

Local Government Bulletin

11 January 2021

This is the regular bulletin MHCLG sends out, updating you on the latest government guidance, advice, communications products and other useful information about coronavirus (COVID-19), EU transition and other topics of interest for local government.

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Coronavirus updates

Health Secretary's statement on coronavirus, testing and vaccinations

Today (11 January), the Health Secretary, Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, gave a statement on coronavirus and provided an update on the rollout of vaccinations.

The Health Secretary also spoke yesterday (10 January) about vaccines, testing and the R number and the Vaccine Deployment Minister, Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP published a statement on the full vaccine deployment plan.

Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Medical Adviser for NHS Test and Trace, Dr Susan Hopkins, also made statements on national alert levels and community testing, respectively.

Statement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/health-and-social-care-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-11-january-2021>

Announcements:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-secretary-of-state-for-health-and-social-care-matt-hancock-on-testing-and-vaccinations>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-vaccine-deployment-minister-nadhim-zahawi-on-vaccine-deployment>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-chief-medical-officer-professor-chris-whitty-on-national-alert-levels>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-chief-medical-adviser-for-nhs-test-and-trace-susan-hopkins-on-community-testing>

Action Fraud: Vaccines

Action Fraud is warning the public to remain vigilant as criminals begin to take advantage of the roll out of the coronavirus vaccine to commit fraud.

The messages below are to help councils promote safe behaviours through their channels if required.

- The vaccine is free of charge.
- The NHS will never ask you for your bank account or card details.
- The NHS will never ask you for your PIN or banking password.
- The NHS will never arrive unannounced to your home to administer the vaccine.
- The NHS will never ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or pay slips.
- If you receive a call you believe to be fraudulent, hang up.
- If you are suspicious about an email you have received, forward it to report@phishing.gov.uk.
- Suspicious text messages should be forwarded to the number 7726, which is free of charge.
- If you believe you are the victim of a fraud, please report this to Action Fraud as soon as possible by calling 0300 123 2040 or visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk.

Announcement: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/alert/coronavirus-vaccine-scams-warning>

Government publishes vaccines delivery plan

The Government has today (11 January) published the UK COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan.

The vaccines delivery plan sets out how the Government will work with the NHS, devolved administrations, local councils and the armed forces to deliver the vaccination programme. The plan is for two million vaccinations to take place per week with over 2,700 vaccine sites across the UK.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-plan-for-the-largest-vaccination-programme-in-british-history>

Plan: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-covid-19-vaccines-delivery-plan>

Asymptomatic testing to be rolled out across the country starting this week

Yesterday (10 January), the Government announced that rapid, regular testing for people without symptoms of coronavirus will be made available across the country from this week, with the eligibility of the community testing programme expanded to cover all 317 councils.

Councils are encouraged to target testing at people who are unable to work from home during the national lockdown. The expansion of asymptomatic testing will identify more positive cases of coronavirus and ensure that those infected isolate, protecting those who cannot work from home and vital services.

The Government has also confirmed that it has ordered two million tests for use in asymptomatic testing.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asymptomatic-testing-to-be-rolled-out-across-the-country-starting-this-week>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-deploy-first-british-manufactured-rapid-lateral-flow-antigen-tests-for-covid-19>

Guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings during the

pandemic

The Government has, today (11 January), updated the guidance on the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings during the pandemic. This includes amendments to reflect the national lockdown regulations and updates to guidance on singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

Short guide on what's working well in remote education

Ofsted has, today (11 January), shared some remote learning tips, based on research and visits to schools and colleges.

The guidance draws on findings from Ofsted's interim visits, as well as wider sources. It sets out some common myths about remote education and counters them with evidence-based pointers. The guide has been designed to help schools and colleges deal with some of the difficulties and challenges they face under current circumstances.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whats-working-well-in-remote-education>

Findings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-covid-19-series>

Department for Education guidance updates

On 8 January, to reflect the national restrictions, the Department for Education updated the guidance for:

- List of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools and educational settings (to clarify that parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can)
- Children's social care services
- Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus outbreak
- Holidays and after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings
- Parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings

Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-of-children-attending-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

New TV advert urges public to stay at home

Yesterday (10 January), the Government launched a major new public campaign urging people to act like they have the virus. The new TV ad, fronted by the Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty, urges people to stay at home in the face of rapidly rising rate of coronavirus infections and pressures facing the NHS. A public information campaign will run across TV, radio and on social media.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-tv-advert-urges-public-to-stay-at-home-to-protect-the-nhs-and-save-lives>

Guidance for landlords, tenants and councils

On 8 January, the Government updated the guidance for councils, landlords and tenants in the private and social rented sectors to reflect the new national restrictions that came into force in England on 6 January.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

Provision of night shelters

The Government has, today (11 January), updated guidance on the provision of night shelters. The guidance sets out operating principles to support commissioners, staff and volunteers of rough sleeping accommodation (night shelters), as well as rough sleepers themselves, should the decision be taken to open a shelter.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters>

Local government updates

Flood and coastal resilience innovation programme

The Environment Agency has extended the deadline for expressions of interest for the flood and coastal erosion resilience programme. The programme will allocate £150 million of government funding to 25 local areas and the deadline for submitting an expression of interest has been extended from 15 January to 29 January.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-and-coastal-resilience-innovation-programme>

EU transition updates

Traders must act now with border traffic expected to increase next week

On 8 January, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, urged traders to ensure they are fully ready under the new rules following the end of the transition period.

Businesses and hauliers trading between Great Britain and the EU have been urged to ensure they meet necessary requirements before travelling to the border, as the Government warns that expected traffic could increase next week.

Exporters must provide the right documentation to hauliers, including export declarations and the extra certificates needed for products like plant and animal products. Hauliers heading to Kent must also get a negative coronavirus test and obtain a Kent Access Permit before heading to port, or risk facing a fine and being turned away.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/traders-must-act-now-with-border-traffic-expected-to-increase-next-week>

Where to find the latest information and guidance

Coronavirus

- Guidance for local councils and LRFs during the coronavirus outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>
- Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Coronavirus communication materials: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/>
- FAQ from the Cabinet Office: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>
- National lockdown: what you need to know: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>
- Coronavirus cases: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>
- Previous MHCLG Coronavirus Bulletins: <https://bit.ly/3iC2Pnz>

EU transition

- Latest information on transition: <https://www.gov.uk/transition>
- To sign up to GOV email updates: https://www.gov.uk/search/news-and-communications/email-signup?related_to_brexit

For information purposes, previous Local Government Bulletins are available to view and download. Please be aware that guidance is updated frequently. To view and download: <https://bit.ly/2E4wKpp>

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