

## Local context

### Local Covid-19 data

The County Council will today (21 December) [publish](#) the latest weekly Covid-19 data summary. This week's data shows a continued rise in cases over the last 7 days. It is vital that everyone keeps following the relevant Tier rules to break chains of infection and stop the spread.

The total number of cases in Hampshire since March 2020 is now 21,984, and there have been 2,391 cases confirmed in the last seven days.

The county's current weekly case rate stands at 149.8 per 100,000 population, which has increased from 86.4 last week. It remains below the England case rate at 262.2 per 100,000 population.

There have been 1,228 Covid-19 associated deaths in Hampshire since March, and 22 deaths in the last seven days.

On hospital admissions for the NHS South East region (which includes Hampshire and the Isle of Wight), the total number of patients admitted to hospital across the region is 23,870, with 1,871 people admitted in the last week and 2,321 patients currently in hospital.

The full data dashboard is available on the [Keep Hampshire Safe webpage](#). [Data on Hampshire districts](#) and [data on positive cases in Hampshire schools](#).

### New Covid restrictions

Following the Prime Minister's [statement](#) on Saturday (19 December) setting out amended Christmas rules and tougher restrictions for large parts of the South East with a new Tier 4: 'Stay at Home' alert level, the County Council swiftly began communicating key messages and guidance to residents.

The local authority areas of Havant Borough and Gosport Borough entered Covid-19 Tier 4 (Stay at Home) restrictions yesterday (20 December), while the rest of the Hampshire County Council local authority area remains in Tier 2 (High).

A press release was [issued](#) yesterday by the County Council which outlined the new restrictions and how Hampshire residents are affected. The Leader of Hampshire County Council and Chairman of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board, Councillor Keith Mans, is quoted: "While the announcement just days before Christmas may understandably come as a disappointment to many... we must continue to work together, follow the rules and protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities, especially with the threat of a new Covid-19 variant spreading much faster in Tier 4 areas, and the ongoing rise in infections in general across the country."

In addition, the County Council [Covid-19 webpages](#) have been updated including the addition of new [web banners](#), updated information and guidance including on [Christmas bubbles](#). The County Council's Christmas bubbles animation has also been [updated](#) to reflect the new guidance and is being promoted across social media channels.

All key messages are being communicated to residents via social media, including information on the new tiers, Christmas, libraries and shielding. Members are encouraged to share/retweet the campaign with their social media followers, as well as any other relevant messages that we are posting on our corporate social media feeds – via @hantsconnect on both [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), as well as on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

## Local Covid-19 testing

The County Council is [reminding](#) residents that Covid-19 testing sites remain open over the festive period and that anyone displaying [symptoms](#) must [self-isolate](#) and [book a test](#). Location details and the festive timetable are available on the County Council's [Test and Trace guidance page](#).

To further support tracing of Hampshire residents who have tested positive and their close contacts, a Local Tracing Service launched in Rushmoor on 3 December and is being rolled out across the county over coming weeks. The number for the Local Tracing Service is 01962 826982.

## 'connect4communities'

'connect4communities', funded by the £2.89 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, awarded to the Authority by the Department for Work and Pensions, comprises a planned programme of measures to support families and individuals facing hardship due to Covid-19. It is run in partnership with schools, colleges and Early Years providers, as well as voluntary and charity organisations.

The programme will provide Community Grants, and local community, voluntary and charity organisations are encouraged to apply to help fund local activities that aim to combat food and fuel poverty. Grants approved so far include:

- Solent Youth Action - £1,940 - to run 'cook and eat' sessions for children who are registered with a disability and from a low-income household. More information is available in the [press release](#).
- RCS Ltd (Romsey Community School) - £1,500 - to provide Christmas hampers to families and individuals. More information is available in the [press release](#).

To learn more about the 'connect4communities' projects and the Community Grant programme, visit [connect4communities.org](https://connect4communities.org)

## Hampshire Music Service

On Friday 18 December, Hampshire Music Service ran a day of live online broadcasting on the [Hampshire Music Service YouTube channel](#) to enable young musicians to perform to the residents of the Authority's 17 nursing and residential homes in a Covid-safe way. The broadcast includes performances from junior and secondary [school choirs and orchestras](#) and [county ensembles](#). The programme culminates with Nine Lessons and Carols. 'A Re-Imagined Christmas' is available to watch again online and will be available online until the New Year.

## *The best gift* - Christmas campaign

The Authority's county-wide winter advertising campaign to urge residents to stay Covid-safe over the festive season remains relevant and effective. Residents are being reminded that the best gift to give friends and family is to keep following the guidance for the [current Tier for Hampshire](#), and to abide by the 'Yule rules'. Outdoor media is appearing in more places across the county, for example:



## Hampshire Constabulary

Hampshire Constabulary has [issued](#) a statement from Assistant Chief Constable, Maggie Blyth, following the Government's review of the tier system. It highlights that Hampshire Constabulary's approach will continue to be to "engage, explain and encourage" people to comply with the regulations.

The police will not prevent people from travelling from one area to another but will work with ferry operators and partner agencies to ensure that the public remains informed about the restrictions in place. Residents are asked to observe the restrictions from the highest tier that they are travelling from, or to, at all times. In addition, Covid-19 related patrols will be maintained, as required, in addition to the usual resourcing through the Christmas and New Year period.

## Support for the clinically extremely vulnerable

Following the Prime Minister's announcement at the weekend, people identified as [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) (CEV) and living in Tier 4 areas are advised to follow the shielding guidance. In Gosport and Havant (both now Tier 4) this applies to approximately 10,000 individuals.

Over the weekend people living in those boroughs, who have been identified as CEV, were advised of this important change by SMS message, email, or where this was not possible in a small number of cases, in person and by letter. These approaches, combined with automated calls, have enabled the County Council to contact around 9,000 residents, which is the majority of those who are not care home residents. By the end of today (21 December) all care home providers who have someone living with them who is CEV will have been contacted. In addition, guidance has been produced and issued to social care providers in the Tier 4 areas.

The County Council's current priority is to recontact any clinically extremely vulnerable person, who under the previous restrictions had requested support, to check if they need help over the festive period (applies to around 3,000 people). If an individual is unable to receive help from family, friends or a neighbour, they are asked to contact the Hampshire Coronavirus Support and Helpline as soon as possible to ensure help can be arranged to keep them safe and well. The County Council is working with Gosport and Havant Borough Councils, and Voluntary Community Sector teams, to step up support.

For more information on support for anyone who is vulnerable, including the helpline festive opening hours, visit [www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/news](http://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/news).

## Covid-19 vaccinations

Following the updates in last week's briefings, more GP practices across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will be starting to vaccinate patients in coming days. There will be additional vaccination clinics at the following sites:

- Forest Surgery, Bordon
- Hayling Island Health Centre
- Emsworth Baptist Church
- Milford on Sea War Memorial Hospital (for New Forest Primary Care Network)
- Fordingbridge Hospital (for Avon Valley Primary Care Network)
- Crosfield Hall, Romsey
- The Lights, Andover
- Winchester Holiday Inn (for Winchester Rural, North and East Primary Care Network)
- Westridge Centre, Ryde, IoW
- The Bay Medical Practice, Shanklin, IoW

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list – we are sharing information, as we receive it, from the NHS. More information about the vaccination programme is available [on the NHS website](#).

The NHS will contact people in the priority groups when it is their turn to receive the vaccine. People should not contact their surgeries - the vaccination service is available strictly by invitation only.

## National context

### Prime Minister's Statement - 19 December

On Saturday 19 December, the Prime Minister [announced](#) tougher restrictions for large parts of South East England with a new Tier 4: 'Stay at Home' alert level. The decision follows a rapid rise in infections attributed to the rapid spread of a new variant of Covid-19. It was announced that the following areas will move from Tier 3 to Tier 4:

- Kent, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey (excluding Waverley), Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Rother and Hastings;
- London (all 32 boroughs and the City of London); and
- the East of England (Bedford, Central Bedford, Milton Keynes, Luton, Peterborough, Hertfordshire, Essex excluding Colchester, Uttlesford and Tendring).

The Prime Minister also said that given the risk the new variant poses, the Christmas bubble policy will no longer apply in Tier 4. For Tiers 1, 2 and 3, Christmas bubbles can continue with up to three households able to meet, but for one day only, on Christmas Day. Tier 4 rules will be reviewed on 30 December, as part of the wider review of all restrictions.

## Communities

### Local government finance settlement

The provisional local government finance settlement for 2021/22 was [announced](#) last Friday (17 December). The settlement was mainly as outlined in the Spending Review. All of the documents can be found [here](#).



Summary below (source: LGA) -

- Confirmation that the Core Spending Power (CSP) will increase by 4.5% (£2.2bn).
- Allocations of the £1.55bn Covid funding for 2021/22 announced (Hampshire County Council has been allocated £24m)
- There is an additional £1bn for social care, including the 3% ASC precept and the £300m social care grant. Allocations of the £300m grant were confirmed (Hampshire County Council was allocated £1.2m)
- A new lower-tier services grant (£111m) has been introduced.
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) allocations of £622m will be made in 2021-22. There is no NHB Returned Surplus in 2021-22.
- In calculating CSP, it has been assumed that authorities will increase Band D by the maximum amount, and that each authority's taxbase has increased in line with their average taxbase growth since 2016-17.
- Band D council tax. 2% council tax referendum limit, 3% ASC precept. District councils can increase Band D by the higher of 2% or £5. Police element of GLA precept can increase by up to £15.
- Local Council Tax Support grant (£670m) is a new grant outside core settlement which will fund authorities for the expected increase in local council tax support in 2021-22. Allocations to authorities to follow next week.
- Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) increases by £13m – i.e. by the increase in Revenue Support Grant.
- Rural Services Deliver Grant (RSDG) will increase by £4m (from £81m to £85m, a 4.9% increase).

### **APSE – Christmas wishes and thank you**

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) has [released](#) a special Christmas video, written and performed by Longfella, Tony Walsh, to thank all local authority workers for their hard work, dedication and contributions throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Letter to thank all council workers**

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, has [written](#) to council workers to say 'thank you' for their services to local communities this year and to wish them all a Merry Christmas.

### **Homelessness**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [announced](#) additional funding targeted at areas with high numbers of homeless people, those at risk of homelessness, or those living in temporary accommodation.

## **Children's social care and education**

### **Testing in secondary schools and colleges**

The Department for Education has [confirmed](#) that all secondary schools and colleges in England will be able to test more of their staff and students in a round of free Covid-19 testing from the first week of January.

## **Adults' social care and public health**

### **Long Covid clinics**

NHS England has [announced](#) £10m funding for a network of new clinics to support patients suffering with long Covid symptoms, as referred by GPs. 69 clinics are now operating across the country (full [list published here](#)) and a further 12 sites are planned to open in January 2021.

### **Payments for self-isolating care staff**

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has [written](#) to councils and care providers to reiterate that care workers should receive normal wages if they need to self-isolate.

### **Waste codes for lateral flow tests**

DHSC has [published](#) new information for councils about waste management for lateral flow Covid-19 tests. The guidance includes the waste categorisation of each item, European waste catalogue (EWC) codes and likely management routes.

### **Advice for clinically extremely vulnerable**

DHSC has [issued](#) advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable in new Tier 4 areas. This group is strongly advised to stay at home at all times, unless for exercise or medical appointments, and not to attend work, even if they are unable to work from home.

Letters will be sent by the Government to all those affected by the new shielding rules for Tier 4 areas later this week.

### **New Covid-19 variant**

Public Health England (PHE) has [published](#) information on the new Covid-19 strain, as found in the South East. PHE suggest that the new strain transmits more easily than the previous variant, but there is no evidence that it is more likely to cause severe disease or mortality.

### **Covid-19 test providers**

DHSC has [published](#) a list of private providers of Covid-19 testing, in a bid to help employers and individuals set up their own Covid -19 testing programmes.

## **Economy, finance and business**

### **Furlough and loan schemes extended**

On Friday (17 December), the Chancellor [announced](#) that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough scheme) will be extended until the end of April 2021, in addition the government loan schemes will be extended until the end of March 2021. It was also confirmed that the Budget will be on the 3 March.

## **Environment, transport and travel**

### **Travel over the festive period**

The Department for Transport (DfT) has [updated](#) the safer travel guidance for passengers to include advice on walking, cycling and travelling in vehicles or on public transport during the festive period. In addition, DfT has [updated](#) its guidance for taxis and private hire vehicles to include travel over the festive period.

### **Rail and coach refunds**

DfT has [announced](#) they are ensuring all domestic rail and coach passengers who have cancelled their travel plans in England between 23 to 27 December (2020) are refunded.

## **National Covid-19 data**

As of 4pm on 21 December, the total number of people tested positive for Covid-19 was **2,073,511** and daily number of lab-confirmed cases was **33,364**. The total number of Covid-19 associated deaths within 28 days of a positive test was **67,616**, with **215** deaths reported on the day. The data is available to [view online](#).

The R number range for the UK is **1.1-1.2** and the growth rate range **+1% to +4%** per day as of 18 December.

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# Where to find the latest information and guidance

- Hampshire County Council webpages on coronavirus (including links to press releases): <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus>
- Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS information on coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- FAQ from the Cabinet Office: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>
- PPE guidance hub: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>
- Guidance for local government: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>
- County Councils Network (CCN) coronavirus information pages: <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus-information-for-local-authorities/>
- Local Government Association (LGA) councillor guidance: <https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-outbreak-councillor-guidance>

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