

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum Stakeholder Update 10 September 2021

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



Dear colleague,

It was heartening to see the support for emergency services voiced on social media for this week's 999 Day, with messages of appreciation for the work all blue light colleagues do. I know that ambulance, police and fire colleagues value the public's gratitude, especially when all services are incredibly busy with pre-pandemic workloads.

Vaccination roundup

Two million milestone reached

This week the COVID-19 vaccination programme has hit another momentous milestone. The total number of vaccinations administered in Hertfordshire and west Essex now exceeds 2 million – that's double the total at the start of July.

Huge thanks are due to everyone involved in vaccinating our population – particularly those staff, volunteers, and community and faith groups who have acted as ambassadors for the campaign, taking the time to listen to concerns, provide reliable information and put the support in place to enable people to take up their jabs.

There is more to do, and outreach work is ongoing in the areas and with the communities where we know that take-up is relatively low. At the same time, NHS and social care colleagues are making preparations for the booster vaccination campaign, which will begin as soon as the national guidance is confirmed.

COVID-19 vaccination plans for 12-15 year-olds in Hertfordshire

The 12 to 15-year-olds currently being offered the COVID-19 vaccine are those who live with someone with a suppressed immune system, and children who have a condition that means that they themselves are at high risk from COVID-19. These children are being offered two doses of a vaccine approved for their age group, which will be given eight weeks apart.

Following guidance from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), GPs have been using their records to identify:

1. children aged 12-15 with severe neuro-disabilities, Down's syndrome or underlying conditions resulting in their immune systems being suppressed
2. children with profound and multiple learning disabilities, severe learning disabilities or who are on the learning disability register
3. children aged 12 years and over who are household contacts of people with suppressed immune systems.

Where and when will these children be vaccinated?

A number of the children identified by their GPs are being vaccinated by their local 'Primary Care Network' of GP practices. Where these networks are not currently vaccinating their own patients, they have provided lists of eligible 12-15 year-old patients to HCT (Hertfordshire Community Trust), the NHS organisation which administers school-aged children's vaccinations in Hertfordshire. HCT have been commissioned to vaccinate these children.

HCT staff routinely vaccinate children with profound and multiple disabilities, or who are on the learning disability register, in their familiar school environment. HCT are in the process of gaining consent from the parents or guardians of these children to administer their COVID-19 vaccinations in their specialist schools. This vaccination programme starts on **Monday 13 September**.

For children identified as eligible but who attend mainstream school, or who are educated at home, four special clinics have been commissioned in Hertfordshire and west Essex that parents can take their children to. These one-off clinics are dedicated to vaccinating only 12-15-year-old children and are being held over 10 days in Epping, Ware, Watford and Bishop's Stortford, from **Sunday 12 September** onwards. Clinics will either take place at the weekends, or after schools have finished for the day.

Parents and carers of eligible children are being contacted with the details of these clinics, together with contact information for HCT, in case they have queries or concerns. Individual catch-up arrangements will be made for children who cannot attend these clinics.

What if a child is eligible to be vaccinated but their family has not yet been contacted?

Parents and carers of the 12-15 year olds who meet the criteria described in points 1, 2 or 3 above should have been contacted either by their own GP, via their child's special school, or through a text or phone call from HCT.

If they have not been contacted, they should speak to their own GP practice and request that either the local Primary Care Network provides their child with a vaccination, or refers their child to HCT.

What about additional children recently recommended to receive the COVID-19 vaccination?

On 3 September, the JCVI recommended that more 12-15 year-old children should be added to the list of those eligible to be vaccinated, including those with:

- haematological malignancy
- sickle cell disease
- type 1 diabetes
- congenital heart disease
- children with poorly controlled asthma
- health conditions listed in full in this [link](#).

GPs are beginning to identify these additional children, so that they can be vaccinated as well.

What about plans for vaccinating all 12-15 year-old children?

We are waiting for the government to decide on vaccination policy for the remainder of the 12-15 year-old population. Parents and stakeholders will be kept informed of local arrangements.

How can parents or carers get help if they are concerned?

If a parent or carer feels that their child is eligible to be vaccinated but hasn't been contacted, they should contact their own GP practice in the first instance. Failing this, they should contact the Clinical Commissioning Group which oversees the vaccination arrangements in their area. In the east and north Hertfordshire, they should email enhccg.quality@nhs.net or call 01707 685356. In south and west Hertfordshire, they should email hvccgpatientfeedback@nhs.net or call 01442 898865.

Children's respiratory health this winter

Our health services are now seeing an increase in severe respiratory illness in children and babies. Case numbers are higher than usual for this time of year and we expect viruses to continue circulating over the winter months alongside COVID-19.

Parents are encouraged to look out for symptoms of severe respiratory infection in their children, particularly in babies and the under twos, including a fever, a dry and persistent cough, difficulty feeding, rapid or noisy breathing (wheezing). Some of these symptoms are similar to COVID-19, so parents are asked to book a PCR test for their child. Having COVID-19, or suspected COVID-19, doesn't mean that a child cannot be treated by a GP, it just means that the GP practice will take extra precautions to protect other patients and staff from infection.

While respiratory infections are common in children, last winter saw many fewer infections in younger people due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, which limited people's opportunities to socialise. Many children and babies will not have been exposed to viruses to develop their immunity and may be at higher risk of severe illness. For the majority of children, winter illnesses will not be serious, and they will soon recover following rest and plenty of fluids. But parents should contact their GP or NHS 111 immediately if they are worried about their child. Find out more about the symptoms to look out for and what to do [here](#). There is also information for parents on the [Hertfordshire and West Essex Healthier Together website](#).

Suicide prevention

Today (10 September) is World Suicide Prevention Day, an awareness event observed globally every year to raise awareness of suicide and suicide prevention, hosted by the [International Association for Suicide Prevention](#).

Challenges at home or at work can have a huge impact on wellbeing and mental health, and the difficult times we have all faced over the last 18 months have emphasised the need for us to look out for one another.

Support services available within our communities:

- Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) has a Single Point of Access freephone number - available 24/7 hours a day, 7 days a week - for mental health support, for people who may be experiencing a mental health crisis, need mental health support, or would just like to talk: 0800 6444 101
- [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org) is a national charity, providing confidential support for people in distress, and is also available 24/7 hours a day, 365 days a year. The number is 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org

There are also support services here: <https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/information-and-resources/spot-the-signs/urgent-help/>.

If you are worried about someone being at risk of suicide, visit this page: <https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/information-and-resources/spot-the-signs/help-for-others/>.

There is more useful information from Hertfordshire's Suicide Prevention Network [here](#).

Thank you.