

Protect yourself, others and the NHS

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(<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6E9RX-o/c.aspx>)

Dear Resident,

It's not long since I last wrote, but given we are at such a critical point in the pandemic and the spread of the virus in the UK, I wanted to email you again to outline the latest guidance issued this week by the Prime Minister. I also want to reassure all of you, especially our most vulnerable residents, that help and support is always available for those who need it most, as has been the case throughout this pandemic.

The situation in Buckinghamshire

We are fortunate that at the moment in Buckinghamshire the number of new coronavirus cases is much lower than in other parts of the country. However, cases are still rising here. Our latest data indicates that our weekly rate of cases is 12.5 people per 100,000 here in Buckinghamshire. You can see all the most recent data on our website. (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6F5S8-o/c.aspx>)

While these current figures are relatively reassuring for Bucks residents, we know that things can change extremely quickly – this is how the virus works. We have seen in other parts of the country significant transmission that can be linked back to the actions of just one or two people. Because there are more cases in the UK overall, the risks are much higher to all of us than they were a few weeks ago, so while we are in a good position here in Buckinghamshire, it's now critical for us to pull together and stick to the guidance at all times. We want to keep things under control here, to keep enjoying seeing our friends and family safely in groups of no more than six, and to keep our businesses open.

The latest national guidance

As most of us will know, this week the Prime Minister set out a series of new measures for England that we must all follow, regardless of where we live. Sticking to these new rules is essential if we are to curb the rise in cases. None of us wants to go into a more stringent lockdown and by sticking together on this and all doing our bit we still have a chance to avoid it.

Here are some of the main elements of the announcement:

From today (24 September) all pubs, bars and restaurants must close at 10pm. This doesn't mean last orders, it means everyone out of the premises by 10pm. All pubs, bars and restaurants must offer table service only. In line with the 'rule of six', bookings will only be allowed for up to six people per table and tables cannot mingle. Where possible, people should now work from home in agreement with their employer, where they are able to do so. People who work in shops and in cafes, bars and restaurants, should all wear face coverings unless they are exempt. Customers in pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants should also wear a face covering except when seated at a table to eat and drink, or if they are exempt. Face coverings should also be worn by all taxi drivers and passengers unless they are exempt. Businesses, schools, colleges and universities will stay open. The 'rule of six' remains in place and will be enforced where needed. People must not meet in groups of more than six people apart from some specific

circumstances like weddings and funerals There are now bigger fines and tougher penalties for both businesses and individuals who don't comply. For example, people gathering in groups of more than six could be fined up to £200

You can read in full detail the national coronavirus guidance on the Government's website (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6E9S3-0/c.aspx>). Please bear in mind that some parts of these pages are still being updated to reflect the latest changes, so do keep checking back to make sure you're fully up to date.

Support if you're isolating

It is vital that if you or someone you live with develops symptoms of coronavirus that your household isolates immediately. You should also try to book a test for anyone who has symptoms – more on testing below. From Monday (28 September) if you don't isolate when you should be, then you will be breaking the law and could face a fine.

There will be payments of £500 available to support certain people on low incomes who cannot work from home and who will face a loss of earnings if they cannot work because they're isolating. There is more detail about this scheme on the government's website (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6F5S9-0/c.aspx>) and we will also provide more information about how this will work when the details are finalised.

NHS COVID-19 app – advice to residents

The new NHS COVID-19 app launches today. This is the 'official' NHS Test and Trace app designed to track the virus and to bolster the Test and Trace system. People with smartphones will be able to download and use the app on a voluntary basis, if their phone's operating system supports it. It will mean you can get an alert if you've been near another user who's tested positive for coronavirus. You will also be able to log symptoms, book a test if you need one and will get advice on whether you need to isolate if you've got symptoms or have been in contact with someone who's tested positive.

Users will also be able to use the app to 'check in' at any venue they visit, such as a pub, restaurant or a church.

The app works on an anonymous basis – it tracks the virus, not the user, using Bluetooth technology. You can find out more at www.covid19.nhs.uk (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6F5SA-0/c.aspx>).

NHS COVID-19 app – advice to businesses

If you run a business or organisation with a physical location that is open to the public, you should display a poster with a QR code for users of the NHS COVID-19 app to 'check in'. This is really quick and easy to do – just use the link below.

This list of venues that should display the QR codes includes:

All hospitality venues, like pubs, cafes and restaurants
All council buildings
Leisure and culture venues
'Close contact' businesses, like hair salons and nail bars
Places of worship
Community halls and venues

To make and print your QR code poster please use this link (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6F5SB-0/c.aspx>).

Vulnerable residents

At the moment, the government has not changed any advice for residents who

were previously shielding, so those residents do not need to start shielding again at the moment. I understand that this is a very worrying time for everyone, and especially those more vulnerable to the virus. Please take time to read the advice for the clinically vulnerable (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6F5SC-0/c.aspx>) on the government's website. We also have our information on our website on how to find help and support if you need it. (<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6F5SD-0/c.aspx>)

Anyone who is worried about whether they or a vulnerable friend, relative or neighbour can look after themselves can call our Adult Social Care Team on 01296 383 204.

When to book a coronavirus test

The difficulties with getting a test have been well-documented in recent weeks and I thank all the residents who have written to me about their experiences. I know many of you are doing the right thing, following the advice, and trying to book a test if you or the person you're booking for is showing symptoms. Please continue to do this if you have symptoms.

Unfortunately, although the capacity to carry out tests has risen significantly, recent demand has been higher still and there's a national shortage of processing capacity at the national laboratories. This means that bookings have been capped locally to allow the labs to get through all the tests they need to process nationally.

New processing centres are being built around the country but for now, unfortunately, the best advice we can give is to remind you that you should only book a test for someone who has symptoms and that if the system is showing no availability, it's best to wait and to try again. Test availability can become available at different times during the day.

I appreciate that this is far from ideal and I understand the frustration and disruption this is causing. We sincerely hope that these issues will be ironed out in the coming weeks and we hope that the new app will also be a significant step forward in helping to track the virus.

Follow the basics

(<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6E9S2-0/c.aspx>)

Our biggest defence against the virus is also the simplest. Please keep going with the three basic principles – Hands, Face, Space.

Wash your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds
Wear a face covering where it's needed
Keep a distance of at least 2 metres from anyone you don't live with or anyone outside your support bubble, if you are in one

I know how hard this is, feeling like we are taking a step back but if we all stick by these guidelines then we give ourselves the best chance of making these measures work, and of getting the 'R' rate down without having to take any more stringent measures – which is what we all hope for.

So please, let's all do our bit and let's all look after each other.

As ever, stay safe and protect Bucks,

Martin Tett

Leader of 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.

(<https://enews.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/5438-9E6G-1DX5Q6-6E9S9-o/c.aspx>)

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Buckinghamshire Council

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