

## Update on fighting coronavirus in Buckinghamshire



Dear Resident,

I know it's only a week since I last wrote to you but, unfortunately, we are seeing a situation of increasing urgency here in Buckinghamshire, so I wanted to update you again. The last week has shown another rapid rise in the number of cases across the county; we now have **87 cases per 100,000 people** in Buckinghamshire compared with the **22 cases per 100,000** that I wrote to you about last week.

This means our **rates have increased dramatically, quadrupling in a little over seven days**. These numbers are changing rapidly so [please go to our website for our latest data in detail](#). You can also see the number of cases in your postcode area at this link too.

I know that overall, the number of cases here in Buckinghamshire is still lower than in some other parts of the UK and this is relatively good news. However, it's the fast rate at which cases are growing here that is the cause for concern. We do not want to follow in the footsteps of areas in the north of England. This would mean potentially the further curtailment of our personal freedoms, reduced ability to meet with friends and loved ones, and a damaging impact on the local economy and jobs.

At present the infection is still predominantly in young people but this is beginning to change and we are seeing it more prevalent in older age categories too. In the north of England, they are seeing hospital beds and intensive care units again filling with COVID patients and we do not want to follow suit. I am aware that this paints a very gloomy picture but I want to be sure that we communicate the very latest information to you all as often as possible so that you can continue to make informed choices about your activities.

So, I am writing again today with a clear message. **Please do what it takes to keep yourselves and your friends, your family and your local community safe**. This means following the current guidance in place for Buckinghamshire **at all times**. We still have a chance to get the virus back

under control here in Buckinghamshire so let's do all we can to reverse the current trend of this rise in infections.

### Reducing the risk

I cannot stress this enough: **we all need to play our part**. We are at our most vulnerable as we enter the cold wet weather of late autumn and winter. The virus is most easily transmitted 'person to person' indoors. Our best defences against this virus at the moment are distancing and hygiene. The virus passes extremely easily between people so please avoid close contact with people you don't live with. Follow the 'hands, face, space' guidance at all times and protect other people by self-isolating immediately if you, or someone you live with, has symptoms:

- Keep at least 2 metres/6 feet from anyone you don't live with
- The fewer people we see, the less chance we have of catching and spreading coronavirus, so please think hard about how you prioritise meeting up with others
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds
- Wear a face covering where required unless you're exempt
- Isolate if you or someone you live with develops coronavirus symptoms
- [Book a test for](#) anyone in the household with symptoms (call 119 if you can't do it online)



### What are the rules for Buckinghamshire?

As you may well be aware, the government has introduced its new '3 tier' local COVID alert system. Buckinghamshire is currently classified as '**medium**'.

These are the main rules that apply here:

- You cannot socialise in groups of more than six, indoors or outside
- Businesses and venues can remain open as long as they are COVID secure
- Businesses like pubs and restaurants must close at 10pm and must operate table service
- Customers in such venues must wear face coverings (unless exempt), only removing them whilst eating and drinking
- Work from home if you're able and in agreement with your employer
- Wear a face covering in all places that it's required by law like shops, unless you are exempt
- When travelling, plan ahead to avoid busy times and routes. Walk and cycle where you can
- Isolate if you or someone you live with develops coronavirus symptoms, or if you have been asked to do so by the NHS Test and Trace system

Everyone should also continue to follow social distancing rules, maintaining a distance of 2 metres/6 feet from anyone you don't live with.

You can read the [full detail about the local COVID alert levels on the government's website](#).

### **Advice for the clinically vulnerable**

I know that this is a particularly worrying time for those people who have previously shielded from the virus. The government has changed its approach with regard to people who are extremely clinically vulnerable and has advised that shielding is not needed yet, in spite of the increase in cases nationally. Instead the advice is intended to be less restrictive than the previous shielding programme and the government has advised it will only introduce shielding in the very worst affected local areas. This means people are only required to shield if they receive a letter advising them to do so. Clearly people should use their own judgement if they feel particularly vulnerable and they may wish to take extra personal precautions.

This government advice in part recognises the efforts to make shops and other venues COVID secure and, of course, allows people to make individual choices about how they go about their daily life.

You can [check the government's website for the updated advice to clinically vulnerable people](#) and please also check our own [Buckinghamshire Council online support hub](#) to find out where you can access extra help if you need it.

I know I can count on the people of Bucks to make the right choices. No one wants to catch this horrible illness and, just as importantly, we all want to protect our vulnerable friends and neighbours so please let's all keep going and do everything we can to reduce the infection rate here in Buckinghamshire.

Look after yourselves and each other.

Stay safe and protect Bucks,

**Martin Tett**

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

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