



Weekly News Bulletin for Community and Voluntary Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Partners and Hub Update Subscribers



Update from the Community Support Hub



Thank you again for the immense support you have been providing to residents, particularly as we move into Tier 4 Stay at Home restrictions from Sunday, 20 December until further notice. We know that these restrictions will have a serious impact on many businesses and families, so we are continuing to promote the [COVID Winter Grant Scheme](#), [Business Support Grants](#), and the services of the Community Support Hub.

The [Community Support Hub](#) remains open during office hours between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Thursday, or between 8.30am and 4.30pm on Friday, except for 24 December and the Christmas/New Year bank holidays. If you need to get in touch, please call us on 01635 503579 or email us on westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk. Please note the Hub is closed on 24 December and Bank Holidays. For out of hours emergencies, please contact 01635 42161.

The latest tier 4 information and an update on Council services during the Christmas and New Year period can be found on: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-residents>

Our Council Leader Lynne Doherty and Chief Executive Nick Carter provided a Covid-19 update for West Berkshire in their latest [Coronavirus Weeknotes #42](#), issued on 21 December 2020.

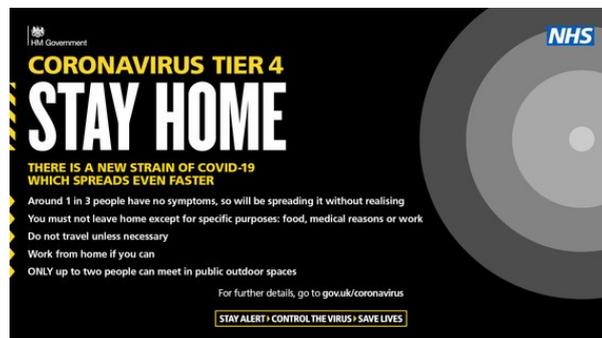
Tier 4 Stay at Home Messaging

The Government has placed West Berkshire in Tier 4 (Stay at Home), along with the rest of Berkshire, London and the South East, due to a very rapidly rising level of infections. This came into effect 20 December, and means that there are much tighter restrictions and that the Christmas Bubble plans have been cancelled. The next review will take place on 30 December.

(continued)

In summary, the following rules now apply for West Berkshire:

- You must stay at home, apart from limited exemptions set out in law. This means that you cannot leave or be outside of the place you are living unless you have a [legally permitted reason](#).
- You must work from home if you can, but may travel to work if this is not possible.
- You cannot meet other people indoors, including over the Christmas period, unless you live with them, or they are part of your support bubble.
- Outdoors, you can only meet one person from another household.
- Non-essential retail, indoor gyms and leisure facilities, entertainment venues, and personal care services must close.
- Hospitality venues such as cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars and social clubs must close; with the exception of providing food and drink for takeaway (until 11pm), click-and-collect, drive-through or delivery.
- People should not enter or leave Tier 4 areas, and Tier 4 residents must not stay overnight away from home.
- It will not be permitted to travel abroad apart from limited exceptions, such as for work purposes.
- These rules will not be relaxed for Christmas for Tier 4: you cannot form a Christmas Bubble in Tier 4.



The above guidance is for people who are fit and well. There is additional advice for:

- [households with a possible or confirmed coronavirus infection](#)
- [people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus](#)

We thank everyone in West Berkshire for complying with the new rules to help limit the spread of coronavirus, reduce the impact on the NHS and save lives.

The rules on what you can and cannot do in Tier 4 have been put into law and must be followed. The relevant authorities, including the police, will have powers to enforce the law - including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

[See all Tier 4 rules on what you can and cannot do.](#)

Additional Guidance

As well as the specific restrictions outlined above, residents should continue to follow the “Hands, Face, Space” advice to help reduce the transmission of coronavirus.

When meeting people you do not live with, it is important to do so outdoors where possible, or to make sure that any indoor venue has good ventilation (for example by opening windows so that fresh air can enter) - subject to the restrictions in place.

Don't forget that if you are asked to self-isolate, you cannot go outdoors and must stay at home for the required period.

How Tiers are determined by central Government

Please note that the following factors are taken into consideration by central Government when deciding which tier each area of the UK should be in:

- Case detection rates in all age groups
- Case detection rates in the over-60s
- The rate at which cases are rising or falling
- Positivity rate (the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken)
- Pressure on the NHS

In order to go back down to a less restrictive tier, there must be a sustained downward trend across a number of these factors.

COVID Winter Grant Scheme messaging

We are continuing to actively promote this Grant scheme in our Residents Bulletins, our social media and through announcements to local press. We want to reach as many people as possible, so would greatly value your help in continuing to share the following information with your communities:

<p>COVID Winter Grant Scheme</p> <p>1 December 2020 – 31 March 2021</p> <p>Support for food, utility and water bills, and related essentials available for those in financial hardship due to COVID</p> 	<p>If you are in financial hardship due to the pandemic you may be eligible for support for food, utility and water bills for household purposes, and essential supplies.</p> <p>Please visit West Berkshire Council's Coronavirus Support page for further information and to apply: https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-support</p> <p>You will need to have your supporting documentation ready to attach them when you are submitting your application.</p> <p>For reasons of privacy, and to avoid scammers, please do not post any comments that would reveal that you or anyone else would like to apply.</p> <p>Deadline for applications: 15 March 2021.</p>
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Mass Covid-19 Vaccination Programme

We will update you on the mass vaccination programme plans for West Berkshire as soon as the details become available to us.

Watch out for phishing emails or texts

Be on the watch for fake emails or texts about the coronavirus vaccine or tests, DPD deliveries, or amazing offers. These phony communications may contain links to fake websites. If you're unsure, don't use the link and visit the website directly instead. If you receive an email you're not quite sure about, you can report it by forwarding the email to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service at report@phishing.gov.uk. You can report suspicious texts you have received by forwarding the original message to 7726.

If you think you've been a victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Hungerford Self Isolation Support Network – Helping Residents in Need During Coronavirus

Introduction



The Community Support Hub was delighted to touch base with Geordie Taylor, who founded the Hungerford Self Isolation Support Network to connect volunteers with community members in need of support, especially during the first lockdown.

Claire Barnes, Town Clerk, Hungerford Town Council said to Geordie and his team: "I would like to say a big thank you to you personally on behalf of Hungerford Town Council for co-ordinating the support network, and please pass on our gratitude to all the 260 volunteers who came forward. Hungerford is blessed to have such a caring and generous community."

We wanted to be sure to document the amazing efforts of this wonderful group, and invited Geordie to provide us with an overview of the support network. We also asked Geordie how the group transitioned and adapted as we came out of the first lockdown over the summer. We are grateful for Geordie's account, which follows:

Supporting self-isolating residents in Hungerford, by Geordie Taylor

Hungerford Self Isolation Support Network was set up a week before the first lockdown back in March and ultimately has supported more than 300 households. Throughout the first lockdown in spring and early summer, the efforts of 260 volunteers were very helpful to many people who needed to isolate, and even critical to some of our more vulnerable or frail residents.

Even as we came out of that lockdown, and our services were therefore less required, we were able to maintain small regiment of reliable volunteers to look after those who still needed shopping, prescriptions, and so on. This included providing some extra support during the second lockdown in November.

The strategy when the network started was to deliberately assign volunteers to clients, thus creating many relationships that will no doubt endure long after. I split the town into 11 precincts with each having a more-or-less equal share of volunteers and clients. Our support network's availability was promoted to residents via leaflets, Facebook and word of mouth.

As a network, we have performed several key tasks for our clients: grocery shopping, prescriptions, dog-walking, phone-a-friend, food banks, transport to appointments and cooking hot meals.

Shopping was the dominant requirement for most volunteers and many relationships with clients developed over the months. Tesco granted our network priority access to assist our frequent shoppers through to September. After restrictions eased and people were able to come out of isolation, where practical and agreeable, I began to introduce clients to the brave new world of on-line shopping.

Prescription delivery has been a resounding success, with just a handful of people (and a hot-line) providing a drug delivery service to anybody in Hungerford and further afield who's asked for our help. We arranged a daily collection service at Boots and our volunteers delivered more than 800 prescription drugs up until the end of July.

In June, I personally called and spoke with every person who had used our prescription delivery service at least twice over the previous three months (there were 121 of them). I asked them the question "How will you manage if we're not here to get the prescriptions for you?"

Their response fit into three camps:

- "No problem, we'll be out and about as lockdown eases and will get them ourselves." We knew that this would group would be able look after themselves exactly as they did before lockdown, although several asked if they could have some masks, just to ease the anxiety of stepping out for the first time.
- "We'll register with an on-line pharmacy and the prescriptions will be delivered to the door." I researched this extensively and created a small team of IT gurus to visit households to assist with registration. I have also spoken with senior management at the surgery and were happy to be on board to assist.
- "I can't manage - I still need someone's help." Most importantly, we now know who these people are so that we can continue to provide vital support.

On the transport side, throughout the lockdown we were able to provide lifts to surgery and hospital appointments through the assistance of Marc @ 1st Direct Taxis (free of charge) and volunteers' private cars. The volunteer group CHAIN is now taking regular clients to and from the shops and appointments.

For food parcels, we registered households with the West Berks Food Bank, who thereafter took care of things very well, and has been wonderfully supportive. The Phone-a-friend service was out-sourced to Hungerford Rotary and they've performed admirably.

Like all, we at the Hungerford Self Isolation Support Network hope that the worst of the coronavirus emergency is over. However, in the weeks and months ahead, you can be assured that ultimately, all those that continue to need our help will receive it. I am humbled and grateful for the support of all our amazing volunteers.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP..

It is anticipated that the coronavirus lock-down and the self-isolation protocol has many more weeks to run. If you are already in self-isolation or need to go into self-isolation in the near future, we have a support network here in Hungerford ready and standing by to help you, your family, neighbours and friends. Just ask!

...WE CAN HELP

If you need some grocery shopping done for your household

If you have a dog that needs to be exercised every day

If you don't know where the next hot meal is coming from

If the cupboard is bare and there's no money in the teapot

If you are frightened or lonely, or just need someone to talk to

...WE CAN HELP

We now have over 200 volunteers in the town who've stepped forward to help and assist people just like you. If you want our help then contact us directly:

CTNA Community Christmas Day Meal Delivery Service 2020

Message from Joanna Abraham on behalf of Christians Together in the Newbury Area



We are holding a Christmas Day Meal Delivery Service this year using the St. George's Church Kitchen and Hall for our meal preparations, with grateful thanks to them for allowing us to use their excellent premises. Unfortunately, due to the Covid situation, we are not able to have our usual event in the traditional way, but we have decided to provide meal deliveries at home to our elderly and vulnerable who would otherwise be without a cooked meal.

Should you or anyone you know be in this category please contact me: Joanna Abraham, RCCG, Jesus Disciples Centre, Newbury. Email: marinaoabraham@gmail.com or telephone 07828244119. [See more details.](#)

Flu jab protects yourself, your loved ones and the NHS



Please kindly remind your communities that with Covid-19 in circulation it is now more important than ever that eligible groups are vaccinated in order to protect them from flu.

The vaccine is FREE to a range of people. If you're eligible you may be asked to wait for the vaccine due to high demand. Please check with your GP/Pharmacy to find out when you can expect to book an appointment. It's important to go to your appointment unless you or someone you live with has [symptoms of coronavirus](#).

Public Engagement Survey for the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy



A Happier and
Healthier Berkshire

Reading West Berkshire Wokingham

West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham Councils have [launched a survey](#) to obtain feedback on how best to shape plans and resources in support of the health and wellbeing of residents.

You are invited to take part in this survey and also share the link with your communities: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/jhwbstrategy>

Good news stories – please keep them coming in!

We love to feature your good news stories on our social media and [Hub Facebook](#) page and you can find more about the wonderful work of West Berkshire's volunteers on our [Local Heroes](#) website. Please contact us to share your stories and volunteer photos. It's a great way to say a public thank you to your volunteers and your local community.

With our grateful thanks and best wishes, The Hub Team

Please ensure that all queries about any individual cases are directed to the Hub via the general email westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk or by calling 01635 503579. This is to ensure they are dealt with promptly, effectively and in line with guidelines on dealing with vulnerable adults.