

Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum

Extending COVID-19 testing to protect staff and the public

Hertfordshire's Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have put in place a system for testing frontline health staff, such as those working in hospitals and ambulances, for COVID-19. This enables staff who have had symptoms that might be coronavirus to return to work as soon as they are safe to do so. Unwell household members of health employees can now also be tested.

As of w/e 17th April, test referrals have been expanded to include GPs and clinical staff working in the community supporting people's physical and mental health care. This is in addition to the testing already available for acute hospital and ambulance staff. From 17th April, testing will be available for care home staff and those providing social care in people's homes, with testing for community pharmacists coming soon.

Local centres for swabbing staff members and their household contacts have been set up at the Harpenden Memorial Hospital and Howard Court in Welwyn Garden City. Regional test centres are available at Wembley and Stansted. Altogether, this means testing is available for up to 400 eligible Hertfordshire staff per day, after they have been referred to the test centres by their employing organisation. Additional laboratory capacity has been secured so that tests results can be supplied in a timely way. Central London Community Healthcare, Hertfordshire Community Trust, Herts Urgent Care and East and North and Herts Valleys CCGs have all been involved in establishing these services.

Support for care homes and home care organisations

In common with other areas, Hertfordshire has had a number of COVID-19 outbreaks in care homes and sadly some deaths. Support is being provided through a Provider Hub – jointly managed by the Herts Care Providers' Association (HCPA) and Adult Care Services (ACS) at Hertfordshire County Council. The ACS team continues to work with Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission to monitor and support care providers. This support includes practical and financial help, as well as wellbeing support for staff experiencing anxiety or trauma.

The multi-agency care home infection co-ordination group continues to oversee, monitor and map outbreaks of COVID-19 across Hertfordshire. The group will share expertise and information amongst health and care professionals and support care homes to support the safe and efficient discharge of people from hospital and support homes and care services to remain open. Support this week has continued to focus around:

- the provision of PPE
- support around hospital discharge
- guidance on end of life care and reporting deaths
- key worker identification and support to be able to access food, school and early years provision and parking concessions.
- supporting people with learning disabilities
- wellbeing support to staff and volunteers

New clinics for people with respiratory and fever symptoms

Hertfordshire's CCGs are supporting GP practices to care for patients with respiratory and fever symptoms, which are common symptoms of the coronavirus, by establishing clinics called 'respiratory hubs' where patients can be safely seen and treated.

While most people are getting GP help by telephone, video or text, these hubs will allow face to face assessments of patients with COVID-19 symptoms. Each hub will work with their local practices and partner organisations to ensure that people with worrying symptoms are supported in the right place for them, whether that's at home or in hospital. NHS Herts Valleys CCG has four 'respiratory hubs' in the west of Hertfordshire at existing healthcare settings in Borehamwood, Harpenden, Garston and Hemel Hempstead Hospital. In East and North Hertfordshire, 13 respiratory hubs have been set up across the patch to cover the six locality areas of North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield, Upper Lea Valley, Lower Lea Valley and Stort Valley and villages. Patients can be seen

following a referral from a GP after a virtual consultation, and only once they have followed the NHS 111 treatment pathway. All patients must have an appointment.

Working with the private sector to support patient care

Our NHS hospitals are working with the independent/private sector to provide COVID-free sites to carry out urgent cancer work, urgent planned procedures and diagnostic tests for patients. These sites are also caring for patients who have not had the coronavirus who are well enough to be discharged from an acute hospital but are not yet well enough to return home or to their care home.

Changes at Watford General Hospital

Watford General Hospital has stopped treating patients with minor injuries and illnesses between 8am and 8pm. Until further notice, patients with minor injuries should attend the Urgent Treatment Centre in Hemel Hempstead instead, which is open between 8am and 10pm every day. Watford General is supporting Barnet Hospital by temporarily treating paediatric emergency patients from the Hertsmere area.

Enhanced community health services

Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust has put in place a 24/7 service to support people at home and prevent avoidable hospital admissions, called an 'Enhanced Prevention of Admission Service'. A patient video consultation system is supporting patients where this is appropriate, and additional healthcare professionals are now on duty, helping patients to get home with the support they need when they are ready to leave hospital. The team has increased the number of patients they can care for in their community inpatient units, which support patients whose care cannot be provided at home. Many of HCT's services for children, young people and families have been suspended in line with national guidance, allowing clinicians to be redeployed into adult services where appropriate. Core services are still being provided for children and families, including the public health nursing service (school nursing and health visiting). Families are being contacted to advise them about the services available online and by telephone.

Emergency services update

The county's blue light services are in a good place resource-wise, and remain ready to respond to emergencies 24 hours a day. Some 17 Hertfordshire firefighters are now working as drivers with ambulance crews in a mutual aid arrangement and fire service colleagues are also helping deliver food and medicine to high-risk residents. You may have seen some conflicting reports in the media about changes to guidance on people leaving their homes, following the extension to lockdown for another three weeks. In fact, nothing has changed, Hertfordshire Constabulary will continue to ask people to respect the regulations. Members of the public can still leave their homes to exercise, to work if they are a key worker or cannot work from home, to care for a vulnerable person or to shop for food/essentials. Our stance is still very much to engage, explain and encourage and exercise common sense. If you are concerned that you have seen a gathering which contravenes the guidance, we would encourage you to contact us using online [reporting](#) methods. This will help to relieve some of the pressure on our emergency lines and allow for a quicker response to urgent 999 calls.

Please continue to share social media messages promoting how to report domestic abuse and letting victims know that they can call 999 even if unable to speak, alerting police silently by pressing 55.

Organisations or individuals that wish to support with the supply of PPE

The organisations coordinating the county's response to coronavirus have put together an online guide at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/covid19ppe to help ensure that any Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) offered meets the necessary standards to keep people safe. A guidance document on Manufacturing, Selling and Donating PPE in Hertfordshire is now available on the website outlining key things to consider for anyone wishing to donate or supply PPE. Please note that homemade masks are not considered PPE and health and social care workers cannot use them as PPE. For further details please read the press release [here](#) .

Paid and voluntary roles at the East of England Ambulance Service Trust

The East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) is expanding its services to meet increasing levels of demand. Although a number of volunteers have come forward, they still need people with:

- medical experience – to fulfil paramedic, emergency medical technician and apprenticeship roles
- C1 driving licences who would be interested in driving patient transport vehicles or moving vehicles between sites.

Roles are available across the region immediately and all training will be provided. Please share this information with your networks and help to support the ambulance service's vital work:

<https://www.eastamb.nhs.uk/join-the-team/vacancies.htm>