

Update from Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

Dear Resident

I know this email swiftly follows my last one, but I wanted to keep you as informed and up to date as possible now this second period of national coronavirus restrictions is underway.

Firstly, I want to thank you again for staying at home and making these sacrifices in the national effort to drive down the number of virus cases. I know this is tough, especially as we have moved into colder, darker weather, and I know the impact is being felt by us all. I know too how hard this is for our local businesses that have faced unprecedented challenges as a result of this pandemic.

Stay at home

As of yesterday we all need to stay at home other than for the following reasons:

- To go to work if you cannot work from home
- For education – schools, colleges and universities will stay open
- For exercise or recreation
- To shop for essentials such as food and medicine
- For medical concerns or reasons – like a doctor's appointment
- To visit or providing care to a vulnerable person, or if you're volunteering
- To get a coronavirus test if you have symptoms

Individuals can also meet one other person outdoors, but you shouldn't have visitors inside your home or garden.

You can read the full detail of what you can and cannot do [on the Government's website](#)

The situation in Buckinghamshire

Our local data continues to paint a concerning picture with another rise in infection rates overall in the county. The numbers are especially high in the former South Bucks District area and in people aged 60 and above.

There is currently a rate of **123.7 cases per 100,000 people** in Buckinghamshire, and the rate is now **170.4 cases per 100,000** in the former South Bucks District Area.

You can see the latest data for the 7 day period up to 31 October [on our website](#).

The best way to protect ourselves and our loved ones is to strictly follow the national guidance and stay at home as much as possible.

It's essential that you book a test as soon as possible if you develop any coronavirus symptoms, no matter how mild they are. It's vital that we identify every case possible. Use the link above or call 119. Capacity to process tests has now been increased and we have new walk through test centres available in Buckinghamshire seven days a week so you should be able to get a slot locally more easily now than in recent weeks. **Isolate immediately if anyone in your household develops symptoms.**

Buckinghamshire Council services

As you already know, the new restrictions are impacting some of our services such as leisure centres and libraries. All leisure centres in Bucks are now closed until the restrictions are lifted. Our libraries have closed too, but five (Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Chesham and High Wycombe) will reopen next Tuesday for customers to use our '[Request and Collect service](#)' – get in touch using this link to tell us what kind of books you're after and our library staff will find you some to suit your preferences.

Our registrars service will remain open as will our Household Recycling Centres and all bin collection services will operate as normal through this period.

Please do keep checking our social media channels ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)) and [our website](#) for up to date information on how we will be running Buckinghamshire Council services during this period.

Support for businesses and employees

We are pleased to have had confirmation from the Chancellor that the national furlough scheme will be extended to March.

In addition, if you're on a low income and can't work from home and have been told by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate, you may qualify for a £500 Support Payment. If this applies to you, you can [check your eligibility and apply here](#)

The government has also announced further financial support for eligible businesses and we will be making payments soon, once we have the full details about the eligibility criteria. We will outline the criteria and how to apply for this support as soon

as possible.

Vulnerable residents

There are many of you that might need some extra support during this time. Please keep checking the [coronavirus pages of our website](#) which outline the various ways you can get help if you need it. These pages will be updated as more new information about help, grants and support packages comes through. Please also use the [Bucks Online Directory](#) to find local community groups who can offer support if you need it.

The government is writing to people who are 'clinically extremely vulnerable' and [you can read that advice here](#). You can also [register on the government's national support scheme](#) if you have a condition that means you're classed as 'clinically extremely vulnerable'. Registering to this scheme will give you access to priority supermarket deliveries for example.

If you or someone you know needs extra support, please call us on 01296 395 000 to let us know.

Visiting loved ones in care homes

The Government has [now published its advice on this](#) and I'm sure it will be a comfort to many families that care homes are able to provide safe visits during this lockdown period. This gives our local care homes the go-ahead to permit visits in a safe way but please make sure you liaise directly with the care home you will be visiting to check what arrangements they have in place first; each care home will need to undertake a risk assessment and determine if it is able to accommodate safe visits.

It might therefore take a little while for the necessary measures to be put in place at some settings to allow safe visits to go ahead.

Call for volunteers

The community effort that we've seen throughout this pandemic has been phenomenal and I know in every part of Bucks we've seen countless examples of how people have been helping in their local communities and really making a difference. We will be starting to ask for volunteers to help out in some of our public areas, providing help and guidance to members of the public on matters such as how to wear a mask properly and how to maintain social distancing.

These roles will not involve any kind of enforcement – this is about helping people out and providing friendly advice on how to follow the current rules to help keep everyone safe. The volunteers will also be able to observe and report back on any problems or issues they spot when out in the community.

I'll give you more detail when we have it on how you should get in touch if volunteering for a role like this appeals to you.

Marking Remembrance Day

As with all events at this time, we have to find ways to do this differently this year. The importance of this event goes without saying and I know many of us will still want to ensure we appropriately remember and pay our respects to those who've given their lives in defence of our country. It is deeply sad that in many areas there won't be the usual public wreath-laying ceremony but we urge residents and veterans to watch the National Service of Remembrance on TV at home where we can all still observe the two minutes silence too.

We also have advice on our website about [how to celebrate Diwali this year](#).

Health and wellbeing

This is a tough time for all of us and as we move into the winter months, it's more important than ever to take good care of ourselves and be mindful of our physical and mental well-being. It's really important that, should you need to, you continue to access local NHS services as normal. If you need to contact your doctor or attend a hospital appointment, you should still do so.

Do your best to get outside for some exercise and fresh air in a safe way. I know too that some people may struggle more than others with their mental health and if that is the case please be assured that help is still there if you need it. No-one should suffer in silence and local mental health support services are open and are there to help you.

[Buckinghamshire Mind](#) is a great place to start for tips and advice on mental health and wellbeing and the [Healthy Minds Bucks website](#) will also tell you how to access help and support services.

Stay safe and look after yourselves and each other.

Martin Tett,

Leader, Buckinghamshire Council

We have used your contact details to provide you with information from Buckinghamshire Council related to the coronavirus pandemic. This is why this email has been sent to you and this is the only other use of your contact details. Please unsubscribe if you do not wish to receive future emails about the coronavirus emergency from Buckinghamshire Council.