaccination update

Local programme reaches record highs

December saw the local vaccination programme across Hertfordshire and west Essex hit new highs for weekly and daily vaccinations as part of the national mission to protect communities against the new

Omicron variant. The week of 13 December saw a record 142,185 vaccinations given with a daily record of 26,886 on 16 December. Over 75% of those eligible across Hertfordshire and west Essex have now had their booster vaccination, the biggest total in the East of England. Throughout December hundreds of people came forward for the vaccine for the first time, as alongside the booster programme the health service continues to deliver the evergreen offer of two initial doses, vaccines for under 18s and third doses for people who are immunosuppressed.

Importance of changing your appointment if you can't attend

Although thousands of people have been vaccinated in recent weeks, the two weeks before Christmas saw high numbers of missed appointments, possibly down to the fact that people who test positive must wait 28 days from a positive test to get a vaccination. If you can't attend your vaccination 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 through the [National Booking Service](#)

All the information needed is on the Hertfordshire and west Essex website:
<https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/>

Vaccination roll-out continues

Vaccination centres are gearing up for a big January push to get everyone fully vaccinated as quickly as possible as Omicron infection rates across the county continue to be high. Around 90% of those currently in hospital with serious complications from COVID are unvaccinated.

We want people across Hertfordshire to start 2022 with the best New Year's resolution they can make - to ensure they are fully vaccinated.

Vaccination centres, GP-run sites and community pharmacies will be open for booked appointment slots and walk ins from the start of the new year with lots of capacity currently available. All vaccination sites offer first and second doses as well as boosters – it's not too late to catch up. Getting a vaccination is the single biggest step you can take to protect yourself and others from COVID as well as reducing the pressure on our hospitals through avoidable admissions.

While protection offered by the vaccine wanes over time, a booster jab can restore protection to around 75%, so the NHS is working hard to make sure that everyone takes up their booster when due.

A reminder of those who are eligible and should now come forward:

- 12 to 15 year-olds can now get their second vaccination three months after their first dose via booked appointment, some walk ins or at school from January onwards
- Anyone aged 18+ who had their second dose more than 12 weeks ago can get a booster by booking an appointment or going to an advertised walk-in clinic
- Immunocompromised patients are now eligible for a fourth vaccine dose at three months after their third dose and will be contacted by their GP practice or can book an appointment or walk in if they are already at 12 weeks.

- Health and care workers and pregnant women can walk in without an appointment at any vaccination site for a first, second or booster dose. Please make yourself known to staff on site and you will be 'fast tracked'.

First, second and booster vaccination appointments can be booked through the national booking service by visiting nhs.uk/covid-vaccination or telephoning 119. Details of walk-in appointments as well as other helpful information is on the Hertfordshire and west Essex website:

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

Call for volunteers

Communities 1st is looking for volunteers to help support the booster campaign at vaccination sites across Hertfordshire. Training and ongoing support will be provided. These are non-clinical roles. To sign up visit: www.communities1st.org.uk/covidsteward or call 020 3940 4865, Monday-Friday, 9:30am-5pm (excluding bank holidays)

Testing update

Daily lateral flow testing for contacts of people with COVID-19 was introduced from mid-December for certain groups – primarily all under 18s and fully vaccinated adults – replacing the requirement to self-isolate. Additionally, people who have tested positive can leave isolation after 7 days if they have two negative tests on days 6 and 7 (as outlined in this [stay at home guidance](#)). This, together with advice for people to take a rapid test before mixing with others, has increased demand and pressures on accessing lateral flow tests.

Public health teams are working to resolve ongoing logistical supply issues and ask for your understanding during these times. Please do not stockpile lateral flow tests and use what you have at home before ordering more. It's important that people who must test because they have been a close contact of someone with COVID-19 are able to access these kits.

In addition to being available for collection from community pharmacies and participating libraries lateral flow kits are available to [order online](#). The website is updated regularly throughout the day so if you get a message to say that no tests are available to order, please continue to keep checking.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, or if you test positive on a rapid test, please [book a free PCR test](#). PCR test sites are currently very busy. Only access a PCR if you have COVID-19 symptoms or are advised to do so. If you're unable to access a PCR and are symptomatic, please stay at home until you can access a test and have a negative PCR result. To keep everyone safe, please do not turn up to a walk-in or drive-through test site unless you have an appointment.

Please find up-to-date information on accessing COVID-19 tests [here](#).

Many thanks

