

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

Title of meeting:	Worcestershire County Council internal GOLD meeting in respect of COVID 19
Meeting number:	44
Date:	Thursday 1st October – 17:00

Key Messages

- The number of cases in the county is rising and as of today stands at 37 cases per 100,000. The England rate is 58 per 100,000.
- The districts with the highest numbers of cases are Wyre Forest, Redditch and Bromsgrove, all in the north of the county.
- In the last 7 days there have been 224 cases recorded in Worcestershire
- There were three times the number of confirmed cases in Worcestershire during September than there were in August
- In Worcestershire, like other parts of the country, residents are continuing to face difficulties getting a test for Covid-19. This continues to have an impact on the published daily figures.
- The demand for tests in Worcestershire continues to outpace supply
- The Council's drive-through test site for essential front-line workers is open and relieving some pressure on the national testing system and facilitate support of public services.
- 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.
- We have requested a local test centre that is accessible by foot to be established in each of the 6 districts. Four of these centres, those in Worcester, Redditch, Bromsgrove and Evesham, will open at the end of this month. We are waiting for opening dates for Kidderminster and Malvern. These centres are designed to be accessible on foot, (i.e. not a drive through) but they are not drop-in centres. Residents will still need to go online and book a test before using the sites.
- There are 10 people in the county's hospitals with Covid-19 in Worcestershire. One person is in ITU.
- 18 care homes in Worcestershire have outbreaks (more than 2 cases, linked in either time place or person). The situation in care homes in Worcestershire is currently stable
- Restrictions on families visiting care homes are now recommended across the whole of Worcestershire.
- 92.6% of pupils in Worcestershire are in school. This is above the national average.
- 12 schools and FE colleges in the county currently have pupils and/or staff isolating due to closed bubbles or partial bubble. This equates to 577 pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.
- All libraries across the county are open.
- All Household Recycling Centres are open.
- Proactive communications to support the key public health messages have been increased and priority is being given to the northern districts of the county.

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

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.
- Of the 179 care homes in the county, there have been only 6 with more than 16 outbreaks and since the start of the pandemic, a total of 82 care homes (47%) have recorded outbreaks.
- We have introduced restrictions on families visiting care homes across the whole of Worcestershire.
- 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 digest and share with our partners and providers to ensure full compliance
- Resource Centres for those with profound disabilities are to reopen this month

Children's Services

- Every school in the county is open with the exception of one independent non maintained special school (Cambian New Elizabethan, Wyre Forest District), that has had to self isolate all 44 children due to one staff member testing positive. The LORT and PHE along with ECF SEN team are in close liaison with this school to monitor provision for children self isolating.
- The average attendance this week is 92.2% of pupils in Worcestershire are in school. This is above the national average.
- 92% of pupils with social workers are in school
- 85% of pupils with EHC plans are in school. This is lower than the broader school population due to the significant health needs of a proportion of children
- There are 22 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 697 pupils currently isolating from a school population of more than 84,000.

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

- We have ramped up communication 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.

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

- 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.
- 3,000 FFP3 masks have been received for special schools. The distribution of additional face coverings to schools is being arranged for transport and education teams as from Tuesday 6th October the use of face coverings on home to school transport changes from recommended to required. This is supported by WCC public health, school transport and the education planning group

Community Services

- All Libraries across the county remain 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 remains operational and able to provide support for the most vulnerable residents in our communities.
- Emergency food provision continues although the demand is low.
- The H2H service is in a good position to be able to 'flex up' if needed over the coming weeks and months to support our residents
- The deadline for submissions to the Worcestershire Crowdfunding initiative which gives project creators a chance to gain funding for projects to support Covid-19 passed on the 30th September.

Economy & Infrastructure

- Traffic volumes have remained at an increased level since the start of the school term. This includes an increase in morning commuter traffic to match the trend of the mid-day peak resembling something more 'normal' compared to pre lockdown figs.
- Bus travel in the county has increased significantly since the beginning of the new school term.
- Face coverings are to be made mandatory on home to school transport in the county from next week
- 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.

- As we move towards the winter, we are planning how we would respond to any significant flood or weather events with the current Covid restrictions.

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

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 has been 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

- An additional advertising campaign has been launched today supported by mobile advertising vans which travel around the county. Bus advertising is to follow in a fortnight's time.
- Information about how to download the NHS Covid-19 App is being shared widely
- Advice is being displayed in all town centres on street scene signage and is being rolled out at locations close to all schools
- A young people's communication plan that targets 17–29 year olds has been developed, recognising that there has been a spike in recent weeks of cases within this age group. This includes paid-for advertising on the Spotify streaming channel.
- 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 Job Support Scheme along with a raft of local initiatives.

Finance

- Financial spend due to the pandemic continues to be closely monitored

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORCESTERSHIRE MPs

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>