

## **Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 15 October 2021**

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



Dear colleague,

With half term for most of Hertfordshire's pupils coming up in a week's time, and COVID-19 circulating amongst secondary school children, there has been an ongoing focus on vaccinating the county's 12-15 year-olds.

The NHS 'East of England' region, which Hertfordshire falls within, has vaccinated 18% of healthy 12-15 year-olds so far, making us the best performing NHS region for this age group of residents. There is clearly still a long way to go to protect all of our eligible young people – but our thanks go to the children, parents, teachers, volunteers and extremely busy vaccinators who are pushing forward with the school-based vaccination programme.

### **Vaccination update**

#### **COVID-19 booster vaccinations**

The latest available figures show that **46%** of those eligible in Hertfordshire and west Essex have already had their 'booster' vaccination, 'topping up' their immunity once six months has elapsed after their second dose. Remember, the NHS will contact you when you are eligible to get your booster – it's not possible to book a vaccination before the six months are up. Find out more about the booster programme [here](#).

#### **Immunosuppressed directly encouraged to get third 'primary dose'**

With immunosuppressed people, such as those who have had transplants or who are going through cancer treatment, at particularly high risk from COVID-19, further efforts are being made to ensure that this group get a third 'primary' dose of the vaccine without delay. This week more than 8,000 letters have been sent by a national NHS team to those eligible in our area, urging them to come forward and get the protection they need. In addition, people's own GP practices and hospital specialists have also been asked to encourage their patients to come forward. If you're not sure whether you or somebody you know is eligible, they can check the information on [this link](#).

#### **Second dose information update - for people who had the AstraZeneca vaccine**

With very few clinics now offering the AstraZeneca vaccination, it has been difficult for some people to complete their vaccination course in recent weeks. The good news for anybody who is keen to take up their second vaccination is that official guidance has now been updated, allowing GPs and vaccination centres to give people a different second dose when the vaccine they received previously is not available.

#### **Urgent appeal for pregnant women to get vaccinated**

This week England's top midwife called for pregnant women to come forward and have their COVID-19 vaccination, which is now strongly recommend to protect the health of women and their new-born babies. 20% of the most critically ill COVID patients are pregnant women who have not been vaccinated, and babies

born to women with COVID are significantly more likely to be premature and need admission to neonatal units.

In our area, vaccinators are planning to attend neonatal clinics with pop up vaccine sessions shortly, and educational webinars for health professionals working with pregnant women will take place next week. Leaflets explaining the importance of vaccination in pregnancy, featuring local women and midwives, have been produced and distributed to antenatal clinics and Family Centres across the area.

If you are, or know someone who is planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding, you can find information about the COVID-19 vaccine with frequently asked questions here:

<https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/pregnancy-breastfeeding-and-fertility>.

### **Making every contact count**

Making Every Contact Count is an established national initiative in which public-facing workers and volunteers are encouraged to use their day-to-day contacts with patients, service users or the public as an opportunity to support, encourage or enable them to consider positive health behaviour changes.

To help broaden the positive impact of the vaccination programme, we are promoting the philosophy of Making Every Contact Count to vaccination clinics, especially as there is an opportunity during the post-vaccination 15-minute observation period to speak to individuals.

To help kickstart this work, the Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service is offering training for staff and volunteers next month. The main areas of focus are smoking, alcohol, weight management and physical activity, as well as other areas of physical and mental wellbeing.

## **Health update**

### **General Practice update**

It has recently been announced that the government plans to allocate additional funding to GP practices to enable them to take on temporary staff. This is a good opportunity to remind our stakeholders that general practice is under immense pressure and demand is higher than it has ever been.

Our area's GP practices are working hard to ensure that everyone gets to see the best health professional for their needs, whether that's a physiotherapist, clinical pharmacist, practice nurse, social prescriber, paramedic, midwife or GP. It is important that patients know that they can ask for face-to-face GP appointments, but there are a host of other options available too.

Please remind patients that if they have an urgent health need that can't wait, they should contact NHS 111 who will advise the best place or treatment to suit their needs. The website [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) has a wealth of health information for people with access to the internet, and community pharmacies are also a useful port of call.

### **Rapid testing communications campaign**

A communications campaign funded by Hertfordshire's Health Protection Board and focused on 18-to 24-year-olds is now complete. The campaign, which used targeted social media promotion, aimed to encourage young adults to take rapid or 'lateral flow' tests at home. Following the campaign, there was a 12.8%

increase in the number of young people in Hertfordshire who said that they were taking rapid tests regularly at home. This equates to 10,700 people who say that they are regularly testing who were not doing so pre-campaign.

## Volunteering opportunities

Communities 1st is recruiting new volunteers to assist with the vaccination booster programme. Volunteers are needed to assist clinical staff in vaccination centres across Hertfordshire, west Essex, Bedford, Luton, and Central Bedfordshire. There are indoor and outdoor roles available.

Volunteer drivers are also needed to help with a number of events for locally-based Afghan asylum seekers. This role will include taking people and equipment to local activities and days out, with volunteers needed who are willing to drive Communities 1st people-carriers or minibuses, or their own vehicles.

If you, or someone you know would like to sign up please visit: <https://www.communities1st.org.uk/sign-up> or call: 020 3940 4865.

Thank you.