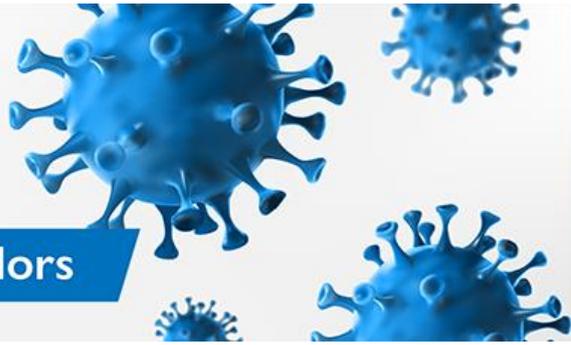


Hampshire County Council
Public Health update
Coronavirus (COVID-19)



Briefing for County Councillors

Edition No.11

19 March 2020

This briefing provides an update on new Government measures, including to support people facing financial difficulties due to COVID-19, whilst focusing on local actions to support Hampshire residents – including volunteers - and businesses.

National context

Coronavirus Bill – the Government has published its [Coronavirus Bill](#) alongside accompanying [explanatory notes](#) and a [summary of impacts](#) produced by the Department of Health.

Social care

The Government has [announced £2.9bn funding](#) to help people no longer needing urgent hospital treatment to return home. £1.6bn will be allocated to local authorities to respond to COVID-19 pressures, including increasing support for the adult social care workforce and services for the most vulnerable.

In addition, the Department of Health and Social Care has published an [ethical framework](#) to support local authorities and professionals support response planning and organisation of adult social care during the pandemic.

Free school meals

Children eligible for free school meals are to be offered vouchers, food or meals to make sure they continue to receive support, even if they are no longer attending school, with immediate effect. [Guidance](#) for schools and local authorities on FSM arrangements has also been issued.

Postponement of local elections

Cabinet Officer Minister Chloe Smith made a [statement](#) updating on forthcoming legislation to postpone local elections and other polls.

Business

The Government's new [Economic and Business Response Committee](#) met for the first time yesterday to discuss Government support for businesses affected by COVID-19.

New COVID Response Force

The Ministry of Defence [announced](#) that an additional 10,000 service personnel will be put at higher readiness to support public services, and has taken measures to mobilise reservists if required.

Home to the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, Hampshire's Armed Forces Community will have a significant role to play in supporting the local and national response. Specialist military planners are already working with Hampshire's Local Resilience Forum to support the local response effort. Hampshire is also home to 1,200 Reservist, including eight County Council employees.

Homeowners and renters

The Government has [agreed new emergency measures](#) with the energy sector to protect domestic energy supply for those most in need or facing financial distress.

Payment Holidays offered to Help to Buy homeowners

Homeowners struggling to pay interest fees on Help to Buy equity loads taken out before 31 March 2015 will be offered payment holidays.

Measures to protect landlords and renters

The Government [announced new measures](#) to protect landlords and renters, including suspending new evictions, with landlords unable to commence eviction proceedings for at least the next three months, and extending the three-month mortgage payment holiday to Buy to Let mortgages.

Local context

Local voluntary response effort

Residents across Hampshire are mobilising to offer in-kind support to the response effort, with many pop-up local community and mutual aid groups forming. Residents wanted to give time / skills should contact their local Council for Voluntary Service organisation, which will direct them to where support is most needed. Contact details for all Hampshire CVSs are available via <https://www.hampshirecvs.org.uk/volunteering/>. These webpages are being updated daily.

Hampshire libraries – are currently being kept open, with some changes to opening hours to reflect staff availability. The Service has [increased its digital resources](#) and is encouraging residents to make use of these to support their health, wellbeing and ongoing learning. Fees for overdue items will be frozen for the next three months and the maximum of loads has been increased significantly.

County Council outdoors centres – are closed from Thursday 19 March until further notice.

Concessionary bus pass holders will be permitted to use their passes in line with early supermarket hours by removing the restriction on use before 9.30am. Change will apply from Friday 20th March, allowing older residents to use their bus pass at any time.

Business Hampshire has published a [new webpage](#) setting out advice, guidance and support to businesses affected by COVID-19. Through Business Hampshire, the County Council is working with local unitary authorities to deploy the Government's [package of support](#).

The Hampshire Cultural Trust has taken the difficult decision to close its venues to protect customers, staff and volunteers – as well as to mitigate significant financial impacts. These bold steps are intended to place the Trust in the best possible position to re-open venues at the right time in future.

Where to find the latest information and guidance

- Hampshire County Council webpages on coronavirus (including links to press releases): <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus>
- Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS information on coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Q&A from Public Health England on coronavirus: <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>
- Guidance for local government: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>