**COVID-19 INFECTION RATES**

**Comments from the Director of Public Health** (8th January 2021)

After a period where Leicestershire’s rates have been rising, but not at as faster a rate as the national average, the last few days have seen an acceleration in the rate of increase.  In the last seven days the local rate has increased by 54% to 348.2 cases per 100,000, compared to a 54% increase nationally (to 579.8/100,000).  Oadby & Wigston has the highest rate in the County (549.0 per 100,000 population) followed by Harborough (462.7), Blaby (392.0), North West Leicestershire (379.3), Hinckley & Bosworth (326.2), Charnwood (311.5), and Melton (304.6).  [The rate for the City of Leicester is 490.1/100,000 and for Rutland 293.0/100,000.]

Similarly in the County, rates in the 17-21 and 60+ age group have increased markedly but remain well below the national average.  This does, though, say more about the rapid increase in cases nationally than any local successes at keeping a lid on the rise.  The national lockdown is well timed to help prevent the worst of further increases in our rates.

**COVID-19 DATA**

From today, 8th January, two Covid-19 data documents will be made available on the County Council’s website on a weekly basis.  The first is titled ‘Covid-19: Data Update for Leicestershire’ and the second is named ‘Weekly Covid-19 Surveillance Report in Leicestershire’.

**Covid-19: Data Update for Leicestershire**

This weekly report provides data on deaths and excess deaths in the County, including information by district, middle super output area (MSOA) and death settings.   Covid-19 case incidence data for the total population are provided, together with figures for the 60+ and 17-21 age groups and information on the geographical distribution of cases (district and MSOA).  For comparative purposes, data for Leicester, England and ‘CIPFA-similar counties’ are also included.

**Weekly Covid-19 Surveillance Report in Leicestershire**

This report focuses on case data in the County including cumulative data since March 2020 and the latest weekly position.   The information is disaggregated by testing ‘pillars’, all age bands, and by district and MSOA.

The reports can be accessed at:  <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/Coronavirus-data-for-cases-in-Leicestershire>

*Together, these provide appropriate and detailed information for wide circulation ensuring transparency about infection rates and deaths in the County.  It is advised that where stakeholders and members of the public seek such information they are directed to these reports on the website.  Other information, which is confidential or more sensitive, is used for planning purposes and shared on an as-needed basis with key partners to ensure an effective response to the pandemic.*

**CLINICALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE PEOPLE - SHIELDING**

The support open to those who are categorised as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) continued with all support services maintaining a small level of service through the tier 3 phase of the pandemic.  This included support from district councils through their community hub network.  Leicestershire moved into tier 4 on 31st December 2020 and the number of individuals requiring support increased to similar numbers that were seen at the beginning of November.  The onset of the current lockdown has also seen an increase in numbers.  In total we have supported 1794 individuals since the beginning of November 2020 which is when shielding was re-introduced.  The current advice for shielded individuals runs until 21st February 2021 and consists of similar messages to the most recent shielding programme where individuals can go outside to exercise with strong advice to work from home if they can.

**REGULATIONS**

The national lockdown regulations[[1]](#footnote-1)[1] which came into force on 6th January 2021 amend the earlier ‘All Tiers’ regulations to move all of the country into Tier 4 and to make some amendments to the Tier 4 restrictions in order to achieve a national lockdown.  This includes:

* removing outdoor recreation as an exception from the restrictions on leaving home;
* restricting takeaway and click and collect of alcohol from hospitality businesses;
* closing zoos, aquariums, safari parks and outdoor animal attractions, outdoor sports facilities and retail travel agents; and
* restricting childcare (other than early years provision) and supervised activities for children to vulnerable children and children of critical workers and removing the exemption to the gatherings restrictions for parent and child groups.

The regulations also change the expiry date of the All Tiers Regulations to 31 March 2021 (previously 2nd February 2021). The Secretary of State must review whether each area that is part of Tier 4 should continue to be part of that area at least once every 14 days.  The Secretary of State must also review the need for the restrictions in the regulations at least once every 28 days.

The regulations may be found here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/8/pdfs/uksi_20210008_en.pdf>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1374/contents>

**IMPACT OF THE CURRENT LOCKDOWN ON SERVICES**

**Children and Family Services**

Early Years, Schools and Colleges

* From 5th January 2021 all children in schools and colleges moved to remote learning apart from children of critical workers and children who are vulnerable.  The definition of a ‘critical worker’ and the fact that only one parent needs to be a critical worker, as set out in Government – Department for Education (DfE) - guidance, means there has been a significant increase in the number of parents and carers requesting a school place.  This increase is leading to many schools in Leicestershire not having the capacity to provide all of the places that are being requested alongside the delivery of remote learning.  The DfE have placed no limit on the number of children who can be on the school site.
* All children with an Education, Health and Care Plan are classed as ‘vulnerable children’ and are therefore entitled to an onsite school place.  This is a significant challenge for special schools, as 100% of their pupils are eligible to be on the school site.
* Alongside this the DfE has set out a series of expectations around the delivery of remote learning (both in terms of numbers of hours and the quality) for those children not on a school site.  This remote learning will be subject to Ofsted oversight and parents have the right to complain to Ofsted if they are not satisfied with the quality of the remote learning provided by their school.
* Early Years providers are open for all children.

School Transport

* School transport continues to be provided for vulnerable children and children of key workers who are attending school.  Currently the level of provision is still settling down as we get more information from schools and actual demand emerges.

Social Care and Targeted Early Help

* All cases open to Children’s Social Care and targeted early help are risk assessed in order to determine the level of contact over the lockdown period.  Face to face contact, with appropriate PPE, will continue and virtual visits will take place where face to face contact is not possible or necessary.
* The ‘front door’ to Children’s Social Care and Early Help remains fully operational in order to ensure the swift identification of children at risk.
* Contact between children in care and their parents will continue in line with guidance and to ensure that we can continue to meet court requirements in a Covid-safe way.
* Resources will be redirected from non-critical services to support critical services if required.

School Food

* As with school transport, the service continues to be provided as the requirement level continues to be assessed.

Financial Implications

* The risk remains that contacts and referrals could increase leading to more children coming into the Department for services.
* Agency staff costs may increase as demand for services increases or permanent staff shortages may lead to extended use of agency staff.
* Placement costs for children in care could rise both in terms of the numbers of children coming into care and an increase in the unit cost of children in our care.
* Contact between children in care and their parents can only be facilitated in local authority Covid-safe buildings, and therefore there may be capacity issues and increased costs.
* There will be contract implications in respect of school food.

**Adult Social Care**

* Services are being reviewed for the ability to meet individual and collective needs in line with Care Act Easements and Ethical Care guidance.
* Face to face visits will only be made where there are no alternatives available and visiting is essential to keep people safe and ensure people have the right care.  Risk assessments for staff and service users are being re-visited.
* We are ensuring there is capacity to deliver personal care services across the County in people’s own homes and in care settings.  Face to face services continue where essential to deliver personal care and resources are redeployed where possible working with external providers of services.
* We continue to support hospital discharge processes, reinforcing Home First services.  Support for care settings with advice and guidance on infection, prevention and control, PPE, visiting and workforce issues, also continues.
* Community Life Choices services are used to support only those people at highest risk.  Other service users are encouraged to remain at home where safe to do so.
* Liaison is maintained with Public Health in regard to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people.

There is a consequential financial impact:

* The external care market is being monitored and additional support is being provided where required to ensure continuation and stability of care delivery.  The potential for provider market failure in Community Life Choices and day care and residential care has to be recognised.
* Additional provider costs may be incurred due to the extra cost of delivering services and increased demand in some areas such as domiciliary services.
* Extra staff costs may be incurred related to increased capacity in redeployed service areas, to enable 7 day working and to boost capacity where required.
* There is potential loss of income from the inability to charge service users for social care.

**Libraries, Adult Learning, Museums, Heritage Services**

* Public access to County Council managed libraries is closed other than to digital equipment – PC access can be pre-booked.  Click and collect services are retained.  Mobile libraries and the Home Library Service remain open for click and collect.
* The majority of community managed libraries remain closed.  Barrow, Countesthorpe, Glenhills, Mountsorrel, Newbold Verdon, Rothley, Sileby and South Wigston have confirmed a click and collect offer.
* Barrow, Newbold Verdon and South Wigston also provide pre-booked PC access.
* Museums, Heritage sites and the Record Office are closed to the public.
* Adult learning services are being provided in line with the restrictions applying to schools.  Adult learning classes are closed and moved online.
* Closure of services means loss of income, e.g. the use of paid-for venues.

**Highways and Waste Disposal**

* Highway services continue with social distancing in place with our gritting crews particularly busy at the present time.
* Recycling and household waste sites continue to operate with close monitoring of levels of usage and liaison with our disposal outlets to ensure the service can continue to function.
* In such frontline services, ongoing monitoring of staffing levels as a result of sickness/shielding is in place to ensure essential services continue.

**Registration Service**

* Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are permitted in exceptional circumstances with a maximum of six attendees and in Covid-19 secure venues or in public outdoor spaces only.
* Save for urgent cases, birth registrations and Notices of Marriage are paused for the next two weeks in light of service reduction due to staff absence and to ensure capacity to deal with death registrations which will continue to operate by remote means.
* There may be a reduction in operating hours at some registration offices.
* There will be a diminution of traded income from weddings.

**HM Coroner’s Service and Legal Services**

* Inquests and court hearings will continue by remote hearings unless in person attendance is required as directed by HM Courts and Tribunals Service. There is no financial impact although greater officer time is required for remote hearing preparation.

**Member Meetings**

* Virtual meetings will continue in accordance with earlier lockdown requirements.
* There is uncertainty relating to May 2021 elections and no clear position at present. There may be additional costs in relation to the elections dependent on the approach eventually adopted.
* Civic events will cease except by remote means.

**Planning and Trading Standards Enforcement**

* Essential enforcement activities/visits will continue when proportionate and in line with Covid-19 secure protocols.
* Site monitoring of quarry and waste sites will be affected (reduced/stopped) during the lockdown which will result in a loss of monitoring fee income.

**Country Parks**

* Country parks remain open with cafés operating takeaway services.  We work closely with the Bradgate Park Trust so that access and other arrangements are matched as far as possible with the Council’s country parks.

**ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM GOVERNMENT**

The table shows Covid-related funding received from the Government.

| Grant | County Council Allocation | National share | Conditions | Use |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Covid-19 Funding (1) | £15.1m | 0.9% | None | Reduce the Council’s financial deficit  |
| Covid-19 Funding (2) | £12.5m | 0.8% | None | Reduce the Council’s financial deficit |
| Covid-19 Funding (3) | £3.7m | 0.8% | None | Reduce the Council’s financial deficit |
| Covid-19 Funding (4) | £3.2m | 0.3% | None | Reduce the Council’s financial deficit |
| Infection Control | £13m | 1.1% | Yes + clawback | Pass to providers for transmission reduction measures |
| Test and Trace | £2.3m | 0.8% | Yes + clawback | Mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of Covid-19 |
| COVID-19 Bus Service Support Grant | £1.0m | 1.8% | Yes + clawback | Support for bus services including employers’ parking information at park and ride sites – covers period to mid January; may be able to claim more for future periods but as yet unconfirmed |
| Emergency Assistance Grant | £0.5m | 0.9% | Subject to monitoring and evaluation | Support those struggling to afford food and other essentials |
| Home to School and College Transport | £1.0m | 1.2% | Subject to retrospective claim | Funding for additional dedicated school and college transport capacity (estimated and covers first 2 terms of 2020/21 academic year) |
| Travel Demand Management | £0.2m | N/A | Yes | Return to school after Covid-19 lockdown and summer. |
| Sales, Fees & Charges(SFC) | £2.0m | N/A | Retrospective claims | 5% deductible of SFC budgets, then 75% Government contribution |
| Arts Recovery Grant | £0.3m | 0.1% | Yes | Specifically for Century Theatre, Coalville |
| Local lockdown | £0.2m | N/A | Yes | Mitigate costs of implementing local lockdown and reducing infection levels. |
| Winter Grant Scheme | £1.5m | 0.9% | Yes + clawback | Support for those most in need with cost of food, energy and water bills etc. |
| Contain Outbreak Management Fund | £5.6m | 1.3%  | Yes | £8 per head funding for national restrictions from 5/11/20 |
| Contain Outbreak Management Fund | TBC | N/A | Yes | Tier 3 eligible to receive funding of £4 per head of population per month from 2/12/20 |
| Clinical Extremely Vulnerable People | £0.4m | 1.1% | Yes | £32m nationally to support the clinically extremely vulnerable on keeping safe |
| Lateral flow testing for care home staff | TBC | N/A | Yes | £149m nationally to pass to care homes to use for additional staffing, test site setup etc. |
| Irrecoverable local tax losses | TBC |  | Retrospective claims | Partial compensation for irrecoverable Council Tax and Business Rate losses |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **2021/22** |  |  |  |  |
| Holiday Activities (2021) | £1.5m | 0.7% | Yes | 6 weeks free holiday provision - including healthy food for free school meals pupils |
| Covid-19 Funding (5) | £11.75m | 0.8% | None | Reduce the Council’s financial deficit |
| Local Council Tax Support grant | £3.6m | 0.5% | None | Partial compensation for extra cost of LCTS schemes in 2021/22 due to higher unemployment – districts also receive an allocation |
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Please remember to keep up to date, including for the latest information on changes to services:

Twitter [@LeicsCountyHall](https://twitter.com/leicscountyhall)

[**https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19**](https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19)

[**https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/working-with-you-during-coronavirus**](https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/working-with-you-during-coronavirus)

1. [1] The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 3) and (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)