

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

Title of meeting:	Worcestershire County Council internal GOLD meeting in respect of COVID 19
Meeting number:	60
Date:	Thursday 26th November – 17:00

Key Messages

- Worcestershire will go into **Tier 2** category of restrictions, once the current lockdown finishes on December 2nd
- Confirmed cases have decreased in the last 7 days by **29%** compared to the previous week. The number of cases has gone down in all districts
- As of today, the rate stands at **166** cases per 100,000. The England rate is **234** per 100,000. The West Midlands rate is continuing to rise and currently stands at **305** per 100,000.
- Redditch District has the highest number of cases in Worcestershire. There are currently **255** cases per 100,000 in Redditch. Wyre Forest has **227** cases per 100,000, Bromsgrove has **202**, Worcester has **163**; Wychavon **111**; Malvern Hills has **89** cases per 100,000.
- In the last 7 days there have been **998** confirmed cases of coronavirus recorded in Worcestershire.
- The highest percentage of individuals testing positive in the week up to November 12 were in Redditch (**12.1%**) and in Bromsgrove (**9.4%**).
- We have good testing capacity in Worcestershire. The volume of community testing in the county has increased.
- Local test centres are being established in all districts. The centres in Worcester, Redditch, Pershore, Bromsgrove and Kidderminster are open. The site in Malvern opens tomorrow (Friday 27 November). More details below.
- The Council's drive-through test site for essential front-line workers is open.
- We continue to work with NHS partners to deliver lateral flow testing pilots
- There are **82** people in the county's hospitals with Covid-19 in Worcestershire. **6** people are in ITU.
- **33** care homes in Worcestershire have current outbreaks (more than 2 cases, linked in either time place or person). **8** homes are currently closed to new admissions due to Covid.
- School attendance has increased and is now above the national average. Our most recent figures show that **86.1%** of pupils in the county have been in school compared with the national average of **84.4%**.
- **60** schools and settings in the county currently have pupils and/or staff isolating due to closed bubbles or partial bubble. This equates to **2024** pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- There are **7** current situations in Worcestershire short breaks units and children's homes.
- Resource Centres will reopen next week after the end of the national lockdown for those with the most complex disabilities.
- All libraries across Worcestershire remain open.
- All Household Recycling Centres remain open.
- Registration offices in the county are closed to the public unless an appointment has been pre-booked or is essential.

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Local Testing Centres:

- Redditch - Trescott Road Car Park: Operational
- Worcester - University Arena Car Park: Operational
- Pershore - Civic Centre Car Park: Operational
- Bromsgrove - Stourbridge Road Car Park: Operational
- Kidderminster - Harriers Stadium Close Car Park: Operational
- Malvern - Victoria Road Car Park: Operational 27 November

Key Service Areas:

Adult Services

- We have 33 care homes across the county with more than 2 confirmed cases.
- 8 homes are currently closed to new admissions.
- 2 homes have temporarily ceased trading (residents moved to other homes owned by the same provider on the same site).
- There are 6 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.
- 45 homes report Red (2) or Amber (43) workforce pressures. This is down 13 since last week.
- We continue to have concerns about the number of domiciliary care workers who are currently absent from work.
- We are closely monitoring the number of registered nurses who are absent from working in our nursing homes.
- We are increasing our capacity in care and nursing homes to support hospital pressures. We have block booked more capacity and increased our reablement service.
- Limited visits to care home residents can be arranged in line with the latest Government guidelines. Extra Care and Supported Living are also being advised that they can open to limited family visits. We have led the way on this regionally and attracted positive media interest for this.
- 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.
- Resource Centres will reopen next week after the end of the national lockdown for those with the most complex disabilities.
- 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 have constructed our local plan and will share with our partners and providers to ensure full compliance.
- Adult Learning Services are continuing to be provided virtually.
- We are working in partnership with the Worcester News group on a Worcestershire Care Heroes campaign which will run throughout December.

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Children's Services

- School attendance in Worcestershire is going up and above the national average. Our most recent figures show that 86.1% of pupils in the county have been in school.
- 60 schools and settings in the county currently have pupils and/or staff isolating due to closed bubbles or partial bubbles. This equates to 2024 pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- We are dealing with an increase in requests from schools for washable face coverings. It is now mandatory for all children in years 7 and above to wear face coverings in communal areas.
- The use of face coverings on home to school transport is mandatory in Worcestershire for pupils over the age of 11.
- We are recommending that face coverings are worn at the school gates at drop off and pick up times. Signs to display this advice are being displayed outside First, Primary and Middle schools.
- Signs are being developed to display at all secondary schools to remind pupils of the key public health messages.
- 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.
- Schools locally are being empowered to make decisions on isolation of contacts of cases and bubble closures, with the LORT available to help with decision making and for more complex situations.
- We are continuing to provide regular communications and advice to our schools about when pupils and staff should get tested.
- 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. Test results are now arriving in a more timely manner.
- There are 7 current situations in Worcestershire short breaks units and children's homes (this includes independent homes).
- Our Children's social care teams are concerned by the high level of contacts at the Family Front Door. The number of calls and contacts are double what we were receiving this time last year.

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Community Services

- Overall, 584 requests for help have been registered on Here2Help during November so far (239 via H2H and 345 via National Shielding Service System (NSSS)).
- The Council's Here2Help service is contacting those people who have asked for local support.
- We have received 23,000 Lateral Flow Test devices from DHSC.
- We are in contact with Clipper directly to resolve issues that we are having with incorrect quantities of PPE being delivered from the DHSC.
- There were issues last weekend in some of our popular countryside areas, particularly Clent. If visitors find that somewhere is busy we are encouraging them to go somewhere else this coming weekend.
- All libraries remain open but with reduced services during the lockdown period. Libraries are open for the reserve and collect book ordering and pick up service, pre-bookable public computer sessions for essential purposes and for book returns.
- Registration offices in the county are closed to the public unless an appointment has been pre-booked or is essential. Death registrations can be taken by telephone; but birth registrations are still face to face.
- Museums in Worcestershire are closed.
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services continue to recruit Covid Advisors. The first of the advisors are in place and are being deployed.

Economy & Infrastructure

- Highways maintenance works and our major construction projects continue to operate safely during lockdown. We currently have no workforce issues on our sites.
- We are working through supply issues on one of our construction projects.
- Some SEN transport services and other transport services have been closed due to staff isolating. We are in regular contact with WCF and operators over these issues.
- The traffic volume has remained at around 79% of pre-Covid levels during this second lockdown period.
- 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.
- 8% of Worcestershire employees were furloughed through the job retention scheme at the end of September.
- In the run up to Small Business Saturday (5th Dec) we are running a campaign to encourage people to shop local and to support their local High Street (once shops re-open next week)
- All Household Recycling Centres are remaining open during Lockdown.
- We are planning our response to any significant flood or weather events with the current Covid restrictions.

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Workforce and Training

- Additional resources have been made available to the LORT which has provided extra capacity. The new staff are being trained and are embedding within the service.
- Staff have been advised that everybody should work from home if they can do so, in line with the restrictions imposed for the Lockdown.
- Those members of staff who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus have been told to work from home.
- County Hall and other Council buildings are Covid Secure and site-specific protocols are in place.
- Office working is only permitted for essential frontline workers and for those who cannot work from home.
- We are above 90 per cent capacity for our flu vaccination programme for all staff. We have 6 Covid-safe sites set up across Worcestershire for delivery of the flu vaccine for all essential workers. Appointments began last week. This also includes schools and academies.

Communications

- Key messages to raise awareness of today's announcement about going into Tier 2 restrictions next week have been shared with partners, the media, residents and parish and town councils.
- Communications continue to be targeted at Redditch and those districts with the highest number of cases.
- Advertising vans displaying public health messages have been at different locations in Redditch all week this week
- We are reminding visitors to our popular countryside areas, particularly the Clent Hills, that if it's busy, go somewhere else. We are targeting media outlets in Birmingham and the Black Country with this message
- We are delivering a communications plan targeting the 60+ population are being delivered across all suitable channels and in all areas.
- We continue to work with NHS colleagues, Worcestershire Association of Carers, Age UK and Worcestershire Voices to develop strong, case study-based video messages.
- Through digital communications we are segmenting our audiences by age, geography and by shared interests.
- A radio advertising campaign with Free Radio is underway reaching all parts of the county.
- District Council community engagement teams are helping us to target marginalised communities.
- All First, Primary and Middle schools in the County have been provided with signs to display messages targeting parents at school drop off and pick up times to remind them about social distancing.
- Poster signs are being developed and will be rolled out and displayed at all secondary schools to reinforce key messages to pupils.
- Advice is displayed in all town centres on street scene signage and at bus stops.

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- 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.
- A young people's communication plan that targets 17–29 year-olds is being delivered. This includes the creation of a dedicated web area, advertising on streaming services and podcasts, working closely with venues and bars.
- In the run up to Small Business Saturday (5th Dec) we are running a campaign to encourage people to shop local and to support their local High Street (once shops re-open next week).
- The NHS is leading on all communications relating to the Covid vaccination programme.
- We are working in partnership with the Worcester News group on a Worcestershire Care Heroes campaign which will run throughout December.

Finance

- Financial spend due to the pandemic continues to be closely monitored.
- In total the Council has received £72.7 million from Government, and spent £77.2 million out in response, leaving a £4.5 million shortfall which it is presently looking to manage. A separate briefing has been prepared for MPs with the detail behind this.

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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. “

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>