

9 July 2021

## **COVID-19 Briefing For All Elected Members**

### **Key messages from Executive Leadership Team – Lorraine O'Donnell, Frank Jordan and Jane Burns**

Dear member,

Here is today's briefing to help keep you informed and up to date with the latest developments in relation to Covid-19.

#### **Government announces lockdown rules set to end**

The government made a raft of announcements this week about the removal of lockdown restrictions – subject to confirmation on Monday 12 July after a review of the latest data.

The government announced it intends to scrap the laws on mask wearing and social distancing **from 19 July** – as well as an end to 'bubbles' in schools – in the final stage of England's Covid lockdown roadmap.

It further announced that in England from 16 August, fully-vaccinated adults and those aged under 18 will not have to self-isolate if a close contact tests positive for Covid.

Those who test positive, however, will have to self-isolate, whether they have had a jab or not.

Other changes announced include:

- Council powers to enforce rules will expire
- The scrapping of guidance to work from home
- An end to limits on attendance at weddings and funerals
- Table service rules at bars and restaurants and venue check-in requirements will be scrapped
- The planned reopening of nightclubs
- Limits on named care home visitors will be lifted
- An end to all legal limits on numbers of people who can attend events
- Large-scale events will not legally require certification.

**'Bubbles' in schools, college and early-years settings** will end from **19 July** – and they will no longer have to stagger start and finish times (please see later item).

The council is urging people to stick to the rules in place until 19 July.

Even after the 19 July, there is still a need for workplaces to enable their staff to work safely. The rise in outbreaks in all types of workplaces means employers and employees should continue to follow Covid safety guidance.

Some employers are likely to request staff to continue with testing and safety measures, such as the use of facemasks.

Public transport providers are also lobbying for facemasks to be worn on their vehicles.

Prof Neil Ferguson, from Imperial College, whose modelling led to the first nationwide restrictions, said there was the potential for the UK to see daily cases of between 150,000 and 200,000 – which could "still cause some pressure to the health system".

PM's statement [here](#) Also see [Slides and datasets](#) of the presentation

## **Cheshire East concerned about increase in Covid cases**

Cheshire East Council remains concerned about the increase in Covid-19 cases across the borough.

Cheshire East was designated as an Enhanced Response Area on 14 June but, since then, cases of the highly-transmissible Delta variant have continued to rise, not only in Macclesfield and Crewe but also, more recently, in Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach.

Council teams in public health, education and regulatory services along with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS partners and neighbouring local authorities, are all working together to ensure the outbreaks are closely monitored and timely and appropriate action taken.

Additional testing resources have been brought into the borough along with mobile vaccination pop-ups, to help curb the latest increase of Covid-19 positive cases.

Despite all our efforts, we are seeing worrying patterns of infection emerging.

Using data from 4 July, there were 257 cases per 100,000 people in Cheshire East in the previous seven days (up from figures in the mid-teens 7 weeks ago), with 972 people getting Covid in that same period – up by 338 on the previous week. The majority of cases are in the 10-39 age group.

We urge everyone to be socially responsible and do the right thing – for ourselves and for each other.

The council has recently launched a new public awareness campaign called 'It's in our hands', which aims to secure the help of residents to think about what they can do individually to help prevent Covid-19 from spreading and to keep communities safe.

Working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace, the council is strongly encouraging people to:

- **Get vaccinated**
- **Get tested** – even if you don't have symptoms and even if you have had one or two doses of the vaccine
- **Self-isolate if you test positive**
- **Be cautious when meeting others** who are not in your household

- **Continue to work from home** if you can
- **Minimise travel.**

For more information on testing, vaccinations and self-isolation support, go to the council's webpage at: [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covid19](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covid19)

## **Future workplace update**

We continue to wait for greater clarity from government, which is expected on Monday 12 July.

This information will help us to form our position on what happens from the 19 July from both a Cheshire East Council employer and customer point of view.

The health and safety of our staff, members, residents and customers is paramount. We have always said we would take a pragmatic and data-led approach when considering how and when we will move forward with our recovery phases.

Based on local data, the 19 July feels too soon for us to begin to transition into the next phase (phase two) of our roadmap.

At this point, it is important to say that nothing has changed, we will continue in phase one of our workplace recovery roadmap.

From 19 July, we are asking staff to continue to work as they are, from home where possible.

We understand that it is not just our staff that will be affected by the potential lifting of national restrictions from 19 July and are continuing our discussions.

These will be informed by the government information on Monday 12 July around items including:

- The point at which we will move into Phase two of our roadmap to recovery;
- Our position on face coverings in buildings;
- Use of PPE and when/where to use it;
- What Covid-secure measures we will need in our buildings to keep everyone safe and reduce any anxieties about returning (for example staff, visitors and customers);
- Local data and what this means for us – especially when we are still an area of enhanced support due to our rising Covid-19 case numbers.

Face-to-face member committee meetings will continue. However, we are minimising attendance by officers to those presenting or supporting.

This decision will be regularly reviewed. Meetings are available via audio recordings.

## Vaccinations: Come forward now – don't wait to be called



More than 45 million people in the UK – around 85% of all UK adults, have now received a first dose of a vaccine and around 34 million people, or about 64% of all adults, have had both jabs.

In Cheshire East, 84% of adults have had their first jab and 66% have had both jabs.

Cheshire East's main issue with vaccination continues to be access to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines – to enable us to offer jabs to the under-40 age groups. Planned clinics are going ahead, however we have asked the government for additional supplies so that we can accelerate the programme.

People can attend NHS drop-in clinics for a first dose of the vaccine with no appointment needed. People will need to provide their name, address, date of birth and contact details.

A flexible, data-driven approach continues to be used to determine where the clinics appear and health and care partners are working closely with local communities to ensure residents are given advanced notice of when the pop-up clinics will be coming to their area.

Recent pop-up vaccination clinics in Crewe have been very successful and there are plans to go back to the **Grand Junction retail park** next **Thursday** and **Weston Road Commercial Park** on **Wednesday** next week.

People can visit our [website](#) – and click on the coronavirus tab – for the latest information about clinics where they can get a first vaccine with no appointment.

Alternatively, appointments can be booked using the [national booking service](#), which can also be used to check and manage existing appointments.

## Booster Covid-19 vaccines from September

The government announced that, following interim advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), those most vulnerable to Covid-19, including those aged 50 and above, may be offered a booster vaccination from September.

The JCVI's interim advice is to plan to offer Covid booster vaccines from September 2021 to prolong the protection in those who are most vulnerable to serious Covid-19 ahead of the winter and against new variants.

The two-stage programme would take place alongside the annual flu vaccination programme and start with those most at risk from serious disease. This includes care home residents, people aged over 70, frontline health and social care workers, clinically extremely vulnerable adults and those who are immunosuppressed.

The final JCVI advice will be published before September and will take into account the latest epidemiological situation, additional scientific data, real-time surveillance of the effectiveness of the vaccines over time and emerging variants. The final advice could change from the interim advice as further data is analysed.

Government announcement details [here](#). JCVI [interim advice](#),

## **Covid testing options in Cheshire East**

To help to control the spread of Covid-19, particularly in areas that have seen outbreaks, we are offering additional testing options for anyone who does not have symptoms.

People may not have felt it was important to get tested before, but the Delta variant is far more transmissible – around 70% more so. People may not know they have got Covid if they don't have a test – and could spread it without knowing.

With almost all Covid restrictions set to end on 19 July there will be far more social mixing and, inevitably, a big rise in Covid infection. One top scientific advisor has warned new cases could rise to 100,000 to 150,000 per day.

The council is urging people to 'do the right thing': stay safe and keep following sensible precautions. Get fully vaccinated and get tested regularly.

We know these measures work. We have seen how they reduced infections to a very low level in Cheshire East in the past.

Free PCR lab tests for people without symptoms are now available at our Crewe and Macclesfield local test sites and at a number of [temporary mobile testing units](#).

Both local and some mobile testing sites are set up to accept walk-ins. However, to avoid unnecessary delays or a wasted journey at busy times, [You can book appointments online](#) via the gov.uk website. When booking, select 'do not have symptoms' and then 'I was asked to take a test by the Local Authority'.

Please remember to take a mobile phone with you or a form of photo ID.

Walk-in local test sites, where no appointments are necessary, are at:

- Chester Street car park, **Crewe**, CW1 2ER
- Commercial Road, **Macclesfield**, SK10 2QJ  
(Both 8am to 8pm daily)

We have one local mobile testing unit operating a walk-in service today (Friday 9 July), at:

- Cheshire East Council HQ, **Westfields** (car park), Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ (Open: 9am to 4pm).

Temporary mobile testing units, available for online booking only, are at:

- **Congleton Library**, Market Square, Congleton, CW12 1ET (Open 9am-4pm, Mon- Fri)
- **Knutsford Booths Hall**, Booths Park, Chelford Road, WA16 8QZ (Open 9am-4pm, Mon-Fri)
- **Wilmslow Rugby Union Football Club**, Memorial Ground, Kings Road, Wilmslow, SK9 5PZ (Open 9am-4pm, Mon-Fri)

Mobile testing units' locations and opening hours will change, so keep up to date on our [testing for COVID-19 web page](#).

## Schools update

The Covid control system in England's schools, where groups of pupils must self-isolate if one tests positive, is being scrapped from the end of term.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson announced [the end of "bubbles" in schools](#) from 19 July.

This system has led to large numbers of pupils being sent home if a single child has a positive test.

Covid-related [pupil absence in England has hit a new high](#) since all students returned to school in March – with 640,000 pupils in England not in school due to Covid last week.

It was also announced that, from 19 July, those aged under 18 will no longer have to self-isolate if a close contact tests positive for Covid. Those who test positive, however, will have to self-isolate, whether they have had a jab or not.

Cheshire East will be working with Public Health and Education Recovery group to provide schools in mid-August with any practical advice guidance for what needs to be in place from September.

In the meantime, we support schools with retaining current arrangements until the end of term as for most this is only a matter of days.

Key Points from the guidance:

- There is an imperative to reduce disruption to children and young people's education;
- From Step 4, it will no longer be necessary to keep children in consistent bubbles – including for Summer activities;
- Assemblies can resume, and groups can mix at lunchtime;
- It may be necessary to reintroduce bubbles as part of outbreak management plans;
- From Step 4, schools will no longer be required to undertake contact tracing – however schools may be contacted in exceptional circumstances to identify close contacts;

- From 16 August, children will not be required to isolate if they are a close contact and will be advised to take a PCR test;
- The Director of Public Health may advise settings to re-introduce control measures in the case of a local outbreak. If a school has several cases in 14 days this may be an outbreak;
- Face coverings will no longer be required in schools or on school transport;
- Control measures are as follows:
  - Ensure good hygiene for everyone
  - Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes
  - Keep occupied spaces well ventilated
  - Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of Covid-19.
- If anyone develops Covid symptoms at school, they should be sent home and they should follow PH advice;
- All pupils in year 7 and above should receive 2 on-site LFT tests 3-5 days apart on their return to school;
- Twice-weekly testing will continue for staff at least up to end of September.

Continued support for testing will help to suppress the cases in schools over the next few weeks and so make us all better placed to enjoy the well-deserved summer holidays.

New guidance for [schools](#) and [childcare/early years settings](#)

## **National funding for adult social care extended**

The government recently announced over £250m of funding to extend adult social care Covid-19 support in the UK beyond June 2021.

The funding is made up of £142.5m for infection control and £108.8m for testing to protect people in adult social care as restrictions in wider society are eased and support rapid, regular testing of staff to prevent Covid-19 transmission.

The new money will boost the Infection Control and Testing Fund, which was due to end last week and will now last until the end of September. Infection Control Funding is used by care homes and home care providers to keep their staff and residents safe.

Government announcement [here](#).

## **Further guidance**

For the latest guidance on coronavirus, visit the Public Health England website at: [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

We would like to thank you all, once again, for your patience and understanding in these challenging circumstances.