

Local context

Supporting care home visits and LFD testing

All efforts continue to facilitate visits in Hampshire's care homes including Hampshire County Council Care locations. As part of this, the County Council continues to support the expansion of the Government's [care home visitor testing programme](#).

There have been recent reports in the media about the accuracy of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing in care homes. Public Health Hampshire has outlined the key points on LFD testing below:

- Testing is just one way of minimising the risk of visiting a care home but must be used in addition to the recommended Infection Prevention and Control measures, including PPE.
- Lateral Flow testing involves processing throat or nose swabs with a Lateral Flow Device (LFD). The device detects a protein (antigen) produced by the virus at its most infectious stage. If present in the person's sample, a coloured line appears on the device within 30 minutes.
- The advantage of LFD testing is that results are available rapidly, and they can be helpful in detecting cases that would not be detected by other testing strategies.
- However, results from LFDs have reduced sensitivity, which means that they do not always correctly generate a positive result for people with a Covid-19. LFDs find at least half of the cases that PCR testing detects and about three-quarters of those who have very high amounts of virus present when the individual was tested. It should therefore be noted that a negative result does not rule out infection and there can be false negative results.
- The LFD should only be performed on people who are asymptomatic. If a prospective visitor is symptomatic, the Site Coordinator should advise them to seek a PCR test through <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.
- LFDs can rarely give an inaccurate positive result and individuals who test positive should have a PCR test to confirm.
- If an individual tests positive, they should self-isolate immediately and follow national guidance.

More information on care homes visits can be found on the County Council's [Covid-19 webpages](#).

Connect4Communities

The County Council's Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People, Councillor Patricia Stallard, has today approved a package of measures under the 'connect4communities' programme. The programme is funded by the £2.89 million Winter Grant Scheme, awarded to the Authority by the Department for Work and Pensions, the scheme comprises a planned programme of supportive measures mainly, but not exclusively, targeting families on low incomes with children over the winter and beyond.

For more information, see the [press release](#) and the [Decision Day papers](#).

Hampshire Perspectives

The responses from the County Council's third online residents' forum survey have been analysed.

The [Hampshire Perspectives](#) survey on the topic of 'staying well during the Covid-19 pandemic' received 658 responses between 5–19 November. These perspectives will help the County Council better understand the types of information that it needs to provide residents and how to deliver this at the right time and in the right way. Key findings include:

- Although most respondents had some confidence in their understanding of the rules, less than a quarter felt ‘very confident’ in their knowledge;
- Those who lacked confidence found the guidelines complex and constantly changing;
- Generally, respondents had found it easy to find clear and up to date information about how to keep themselves and others safe during the pandemic;
- Where messaging was less important to respondents’ as individuals, they acknowledged the importance to others – highlighting their concerns about the mental wellbeing of friends and family and their recognition that many people may be struggling with new technologies and financial concerns.

National context

Communities

Loneliness

The Government has [confirmed](#) that the £4m Local Connections Fund will be open to charities and interest groups that reduce social isolation during the pandemic and after. The fund will be split into two rounds of funding – each with its own application window, one in January 2021 and one in the summer 2021.

Prison visits

The Ministry of Justice has [updated](#) the guidance about visiting prisons to include information related to Tier 3 areas.

Children and education

Support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

The Department for Education (DfE) has [announced](#) that children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will receive extra educational support including extra tutoring, one-to-one support and expert guidance to help them progress in education or find employment.

Support for vulnerable children

DfE has [announced](#) £4.4 million funding to extend Covid-19 response programmes run by major children’s charities, and plans to create a National Centre for Family Hubs that will improve families’ access to vital services across the country.

Schools, nurseries and colleges guidance

DfE has [updated](#) the guidance for parents and carers about attendance at schools, nurseries and colleges in the autumn term. The update includes information on primary assessments and GCSE and A-level exams in summer 2021, Ofsted inspections and exams for selective schools.

Technology for schools

The Government has [updated](#) the guidance for councils, academy trusts and schools on the devices and support available to provide remote education and access to children’s social care. This includes information on how to obtain a grant and support to use a digital education platform.

Adults' social care and public health

NHS vaccine programme

Yesterday (8 December) the Covid-19 immunisation campaign started. NHS chief, Sir Simon Stevens, [praised](#) efforts of staff for making the roll out of a Covid-19 vaccine possible, saying that the deployment marks a “decisive turning point” in the battle against the pandemic. The key NHS asks of the public are:

The NHS will contact individuals when it is the right time to come forward, so please don’t contact the NHS to seek a vaccine before then;

- Act on your invite when it comes, and make sure you attend your appointments when you arrange them;
- Continue to abide by all the social distancing and hand hygiene guidance.

Testing for extra care and supported living

The Government has [published](#) guidance on regular retesting for Extra Care and Supported Living settings that meet the eligibility criteria. Regular retesting involves weekly staff testing and monthly resident testing. The guidance sets out which settings can access test kits, details on the self-referral portal and information on the testing process.

Lateral flow testing of care home visitors

The Department of Health and Social Care has [issued](#) guidance outlining how care homes and visitors can prepare for visitor testing with lateral flow devices.

Vaccination posters

Public Health England has [published](#) promotional materials to download to support the Covid-19 vaccination programme in care home and healthcare settings.

Vaccines Taskforce report

The Government has [issued](#) a report highlighting the work of its Vaccines Taskforce (VTF), six months after it was set up. The interim report outlines the progress VTF has made to secure vaccines for the UK, the international work to develop and increase access to vaccines, and how it has built the UK's capability in vaccine development.

Economy, business and finance

Lifetime Skills Guarantee

DfE has [announced](#) that as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, [announced](#) by the Prime Minister in September, almost 400 free courses will run next year for adults without a full qualification at Level 3 (A-level equivalent) to help them gain in-demand skills and open up further job opportunities.

National Covid-19 data

As of 4pm on 9 December, the total number of people tested positive for Covid-19 was **1,766,819** and daily number of lab-confirmed cases was **16,578**. The total number of Covid-19 associated deaths within 28 days of a positive test was **62,566**, with **533** deaths reported on the day. The data is available to [view online](#).

The R number range for the UK is **0.8-1.0** and the growth rate range is **-3% to -1%** per day as of 4 December.

Additional links

- 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>

Deborah Harkin
Assistant Chief Executive