

## **Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 1 October 2021**

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



Dear colleague,

It has been a challenging week for some Hertfordshire residents, as well as the public and voluntary sector employees and volunteers who provide us with essential services. I am pleased to report that most members of the public have been patient and sensible when faced with congestion hot-spots and difficulties in accessing fuel in some areas.

Each organisation which provides critical services to the public has plans which swing into action in the event of disruption – whether that's caused by the weather, unexpected one-off events or long-running issues. These plans ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities are cared for even when 'business' is not 'as usual'. Thank you to everyone who has gone above and beyond their usual day job – your continued efforts are greatly appreciated.

## **Vaccination update**

### **COVID 'booster' jabs**

Nationally, more than 850,000 people have now booked booster vaccinations. These vaccinations are important to keep people's resistance to COVID-19 'topped up', as it naturally declines over time, making them more vulnerable to serious illness. The vaccinations are being offered to those who are eligible – **you will be contacted** by either your GP practice or the national NHS booking system when it is your turn to come forward. In Hertfordshire and west Essex, booster vaccinations are being offered in community pharmacies, by GP practices and at the five large vaccination centres in our area, as well as in care homes for older people and residential homes for vulnerable adults.

In line with [guidance issued on 15 September](#) the following groups of people are eligible for booster vaccinations **once six months have elapsed after their second vaccination**. Please note that pregnant women in an eligible group **can** receive a booster dose:

- people aged 50 and over
- people who live and work in care homes
- frontline health and social care workers
- people aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19
- unpaid carers aged 16 and over
- people aged 16 and over who live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis).

In addition to the nationally agreed list above, the Hertfordshire and west Essex Integrated Care System has agreed that, once six months have elapsed after their second COVID vaccination, these vulnerable people should be prioritised for a booster vaccination too:

- **all individuals** over 16 years of age with a learning disability or severe mental illness, regardless of whether they live in their own home, with family, or in a care home or supported living. People who have mental health issues relating to eating disorders or personality disorder traits are included in this group
- the carers (paid or unpaid) of people in these groups.

### **Online vaccination booking service now open to 16 and 17 year-olds**

Updates to the national booking service websites now mean that 16 and 17 year-olds who are eligible to receive just one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination can now book online to get their vaccination at a large vaccination or local pharmacy, as well as 'walking in' to a vaccination centre. This group of residents can also be invited into GP-run clinics to get their vaccination.

### **New pregnancy videos now online**

Since April this year, pregnant women have been offered the COVID-19 vaccine alongside the rest of the population, following [updated guidance](#) from the JCVI.

COVID-19 vaccines are strongly [recommended in pregnancy](#) as the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both mothers and babies. Plus, vaccinated mothers who breastfeed can pass on protective antibodies to their babies.

Alongside having the opportunity to discuss the vaccine with their medical professional, it's important for people who are planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding to have access to reliable sources of information.

The NHS vaccination communications team from Hertfordshire and west Essex and the Local Maternity and Neonatal System have worked together to create targeted resources about the vaccine, with input from clinical experts and service user groups from each of the hospital trusts. These include a [new video](#) featuring local mums and their babies and a [leaflet](#) which can be found alongside other resources on a new website page for people who want to find out more about the vaccine <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/pregnancy-breastfeeding-and-fertility>

The leaflet will be printed and distributed locally, and the video will be widely shared on social media and through local networks from today. Please signpost people who may be interested to these new resources.

### **Drop-in vaccination clinics continue**

Across the county, drop-in clinics continue to make vaccinations more accessible for people who are missing out on the protection that they bring. This week, University of Hertfordshire students have been targeted with on-campus clinics. Next week Waltham Cross, Waltham Abbey, St Albans and Borehamwood will all be visited. Full details are available [here](#).

### **Vaccination volunteers needed**

As volunteers have begun to go back to their day jobs, Communities 1st is looking to recruit new volunteers to assist with the vaccination booster programme. These volunteers will be assisting medical staff in

vaccination centres across Hertfordshire, west Essex, Bedford, Luton, and Central Bedfordshire. There are indoor and outdoor roles available. If you, or someone you know would like to sign up, they can visit: <https://www.communities1st.org.uk/sign-up> or call: 020 3940 4865.

## **Award for Hertfordshire team which revolutionised COVID care**

Clinicians at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust (WHHT) who set up the UK's first virtual COVID hospital to care for local patients have been named Respiratory Team of The Year by the British Medical Journal. The award recognises the team's immediate and innovative response to the pandemic.

In the early days of the pandemic, anticipating a massive increase in hospital admissions, the trust's respiratory consultants started work on plans to care for COVID patients in their own homes. Colleagues from other specialties came on board quickly, as did staff from NHS organisations who provide community care, and within a few weeks the 'virtual COVID hospital' went live.

Patients in the virtual hospital were closely monitored and had easy access to the team looking after them. Monitoring evolved from a combination of calls from consultants and readings from oximeters (to check blood oxygen levels) to a more sophisticated app that closely tracked changes in patients' symptoms, raising alerts when needed.

This close monitoring provides reassurance for patients. Where monitoring raises a cause for concern patients can quickly be seen in person, given additional tests, or transferred to hospital if needed. Patient feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The respiratory team's early response enabled WHHT to care for over 4,000 patients at home, preventing about 2,400 admissions and achieving 1,600 early discharges.

Work is now underway to develop the 'virtual hospital' model to help more patients, including those with a broader range of respiratory conditions and heart failure. These new services will start in November.

Thank you.