

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update – 23 July 2021

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



Dear colleague,

We're almost a week into the lifting of national coronavirus restrictions, a move that has been welcomed with great relief by some residents and businesses and concern from others. There's more information about those concerns and how vulnerable people are being supported in today's update from the volunteering and people assistance cell.

As we all adjust to the new situation we find ourselves in, your support in spreading a culture of kindness and respect would be appreciated by all those who are working hard in difficult circumstances. Reports of threats to vaccination centre staff, GP practices and rapid testing crews are extremely disturbing and will be taken very seriously by those organisations involved. Please be kind and encourage others to do so too.

Vaccination update

Highways signs join the vaccination campaign effort

This week, in a first for our county, highways signs have joined the vaccination promotion effort. Dozens of digital display boards, which usually alert motorists to traffic or parking information, are also now showing the location, opening times and type of vaccine offered at the nearest drop-in clinic. Many thanks to the Hertfordshire Highways team who have worked with NHS staff to make this possible.

Teams of staff and volunteers from around the county are continuing to find new ways to get the vaccination message out to everyone in their communities. Please #playourpart and help to share reassuring positive messages about vaccine safety with those who are concerned. There are lots of resources on our area's [COVID-19 vaccination website](#), including information in different languages and aimed at different communities.

If you have time to do just one thing this week, please consider [sharing this link](#) to a really helpful short video from the BBC about the vaccination and pregnancy. Concerns about pregnancy and fertility are regularly cited by people who haven't yet had their vaccination – it's crucial that the known risks of COVID to pregnant women aren't overshadowed by misinformation about vaccinations.

Supporting our communities

Hertfordshire Volunteering and People Assistance Cell (VPAC)

When restrictions eased on Monday 19 July, a letter was sent to around 70,000 Hertfordshire

residents identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) by the NHS or through the COVID-19 population risk assessment. The letter thanked people for their understanding and patience over the past 16 months and for playing their part in helping to support Hertfordshire's response to the pandemic. Anyone who is feeling anxious or fearful is encouraged to adapt to the restriction changes at their own pace. The letter and provides the latest Government guidance on CEV support available, as well as signposting the local support available via HertsHelp.

Around 3,000 people responded to a survey sent to 11,000 CEV residents in Hertfordshire registered on the National Shielding Service System (NSSS) last month. Of these:

- 1 in 5 respondents stated they will continue to shield unofficially 3 months on from shielding pausing (note that 96% answered that they have now received both vaccinations), whilst the majority (71%) will take extra precautions.
- Approximately 60% had concerns about no longer having to shield.
- Approximately 1 in 5 said their mental wellbeing had got worse and 1 in 16 said it had got significantly worse.
- Nearly 1 in 2 said their physical health got worse or significantly worse through shielding.
- The top negative impacts experienced by shielding are physical health (44%), mental health (42%) and loneliness (30%).
- HertsHelp was recognised by the majority (60%) as a contact point, with 39% knowing what they could provide and 21% recognising the name

These results will help inform the programme team on how to best use funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, as well as other COVID recovery initiatives which are either underway or being planned.

Volunteering opportunities for teenagers

Communities 1st is recruiting 16 and 17-year-olds to help the clinical staff in vaccination centres, in front of house and stewarding roles. Volunteering can give young people purpose and routine as well as helping them to feel that they are making a difference.

If you know a young person who would like to sign up, they can register by visiting:

www.communities1st.org.uk/sign-up, emailing: volunteer@communities1st.org.uk or calling 020 3940 4865. Communities 1st volunteers are supporting 22 vaccination centres across Hertfordshire and have already completed over 130,000 hours of volunteering.

Rapid testing update

To date, roving vans have carried out 4,893 supervised tests and handed out 34,284 home testing kits to small high-risk businesses and the public. As COVID cases rise nationally, an increasing number of positive cases in people with no symptoms have been flagged in this way.

Sadly, there have been an increasing number of completely unacceptable incidences of abuse, harassment and threatening behaviour aimed at the roving rapid testing teams. As a result, security guards are being commissioned to accompany the roving teams to all sites. Negotiations are ongoing and the security will start as soon as possible.

As part of their work to reach people who are disproportionately impacted by COVID, and those who might find it hard to access supplies of rapid tests, the roving van staff have recently attended a migrant and refugee football match, a centre for people living with addictions and a mosque in Watford. Upcoming events the rapid testing team are due to visit include Herts Pride in Hemel Hempstead and a family fun day for lower income families in Hertsmere.

Thank you.