

Protect yourself, others and the NHS

Dear Resident,

As you're probably aware, coronavirus cases in England have been rising again recently, and this has resulted in some local lockdowns across the country.

Although coronavirus cases in Buckinghamshire remain low, it's vital that we all continue to follow the guidance around washing hands, social distancing and wearing face coverings.

You can read the latest government advice on staying safe [here](#).

Get a test no matter how mild your symptoms are

The best chance we've got of controlling the virus is if we can detect as many cases as possible. We need as many people as possible to get tested in Buckinghamshire, no matter how mild their symptoms are.

So if you have a fever, new persistent cough or change in or loss of smell or taste, even if it's slight, then please book a test as soon as you can.

We have mobile testing units that come to various locations in Buckinghamshire – this week there's one in Marlow for the first time, plus another unit in High Wycombe at the end of the week.

All tests must be booked [via the government's website](#) and it's quick and easy – you'll either be able to take a test at home or be sent to the closest test site available. If you don't have access to the internet then please call **119** to book a test if you need to.

Reopening of leisure centres

I'm pleased to tell you that facilities at public leisure centres across Buckinghamshire began a phased programme of reopening from last weekend, enabling residents to get back into the gym after four months of lockdown.

Our partners who run the centres across the county – Everyone Active, GLL and Places Leisure – have been busy making all the necessary arrangements and putting the required safeguards in place.

While eight leisure centres are reopening, Chesham and Chalfont St Peter will remain temporarily closed so major refurbishment and improvements to the facilities can take place. However, while

these works take place, members of those two centres can use the facilities at Amersham, as well as at other Everyone Active facilities at centres across Dacorum, Slough, Aylesbury and Three Rivers.

[Find out more.](#)

Face coverings

As you'll probably be aware, the government has announced that on **Saturday 8 August**, face coverings will be compulsory in England in more indoor settings. These include community centres, cinemas and places of worship. ([See the full list here.](#))

I know lots of people have already been wearing face coverings in public places, and I thank you for doing so. However, to protect our environment, I'd like to remind you to either use a reusable mask or – if you're using disposable face coverings – to put these into your normal rubbish bins when you've finished using them. (These face coverings are not recyclable.)

I also want to stress that even when wearing a face covering it's still essential to carry on with social distancing measures and regular handwashing too. Look out for the signs and guidance around our town centres.

For people who've been shielding

From **Saturday 1 August** the government's advice to people who have been shielding has changed, and the national shielding programme has been paused. You can read about the [full advice here](#) on the government's website, but please remember it's very important that you continue to take care when mixing with people outside your household and maintain strict social distancing.

It means that people who were shielding can now go back to work, as long as the business is COVID-safe, or go to the shops and resume a more normal lifestyle. I know that after so long, this is a huge change and I want any Buckinghamshire residents in this position to know that support is still available to them if they need it.

If you've been shielding and feel you need help adjusting to a more normal lifestyle, help with arranging your own shopping or medicine deliveries, or if you're nervous about all this change, please do get in touch. You can call **01296 395 000** or [fill in our online contact form](#).

Parking charges

This is just a reminder that all parking charges have now been brought back in Buckinghamshire Council car parks and on-street pay and display bays. It means you will need to pay for parking in one of our parking spaces from now on – we had suspended charges during lockdown and in the few weeks afterwards.

To find out more [see our website](#). We'd also like to urge you to pay using a parking app where possible so you can use a contactless payment method.

Six contenders for emergency active travel plan

We've confirmed six locations across the county as sites for temporary emergency active travel schemes, as coronavirus lockdown restrictions are eased.

The initiative comes in response to the government's desire to make post-Covid-19 travel safer and offer new ways of getting around, helping us adjust to a 'new normal'.

Temporary schemes will be funded by an initial government grant of £514,000, and could include temporary 'quietway' schemes, pop-up cycleways, more cycle parking in town centres, and temporary one-way roads.

The six temporary schemes in Buckinghamshire include:

- **Amersham:** reallocation of road space to create pop-up cycleways around Amersham on the Hill, with improved active travel links to Amersham station, local schools and business areas.
- **Aylesbury:** improved cycle corridors through Southcourt for connections to Stoke Mandeville Hospital and Aylesbury town centre. Also in Aylesbury, a one-way system for vehicles in Turnfurlong to improve walking and cycling access to the three secondary schools, helping to reduce local congestion and problem parking hotspots.
- **Chalfont St Peter to Gerrards Cross:** closure of back roads to through traffic to create quiet streets, which are safer and more attractive for walking and cycling while maintaining local access.
- **Haddenham:** reallocation of road space to create safer routes for cyclists travelling east to west, to support social distancing and healthy travel to schools.
- **High Wycombe:** upgrades to create safer routes for cyclists travelling east to west through High Wycombe.

Detailed plans – currently being drawn up – will be included in letters to residents in these neighbourhoods and will also be published on our website shortly. Go to this [webpage](#) to submit feedback on these plans.

British Grand Prix

The second weekend of the British Grand Prix takes place at Silverstone this weekend. Sadly, this year, it isn't open to the public so please can I remind fans, just like last weekend, to stay away and let the events take place safely. There will be local restrictions in place.

For further information, please visit the Local Resident Information tab at: www.silverstone.co.uk/about/local-community

Feeling low? There's support available 24/7

The last few months have taken their toll on us all and I know many people have suffered more with feelings of stress, anxiety, low mood or maybe even more acute mental health symptoms. Please don't suffer in silence. There's a special helpline available 24/7 across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, so please do use these numbers if you want to speak to someone about how you're feeling.

Adults: 0800 783 0119 or 01865 904 997

Children and young people: 0800 783 0121 or 01865 904 998

There's also additional help available on the [Healthy Minds Bucks](#) website.

COVID-19 honours – who's been your hero?

The government has announced it'll be awarding official honours to individuals or groups to recognise outstanding and exceptional contributions during the coronavirus pandemic response.

Perhaps you know of someone worthy of such an honour – we know there's been, and still is – an exceptional community effort going on across Buckinghamshire.

Maybe it's someone who's worked on the frontline of their organisation? A health or care worker who has given critical care on the front line? Or maybe a person who's volunteered in their community?

Take a look at the new [COVID-19 honours nomination form](#) on the government's website if you want to nominate a person.

The deadline for applications is **Friday 25 September** – so I'll be mentioning this in future emails too!

Culture in Bucks – don't miss out!

During the pandemic, lots of people have found culture to be a vital comfort, especially during the time of the deeper lockdown. As we emerge into a changed world, culture remains a really important source of solace and inspiration.

We place a huge value on culture in Buckinghamshire and it's still possible to enjoy first class cultural experiences across the county, even if we're having to do things a bit differently. There

are a large number of Bucks attractions and cultural venues that are offering free content at the moment – from virtual tours to children’s activities.

The [Visit Buckinghamshire website](#) is a great way to see what’s available, whether you can physically visit or soak up a cultural experience online.

Lockdown stories

I also want to make sure you know of the ‘[Lockdown Stories’ project](#) being run jointly by the University of Buckingham and Buckinghamshire Culture. This is a new local venture launched during lockdown, where people can create and share their own stories, inspired by isolation and the recent changes to our lives. We want to build an online community to share stories when it’s so much harder at the moment for people to come together physically.

This is a brilliant project, so please do check the website for stories shared so far and hopefully this might inspire you to create your own!

Stories can be submitted as video, film, voice recording, image or text. (Please note that stories must be suitable for audiences of all ages.) To submit your story, please email: Camilla.zingari@buckingham.ac.uk.

KEEP YOUR MIND ACTIVE

Has the lockdown inspired you to pick up an old hobby or maybe try something new? Then take a look at the online courses available from Buckinghamshire Council’s [Adult Learning](#) service. There’s plenty to inspire you!

Worried about a vulnerable friend, relative or neighbour?

Our Adult Social Care team is checking in with all vulnerable residents we are aware of by making many regular phone calls and by supporting in other ways too. Please tell us if you know of someone who might need our help by calling the Adult Social Care team on **01296 383 204**.

Please also carry on using our [online community hub](#) for details of how to find support in your local area.

Tell us how the pandemic has impacted you

Our survey to find out how our residents have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic draws to a close tomorrow – so please make sure you take part if you haven't already.

We want to understand how people's lives have been affected by coronavirus – whether it's directly or indirectly. How have the lockdown and its consequences impacted you?

This information will help us tailor our recovery across the county in the best possible way – so please let us know via the [Buckinghamshire Coronavirus Health & Wellbeing Survey](#) before tomorrow's deadline.

We've had a good response rate already and we'd especially like to hear from more people who are Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority, and people who work in high-risk roles such as carers, taxi drivers and NHS workers. It would also be really valuable for us to capture more experiences of men and people who've got long term health conditions, so please use the link above and tell us about how coronavirus has affected you.

Stay safe and protect Bucks,

Martin Tett

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

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Buckinghamshire Council
The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
buckinghamshire.gov.uk