

Local context

Local rapid testing programme – Bramley (RG26)

The local rapid testing programme in Bramley will conclude today (19 February) after starting on Wednesday. The County Council has worked with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care to organise a localised rapid testing programme in the Bramley area following confirmation of a single case of the South African variant.

A team from the County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and local volunteers from the Red Cross and REACT visited properties in the designated postcodes to distribute and then collect kits. Alternative arrangements have been in place to enable residents who were not at home to participate via a mobile testing unit (MTU) located in the car park at the Bramley Inn until 5:30pm on Friday.

There has been a very positive response from the community, and Hampshire County Council would like to thank residents and volunteers for enabling a successful programme. More information, including a map of the affected area, information on the variant and operational detail has been available on the [County Council's website](#).

May elections

The County Council has [issued](#) a press release reminding residents of the various ways they can safely cast their vote in the County Council elections on 6 May. Voters are reminded that there are range of options including voting in person, by post or by proxy. The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm on 20 April, and for a proxy vote the deadline is 5pm on 27 April.

For those who choose to vote in person, polling stations will be safe places to vote on 6 May. Voters are encouraged to keep themselves and others safe by:

- Wearing a face covering / mask
- Bringing their own pen or pencil
- Cleaning their hands when entering and leaving the polling station
- Keeping a safe distance

Voters should not attend the polling station if they have symptoms of Covid-19, or if they have been asked to self-isolate. Anyone who is self-isolating because of Covid-19 can also request a proxy vote at the last minute – up to 5pm on polling day itself.

Keep Hampshire Safe campaigns

Members are encouraged to share/retweet with their social media followers, any relevant messages that we are posting on our corporate social media feeds – via @hantsconnect on both Twitter and Facebook. The following key messages are currently being shared on social media:

Weekly Covid-19 local data - [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

- Community testing - [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Transport help to vaccination appointments - [Facebook](#)
- Using the countryside and public spaces - [Facebook](#)

Throughout the week, messages have also been shared on the rapid testing programme in Bramley as well as on activities and ideas for families to enjoy the February half term safely.

Offline, the 'Do the right thing' campaign continues with posters at bus stops, road signs, digital sheets at supermarkets and shopping centres, and a radio advert.

Large gatherings

Hampshire Constabulary has [released](#) a video highlighting the dangers of large gatherings during the Covid-19 pandemic. The video, which contains footage from a party being broken up by the Police, aims to demonstrate the danger people are putting themselves and their loved ones in by attending mass gatherings.

Hampshire Constabulary has confirmed that they continue to follow the approach of engaging, explaining and encouraging people to comply with the restrictions. However, Assistant Chief Constable Maggie Blyth has said that robust enforcement action is also taken as required, where blatant breaches in public places or private premises are reported.

Vaccination update

NHS partners have confirmed that excellent progress continues to be made with delivery of the Covid-19 vaccination programme across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. More than 480,000 vaccines have been delivered to communities, with the vast majority of those in priority groups 1-4 now vaccinated. Across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care System (ICS) and Frimley Health and Care ICS, more than 95% of people aged 80 and over have received their first dose.

The programme has now entered a new phase - in addition to those in priority groups 1-4, people in groups 5 and 6 (all those aged 65-69 and those aged 16-65 in an at-risk group and unpaid carers) are now being invited to book an appointment. Anyone in groups 1-4 who has not yet been vaccinated for any reason is being followed up and encourage to take up the offer.

Individuals aged 70 and over who have not yet received their first dose of the vaccine continue to be encouraged to contact the NHS directly in one of the following ways to arrange an appointment:

- Visit the national booking service at nhs.uk/covid-vaccination
- Call 119 free of charge between 7am and 11pm seven days a week
- If a suitable and convenient slot is not available, people can also contact their GP practice

The NHS are reminding people that if they receive more than one invitation, they can choose where they would like to attend. This could be their local vaccination centre, pharmacy, hospital, or their GP surgery. However, if an individual has made an appointment and decides to attend another site, it is important that they cancel one of the appointments so that it can be offered to someone else.

More information about the vaccination programme is available on the [Frimley Health and Care](#) and [Southampton City CCG website](#) as well as [the County Council's website](#).

Adults' social care and public health

Home testing kits now easier to order

The Government has [announced](#) that it has introduced a number of new accessibility improvements to the home testing programme to aim to make it easier to get tested. This includes making tests available to order over the phone (119); a new partnership with Royal National Institute of Blind People to improve the home testing service for people with visual impairments and; a new video-call support service that will assist people with vision impairments to test at home.

Designated settings for people discharged to care homes

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has [published](#) guidance on the designated settings scheme for people discharged into care homes with a positive Covid-19 test.

REACT study

Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI have [published](#) the results from the latest REACT study into Covid-19 infections in England. Interim findings show infections fell by more than two-thirds from the last REACT report, with 1 in 196 people infected.

Letters to clinically extremely vulnerable people

The Government has [published](#) reference-only versions of the letters sent to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, following additions announced to the Shielded Patient List. This includes letters for adults, children, young people and high-risk individuals.

Vaccine development

At the G7 meeting today (19 February), the Prime Minister [announced](#) his ambition to cut the time to develop new vaccines by two-thirds - to 100 days. The Prime Minister has also confirmed that the UK will share future surplus Covid-19 vaccines with the COVAX procurement pool to support developing countries, in addition to the UK's £548 million funding for the scheme

Surge testing

DHSC has [announced](#) that working in partnership with the local authority, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas in Leeds LS8, where the Covid-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been detected.

Long Covid

DHSC has [confirmed](#) £18.5million funding for four research projects to help better understand the causes, symptoms and treatment of Long Covid. Approximately 1 in 10 people with Covid-19 continue to experience symptoms beyond 12 weeks.

Vaccine social media campaign

DHSC has [announced](#) a new campaign to support vaccine roll-out backed by social media companies and celebrities. The new initiative allows social media users to update their profiles with a range of specially designed vaccine themed profile frames and graphics.



Economy, business and finance

Coronavirus financial management data collection

MHCLG launched the tenth round of the Covid-19 data collection on 18 February, to gather

information about the financial pressures councils are experiencing as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. The deadline for submitting the financial data return is 11pm on 26 February.

Additional links

- NHS information on the Covid-19 vaccination programme: www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination
- 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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