

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

Title of meeting:	Worcestershire County Council internal GOLD meeting in respect of COVID 19
Meeting number:	52
Date:	Thursday 29th October – 17:00

Key Messages

- The number of cases in the county continues to rise and as of today stands at **134** cases per 100,000. The England rate is **229** per 100,000.
- We are seeing a levelling out of the figures in Bromsgrove but the district continues to have the highest number of cases in Worcestershire. There are currently **171** cases per 100,000 in Bromsgrove. Redditch has **159** cases per 100,000. Worcester has **150**; Wychavon **119**; Wyre Forest **115**; Malvern Hills has **93** cases per 100,000.
- Worcester City has seen a steep increase in cases over the past week.
- Students currently contribute **1%** of cases seen in Worcester City.
- In the last 7 days there have been **808** confirmed cases of coronavirus recorded in Worcestershire.
- There were **42** new situation records created over last 7 days which is a decrease of **12** compared to the previous 7 days. There have been fewer notifications from schools during the half term holiday.
- We currently have good testing capacity in Worcestershire. Supply is meeting demand in the county.
- Sites have now been identified for local test centres for all districts. The location of the site for the centre in Malvern has now been agreed. These centres are designed to be accessible on foot, (i.e. not a drive-through) but they are not drop-in centres. Further details of the sites are listed below.
- The Council's drive-through test site for essential front-line workers is open and relieving some pressure on the national testing system and has capacity.
- GPs, healthcare and social care workers, school staff and those working directly with children, police and fire crews are eligible to access this additional testing.
- There are **34** people in the county's hospitals with Covid-19 in Worcestershire. **6** people are in ITU.
- **18** care homes in Worcestershire have current outbreaks (more than 2 cases, linked in either time place or person). **9** homes are currently closed to new admissions due to Covid.
- Limited visits to care home residents can now be arranged in the county once more, following a review, providing strict safety measures are in place.
- This week is half term in Worcestershire. Prior to half term just under **90%** of pupils in Worcestershire were in school which is above the national average.
- **83** schools and settings in the county currently have pupils and/or staff isolating due to closed bubbles or partial bubble. This equates to **2,686** pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- There are **3** current situations in Worcestershire short breaks units and children's homes.
- A number of SEN transport services are currently closed due to staff isolating – we are in regular contact with WCF and operators over these issues
- Three Resource Centres for those with the most complex disabilities are open
- All libraries across the county are open
- All Household Recycling Centres are open

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Local Testing Centres:

- Redditch Trescott Road Car Park: Live
- University of Worcester, Arena Car Park: Live
- Pershore Civic Centre Car Park: estimated Monday 2nd Nov
- Bromsgrove Stourbridge Road Car Park: estimated Monday 9th Nov
- Kidderminster Harriers Stadium Close Car Park: estimated Monday 9th Nov
- Malvern Victoria Rd Car Park: estimated Monday 23rd Nov (no dates confirmed yet though)

Dates are potentially subject to change and not confirmed by Deloitte.

Key Service Areas:

Adult Services

- Nationally, concerns remain about infection rates in care homes. The situation in Worcestershire is currently stable.
- We have 18 care homes across the county with more than 2 confirmed cases.
- 9 homes are currently closed to new admissions.
- Two homes have temporarily ceased trading (residents moved to other homes owned by the same provider on the same site)
- There are 8 supported living / extra care locations where either staff or service users have tested positive. We have started to regularly test all staff and residents at these locations.
- One third of the county's 179 care/nursing homes in the county have had recorded outbreaks during the pandemic.
- We are increasing our capacity in care and nursing homes to support hospital pressures. We have initiated 3 new care home contracts this week.
- Limited visits to care home residents can be arranged in the county once more, providing strict safety measures are in place to protect vulnerable residents. Extra Care and Supported Living are also being advised that they can open to limited family visits.
- Screens and digital tablets are being used to enable families to keep in touch with residents virtually.
- Infection prevention training for care homes and domiciliary care providers continues to be rolled out
- National guidance is that PPE will be provided to us free of charge and the details of this are being worked through
- The Adult Social Care Winter Plan guidance has been issued and we will construct our local plan and digest and share with our partners and providers to ensure full compliance
- Three Resource Centres for those with the most complex disabilities are open. Those are the centres in Bromsgrove, Pershore and in Worcester. The opening of the Wyre Forest centre is delayed due to flooding in the building

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Children's Services

- This week is half term in Worcestershire. Prior to half term just under 90% of pupils in Worcestershire were in school which is above the national average
- We have been working together with Councils from across the county to make sure that every vulnerable child in Worcestershire has access to a meal every day during the half term holidays
- There are 83 schools and colleges in Worcestershire that currently have closed bubbles/part bubbles where staff or pupils have been identified as contacts and are self-isolating. This equates to 2,686 pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- The delivery of PPE packs and face coverings to schools is continuing
- The use of face coverings on home to school transport will continue to be mandatory in Worcestershire for pupils over the age of 11 once the school term resumes next week.
- We are acutely aware of the challenge to the daily running of schools. Worcestershire Children First (WCF) staff are working closely with Council colleagues to ensure that the information, contacts and support we provide is as supportive as possible to schools, settings and families.
- Despite it being half-term we are continuing to provide communications and advice to our schools about when pupils and staff should get tested. As with all county residents, the advice remains to only get tested if you are showing symptoms or if advised to do so by their GP or Local Authority or Public Health England.
- We have recommended via schools that from next week parents and carers wear face coverings as they drop children off and pick them up from school.
- Each school has a number of tests they are able to deploy, and schools are able to order additional tests from DfE 21 days after initial delivery. The education planning group have reported test results arriving in a more timely manner.
- Worcestershire's Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) is providing a valued and trusted advisory service to our schools community.
- We are concerned to see an increase in demand in social care at the Family Front Door. Similar increases in calls and referrals have been seen elsewhere in the country.

Community Services

- All Libraries across the county are open.
- Worcestershire Registration Services continue to run wedding ceremonies but with a reduced number of people attending to meet Government guidelines
- The Council's Here2Help service is operational and able to provide support for the most vulnerable residents in our communities.
- The H2H service is beginning to see a slight increase in the number of requests for help. H2H is in a good position to be able to 'flex up' if needed over the coming weeks and months to support our residents.

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- Working with the district councils we are making sure that every vulnerable child in Worcestershire has access to a meal every day during the half term holidays. The 6 district councils are providing welfare support services and Here2Help Worcestershire is taking requests for additional support.
- We are working with Worcestershire Regulatory Services to recruit Covid Advisors who will be deployed in coming weeks
- The new Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme is available for eligible residents to apply for. District Councils are responsible for processing applications for the £500 payment from people

Economy & Infrastructure

- Some SEN transport services and other transport services currently closed due to staff isolating, although currently half-term. We are in regular contact with WCF and operators over these issues
- Traffic volumes have remained at an increased level resembling something more 'normal' compared to pre-lockdown figures
- Bus travel in the county has increased since the beginning of the new school term.
- There has been extensive work with public transport operators based on the latest DfT Guidance and to improve public confidence in bus services.
- All Household Recycling Centres are operational. Provision is being reviewed as we head into winter months.
- We are planning our response to any significant flood or weather events with the current Covid restrictions.

Workforce and Training

- County Hall and other Council buildings continue to be Covid Secure and site-specific protocols are in place.
- Staff continue to work from home where they can do so. Office working is permitted for essential frontline workers and for those who cannot work from home.
- There was a 70% response rate to the Staff Survey, which is the biggest in recent times. The survey gathered views on work experiences since lockdown and the future of greater flexible working opportunities.

Communications

- Priority communications have been targeted at Bromsgrove district, including paid-for advertising on buses, advans, media appeals and social media posts aimed at Bromsgrove post codes.
- Similar communications are now being delivered in both Worcester city district and in Redditch.
- Through digital communications we are segmenting our audiences by age, geography and by shared interests.
- Newspaper advertising has been booked for weekly papers across the county for the weekend of 7th and 8th November.

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- A content bank of communication material is ready to be issued should Worcestershire or any part of Worcestershire be moved into Tier 2 at any point in the future.
- Communications continue to be shared with care home providers and with families regarding the changes to visitor restrictions to care home settings.
- We are working with schools to display messages targeting parents at school drop off and pick up times to remind them about social distancing. Advice is also displayed in all town centres on street scene signage.
- Advice is being provided ahead of upcoming events such as Halloween and Remembrance Sunday.
- The Here2Help advice line is being promoted to provide support for those who need it and to point people to district council and partner services.
- Communications targeting the 60+ population is being delivered across all suitable channels.
- A young people's communication plan that targets 17–29 year olds is being delivered, recognising that there has been an increase in cases within this age group in parts of the county.
- Working as One Worcestershire and together with our district council partners communication resources are being dedicated to support the economic recovery, to point to business advice and guidance and to promote the expanded Job Support Scheme along with a raft of local initiatives.

Finance

- Financial spend due to the pandemic continues to be closely monitored.
- Worcestershire has been allocated £4.4million from the Government's most recent funding announcement for local government.

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COVID-19 STATISTICS

Official statistics and information are available on the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-track-coronavirus-cases>

The methodology for reporting positive cases changed on 2 July 2020 to remove duplicates within and across pillars 1 and 2, to ensure that a person who tests positive is only counted once. Numbers of lab-confirmed positive cases throughout this website now include those identified by testing in all settings (pillars 1 and 2).

Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 are different kinds of data taken from coronavirus testing. Swab tests for Covid-19 are carried out in hospitals and surgeries as well as in the community all the time. Each pillar comes with specific coverage goals and a set purpose from one or several organisations:

- Pillar 1 data comes solely from the tests carried out in Public Health England (PHE) lab and NHS hospital settings.
- Pillar 2 tests come from out in the community, such as care homes.

The publication of pillar two data will show a marked increase in the number of our confirmed cases in Worcestershire. This data has been available to Public Health and the Director of Public Health for some time and has been closely monitored throughout. In Worcestershire, our figures remain stable and comparatively low for the Midlands. “

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WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION, HELP AND ADVICE?

Reminder that the Here2Help website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help is the first point of contact if people want to offer assistance or gain support. The other option is the telephone contact number which is staffed 8am-6pm 6 days a week – 01905 768053.

Carers who support a family member or friend who require support should contact the Worcestershire Association of Carers on www.carersworcs.org.uk or call the Helpline 0300 012 4272.

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS Website for information on Coronavirus
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports#history>