

Hampshire County Council Public Health update Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Briefing for County Councillors



This briefing will focus on the announcements made at today's press conference and will include government updates and guidance on local authority additional funding, support for mental health, food parcels, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), street works and housing.

The briefing will also provide an update on local issues including support for vulnerable residents, domestic abuse support and schools remaining open during the Easter holidays.

Members are kindly reminded to direct any coronavirus related queries and comments to the new dedicated inbox - coronavirus.memberqueries@hants.gov.uk

[View in browser](#)

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National context

Government's daily press conference

Today's conference was chaired by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Dominic Raab and Chief Scientific Officer, Sir Patrick Vallance.

Mr Raab outlined the support the Government has provided to UK citizens abroad. He acknowledged the difficult predicament of those people stranded abroad and provided reassurance that the Government is working around the clock to advise and support British travellers on returning home. Mr Raab has been in regular communication with other Foreign Ministers and is working closely with airlines to keep routes open. In circumstances where commercial flights cannot operate, the Government has chartered flights – and pledged up to £75 million to pay airlines for the additional charter flights to ensure tickets are affordable.

Once special flights have been arranged, these will be promoted through the Government's travel advice and by the British Embassy or High Commission in country. More information is available [here](#).

Sir Patrick Vallance provided an update on the spread of the virus and explained how behaviour change has played a big part in limiting the spread. He is confident that reduced social contact has limited the number of cases – and reiterated the message to stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives.

Prime Minister's letter to the nation

The Prime Minister is writing to every UK household to urge them to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. The [letter](#) with an enclosed leaflet on the support available and rules that need to be followed will be sent this week.

Coronavirus FAQs: what you can and can't do

The Government has published a [new set of FAQs](#) for the public summarising relevant guidance in a simple and easy to read format.

Covid-19 additional funding

On 19 March the [Government announced](#) £1.6 billion of additional funding for local government to help fund the response to coronavirus. It has been confirmed that Hampshire will receive £29,654,341. The allocations table for local authorities can be viewed [here](#).

Letter to social care workers

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, has [written](#) to the social care workforce thanking them for their help on coronavirus so far.

Covid-19 testing of NHS staff

A [letter](#) was sent to NHS trust chief executives, CCGs, STPs/ICS, Regional Directors and Chairs from Amanda Pritchard, Professor Stephen Powis and Sarah-Jane Marsh. The letter sets out that testing should start this week with those working in critical care, emergency departments and ambulance services, and any other high priority groups. Testing will then sequentially expand to other NHS staff groups as more tests are made available and ultimately into other essential public services including social care.

Combatting misinformation

[Specialist units are operating](#) across government to combat misinformation about coronavirus. To help the public spot false information the Government is running the [SHARE checklist](#) and [Don't Feed The Beast campaign](#).

Supporting mental health

The Mental Health Minister has [announced](#) that people struggling with their mental health during the coronavirus outbreak will be offered additional online support and practical guidance to help them cope.

Public Health England (PHE) has published new [online guidance](#) setting out principles to follow to help people to manage their mental health during the outbreak. In addition, PHE has published [Guidance for parents and carers](#) on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and an easy read-guide to [looking after your feelings and your body](#).

Food parcels

The Government [confirmed](#) that the first 2,000 food parcels were delivered over the weekend to clinically vulnerable people. The packages, which are currently part of a national service, contain essential food and household items for those who need to self-isolate at home for 12 weeks but have no support network of family or friends to help them.

Telecommunication commitments

The UK's major telecommunications providers have [agreed](#) a set of commitments to support and protect vulnerable consumers including: working with customers who may struggle to pay their bills; removing data allowance caps on all fixed broadband services; offering new and generous mobile and landline packages and; priority repairs for vulnerable and self-isolating customers.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Business Secretary is [easing administrative requirements and barriers](#) to imports of PPE and hand sanitiser to bring more products on to the market faster. The temporary measures include asking the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities to fast-track PPE through the product safety assessment process and providing new guidance for local authorities, ports and borders enforcement officers on the import and safety testing of hand sanitiser.

Domestic abuse

The Government has published [advice and guidance](#) for those who are experiencing, or feel at risk, of domestic abuse during the coronavirus outbreak. The Government acknowledges that recent measures announced such as the order to stay at home, can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse.

Caravan and park homes

The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing has [written](#) to all caravan and park home site owners to make clear that they should remain open for key workers and vulnerable groups during the pandemic. The Minister also asked that site owners work cooperatively with their local authority to provide accommodation to key workers and those who are homeless where needed.

Landlords and tenants

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published [guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities](#) in the private and social sector on the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020, and more broadly about rights and responsibilities during the coronavirus outbreak.

Teacher assessed grades

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) has published [guidance about teacher-assessed grades](#) following the decision to cancel this summer's GCSE and A-level exams.

Street works

The Highways Authorities and Utilities Committee, which brings together councils, the utilities industry and relevant government bodies has published [guidance on street works](#). This document, agreed by DfT, DCMS, HAUC, JAG and Streetworks UK, aims to provide clarity to highways authorities on the continuation of street works.

Local context

Supporting vulnerable residents

Over the weekend, the County Council proactively contacted residents registered with the Government as 'extremely vulnerable' and in need of urgent support.

Arrangements were made through local networks to meet pressing needs, providing welcome reassurance that help is at hand. In addition, Public Sector partners worked together to provide temporary accommodation for almost all homeless people in Hampshire.

The new Coronavirus Hampshire Helpline – *Hantshelp4vulnerable* – launches tomorrow (31 March) and will be fully operational by Wednesday. In addition, Local Response Centres are in place at local level within each district area. Each Centre will receive £5,000 of County Council funding to distribute across local organisations in grants of up to £500, helping to meet unfunded demands arising from Covid-19.

A significant amount of work is taking place to ensure the sustainable and smooth provision of supplies – including food and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), with distribution centres established in Hampshire. The first bulk food delivery from the Government is expected imminently, which will be bolstered by local donations. Work is also underway to capture the need for PPE across organisations and key workers, including volunteers, in Hampshire and the wider HIOW LRF area.

Domestic abuse services

[Hampshire's Domestic Abuse Service](#) is continuing to provide help to people experiencing domestic abuse via phone, email and online. The telephone helpline can be accessed on 0300 165 112 and will be staffed from 11.30am to 2.30pm Monday to Friday. A face to face support option is not available during this time but access to refuge, for those with urgent needs, will still be available 24/7. Anyone in immediate danger is urged to call 999 and ask for the police, who are continuing to respond to emergency calls.

Education settings to continue over Easter holidays

Hampshire schools, early years' education settings, nurseries and childminders will continue to look after vulnerable children and children of key workers throughout the school Easter holidays (6 to 17 April 2020). This is in response to the Department for Education's request to keep the provision in place over the holiday fortnight, including bank holidays.

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/>
- Q&A from Public Health England on coronavirus: <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>
- 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>