

Protect yourself, others and the NHS

3 February 2021

Dear Resident,

I'm sure we are all pleased to see January behind us. Our local NHS services have been under enormous and unprecedented pressure since Christmas due to Covid. However, while the situation remains very serious, we are now at last seeing reducing infection rates in Buckinghamshire. I would like to thank every one of you for playing your part in helping to achieve this. Nevertheless, our rates still remain very high compared to as recently as November. Also, in neighbouring Hertfordshire and Surrey there have been reported cases of the new South African virus strain. Therefore, it is far too soon to think that this virus is beaten. You can find up to date information about local case numbers on our [COVID-19 dashboard](#) and on [the Government's website](#).

We must keep on doing everything we can to keep suppressing the virus and get it fully under control. So please, continue to do your bit, [follow the rules](#), and stay at home unless your [journey is essential](#). If you develop coronavirus symptoms then [book a test](#) and isolate along with everyone else you live with too. We are supporting the national contact tracing programme so if you do test positive for COVID-19 then we may contact you to offer support with self-isolating and to ask who you've been in close contact with. If you get a call from 01296 585 167 that'll be our team so please do pick up. We are here to support and to help in the effort to stop the virus spreading. And remember – you may qualify for a [self-isolation payment](#) if you have to miss work due to isolating if you're on a low income and can't work from home.

COVID-19 vaccine roll out

Our local COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to speed forward and I'm really pleased to be able to let you know that local capacity is expanding even more in the days and weeks ahead. Subject to final sign off, we have a new large vaccination site opening in Buckinghamshire next week. We also have a vaccine site in Chesham and a hospital hub vaccine site for health and social care workers opening in Amersham. Every GP surgery in the county is linked in to one of our nine GP-led sites which are giving many vaccines every day. There have been a few pockets of areas where supply has been slower but the majority of residents aged 80 and over have now been invited for their first vaccine. Our NHS colleagues remain on target to offer everyone aged 70 and over and the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable a vaccine appointment by the middle of this month.

Nearly 190,000 residents have now been vaccinated in our region (Bucks, Oxon and Berks), of which around 70,000 are Bucks residents.

You can read more about the COVID-19 vaccine and the roll out on [the Buckinghamshire Council website too](#), including the answers to many of the frequently asked questions.

How you'll get your COVID-19 vaccine appointment

When it's your turn you will get a letter from the NHS and/or your GP will contact you direct as the national programme is running alongside the GP led programme. If you book an appointment through the national system but then decide to get your vaccine through your GP please call 119 to cancel the national appointment and so avoid vaccine wastage. If you get an NHS letter but are offered an appointment some distance away that you don't want, do hold onto the letter and keep checking back as new local sites are opening so you might get an appointment closer to home. Also, make sure you're registered with a GP and that the contact details they have for you are up to date.

If you haven't heard about your appointment and are expecting to, then rest assured you will get news from your own doctor or the NHS national programme soon. It's the NHS that is co-ordinating the vaccine roll out so while I cannot give personal assurances on their behalf, I am confident from their updates that we are in a very positive position.

Vaccinating health and social care staff

We've made great strides vaccinating our health and social care staff in Buckinghamshire, which is fantastic news both for residents who work in this sector and the vulnerable people they care for.

If you work in health and social care and haven't had your vaccination yet, please contact your employer. If you are a self-employed worker in health and social care and haven't had your vaccination, please contact the Allocation Bureau: COVIDvaccination@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Think before you share

There's a lot of information about the vaccines available online and we all have a responsibility to 'think before sharing' any vaccine posts. **The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, it does not contain animal products or egg and has been declared halal by Imams.**

There is a lot of misinformation circulating on social media so please think before you choose to share any posts; take five seconds to consider:

- Is this a rumour?
- Is the info from a reliable source?
- How does the person who's sent this know it's true?

Of course, having the vaccine is a personal choice but it's critical that we all do our bit to avoid a situation where someone refuses a vaccine as they've read misinformation about it online. If you

do want to find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine then make sure anything you read about the vaccine comes from a reliable source such as the [NHS or Government's websites](#).

Support for you

None of us is alone in this and I know most of us will be facing challenges in some way, whether that's combining home schooling and working, caring for someone, money worries, or running a business that's struggling:

- If you do have a business and need to access support, we've got a **new round of grants open** – please look at the [details on our website](#).
- Please take the opportunity of your **daily exercise** and **keep in touch** with loved ones – it's more important than ever that we all take time to do the things that will protect our physical and mental health, especially as winter takes its toll.
- It's **Time to Talk** day this Thursday – a reminder to us all that it's good to talk honestly and openly about how we are feeling. Their [website is well worth a read](#) and if you do need some support please check the '[Health and Wellbeing Bucks](#)' website as there are lots of organisations that can help.

Show some love to our key workers

The dedication and sacrifices of all key workers during the last year has been incredible. Shop workers, teachers and school staff, childcare workers, street cleaners, delivery drivers, everyone working for the NHS and care services – they and the many other key workers have all kept on going.

So why not join in our special Valentine's **#ShowSomeLove** campaign. Between now and Valentine's Day put some hearts in your window to say 'thank you' to these fantastic people who are keeping life's essential services going for us all. [Find out more about the campaign on our website](#) and keep an eye out for **#ShowSomeLove** on our social media channels ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)).

Look after yourselves and each other,

Martin Tett

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

We have used your contact details to provide you with information from Buckinghamshire Council related to the coronavirus pandemic. This is why this email has been sent to you and this is the only other use of your contact details. Please unsubscribe via the link at the bottom of this email if you do not wish to receive future emails about the coronavirus emergency from Buckinghamshire Council.

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