

Heartfelt thanks to Hampshire's volunteers

Hampshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Communities, Partnerships and External Affairs, Councillor Andrew Joy has expressed thanks on behalf of the Authority, for the tremendous work of the county's army of volunteers who have been responding to the needs of communities during the coronavirus outbreak.

"In Hampshire volunteering has always played a crucial role but, during the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been particularly heartening and humbling to see this strong community spirit really flourish across the county. Numerous groups and thousands of volunteers have given and continue to give generously of their time and energy, providing immense support to those in need, through caring and selfless acts of humanity. Whether collecting medicine for shielding residents, delivering food and household supplies, or checking in on elderly or vulnerable neighbours – every act of kindness and solidarity has made a marked difference. Looking ahead, while we may be making good strides in returning to a healthy 'normal', there are many in our communities who still rely on the help and support of the volunteers who stepped forward at the height of the pandemic to support the vulnerable. As we head into the autumn, and with the coronavirus still with us, we anticipate demand for support will start to grow again. Therefore, we need to say:

- To those who continue to volunteer – we thank you. Your support is invaluable, and please do stay with us.
- To those who may have recently stopped volunteering – we would like you to consider coming back, even if it is only for a couple of hours a week.
- To those who have never volunteered – now could be a great time to start."

Tim Houghton, Chief Executive of Community First, on behalf of the Hampshire CVS Network said: "The generosity and willingness of Hampshire's residents to help each other during the crisis has been simply amazing and on behalf of Hampshire's CVS network we also say 'thank you'. Local volunteer groups, charities and wider voluntary sector have never been more needed, and we now have a great opportunity to change for the better and maintain the commitment and enthusiasm shown by volunteers and a sense of local community belonging that makes lives better for all. Many charities and voluntary groups are still operating and are now busy reshaping and restarting services to prevent isolation, reduce loneliness and tackle the long-term mental health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic. There are a wide range of organisations on the frontline, including those providing children's services, working with homeless people, delivering social care, or tackling domestic abuse who need your help now and into the future. If there's a cause you care about, please reach out and offer whatever time and commitment you can – a little can go a long way."

To find out more about volunteering opportunities in Hampshire, go to: www.hampshirecvs.org.uk/volunteering/

Hampshire's educators are ready and eager to start the new term

Pre-schools, primary and secondary schools across Hampshire were eager to welcome children and young people back at the start of the new academic year. Councillor Roz Chadd, Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Education and Skills, said: "Hampshire's early years providers and countywide family of schools have worked hard during the school summer holidays to complete the necessary risk assessments to keep Hampshire safe by implementing appropriate measures to ensure all children and young people can return to school safely. I am deeply relieved that the government agreed that all children and young people should go back to school from 1st September following the disruption of lockdown. We may never fully appreciate the impact that the fall-out from Coronavirus will have on their education and future achievement but what is in no doubt is that children and young people should be in school, not only for them to learn, but for their mental health and wellbeing – having a more normal routine and being back with their peers and friends is important."

The County Council's Director for Public Health, Simon Bryant, added: "Parents and carers should feel reassured that children are far less likely to be affected by Coronavirus. A Public Health England Study showed that those aged under 16 account for just 1.1 per cent of 130,000 confirmed Coronavirus cases during the first wave of the virus."

According to the Office for National Statistics, 90 per cent of school age parents indicated their children would return to school or college in September. Hampshire's educators are fully prepared to have them back, confident they have put in place arrangements to help prevent the spread of coronavirus infection. While those arrangements will vary from school to school, depending on the size and layout of their sites, as well as the ages and number of children attending, the measures include:

- Placing children in distinct 'bubbles' (groups) to be maintained throughout the school day
- Operating a one-way system around the school site
- Staggering the start and end of the school day
- Staggering break times
- Building time for frequent handwashing in the daily timetable
- Additionally, providing hand sanitiser in strategic areas of the building
- Frequent reminders to Catch It, Bin It, Kill It
- Additional cleaning of school buildings.

Wherever possible, and for multiple health benefits, children and young people are encouraged to walk, scoot or cycle to school. The County Council has installed a range of temporary changes across the county to provide more road space for people walking and cycling – keeping a safe social distance as they begin to go back to work and school after the Coronavirus lockdown. Government guidance will apply to home-to-school travel arrangements for children and young people, eligible for school transport funded by the County Council. There is no requirement for social distancing on dedicated services but

there will be a set of controls that will apply, such as use of hand sanitiser and where possible sitting in year groups. Face coverings for pupils over 11 are recommended. Enhanced cleaning will apply to vehicles being used on home-to-school journeys. Pupils who travel on public transport will be required to respect the social distancing measures on public bus services and, if they are aged 11 years old or over, must wear a face covering.

If a pre-school child or school pupil displays any symptoms of Coronavirus, education settings will follow the Public Health England guidance that they have been given including what to do in the event of a confirmed case of the virus in an education setting. The closure of any school due to Coronavirus will be a last resort action and only on the advice of the local Public Health England Health Protection Team.

Climate change

Hampshire County Council has announced the first initiatives to help Hampshire residents reduce their carbon footprint. Community projects include advice from energy choice to insulation, establishing a Community Energy Network across Hampshire and a Targeted Residential Solar Group Buying Scheme. Parishes and communities are encouraged to take part in the sustainable community Greening Campaign (<http://www.greening-campaign.org/>). The climate change Action Plan is due to be presented to the HCC Cabinet on 29th September.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/climatechange>

Roads & Footpaths

Hampshire Highways are now re-using recycled material from old roads. Materials are screened, crushed and blended cleanly and quietly ready for re-use. With around 5,500 miles of roads this will make a significant contribution to reducing our carbon footprint. Over 40 new temporary footpaths and cycleways have been installed across Hampshire. HCC have bid for £3.45 million from Government to build more highways schemes to support social distancing, encourage walking and cycling and assist economic recovery.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/21082020TransportPopUps>

Cllr Roger Huxstep
Member for Meon Valley Division
Hampshire County Council

7th September 2020