

## **BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs**

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	<b>Worcestershire County Council internal GOLD meeting in respect of COVID 19</b>
<b>Meeting number:</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thursday 19th November – 17:00</b>

### **Key Messages**

- We are seeing signs that the rate of increase of cases in Worcestershire is plateauing.
- As of today, the rate stands at **228** cases per 100,000. The England rate is **284** per 100,000. The West Midlands rate is continuing to rise and currently stands at **355** per 100,000
- Redditch District has the highest number of cases in Worcestershire. There are currently **354** cases per 100,000 in Redditch. Bromsgrove has **276** cases per 100,000, Wyre Forest **271**, Worcester has **227**; Wychavon **155**; Malvern Hills has **114** cases per 100,000.
- We continue to be concerned by the number of positive cases that there are within people who are aged 60 and above.
- In the last 7 days there have been **1369** confirmed cases of coronavirus recorded in Worcestershire.
- The highest percentage of individuals testing positive in the week up to November 12 were in Redditch (12.5%) and in Bromsgrove (9.8%).
- We currently have good testing capacity in Worcestershire.
- Local test centres are being established in all districts. The centres in Worcester, Redditch, Pershore, Bromsgrove and Kidderminster are open. The site in Malvern will open next week. There are more details of the sites below.
- The Council's drive-through test site for essential front-line workers is open and has capacity.
- There are **76** people in the county's hospitals with Covid-19 in Worcestershire. **10** people are in ITU.
- **25** care homes in Worcestershire have current outbreaks (more than 2 cases, linked in either time place or person). **9** homes are currently closed to new admissions due to Covid.
- School attendance is currently declining in Worcestershire. Our most recent figures show that **87%** of pupils in the county have been in school
- **65** schools and settings in the county currently have pupils and/or staff isolating due to closed bubbles or partial bubble. This equates to **7147** pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- We have seen an increase in requests from schools for washable face coverings. It is now mandatory for all children in years 7 and above to wear face coverings in communal areas.
- There are **7** current situations in Worcestershire short breaks units and children's homes.
- Resource Centres for those with the most complex disabilities are closed
- All libraries across Worcestershire remain open but with reduced services during the lockdown period.
- All Household Recycling Centres remain open.
- Registration offices in the county are closed to the public unless an appointment has been pre-booked or is essential.

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## **Local Testing Centres:**

- Redditch - Trescott Road Car Park: Operational
- Worcester - University Arena Car Park: Operational
- Pershore - Civic Centre Car Park: Operational
- Bromsgrove - Stourbridge Road Car Park: Operational
- Kidderminster - Harriers Stadium Close Car Park: Operational
- Malvern - Victoria Road Car Park: Planned for 26<sup>th</sup> November\*

\*Date is potentially subject to change and not confirmed by Deloitte.

## **Key Service Areas:**

### **Adult Services**

- The number of cases in care homes continues to rise although the rate of increase has slowed this week.
- We have 25 care homes across the county with more than 2 confirmed cases.
- 9 homes are currently closed to new admissions.
- 2 homes have temporarily ceased trading (residents moved to other homes owned by the same provider on the same site).
- There are 6 supported living / extra care locations where either staff or service users have tested positive. We have started to regularly test all staff and residents at these locations.
- Forty-five homes report Red (2) or Amber (43) workforce pressures. This is down 13 since last week.
- We are now seeing the number of positive cases within domiciliary care going up. We have 159 domiciliary care workers who are currently absent from work.
- We are closely monitoring the number of registered nurses who are absent from working in our nursing homes.
- We are increasing our capacity in care and nursing homes to support hospital pressures. We have block booked more capacity and increased our reablement service.
- Limited visits to care home residents can be arranged in line with the latest Government guidelines. Extra Care and Supported Living are also being advised that they can open to limited family visits. We have led the way on this regionally and attracted positive media interest for this.
- Screens and digital tablets are being used to enable families to keep in touch with residents virtually.
- Infection prevention training for care homes and domiciliary care providers continues.
- Resource Centres for those with the most complex disabilities are now closed. Externally provided day centres can remain open if they fully comply with Covid safety guidelines.
- National guidance is that PPE will be provided to us free of charge and the details of this are being worked through.

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- The Adult Social Care Winter Plan guidance has been issued and we have constructed our local plan and will share with our partners and providers to ensure full compliance.
- Adult Learning Services are continuing to be provided virtually.

### **Children's Services**

- School attendance is currently declining in Worcestershire. Our most recent figures show that 87% of pupils in the county have been in school.
- 65 schools and settings in the county currently have pupils and/or staff isolating due to closed bubbles or partial bubbles. This equates to 7147 pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- We have seen an increase in requests from schools for washable face coverings. It is now mandatory for all children in years 7 and above to wear face coverings in communal areas.
- The use of face coverings on home to school transport is mandatory in Worcestershire for pupils over the age of 11.
- We are recommending that face coverings are worn at the school gates at drop off and pick up times. Signs to display this advice are being put in place outside all First and Primary schools.
- Signs are being developed to display at all secondary schools to remind pupils of the key public health messages.
- We are acutely aware of the challenge to the daily running of schools. Worcestershire Children First (WCF) staff are working closely with Council colleagues to ensure that the information, contacts and support we provide is as supportive as possible to schools, settings and families.
- We are continuing to provide regular communications and advice to our schools about when pupils and staff should get tested.
- Each school has a number of tests they are able to deploy, and schools are able to order additional tests from DfE 21 days after initial delivery. The education planning group have reported test results arriving in a more timely manner.
- There are 7 current situations in Worcestershire short breaks units and children's homes (this includes independent homes).
- Worcestershire's Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) is providing a valued and trusted advisory service to our schools community.
- We are concerned by the increase in demand in social care at the Family Front Door. The number of calls and contacts are double what we were receiving this time last year.

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## **Community Services**

- 965 records have been received from the National Shielding Service System including 168 contacts from clinically extremely vulnerable people who have asked for local support.
- The Council's Here2Help service is contacting those people who have asked for local support.
- The H2H service is seeing an increase in the number of requests for help. H2H is in a good position to be able to 'flex up' when needed and extra staff have been brought in to support the service.
- Ten thousand Lateral Flow Test devices have been ordered. Delivery is expected next week.
- All libraries remain open but with reduced services during the lockdown period. Libraries are open for the reserve and collect book ordering and pick up service, pre-bookable public computer sessions for essential purposes and for book returns.
- Registration offices in the county are closed to the public unless an appointment has been pre-booked or is essential. Death registrations can be taken by telephone; but birth registrations are still face to face.
- Museums in Worcestershire are closed.
- We are continuing to work with Worcestershire Regulatory Services to recruit Covid Advisors who will be deployed in coming weeks. The first of the advisors are now in place.

## **Economy & Infrastructure**

- Highways maintenance works and our major construction projects continue to operate safely during Lockdown. We currently have no workforce issues on our sites.
- There are currently no significant issues with our suppliers.
- Some SEN transport services and other transport services have been closed due to staff isolating. We are in regular contact with WCF and operators over these issues.
- We are monitoring the impact of the Lockdown on traffic volumes.
- Bus travel in the county has increased since the beginning of the new school term.
- There has been extensive work with public transport operators based on the latest DfT Guidance and to improve public confidence in bus services.
- All Household Recycling Centres are remaining open during Lockdown.
- We are planning our response to any significant flood or weather events with the current Covid restrictions.

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## **Workforce and Training**

- Additional resources have been made available to the LORT which has provided extra capacity. The new staff are being trained and embedding within the service.
- Staff have been advised that everybody should work from home if they can do so, in line with the restrictions imposed for the Lockdown.
- Those members of staff who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus have been told to work from home.
- County Hall and other Council buildings are Covid Secure and site-specific protocols are in place.
- Office working is only permitted for essential frontline workers and for those who cannot work from home.
- Our flu vaccination programme is now accessible for all staff with 6 Covid-safe sites set up across Worcestershire for delivery of flu vaccine for all essential workers and appointments will start booking this week. This also includes schools and academies.

## **Communications**

- Communications are being targeted at Redditch and those other districts with the highest number of cases.
- A paid-for social media campaign has been launched to target people by post codes in Redditch.
- Advertising space has been booked for this week in the two weekly papers in Redditch.
- Advertising vans displaying public health messages will be in Redditch from Monday
- Communications targeting the 60+ population are being delivered across all suitable channels and in all areas.
- We are working with NHS colleagues, Worcestershire Association of Carers and Worcestershire Voices to develop strong, case study-based video messages.
- Advice and guidance have been shared with all town and parish councils and we have supplied posters to display across the county.
- Through digital communications we are segmenting our audiences by age, geography and by shared interests.
- Radio advertising is being secured on Free Radio
- District Council community engagement teams are helping us to target marginalised communities.
- All First, Primary and Middle schools in the County have been provided with signs to display messages targeting parents at school drop off and pick up times to remind them about social distancing.
- Poster signs are being developed and will be rolled out and displayed at all secondary schools to reinforce key messages to pupils.
- Advice is displayed in all town centres on street scene signage and at bus stops.
- The Here2Help advice line is being promoted to provide support for those who need it and to point people to district council and partner services.

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- A young people's communication plan that targets 17–29 year-olds is being delivered. This includes the creation of a dedicated web area, advertising on streaming services and podcasts, working closely with venues and bars and working with a local artist who has an Instagram following of more than 80,000. The dedicated web area will go live this week.
- Working with district council colleagues, communication resources are being dedicated to provide advice and support to businesses.
- We are developing a series of business case studies sharing first-hand experiences during the pandemic and in Lockdown.
- The NHS is leading on all communications relating to the Covid vaccination programme.

### **Finance**

- Financial spend due to the pandemic continues to be closely monitored.
- Four areas of financial support have been announced:
  1. **Support for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)** – further funding of £32m nationally is being provided to councils to support the CEV. This works out at £14.60 per CEV and is for a 28 day period only. This is to be paid to upper tier councils in two tier areas.
  2. **Discretionary Support for Business** – a sum of £20 per head has been allocated for discretionary business support. BEIS are due to write shortly (i.e. next 24 hours) with guidance but it will be down to councils to design and implement within this guidance. This is going to be paid to district councils in two tier areas.
  3. **Very High Alert Financial Support** – given that all of the country has effectively been locked down and put into the highest tier of “very high” all areas are now to receive the £8 per head. For us this will be c£5m minus the £0.6m we have claimed to date from the Tier 1 position. But not clear what conditions will come with this.
  4. **Business Closure Grants** – Grants of up to £3k are to be paid where there is a business closure. This will be paid to district councils in two tier areas for them to administer. The banding of support is as follows –
    - Properties with a rateable value of £15k or under = £1,334 per month
    - Properties with a rateable value of between £15k to £51k = £2,000 per month
    - Properties with a rateable value of £51k or over = £3,000 per month

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## **COVID-19 STATISTICS**

Official statistics and information are available on the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-track-coronavirus-cases>

The methodology for reporting positive cases changed on 2 July 2020 to remove duplicates within and across pillars 1 and 2, to ensure that a person who tests positive is only counted

once. Numbers of lab-confirmed positive cases throughout this website now include those identified by testing in all settings (pillars 1 and 2).

Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 are different kinds of data taken from coronavirus testing. Swab tests for Covid-19 are carried out in hospitals and surgeries as well as in the community all the time. Each pillar comes with specific coverage goals and a set purpose from one or several organisations:

- Pillar 1 data comes solely from the tests carried out in Public Health England (PHE) lab and NHS hospital settings.
- Pillar 2 tests come from out in the community, such as care homes.

The publication of pillar two data will show a marked increase in the number of our confirmed cases in Worcestershire. This data has been available to Public Health and the Director of Public Health for some time and has been closely monitored throughout. In Worcestershire, our figures remain stable and comparatively low for the Midlands. “

## **WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION, HELP AND ADVICE?**

Reminder that the Here2Help website [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help) is the first point of contact if people want to offer assistance or gain support. The other option is the telephone contact number which is staffed 8am-6pm 6 days a week – 01905 768053.

Carers who support a family member or friend who require support should contact the Worcestershire Association of Carers on [www.carersworcs.org.uk](http://www.carersworcs.org.uk) or call the Helpline 0300 012 4272.

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS Website for information on Coronavirus

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports#history>