

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update – 4 June 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,

This week's update has a health focus. Thank you for continuing to stay up-to-date with news from around our area. With new developments every week, your help to keep your networks informed about our county's efforts are as important now as they ever have been.

Vaccination update

More than half a million people in Hertfordshire and west Essex have now received their second dose of the vaccine. Vaccination staff and volunteers are pulling out all the stops to protect the population, with tens of thousands of second doses given over the Bank Holiday weekend alone.

Great progress is being made through the age cohorts for first vaccines and more people are expected to be invited in for a vaccination in the near future. This comes at a time when Pfizer and Moderna supplies are limited, so newly eligible people may need to regularly check the National Booking Service for available appointments.

Walk-ins continue to be offered for AstraZeneca vaccinations and the latest opening times can be viewed [here](#). These can be extremely popular, so people need to be prepared to wait and understand that supplies cannot be guaranteed. There are plenty of bookable appointments for AstraZeneca vaccinations available via the national booking service website or by calling 119, for those who prefer a guaranteed appointment time.

Support for people with needle anxiety/phobia

A fear of needles or injections is one of the reasons that some people worry about getting the COVID-19 vaccination. This can range from people feeling slightly nervous right through to a debilitating phobia. Anyone who comes for their COVID-19 vaccination appointment who is worried about needles should let the vaccination team know on arrival. The team can give them extra support, using techniques to make the process as comfortable and stress-free as possible.

The local NHS vaccine communications team is planning a campaign to help people who are worried about needles. There's a [short video](#) from a young Hertfordshire resident who was supported to have her vaccine at Hertford Theatre, and there are free resources about the COVID-19 vaccine available on the [Anxiety UK website](#).

Health updates

Please, think NHS 111 First

People in Hertfordshire that need medical care that is not life or limb threatening and do not require an ambulance are being asked to contact NHS 111 before going to A&E so they can be directed to the best place for treatment. This will help to keep patients safe and hopefully ease waiting times and the pressures currently being experienced in hospitals and emergency departments.

It is vitally important that everybody who needs urgent care is seen and treated safely in the right place, first time. Waiting for a long time in an emergency department to be seen for a minor injury or illness is not in anyone's interests. By picking up the phone and dialling 111 or going online to 111.nhs.uk before making the decision to travel, patients can be assured that the right clinician is expecting to see them.

An appointment system has been set up to help ensure that everyone who needs urgent care can be seen safely and comfortably. This is helping residents to get the help they need without spending time in a waiting room where the likelihood of contracting COVID-19 or other viruses is increased.

Anyone going online to 111.nhs.uk or calling the free NHS 111 number will be given a thorough assessment and then helped to find treatment, which could be at their local pharmacy, their GP surgery or an appointment slot at an A&E department or Urgent Treatment Centre.

General Practice – there for you when you need them

GP practices are currently facing unprecedented demands for their services and are continuing to adjust how clinicians' time can be best used to support patients – particularly those who need to see a healthcare professional the most.

Practices have been open throughout the pandemic, offering patients telephone and online appointments, with face to face consultations available for those who need them. This was in line with national requirements to keep patients safe, whilst COVID infection rates were high and before the vaccination programme was widespread. Practices have continued to manage their patients' care alongside delivering the COVID vaccination programme.

During the pandemic, the use of online GP systems such as 'eConsult' increased, as they offer a convenient way to contact a practice without waiting on the phone. These systems are a great way for people who are online to approach a GP surgery to get advice or arrange to speak to a clinician. However, it is worth remembering that each consultation takes time to review and there are lots of other ways to get advice. GP practice websites have links to key NHS information and advice which might connect people directly with the information they need. Local community pharmacists are experts in medicines and can offer advice and suggest over-the-counter remedies for a range of ailments. They also know when to refer people on to a GP or another more urgent service if their symptoms give cause for concern.

Please continue to use general practice when you need to. Our practices are open and there for you.

Advice on hospital visits

With our hospitals open to visitors (please check individual hospital websites for their detailed instructions), it's important to remember that everyone who attends a hospital site must play their part to protect patients, staff and services.

Everyone must wear a mask or face covering on a hospital site, unless they have a valid reason to be exempt. It is very important that people do not visit a friend or family member if they are feeling unwell – particularly if they have symptoms which could mean that they have COVID.

The government also advises that those visitors who don't show any symptoms of coronavirus take a rapid lateral flow test twice a week for the period that they are visiting their loved one and confirm that they have received a negative result. You can order your free lateral flow testing kit by visiting the [UK Government website](#).

If you have a positive result from the lateral flow test or you start showing symptoms of coronavirus, you must not visit your loved one in hospital and should book a PCR test by visiting the [UK Government website](#).

Thank you