

Councillor Barbara Jones-Williams-October 2020

Coronavirus update

We are now starting to see the rising number of coronavirus cases in Worcestershire, translate into increasing hospital admissions and people being admitted to intensive care. Numbers are small at the moment but are expected to increase in-line with the national trend.

The county mortality management group has started to meet again as a precaution.

The number of calls to the Worcestershire Here 2 Help line are also increasing, mainly due to people who are self-isolating, needing help with food supplies.

Issues with access to testing also means the number of official cases is not representative of how many people have got Covid-19 in our communities.

Update on testing

Below is a comprehensive update from Worcestershire County Council on the current testing situation.

In Worcestershire we have 4 different types of testing facility.

County Hall - This site is for community testing (Pillar 2) available for anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. It was formerly at Worcester Warriors, and relocated earlier this month. This is where the residents of Worcestershire are currently asked to attend for a test if they have booked online. It is drive through and can only be used by residents who have booked online. Testing can be booked at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Mobile Testing Unit - This works in the same way as the County Hall site but provides more local testing provision. The MTU is currently in Evesham and has the ability to move around the county. This is available to test anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 and can be booked online.

Essential Workers test site- A temporary test centre for essential key workers has been created. This will offer a limited number of tests each day to those who are considered to be frontline essential workers - social care, school staff who work with children, GPs, Healthcare workers, police, and fire crews. This is not a drop-in centre, and users must book in advance via their employer gateway. It is not open to the public.

District walk-in centres - Public Health has requested a walk-in test centre be established in each of the districts. The centres are designed to be accessible on foot, (i.e. not a drive through) but they are not drop-in centres. Residents will still need to go online and book a test before using the sites.

These centres will not resolve the current testing shortage in the county. They are being created to ensure once community testing is back at capacity, more of our residents can easily access testing.

Download the new NHS Covid-19 app

We saw the launch of the new NHS Covid-19 app. This is designed to support the NHS Test and Trace Service.

The app allows people to report symptoms, order a coronavirus test, check in to venues by scanning a QR code and it helps the NHS trace individuals that have coronavirus.

If someone you have been near to tests positive for Covid-19, NHS doctors and scientists will use an algorithm to work out how close you need to be to someone to be at risk of the virus. A random unique ID will then be used to alert other app users so they can self-isolate immediately and get a test.

The app will help the NHS understand if the virus is spreading in a particular area, and so local authorities can respond quickly to stop it spreading further and save lives.

The app does this while protecting a user's anonymity. Nobody, including the government, will know who or where a particular user is.

I encourage you all to download the app and to share our messages on your own channels to encourage others to do so.

[Introducing the NHS Covid-19 app](#)

[NHS Covid-19 app privacy FAQs](#)

[Factsheet for parents and carers](#)

£500 Self-isolation test and trace support payment

From 28 September, it will be a legal requirement to self-isolate if you are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace. The Government has introduced a £500 support payment to help people on low incomes who have to self-isolate. We will be responsible for administering these.

Although people will be eligible for payments from 28 September, we are still awaiting the full guidance from the Government on how to implement the scheme. We have until 12 October to get the scheme fully up and running. People will be eligible for a back dated payment.

We are asking people to temporarily give us their contact details using a simple form on our website. We will then call them back to ask them to provide their supporting evidence and arrange to make payment.

Funding secured to support rough sleepers

The housing team led a bid, in collaboration with other district councils across Worcestershire, for funding from the Government's Next Steps Programme to allow us to continue to support rough sleepers we have helped during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We received more than £440,000 which will allow us to keep people in B&B and hotel accommodation until March 2021 and to work with people to help them access permanent accommodation in the private rented sector. Extra money will also be available for emergency shelter provision this winter.

We are waiting on news of a separate bid we have made for funding for our long-term plans to try and prevent people from sleeping rough in the first place.

Cllr Barbara Jones-Williams