

Hampshire County Councillor report

April 2022

1. Homes for Ukraine

The County Council is working with local district and borough councils, as well as key local partners such as the NHS and Hampshire Constabulary, to prepare for the provision of immediate support and assistance to Ukrainians arriving in Hampshire under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. An initial £100,000 has been set aside to provide immediate support and assistance.

The position is developing rapidly and remains fluid. Several key areas of activity are currently being prioritised:

- a process for home visits is being put in place; individual sponsors will be contacted by the County Council regarding these, as soon as they have been formally notified by Government of an impending arrival
- a process is also being set up to allow sponsors to receive a 'thank you' payment of £350 per month direct to their bank accounts.
- DBS checks are required of all sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as well as enhanced DBS checks for hosts who will have Ukrainian children staying with them. These will commence as part of the home visit process and will be undertaken by HCC.
- guest families will be assisted with school admissions so that formal education can continue as soon as possible; queries about school places can be directed to https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/admissions/contacts_places
- the County Council's adult social care team is liaising with NHS representatives regarding how support will be provided. GP support and the provision of crisis mental health assistance is a key consideration.

A dedicated 'Support For Ukraine' webpage (www.hants.gov.uk/ukraine) has been set up and is being regularly updated with the latest information, together with signposting to updates from central Government.

2. Covid-19 update

Changes have occurred to the national Covid testing regime, as part of the Government's 'Living with COVID' plan, which has been made possible largely thanks to the successful vaccination programme; this has placed the UK in a strong position to now treat Coronavirus like other respiratory diseases.

Recent changes include the closure of testing sites for people with symptoms and the end of the provision of free tests for the general public in England. Anyone wishing to get tested will be able to purchase an LFD test from pharmacies.

Limited free symptomatic testing will continue for a small number of at-risk groups and will also remain available to social care staff. Guidance on testing arrangements for visitors to care homes is provided on the gov.uk webpages.

The current data shows a picture of increased COVID-19 activity and continued high case rates across all ages in Hampshire, with the highest rates currently among 35-39 year olds, and rising infections in the those aged 60+. Despite hospitalisations decreasing since the peak of the Omicron wave, there is a slight upward trend in those admitted to hospital with COVID-19, which HCC's Public Health team are monitoring closely, alongside outbreaks within the community.

More information can be found on the 'Keep Hampshire Safe' web page at www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus/covid-changes-faqs.

3. New community pantries

Five new Community Pantries are opening in Hampshire with support from the connect4communities programme, led by Hampshire County Council. Each pantry will help families who are facing hardship to access food at reduced prices. There is now at least one community pantry in each of the 11 districts in the HCC local authority area, with a total of 20 across Hampshire. For more information visit www.connect4communities.org

4. Roads

The countywide clear-up following the severe storms in February continued into March. Storm Eunice alone generated over 5,000 reports with the highways team attending to almost 2000 fallen, damaged or dangerous trees, many of which needed emergency or urgent works. Specialist teams continued to inspect and prioritise tree related issues throughout March.

In addition, across the county 11,395 square metres of carriageway were resurfaced in February, 16,521 gullies and other drainage was cleared and 4,905 potholes were repaired.

The Task and Finish group set up to investigate 20mph speed limits in residential areas has had its first meeting and will now begin reviewing the evidence. The outcome is expected later in the year.

It is worth noting that there is a different process to reporting rights of way issues to HCC, as opposed to Highways issues. Residents should use this link, which enables the team to raise a job order and update the complainant.

[Problems on rights of way | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](http://www.hants.gov.uk/problems-on-rights-of-way)

5. Queen's Green Canopy

The first tree has been planted in the The Queen's Copse, created as part of the The Queen's Green Canopy initiative to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. The oak tree, in the River Hamble Country park, will be one of 350 sapling trees on this site, including English Oaks and smaller Scots pines along with Cherry, Silver Birch, Field Maple, and Hornbeam. These will be complemented by a shrub layer of native hedge plants to increase the biodiversity of flora and fauna.

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