

Oxfordshire

NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing

19 February 2021

Oxfordshire health and local authority partners are working together to respond to the pandemic and help the county restart, recover and renew after COVID-19.

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Outbreak Management

The number of new COVID-19 cases in Oxfordshire is continuing to decline, and the weekly rate in the county has now fallen to below 100 per 100,000 for the first time since early December. However, rates are coming down at a much slower rate than they went up and they still remain at a high level.

For the week ending 12 February, there were 557 new confirmed cases in Oxfordshire, compared with 931 the previous week. This equates to a weekly rate of 80.5 per 100,000 people. The latest COVID-19 figures can be viewed on the county council's [interactive dashboard](#), which is updated on a daily basis.



Symptom-free testing

Free rapid testing will shortly be available to public-facing workers and volunteers across Oxfordshire.

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

Work continues to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination programme across the county. Huge progress has been made to ensure our most at-risk patient groups and staff will have been offered a first dose of the vaccine and thanks go to all the staff and volunteers involved.

The county council is working in partnership with Oxfordshire's city and district councils to provide free rapid tests for public-facing workers to help stop the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and vital social care services, and save lives.

The symptom-free testing programme, which launched on 8 February, began with the police and fire service and was then expanded to include early years workers and childminders as well as council staff in public-facing roles. It will shortly expand further to include public-facing workers and volunteers across Oxfordshire, who cannot work from home and who do not have access to workplace testing through their employer.

Three symptom-free testing centres have been set up in the county:

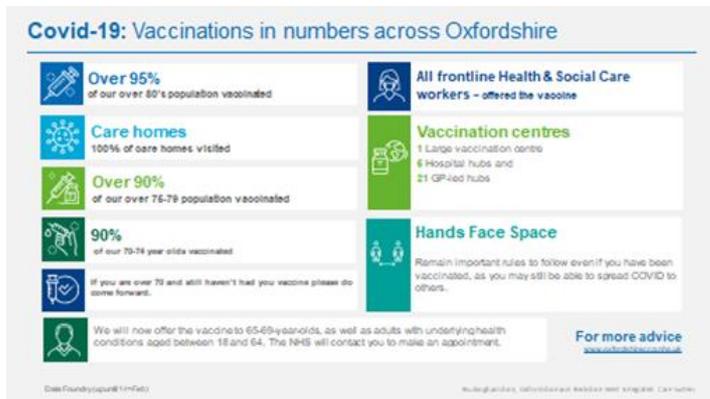
- Spiceball Leisure Centre in Banbury
- The Beacon in Wantage
- King's Centre in Oxford.

The test takes just 15 minutes using a lateral flow device and involves taking a swab of the back of the throat and inside the nose. The swab is then given to trained staff at the test centre who processes the test on-site. Results are given within an hour by text message or by email. Anyone who tests positive is told to self-isolate and follow the national guidance. They are provided with detailed [information, advice and support on self-isolation](#).

In Oxfordshire we are pleased to confirm that all those in the [first four priority groups](#) have been offered a vaccination.

Across the county more than 95% of people aged over 80 and those aged 75-79 and more than 90%

of those aged 70-74 have had their first jab. All older adult care home residents and staff have been offered the vaccine and all our frontline health and social care staff have also been offered the vaccine. So far, over 150,000 people living or working in the county have now received their first dose of the vaccine.



There is a high take up of the vaccine for health and care staff and we are continuing to work directly with all health and social care providers to increase that on a rolling basis. The range of settings where staff are eligible for the vaccine has also recently increased.

Further efforts are also being made with the small proportion of people within cohorts 1-4 that have not yet accepted their invitation for the vaccine. Local authority staff will start to undertake direct contact (including home visits) to help and assist them, via the provision of information, help, advice and support and engagement with local community groups.

In line with the national roll-out, people in the next two priority groups (5 and 6) are now being offered the vaccine. This includes people aged 65 and over (group 5) and people aged 16 to 64 years with [certain underlying health conditions](#) (group 6).

People in these groups will be contacted and invited to book their vaccination. Patients should not contact their local GP, these two cohorts represent a large group of people and it will take some weeks to complete the task but you can be assured that the NHS staff and volunteers are working hard to vaccinate people as quickly as possible.

Vaccinations will be offered through the vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium or at one of 21 GP-led local vaccination sites across the county.

First COVID-19 vaccinations in care homes

The first round of COVID-19 vaccinations has been carried out across Oxfordshire's care homes. GP practices, health care professionals and volunteers have worked together to ensure that care home staff and residents received their first jabs before the government's deadline of 31 January.

Across the 110 older peoples' care homes in the county, over 90 per cent of current residents and 72 per cent of staff have received their first jabs.

NHS chief praises staff on visit to Oxford Health's COVID vaccination centre:

The head of the NHS, Sir Simon Stevens, visited the COVID vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium, Oxford, on Monday to witness first-hand the success of the delivery of the life-saving COVID jab at the site.

The centre is one of three large sites to be operated by Oxford Health (OHFT) and has the capacity to vaccinate up to 3,000 a day when at full capacity.



Sir Simon's tour coincided with the NHS milestone of vaccinating 15 million people in just 10 weeks. It also heralded a new phase of the vaccination programme, with people aged 65+ (cohort 5) together with an expanded group of clinically vulnerable people now able to receive their first dose.

He arrived at the Oxford vaccination centre to meet a range of staff.



He witnessed Prof Andrew Pollard, from the Oxford Vaccine Group which developed the Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine, vaccinate the 67-year-old CEO of Age UK Oxfordshire, Penny Thewlis, whose organisation has worked closely with NHS organisations, especially with the [Home First campaign](#).

Sir Simon also met Imam Monawar Hussain MBE , the Muslim chaplain at OUH, who has been so proactive in spreading the pro-vaccination message to BAME communities, using a range of videos in a variety of languages. These have been shared throughout the Oxfordshire health and social care system, and promoted widely on social media. with 30,000+ hits on Oxford Health sites alone.

The VIP visit was captured by Sky News and pooled footage shared across networks including BBC and ITV for lunchtime and evening news broadcasts. The visit made the front page of the Oxford Mail (see above) and featured in the Oxford Times.

Bookings mix up

The Kassam Vaccination Centre also made the news when nursery workers who were able to book slots (contrary to JCVI priority lists) were turned away from the centre as they are not eligible for vaccinations.

Staff at the centre are only provided with names of attendees from the national bookings system (NBS) and have to check eligibility when visitors arrive on site. This ensures they only administer doses to those entitled to them.

The NBS (via its website and 119) asked people to self-declare they were health and social care workers but did not differentiate between priority and non-priority staff. It is expected the bookings system will be updated shortly.

The list below clarifies who are prioritised as health and social care workers.

Annex A: The government "Green Book" for immunisation against infectious disease includes the following definition for frontline social workers:

| Occupational Group | Example of roles in |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Direct care – these roles involve directly working with people who need care and support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care worker • Personal Assistant • Rehabilitation, reablement, enablement worker • Shared lives Carer |
| Frontline suppliers with direct contact with clients | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team leader or supervisor • Specialist coordinator, such as Dementia or end of life care coordinator |
| Social care support – these roles provide direct support functions to clients | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing support • Social care prescriber/Care Navigator • Welfare rights • Employment advisor |
| Ancillary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook or Kitchen assistant • Housekeeping or domestic worker • Driver • Maintenance |
| Regulated professionals – these roles require the worker to hold relevant qualifications and to be registered with a regulated body to practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social worker • Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) • Occupational Therapist • Nurse including nursing associate • Counsellor |

The following are, however, **not eligible** within this priority group as defined by the JCVI:

- Administrative staff who do not have any direct contact with clients.

- Social care workers working with children who are not considered priority within the context of the JCVI priority cohorts 1-9 (children under 16 who do not have underlying health conditions leading to greater risk of disease or mortality and children who have no underlying health conditions).
- Unpaid carers
- Teachers and teaching assistants

Oxfordshire CCG and Oxfordshire County Council promptly acted and issued briefings to cascade with early years providers to set the record straight.

And finally at the Kassam

On Saturday 14 February, a small fire in the floodlight room during a football match at the stadium resulted in the match being halted and the vaccination centre being evacuated as a precaution. All staff and members of the public were quickly and safely out of the building within three minutes.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue attended and quickly made the area safe. Vaccinations were able to resume shortly afterwards and continued until 8pm.

Lateral flow testing helps keep OUH staff and patients safe

New research published by Infection prevention and control clinicians and researchers at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) demonstrates the impact of deploying self-administered home-based lateral flow device (LFD) COVID-19 testing for staff working in hospital.

In a letter published in the *Journal of Infection*, they said that 46,503 tests have so far been carried out by OUH staff who didn't have any symptoms of COVID – of these, 328 (0.7%) were positive.

LFD testing of nasal swabs was introduced for asymptomatic staff based on all OUH hospital sites. Staff are expected to test themselves with a home testing kit twice a week. Between 23 November 2020 and 9 January 2021, 8,657 staff carried out tests.

This is in addition to the Trust's existing asymptomatic staff PCR testing programme through

which a test is offered a maximum of every two weeks. While LFD tests are less sensitive than PCR tests, they were found to be effective at detecting cases with high viral loads.

The lateral flow testing system has been an important way for the OUH to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in its hospitals. The use of LFDs identified asymptomatic infections that would not otherwise have been detected, has enabled the Trust to reduce staff-to-staff and staff-to-patient transmission. A big thank you to the thousands of staff who have participated and reported their results! For more information visit the OUH [website](#)

Military staff deployed at OUH

Members of the Armed Forces are now supporting teams at the OUH to help in the response against COVID-19.

Initially based at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, 42 military personnel from the Ministry of Defence are supporting staff in both clinical and non-clinical roles. A total of 20 trained Combat Medical Technicians, who in their day job deploy on overseas operations and exercises as medics, are supporting the Cardiac and Thoracic Critical Care Unit (CTCCU) and Emergency Department.



Meanwhile, 16 military staff have joined the Trust in non-patient facing roles – their tasks include stock management and assisting with donning and doffing of PPE, as well as general logistical and administrative work – and a further six discharge planners are helping our teams to get patients home when they are well enough to be discharged from hospital.

The Trust and wider NHS in Oxfordshire are incredibly grateful for the support from our Armed Forces as we continue through what is a very challenging time for the NHS. For more information please see [here](#).

Exemption stickers for OUH patients, carers and visitors who cannot wear face coverings

It is a requirement for all outpatients, carers and visitors to wear face coverings on OUH hospital sites – and inpatients on our wards should also, if they are able to do so – but the Trust recognise that not everyone is able to wear a face covering.

And so the OUH has made exemption stickers available to those people who live with disabilities, hidden or otherwise, which mean they cannot wear a face covering.

These single-use stickers are available at the main reception desks on all four main OUH hospital site. They are for patients, carers and visitors only, not for staff. All staff working on our hospital sites, whether or not they are employed by OUH, must wear face masks (not face coverings) – and staff who are unable to do so cannot work on site.

The Patient Experience Team at OUH developed the exemption stickers in consultation with Melanie Wilkinson, from Carers Oxfordshire. More information is available on the OUH [website](#).

New COVID treatment breakthrough for RECOVERY trial

The Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy (RECOVERY) trial, which is led by the University of Oxford, has found that [an anti-inflammatory treatment, tocilizumab reduces the risk of death when given to hospitalised patients with severe COVID-19](#).

The study also showed that tocilizumab shortens the time until patients are successfully discharged from hospital and reduces the need for a mechanical ventilator.

This is the second successful treatment that the RECOVERY trial has identified. In June 2020, researchers found that the [inexpensive and widely](#)

[available steroid dexamethasone reduces death for patients with severe COVID-19](#).

Trusts' ENO collaboration helps Long COVID sufferers to breathe more easily

A clinic that is helping Long COVID sufferers in Oxfordshire to recover from its debilitating effects has teamed up with the English National Opera (ENO) to help them to breathe more easily.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust has been working with Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) for some time to provide specialist help to patients suffering from Long COVID. The Trusts are running an assessment service which takes referrals from hospital consultants and GPs for people experiencing prolonged symptoms such as brain fog, anxiety, depression, breathlessness, fatigue and other debilitating symptoms.



And now they have now signed up to refer patients to the new [ENO Breathe](#) programme which has been specifically developed for people recovering from COVID-19, who are still suffering from breathlessness and its associated anxiety.

The programme is for participants aged 18 and over who take part in six sessions. There is no cost to take part in the programme. It is inclusive and open to all ethnicities, levels of spoken English, religious backgrounds and identities. No prior experience or interest in singing is required to take part.

Common asthma treatment reduces need for COVID hospital treatment

Early treatment with a medication commonly used to treat asthma appears to significantly reduce the need for urgent care and hospitalisation in people with COVID-19, researchers at the University of Oxford have found.

The [STOIC study](#) found that inhaled budesonide given to patients with COVID-19 within seven days of the onset of symptoms also reduced recovery time. Budesonide is used in the long-term management of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The trial was inspired by the fact that, in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, patients with chronic respiratory disease, who are often prescribed inhaled steroids, were significantly under-represented among those admitted to hospital with COVID-19. More information is available on the OUH [website](#).

A day of celebration for Mental Health Nurses

The work of mental health nurses across the UK is marked with a special day of celebration on Sunday 21 February.

The annual event highlights the excellent work done to support and care for people and, in this particularly challenging year, the day is being used to encourage staff to make sure they take time to care for themselves as well as others.

Hajrah Yousef, Ward Manager at Littlemore Health Centre, is one of the Oxford Health team who is keen to shout about the work of mental health nurses. To her the best thing about the job is “The pace and diversity of what you deal with or manage on a day to day basis.”



She also has encouraging words for anyone wanting to join the profession: “If it’s a challenge you’re after with the most rewarding job satisfaction then this might be for you. It’s for those who have professional curiosity, a desire to know more and push themselves to their optimum performance levels.”

Oxford Health will be promoting the day on their own [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts and you can follow #MHNursesday nationally on the day’s own [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

New website launched to help those who are looking after others

Help is at hand for NHS and social care workers who are feeling stress, low mood, anxiety or tiredness as a result of the work they are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.



A new service called You Matter, developed by Oxford Health, has been launched to make it easy for all health and social care employees to get quick, free and confidential access to help and support either online or on the phone.

The You Matter website can be found [here](#) and one click allows colleagues to quickly and easily access online, email or telephone support.

Could you become an Oxford Health governor?

Would you like to become part of the team that shapes Oxford Health’s future?

The Trust has 18 seats coming up for election in this year’s Council of Governors election with vacancies for service users, carers, members of the public and staff.

The elections are to be held this spring, with nominations opening in March. You can find out more about how to take part and the role of a governor [here](#).

The Trust is increasing service-user representation in its Council, and in Oxfordshire there are four service user vacancies and one public governor vacancy up for election. [Hannah-Louise Toomey](#),

who has been a Public governor for Oxfordshire, said: "It's been 100 percent worth it.

"We are led by our service users. They are the experts with lived experience. The Trust is just facilitators in their care and recovery. We need more of our service user voices in order to do the absolute best that we can." You can read more about Hannah-Louise's experiences [here](#).



Community resilience

Expansion to the shielded list



The government has announced a national expansion of the number of individuals being asked to shield because they are considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to COVID-19.

This follows the development of a new model at Oxford University, which looks in detail at the medical and demographic factors of those previously most affected by the pandemic.

Individuals who have been added to the shielded list will now be prioritised for vaccination alongside those already considered CEV; they will also be eligible for statutory sick pay and prioritisation for online shopping slots.

Working closely with the community and voluntary sector, Oxfordshire councils have in place a framework to support all CEV individuals and will be contacting those new to the list in the coming days to outline the support available.

Volunteers win international COVID response award

Cherwell Collective, a Kidlington-based umbrella organisation for several not-for-profit community groups, has been awarded a European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Civil Solidarity Prize at an online ceremony on 15 February.

With advice and support from Cherwell District Council's communities team, Cherwell Collective has flourished and now supports three key projects: Cherwell Larder, Climatedarian Kitchen, and Harvest at Home.

The groups' activities include the provision of food and other essential goods; supplies and guidance to grow food at home; and meal and recipe kits along with events and courses that empower people toward more sustainable lifestyles.



Cherwell Collective and the organisations it supports have so far received £8,850 in funding from the council via the Community Hub Emergency Relief Fund and the COVID-19 Councillor Priority Fund.

Economy

Oxford-Cambridge Arc

The government has this week [announced an ambitious plan](#) to transform the Oxford-Cambridge Arc into the UK's fastest-growing economic region.

The Arc is a globally significant area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, made up of the five counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. It supports over two million jobs, adds over £110 billion to the economy every year, and houses one of the fastest-growing economies in England.

The aim is build a better economic, social and environmental future for the area, with high-quality, well-connected and sustainable communities. With the right interventions and investment, local analysis suggests that by 2050 economic output could double to over £200 billion.



To achieve this ambition, the government will work with local partners to:

- **Develop a spatial framework for the Arc – this is a long-term regional plan** to help coordinate the infrastructure, environment and new developments in the area, and help unlock the long-term potential of the area in a sustainable way. It will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.
- **Explore the creation of an Arc Growth Body** – this would be a clear economic leadership voice for the Arc, championing its talent and assets internationally, supporting businesses, and fostering innovation.

A [policy paper](#) has been published, which sets out the intended approach for developing the spatial framework, including the high-level scope, timeline, and approach to engaging with local partners and communities.

Support for businesses post EU transition

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) continues to offer businesses in the county a tailored support service from experienced business advisers. Its Post-EU Transition Service can help find answers to businesses' specific questions, as well as reviewing the impact the recent changes may have on companies, helping them to develop an action plan too.

The business advisers can provide businesses with one-to-one guidance and advice on challenges and opportunities in the following areas:

- Importing and exporting
- Regulations and standards
- Workforce and people
- Business and legal requirements
- Energy and climate
- Public procurement, IP and UK EU Funding

OxLEP held the first in a series of business support webinars earlier this month, introducing this Brexit support programme to the county's businesses. The webinar is available to watch at www.oxfordshirelep.com/uk-transition.

Two further webinars will be taking place next month

- 16 March at 10am: Keep Your Agricultural Business Moving – What Oxfordshire SMEs need to know about the EU exit
- 16 March at 2pm: Keep Your Supply Chain Moving – What Oxfordshire SMEs need to know about the EU exit

To request a space at either event, visit www.oxfordshirelep.com/uk-transition.

For more information about the Arc, visit www.gov.uk/guidance/oxford-cambridge-arc

Place, Transport, Infrastructure

Consultation on Oxfordshire's draft transport blueprint



Residents and organisations across Oxfordshire are being offered the chance to help shape the transformation of transport and digital connectivity across the county in a county council consultation on a draft blueprint for the future.

With the need for climate action, helping create healthy communities and addressing air quality at the heart of council thinking, the new local transport and connectivity plan (LTCP) sets out a vision for Oxfordshire that will contribute to developing a zero-carbon economy for the county and transform the health and wellbeing of residents.

The consultation runs from 15 February to 29 March. Find out how to get involved [on the county council's website](#).

Children, Education, Families

Laptops for young people

More than 50 laptops have been delivered to local project Educate 200 to help children who would otherwise struggle to access online learning in Oxford.

Oxford City Council is aiming to donate over 200 used laptops in total. The initial donation will be checked to ensure they are suitable for being refurbished for school learning before more are handed over to reach other schools in the city.

And finally...

We hope this update is useful. Please email occg.media-team@nhs.net with any queries and we will endeavour to get back to you as soon as we can.

E-scooter trial launches in Headington

A 12-month trial of a range of new electric scooters began in the Headington area on 18 February.

The trial, which is designed to support a green restart of local travel, is starting with 50 scooters that can be hired for short journeys with an app. The county council is working with Swedish e-scooter firm Voi Technology on the trial, which has been authorised by the Department for Transport.



The goal is to extend the trial area to cover the whole of Oxford during the 12-month period. It will offer residents and visitors a zero-emission form of transport and help reduce car use and pollution across the city. The scooters will also be exempt from the Oxford Zero Emission Zone charges which start this summer.