

Hampshire County Councillor report

September 2021

1. Return to school measures

The County Council is prioritising supporting pupils and students so they can safely return to face-to-face learning. The following guidance has been issued for parents and carers of school-age children:

- **Bubbles are no longer required:** Students will no longer be required to form bubbles or limited groups.
- **When to wear a face covering has changed:** Face coverings are no longer required for pupils and staff in school, which means a return to singing and playing brass instruments in school settings. However, face coverings are still recommended when using public transport to and from school.
- **Changes to who needs to self-isolate and when:** Under 18s and fully vaccinated adults who are identified as close contacts do not need to self-isolate unless they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Close contacts should instead take a [PCR test](#). If positive, NHS Test and Trace will inform the individual what to do next.
- **Regular asymptomatic testing at home should continue:** Secondary school pupils and college students are encouraged to continue taking [Lateral Flow Device tests](#) twice each week. At the start of term, schools will carry out two rapid flow tests on the school premises for each person; after this, tests should continue at home.
- **Additional age groups can get vaccinated:** Anyone aged 16 or 17 can now [get vaccinated](#). Children aged 12-15 with underlying health conditions or who live with someone that is clinically vulnerable can also be vaccinated.
- **Children and young people should stay home if they are at all unwell and not use public transport.** Even if they don't have COVID-19 symptoms or their COVID-19 test is negative, they may still have an illness which could be passed on to other people.

Schools will get in touch directly with parents and carers if they have put any extra precautionary measures in place, such as staggering school start times.

2. County deals

The Prime Minister announced in July new 'County Deals' as part of his vision for 'levelling up' across the UK with the aim of benefitting local communities. Hampshire County Council has registered a formal expression of interest to be one of the early pilots for a County Deal.

These aim to bring decisions and powers closer to people and places. The County Council is not committed to anything at stage but will now start discussions with government. The cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, the Isle of Wight and the district councils within Hampshire are all expected to join these discussions.

3. Afghan Refugee Support

Local authorities across the country are working with the Home Office and local partners to assist Afghan families moving to the UK to re-settle as part of the Government's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy programme. As part of this, the County Council is working alongside district councils, NHS, support providers and local charities, to help re-settle a number of families into longer term accommodation in Hampshire, with associated service support. In addition, temporary accommodation is being procured prior to them being offered permanent resettlement into housing either in Hampshire or anywhere in the country.

Many offers of support and donations have been received from across the county and these are very much appreciated, especially offers of practical support. If individuals or community organisations wish to make donations, they are encouraged to visit the website of registered local charity Community First who are co-ordinating collections across the county. In addition to signposting to donation points, Community First is also publishing a list of priority items that are needed first and foremost. It is requested that items are either nearly-new or in good second-hand condition.

The Community First website can be found at <https://www.cfirst.org.uk/donating-to-help-afghan-evacuees/> and they can be emailed with offers of practical support at support@cfirst.org.uk.

For offers of accommodation, the County Council is working with district councils to establish a co-ordinations process.

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