

Covid-19 Councillors FAQ

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A Local and National Information on Covid-19

1. What is the latest information on testing for Covid-19?

New Case Definition for Covid-19

The four UK Chief Medical Officers have announced that anosmia – the loss or a change in your normal sense of smell or taste – has been added as a symptom of Covid-19.

This means that individuals need to self-isolate immediately – and will be eligible for a test – if they have a new continuous cough, or they have a high temperature, or they feel a loss or changed sense of normal smell or taste. All members of their household must also self-isolate according to current guidelines, unless the symptomatic individual receives a negative test result.

National Testing Expanded

Everyone who is showing coronavirus symptoms is eligible to book a swab test to find out if they have the virus.

People can register for a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus, after checking their symptoms. Arrangements for essential workers are set out below.

Those in England and Wales who do not have any access to the internet, or who have difficulty with the digital portals, will be able to ring a new 119 service to book their test.

Access to Testing for Essential Workers

Essential workers are prioritised for testing, while allowing as many tests as possible for the wider population:

- Essential workers and members of their household who have symptoms should continue to register for a test through [the Self-Referral and Employer Portals](#).
- Care homes in England can [continue to register for delivery of tests](#) for all their staff and residents, whether or not they have symptoms. There are 30,000 daily capacity for this channel. We are continuing to support care homes that have been identified as a priority to receive tests as early as possible; we have supplemented this locally with an accelerated care homes testing team using some of the spare capacity from the Pillar 1 site at Brockworth.

Mobile Unit

From 5 June 2020, a new regional testing centre will operate from Hempstead Meadow in Gloucester.

The Covid-19 Mobile Testing Unit will be at the Royal Agricultural University, Stroud Road, Cirencester (23 - 29 August), and at Stow RFC, Oddington Road, Stow on the Wold (30 - 31 August).

2. How many cases have there been in Gloucestershire?

For up to date information on the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 within Gloucestershire, please refer to the email updates sent by Democratic Services.

3. Please could you clarify the way the numbers of deaths are presented on the member email updates?

The first Gloucestershire figure is taken from this [NHS page](#).

There is a document on the page which explains the data more fully and which we paraphrase in the email update (please see the asterisk which refers to a footnote on the data). It records all those who died in NHS Trusts in Gloucestershire who had a positive Covid-19 test or where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. This is updated daily and until recently was the best measure we had for Covid-19 deaths at a county level so it was referred to as "Total deaths in Gloucestershire"; Covid-related being implied by the nature of the email. The footnote has always stated the caveat that these are deaths recorded in hospitals only. There is a national total which would allow for comparison.

The national total deaths figure is taken from this page on [the Government website](#).

Until 29 April, it also only recorded deaths in hospital but now records the deaths of those in all settings who tested positive for Covid-19. This is not given at a county level so unfortunately cannot be compared but it is the main figure the government publishes.

The second Gloucestershire figure is extracted from Office of National Statistics (ONS) data. The ONS has started publishing weekly death registrations in all settings where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. This does not necessarily mean that the person had a positive test for Covid-19. There is a significant time lag on this data and it is only updated weekly. Please see the footnote for more information. There is also a national total which would allow for comparison.

4. Could the total number of tests for Gloucestershire residents be included in the email updates?

Testing is done through various routes in the county:

- Health and care worker staff are testing through the 'Pillar 1' testing provision provided by GHC at Brockworth.
- Care home testing is co-ordinated through Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Testing for anyone who has symptoms is now done through the national government testing portal 'pillar 2' testing. Pillar 2 testing includes the large

sites at Worcester and Bristol Airport, and from 5 June at Hempstead Meadow, Gloucester. See more here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-scaling-up-testing-programmes/coronavirus-covid-19-scaling-up-our-testing-programmes>

These figures are fed nationally to give the number of daily tests you see referenced on national briefings. That information is not yet received at a local authority level and therefore cannot be provided in the email updates.

5. Which are the best sources of data to use to see how the virus is affecting my area?

In Gloucestershire we monitor a wide range of information to understand Covid-19 locally to ensure we are able to prevent, contain, respond and monitor Covid-19.

Fortunately new Covid-19 cases in Gloucestershire currently remain low. As you are aware there is a range of information published nationally on cases and mortality, and additional case data is now available at district and MSOA level:

- <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/> - provides a daily update to number and rate of cases on a national, regional, upper tier local authority and lower tier local authority level.
- <https://coronavirus-staging.data.gov.uk/cases?areaType=ltla&areaName=Stroud> – provides a daily updates on cases by lower tier local authority and MSOA area*
- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/> - provides data on deaths in hospitals (where the patient had either tested positive for Covid-19 or where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate) and also Covid-19 hospital activity
- [ONS website](#) provides data on deaths involving Covid-19, including deaths in the community or care homes.

*MSOAs are approximately twice the size of district council wards, generally ranging from populations of 7000 - 10,000; their boundaries are not coterminous with district council wards or county council electoral division. Each area has a similarly sized population and remains stable over time .There are 75 MSOAs in Gloucestershire.

We are currently publishing a daily graphic via social media channels and will be introducing a weekly info graphic of key data too. This information will also be available via a dedicated web page on the council website in the near future.

6. How many residents in Gloucestershire have used the Test, Track and Trace since its roll out?

As you will be aware, NHS Test and Trace service launched on the 28 May, and forms a central part of the government's coronavirus recovery strategy. Anyone with symptoms will be tested and their close contacts will be traced.

GCC will receive data on the cases and contacts from Public Health England. As this emerging dataset develops, further analysis on activity will be undertaken as data becomes available.

In Gloucestershire the information from the NHS Test and Trace service will help us to identify and respond to localised outbreaks. We have been refining our local outbreak plan and action cards for different settings to reflect how we will use this data and intelligence locally

7. How are Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) deployed?

There are currently a pool of over 20 Mobile Testing Units that cover the south west region. Their deployment is controlled by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and managed through regional MTU meetings currently held on Monday and Thursday every week. At this meeting, representatives from each Local Resilience Forum (LRF) or Health Protection Board (HPB) will suggest sites to host an MTU or MTUs located in their area.

The schedule is set for just few days at a time to allow a more agile approach to deployment based on what is happening across the region, although often MTUs can end up remaining on sites for a few days or sometimes weeks. DHSC check the regional schedule then add the locations to the public-facing booking portal, enabling tests to be booked by the public. Sometimes units need to go into “reserve” which is a standby period allowing the crews to rest but be available in an emergency. The units are currently staffed by military personnel but DHSC will be reviewing this in the future.

The LRF or HPB representatives collate the upcoming deployments for their areas, as well as the detail of testing figures supplied by the DHSC representative to ensure an accurate picture of all Pillar 2 testing undertaken in the locality. The Mobile Testing Units can be placed to help increase access to testing which has been our local approach, but they can also be deployed in an outbreak situation. So far we have not needed to do this in Gloucestershire because our numbers have remained low for several weeks, but we monitor this daily so that we could ask an MTU to be redeployed if we needed to do this. We would also communicate to the public and work with the Covid-19 Engagement Board if we thought there was an increase of cases that would mean we would want more people to get tested.

8. Where are the mobile test centres in Gloucestershire?

There are now a number of Mobile Testing Units available across the county. The mobile testing unit, previously at Oxstalls Tennis Centre in Gloucester, is now available at other locations in Gloucestershire. The mobile unit has meant hundreds more tests are available each day it is operating.

Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) locations are updated weekly. They are currently based at:

- Royal Agricultural University, Stroud Road, Cirencester (23 - 29 August)
- Stow RFC, Oddington Road, Stow on the Wold (30 - 31 August)

There is also a permanent testing site in **Gloucester**:

- Hempsted Meadows, David Hook Way, Gloucester, GL2 5LE

We need your help to encourage those who do have symptoms, to get tested and to let the residents of Gloucestershire know where the mobile testing units will be each day. It's important to isolate straight away if someone thinks they might have covid-19 symptoms and order a test. A test can be ordered immediately at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119 if people don't have internet access or cannot drive to a site - one will be delivered to their home.

9. How quickly are Covid-19 test results being made available to residents/keyworkers?

Testing is being done through various routes in the county. Health and care worker staff are testing through the 'Pillar 1' testing provision provided at Brockworth.

A wider group of people eligible for testing can access the 'Pillar 2' regional testing sites in Bristol, Worcester and from 5 June, Gloucester.

There are additional routes for testing in care homes.

It is important that people receive timely results and locally through the Pillar 1 site, results should be delivered to the individual within 72 hours. Often, it is much quicker than this.

10. How do volunteers, who have been supporting the alleviation of Covid-19, access testing and how quickly can this be undertaken?

It is fantastic that the community and volunteers in Gloucestershire continue to support the response to Covid-19 through supporting those self-isolating. The best method to prevent the spread of Covid-19 remains good hand hygiene and maintaining at least 2m social distance wherever possible. There should be very few volunteering activities where these simple measures cannot be followed. The latest guidance is available on the [Government website](#)

If someone is self-isolating because of Covid-19 symptoms, and/or has had a positive test for Covid-19 there is guidance available [here](#). A key section within this is called "While you are self-isolating, make sure you do the following things". This contains information about how people should self-isolate and includes guidance on how people should access support from friend, family, or non-family members (e.g. volunteers).

Testing is available in England for anyone with Covid-19 symptoms. So volunteers in the community can access this quickly and easily either by dialling 119 if they do not have the internet, or going to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-an-antigen-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>

The advice is currently that testing of people without symptoms is only recommended in very specific situation where people are very vulnerable and/or at

high risk of the effects of Covid-19 (e.g. in care homes). Routine testing in other circumstances is not recommended. The following FAQs may help explain this.

Swab (PCR) Tests for People With Symptoms (Symptomatic)

Where can I get a test?

- If you have the symptoms above of Covid-19, anyone in England can now get a test by visiting [this website](#) or by dialling 119.

What will the Swab/PCR test tell me?

- The swab or PCR test will confirm if an individual who is showing symptoms of the virus currently has it.
- It will not confirm whether they have had it and have now recovered.
- Like any diagnostic test however, there is always the small possibility of a false negative (which means the test says you are negative and you do in fact have the virus) or a false positive result (which says you have the virus when you do not).

If I test negative, and then later I develop symptoms, can I get tested again?

- If you start to get coronavirus symptoms, your employer may refer you again to be tested or you can book a test yourself via the self-referral portal.
- Repeat testing of people with no symptoms is not routinely recommended.

When should I be tested?

- You should be tested in the first three days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day five.
- No testing should be undertaken after day five, unless it's for a specific reason which will be agreed on a case by case basis by locally. This is because the test is considered most accurate in the first three days of symptoms.

Testing if you have no symptoms

Can I get tested if I don't have symptoms?

- The test is most effective for those who are experiencing coronavirus symptoms. It only checks if you have coronavirus right now. This is why government testing website (link above) only allows you to access testing if you have symptoms.
- We are rapidly building and analysing the evidence around the benefits and timescales of testing of people with no symptoms (screening). There is no evidence or guidance from Public Health England or other agencies on the best frequency for asymptomatic testing in any other circumstances and a negative test could provide false reassurance.

- So, you can only get a test for Covid-19 infection if you do not have symptoms in a very limited number of circumstances. Presently, we would only expect targeted repeat testing/screening where there are outbreaks and/or evidence of sustained transmission in high risk settings such as hospitals and care homes.

If I am asymptomatic and test negative, does this mean I don't have the virus?

- A positive result from an asymptomatic test is highly likely to be accurate, whilst a negative one is much less so. If you are asymptomatic, the test can confirm you have the virus, but cannot confirm that you do not have it.

If you test negative but go on to develop symptoms, you should immediately follow the national guidance.

11. Gloucestershire Sightloss Council are concerned that they will not be able to access the track and trace app. What is being done to address this?

Whilst we can understand that there would be concerns about people who have visual impairments accessing Test and Trace, we would like to provide some reassurance.

There are two arms to the national NHS Track and trace programme.

The first arm is a staffed model for Test and Trace and this has been operational since the start of June. The way it works is that people who have symptoms can access a test in England by going online, or telephoning 119 where someone can talk them through options to get a test; there are drive through options or tests can be delivered to the house of the person. Our understanding is the 119 phone line will support people with impairments or disabilities to access the best route.

When taking their test, the individual will be advised to self-isolate whilst they await results and told that if they test positive they need to isolate. Their result will be texted or emailed to them, and hopefully those with impairments will have technology to support them in the receipt of this result, but 119 can advise further if not.

Every time somebody tests positive for Covid-19, their details are sent to the national NHS Test and Trace team. When this happens, an email and/or text is automatically sent to the individual asking them to log on to a website to complete the contact tracing information. This is essentially identifying anyone they have been within 2m of for more than 15 minutes in the previous few days. If a visually impaired person cannot engage via this method, they do not need to worry, as anybody who does not (or cannot) complete the online information will be telephoned by a trained call handler 24 hours after the initial test. All advice will be on the phone from that point on. If somebody is identified as a contact of an individual who tests positive, they are then contacted via text message or email in the first instance, and telephoned 24 hours later and provided with verbal advice to isolate for 14 days and get tested if symptoms appear. It does rely on people having an email address or telephone number though, and this is a known disadvantage of the system.

The second arm is the NHS Test and Trace app; this works using Bluetooth signals in people's mobile devices to understand how close they have been to somebody for

how long, enabling rapid identification if someone tests positive. This app has not yet been launched as the national teams are still gathering more data after the pilot in the Isle of Wight. So at this stage, nobody is using this method in mainland England.

Here is a link to a helpful section on a radio programme about the accessibility of Test and Trace - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000jmtw>

12. What is the "R" number and why is it different regionally?

The R number is worked out at a regional level. The current figure for the South West can be found online: <https://www.mrc-bsu.cam.ac.uk/now-casting/>

What is the R number?

The R number tells us how many people will be infected from a single case. So if someone with Covid-19 infected two extra people, the R number would be 2. If R value is below one, then on average each infected person will infect fewer than one other person and the number of new infections will fall over time. The lower the number, the faster the number of new infections will fall. When R is above one, the number of new infections is accelerating

The R value is only one part of the picture and needs to be considered alongside other information, such as pressure on healthcare services, to assess the threat posed by Covid-19.

How is the R number calculated?

The R value is calculated by Cambridge University, working in partnership with PHE. They use published data and evidence on infection rate, the risk of dying with Covid-19 and the duration of infection to build regional models. This enables them to estimate ongoing transmission (R).

Why is the R number higher in some areas than others?

The timing of the initial wave of infection was very different in each region, for example there is a big contrast between the South West and London. Consequently, there will be some regional variation in R even now while we are in lockdown. This can be seen in the decrease in the number of daily deaths in every region but with a particularly sharp decline in London. Regions currently estimated to have the highest value for R (North East, South West, East of England) are those which had the lowest level of activity prior to the lockdown, due to a delayed spread into these regions. The PHE/Cambridge group is one of many teams producing such estimates, and this regional variation seems to be a consistent finding.

13. Is there an "R" rating available for Gloucestershire?

The "R" value is currently available at South West region level, and in Gloucestershire we are monitoring a range of other information to understand the local situation.

14. Please can you report on "excess deaths" as it would allow members to better scrutinise the potential number of Covid-19 deaths that weren't identified with a test / would show if those deaths with Covid-19 might have been expected anyway (i.e. someone dying with Covid-19 rather than because of Covid-19).

Using Office of National Statistics data we can compare the mortality in the county with the five year average for the same week. This allows for "smoothing" of effects such as heavy seasonal flu years, or Easter weekend moving. This analysis allows us to see if there are more deaths than we would expect per week in the county.

Importantly, the counts are of deaths by all causes combined, meaning that the uncertainty of what is or is not a registered death due to Covid-19 is less relevant.

The weekly 'all cause' death rate in Gloucestershire was significantly higher compared to the five year average for several weeks during April and early May; this trend was seen across all regions in England. As of week 19 (week commencing 8 May) the mortality rate was not significantly higher than we would have expected, both in the county and in all districts. You can see a more detailed explanation [in this video](#).

15. Where can I find the latest information from Central Government?

The Government is continuously updating its advice and guidance on Covid-19. This information can be accessed using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

16. What is the advice from the NHS to people who are unwell with Covid-19 at home?

Self care advice is available to patients online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/what-to-do-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/how-to-treat-coronavirus-symptoms-at-home/>

Advice includes:

- Get enough rest and sleep
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration - drink enough so your pee is light yellow and clear
- Take paracetamol to lower your temperature
- When to take ibuprofen.

17. How many cases of Covid-19 have occurred in families where only one person has been infected, and where this is the case, has antibody testing taken place?

GCC would not receive this level of information, however equally it is not believed that this information is collected. When a positive case is identified there isn't currently a process whereby other members of a household would be tested for current infection.

There are some nationally led pilots into testing of asymptomatic staff and patients/residents in hospitals and care home settings currently happening. This is to better understand the prevalence of asymptomatic carrying of Covid-19, but GCC is not aware of anything on-going in domestic/private households.

Transmission within a household would be affected by many factors. The amount of contact, the type of contact, the dose of the virus that someone is exposed too, hand hygiene and an individuals susceptibility e.g. if they are immunocompromised.

B Adult social care and care homes during the Covid-19 outbreak

1. How is Adults Services responding to the crisis?

- Customers who usually attend day care and respite are being contacted every other day to make sure informal carers are coping or if they need support.
- Great Western Court (Gloucester) provides bed based reablement and has freed up the beds available and opened an additional six beds to take cases from hospital discharges or cases from the community.
- From Monday 6 April, the Adult Social Care teams will be operating seven days a week from 8am to 8pm.
- The number of locality offices that staff are working from will be reduced as will the number of staff that will be working in the office. Staff will now work from two hubs, one in Shire Hall, Gloucester, and the other in Redwood House, Stroud. These hubs will have a small group of key staff working triage referrals and decision making, and will have additional support from other colleagues working at home.
- There are no changes to the referral route, all referrals should continue to be made via the Adult Help Desk on 01452 426868.
- Currently independent care providers are still taking on new referrals and meeting their existing commitments.

Please note that people shouldn't be referred to adult social care without their knowledge/consent. It is important that the normal process for referrals is followed.

2. What measures is GCC taking in response to Gov UK issued guidance on easing Care Act 2014 provisions as a result of the Coronavirus Act?

The Care Act Easements were included in the Coronavirus Act but the implementation of them is very specific. GCC lawyers have written a set of guidance notes to be used and are part of a regional group that advise us. GCC plans to use existing governance arrangements if it needed to consider enacting any easement.

However, there is a prescribed process to do this which involves a review and recommendation by the principle social worker of any proposal to remove or restrict a service, a risk assessment, consultation with the cabinet members for adult social care, consultation with the CCG, a decision by the executive director of adult social care and communication with service users, organisations and carers. All of which must be documented, evidenced and recorded on the Covid 19 log.

GCC is working as usual, albeit in a different way and continues to accept and assess referrals, process blue badge applications and conduct financial assessments. GCC is working to the new discharge guidance with colleagues in the acute and community hospitals. The easements do not apply to the Mental Health Act, Deprivation of Liberty or Mental Capacity Act. GCC's safeguarding and DoLs teams are working.

The Council does not expect to be overwhelmed by demand for easements and there is no sign so far of that being likely. Nevertheless GCC has to be prepared. According to the CQC website, seven councils have used them so far.

3. How have care homes in the County been affected by the crisis, and what role does GCC have in ensuring that they have sufficient PPE, and that staff know how to use it?

The Integrated Brokering team are in regular contact with the care providers that GCC contract with, and are recording daily the number of homes with Covid-19 or suspected cases of Covid-19. GCC triangulates this information with the information received from the Public Health team once they are alerted to positive cases. The Integrated Brokering team then discuss with the home how they are managing in regards to staffing levels and PPE. With homes where there has been a high level of infection, GCC has requested the Care Home Support team from the CCG contact and advise on any infection control issues.

All care homes use their usual routes for securing PPE. If a home is having difficulties or runs short waiting for an order to arrive, then they have been contacting GCC to provide them with an urgent supply to get them through. The homes most in need have also been identified i.e. the homes and domiciliary care providers who have active Covid-19 cases, and GCC has been supplying them with PPE aprons, gloves, masks and disposable glasses from the LRF stock that has been delivered.

National PHE guidance on use of PPE has been shared. Training on PPE has been offered to all care homes in the county, and provided to those who requested it within two weeks. There is also guidance available on when PPE is to be used.

Gloucestershire's PPE stocks are currently sufficient. Care home requests are being met the same day.

4. Is there a risk that independent or small care providers to vulnerable people in their own homes might collapse at short notice, and are we in a position to ensure continuity of service to house-bound vulnerable people?

The Council has a good relationship with the Gloucestershire Care Providers Association, and they would alert the Council to any concerns from their members. The Council has modelled demand and reablement staff are working closely with the brokerage team to support domiciliary care. Some families have declined domiciliary care because of the risk of having visitors in their home, so there has not been a significant rise in demand.

The Council is prepared for increased levels of frailty for those people who recover from the virus. From the regional and national calls the Council is part of, the Council

is better placed than many and its long established relationship with the CCG is a benefit at times like these.

5. What is the process for recording Covid-19 cases in care homes, and what are the latest statistics?

The current process is that care homes need to notify PHE when they believe they have two or more cases of suspected Covid-19. PHE then risk assess the situation, send out testing kits, provide advice, and then inform the County Council.

The latest figures on deaths in care homes within the County can be found in the email updates sent out by Democratic Services.

6. What testing is being done regarding the care system (both care homes and care for the vulnerable in their own homes) in Gloucestershire?

Public Health England is the national agency coordinating this along with NHS England/NHS Improvement since we moved to the delay phase nationally. Public Health England South West has supported care home swabbing since the onset of the Covid-19 situation, meaning care home residents in Gloucestershire have access to testing. Residents in care homes are receiving swabbing test kits once an outbreak has been reported to PHE. Residents are tested both for Covid-19 and other respiratory diseases to ensure diseases that can be treated (eg Flu) are not over-looked.

There is also a mechanism in place to ensure that care home staff can be tested if they become symptomatic.

7. Please can you confirm that staff in care-homes are now getting Covid-19 anti-body test via a blood sample? Please can you tell me when immediate family members will receive the same service?

Currently, antibody testing has been offered via Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust to certain frontline staff including some care home staff. This may help us to better understand the spread of Covid-19 in some of our settings. At the moment, there are no plans to extend this to immediate family members. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are also yet to announce plans for the roll out of this to all relevant care settings.

We recognise that there is limited value in using the antibody test. The test only helps to answer the question of whether someone has had the virus. There is currently no strong evidence to suggest that those who have had the virus develop long-lasting immunity from Covid-19. Therefore, receiving a positive antibody result does not mean that somebody is immune or that they cannot pass the virus on to others. The results of an antibody test will not allow people to make any changes to their behaviour, such as easing social distancing measures, hand hygiene or

changing the ways that PPE is used; the continued and consistent implementation of these measures remains essential to prevent spread of Covid-19 in our care homes

8. Are people with learning disabilities able to get tested for Covid-19 and are their deaths being monitored? What measures are there in place to support people with learning disabilities?

The following arrangements are in place for testing in care homes in Gloucestershire:

- **Residents in care homes with newly reported outbreak:** Testing is available now. Public Health England South West Health Protection Team will arrange testing for the initial five cases in a home.
- **Residents in care homes who require additional testing:** If homes require additional testing, whole-home testing is available through the [care home testing portal](#).
- **Residents in care homes without suspected outbreak:** Whole-home testing available through the [care home testing portal](#)
- **Clients receiving care at home with symptoms:** Testing is available now. Clients can self-refer [online](#) or go to NHS111 online or get GP referral. Test type dependent on client needs.

As a local system GCC is alerted to Covid-19 outbreaks in care homes, and lead commissioners for learning disabilities are kept informed. There does not currently appear to be large numbers of outbreaks in GCC learning disabilities residential settings. GCC does not have any detail on the numbers of people with a learning disability testing positive for, or dying with, Covid-19.

Gloucestershire has a very active learning disabilities partnership board who have been promoting guidance and educational material on how to support someone with a learning disability, as well as working with the community resilience working group to ensure that those in the community that need support can access it.

Please find attached or below a helpful reference document for health care professionals to utilise when supporting someone with a learning disability to access healthcare settings. This has been designed to be printed and made available for staff. This guide has been developed in response to Covid-19 by the Gloucestershire Learning Disability and Autism Clinical Programme Group and was co-produced by people with lived experience and those with clinical experience of supporting this vulnerable group of patients:

- [Learning Disabilities Guide CH April20.pdf](#)

Additionally there has been work to pull together [easy read information for those with a learning disability](#), and those supporting them, through this difficult time.

9. Are there sufficient supplies of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) within Gloucestershire?

Maintaining sufficient stocks of all necessary PPE for the County remains the top priority for all partners in Gloucestershire and we are working together, through the LRF, to do all we can to ensure staff in the County continue to have all they need. We currently have enough PPE within the County.

As a county council, we have carried out a preliminary assessment of requirements in Adult's and Children's Social Care. We have pooled our available stocks to make sure we can prioritise distribution to frontline staff in children and adult services and have taken steps to centralise distribution to those services. Further orders have been placed, including a large order by GFRS on behalf of GCC as a whole, against existing estimated requirements. Work is underway to explore the requirements of the County's schools.

At this time, we are not asking you to proactively ask people if they have stocks of PPE, but we are contacting specific trade sectors to see if they can help. However, if you do get sent offers, please send them to Tina Reid (tina.reid@gloucestershire.gov.uk) so they can be followed up.

C Children's social care during the Covid-19 outbreak

1. What measures is GCC taking to protect vulnerable children and young people?

Within Gloucestershire, social workers are conducting thorough risk assessments and will continue home visits for those considered most at risk. For other children, GCC is carrying out eyes on visits or 'garden gate' visits through which we can get visual and verbal reassurance of a young person's wellbeing. GCC is also using digital technologies such as WhatsApp, Mind of my Own, and FaceTime, particularly for older children who have their own phone.

Currently, the localities and services supporting children and families are reporting that there is sufficient staff to deliver our statutory responsibilities, especially visiting our most vulnerable children on a regular basis. Whilst there is no guarantee that this will remain the case, we are keeping our contacts with external social work agencies who still appear to be offering agency staff, so that if numbers fall below a critical mass, we will attempt to engage them to cover vacancies.

Our foster carers continue to provide care for our vulnerable children and young people, and a significant number are offering to take more children if they can. Our foster carers receive regular updates on how the virus is affecting our practice. Whilst placements remain stable, they are reviewed at 2pm each day, and if future placements do look like becoming very difficult to find, we are considering some safe exemptions to current placement rules.

2. What measures is GCC taking to protect children's social service workers and the families they interact with?

To protect our frontline staff, we have sourced flasks for carrying warm water, soap and paper towels for social workers to use between visits, should they not be returning to base, and gloves are due to be distributed shortly.

D Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service during the Covid-19 outbreak

1. How is Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service ensuring that preventative visits can continue during the crisis, with officers and members of the public being equally protected?

GFRS has had to adapt and restrict the way they approach prevention activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. GFRS has done this by prioritising 'very high risk' members of the community to ensure they are still visited. GFRS will continue to undertake limited prevention activity on a risk based approach.

Those classified as 'very high risk' are vulnerable people that GFRS were already aware of. Where a visit does take place, GFRS are using minimal staff with appropriate safety provisions to mitigate risk to the firefighter and the member of the community. Many of those that will be visited will be elderly with underlying health condition, and must be protected from infection.

For any visit that has had to be delayed or postponed, GFRS will be sending personal letters to each address explaining the reasons why it has been cancelled and that any visits will be rescheduled. Fire safety information and advice is enclosed with each letter.

The fire safety advice line will temporarily be staffed in day time hours by the dedicated fire safety team, who will be able to offer further advice/support over the phone.

GFRS are continuing to share fire safety messages and these have been tailored accordingly to related house hold activity whilst more people are at home. This will continue over the coming weeks and months.

2. What additional duties will GFRS be carrying out during the crisis?

GFRS has put arrangements in place to offer further assistance to the community, while making sure that its own resilience and ability to respond to statutory responsibilities is not compromised. The following additional duties are being carried out by GFRS:

- Assistance for packaging and delivering food and medication to members of the community who are shielding via the community resilience cell.
- A team of 20 are assisting the mortality planning cell with the collection and management of the deceased through Covid-19.
- Assistance to South West Ambulance Service Trust has been offered. Staff can assist by driving ambulances on blue lights, alongside casualty and patient care depending on the level of clinical qualification held by GFRS staff.
- Assisting in fitting and training NHS staff in the use of respiratory PPE.

- We have converted one of our Community Fire Stations into a temporary Covid-19 drive through testing station and will be supplying firefighters to assist with the daily operation.
- We are using stations and other buildings for storage of Local Resilience Forum PPE.

E Other GCC services and community support during the Covid-19 outbreak

1. How is the County Council engaging with communities?

Community Help Hub

Gloucestershire's councils and partners have created a Community Help Hub to connect local people who need help with others who can provide the support they need. People can now register to the County's Community Help Hub by calling 01452 583519 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, and on weekends 9am to 4pm. People can also register online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/helphub. Please note that people should only register if they need help now, not if they may need help in the future.

This group will be coordinating offers of community support and requests for help. The Portal is hosted by the County Council, with information being fed through to the relevant district councils to follow up. GCC is collating information on community-led volunteer groups and changes to business as usual across the County so that the situation can be mapped and gaps identified where resources may need to be mobilised.

The District Councils are coordinating activities on the ground and can provide you with more information about the community groups operating in your division. Please see contact details below:

- Cheltenham BC (lead Richard Gibson) - communityservices@cheltenham.gov.uk
- Cotswold DC (lead Jacqueline Wright) - response.hub@cotswold.gov.uk
- Forest of Dean DC (lead Andy Barge) - response.hub@fdean.gov.uk
- Gloucester City (lead Anne Brinkoff) - community.wellbeing@gloucester.gov.uk
- Stroud DC (lead Emma Keating Clark) - emergency.planning@stroud.gov.uk
- Tewkesbury BC (lead Andy Saunders) - communityresponse@tewkesbury.gov.uk

Volunteers will not be issued with PPE by GCC; people will mostly be volunteering through established groups who have health and safety and safeguarding procedures. Trading Standards has issued information relating to protecting volunteers from unfounded allegations should something go wrong for the people they are helping.

Community Groups

Each district council has been allocated up to £50k from GCC to use as a Community Float and for other emergency needs, for example, infrastructure. The funds are intended to support local voluntary sector agencies and community groups who are helping vulnerable people during the Covid-19 crisis. It is open to

community/voluntary groups, registered charities, community interest companies, and parish and town councils. The fund cannot be used to support the mainstream activities of an organisation e.g. ongoing spending commitments including salaries and administration costs. Community groups should contact their districts if they are getting into financial difficulty or need support to respond to the needs of residents during this crisis.

GCC is working with DEFRA and local agencies to work with food banks who are receiving high demand. The Local Resilience Forum has identified food access as a priority and plans are being developed to address this. District councils are establishing community hubs and working closely with their local food banks and other VCS agencies to distribute food to those that need it. Local funders such as Gloucestershire Community Foundation are launching a grant scheme to get money to those that need it as quickly as possible. GCF is a recipient of the Emergency Coronavirus Funding Scheme which is collecting donations nationally.

2. How is the Council supporting organisations such as the Nelson Trust and others that provide services in the community?

The Government has announced a series of measures to assist businesses during the Coronavirus crisis, and, in addition, the Council is able to offer some supplier relief (support) on a case by case basis according to the nature of the services, goods, or works being provided, the challenges being faced, the contracted terms, and the constraints of any statutory requirements.

It is the responsibility of each contract manager/commissioner to identify those suppliers who may be at risk and require assistance.

Every contract and supplier will have its own unique characteristics and therefore the relief available will vary case by case, but some examples could be as follows:

- Accelerated invoice payment
- Payment in advance or on order (not receipt)
- Change to contract requirements including an extension to current agreed end date
- Change to delivery locations, frequency and timing of delivery.

Procurement and Finance have been working closely to ensure that commissioners/contract managers have clear advice about what constitutes a supplier 'at risk', what Government assistance is available, and what additional assistance the Council can offer.

The Chancellor has also set out a package of other measures to support contracted suppliers and other businesses during this period of time. Contracted suppliers should pursue Government sources of relief particularly in circumstances where they are unable to provide goods, works or services where staff are or may be furloughed.

It is important that suppliers are not claiming public subsidy in relation to the same cash flow issue twice e.g. the supplier claims 80% of staff costs through the Job Retention Scheme for furloughed staff, as well as receiving payment through the Council's contracts with other suppliers.

In the first instance, supplier relief is currently available up to the end of June 2020. This may be extended further at a later date if we are advised by the Government.

3. How have County Council services been affected by Covid-19?

Concessionary travel restrictions

Time restrictions applying to the English national concessionary bus pass scheme in Gloucestershire were removed on Monday 23 March 2020. Anyone holding a pass will be able to travel for free on all public bus services until further notice.

Highways

Most planned works have now resumed with some adjustments to take account of social distancing guidelines. Please report all non-emergency matters online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/report-it or email us on highways@gloucestershire.gov.uk. Emergencies can be reported through 08000 514514.

Our phone line 08000 514 514 is now for emergencies only.

Household Waste and Recycling Centres

All five county council sites are now open. Visitors to Household Recycling centres are required to prebook their visit in order to gain access to the sites. Social distancing will be required on site, and in order to minimise queues and waiting times the number of booking slots available will be limited. Bookings can only be made online.

[The HRC online booking system can be found here.](#)

Further information on Gloucestershire County Council's recycling centres is available here: <https://www.gloucestershirerecycles.com/household-recycling-centres-hrcs/>

Libraries and Archives

Libraries have been closed since March in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; however four libraries have now reopened with strict social distancing measures in place. The four libraries are: Newent Library, Longlevens Library, Prestbury Library and Stonehouse Library. More are set to open in the coming weeks.

A new 'reserve and collect' library service is being launched to ensure customers can request books, DVDs and other available materials that they would like to borrow and book a slot for collection.

To reserve and collect, you simply browse through the online catalogue, find the items you wish to borrow and reserve them.

You will then be sent an email with a link to select a slot to collect the items.

Alternatively an 'off the shelf' service will also be available where you can choose the type of stock you wish to borrow, instead of specific items, and library staff will select something for you. When it is available you will be sent an email inviting you to choose when you would like to collect it.

If you do not have internet access staff will arrange for a 'ring and read', where a customer will call and request the type of stock or title required that can then be collected, or 'home delivery' service.

All collections will be managed with social distancing and the online catalogue is available at <https://gloucestershire.spydus.co.uk/>

If you haven't yet joined your local library and want to browse our digital catalogue and take advantage of this new collection service, go to www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/join-the-library/

This service will be available from Monday 13 July and a list of the libraries that will be offering it can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/our-response-to-covid-19-accessing-library-services-from-home/>

Gloucestershire Archives at the Heritage Hub remains closed until further notice.

Registration Services

Ceremonies:

The government announcement (23 June 2020) stated that marriage and civil partnership ceremonies can resume from Saturday 4 July 2020. The government has indicated that up to 30 people may be permitted in the ceremony room subject to:

The venue and the room being available for use and suitably risk assessed as COVID secure and the number of people in the room is compliant with social distancing rules.

Please click [here](#) for full details how a ceremony will look in Gloucestershire with the current government restrictions.

We will be contacting couples in priority order if these restrictions affect your planned ceremony date.

We are currently unable to take any new bookings for Ceremonies to take place during the remainder of 2020. This is due to the need to accommodate bookings that have been unable to go ahead due to the Government restrictions

If you need to contact us about a ceremony, please email ceremonies@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Death Appointments:

Due to the current COVID-19 (Coronavirus) situation no face to face death registration appointments are being offered in our offices. All deaths will now be registered via a telephone appointment.

Births:

In line with Government advice we are now permitted to undertake Birth Registrations. Due to the restrictions that have been in place since 23rd March 2020 we have a backlog of births to register, therefore we will be contacting parents in priority order to arrange a Registration appointment. We will be working through this back log as quickly as possible.

A claim for child benefit or universal credit can be made prior to the birth being registered, where they have not been able to do so because of the measures currently in place.

Notice of Marriage / Civil Partnership:

In line with Government advice we are now permitted to undertake Notice of Marriage/Civil Partnership appointments.

Due to the restrictions that have been in place since 23rd March 2020 we will be contacting couples in priority order to arrange an appointment in order to ensure their Notices are in place prior to their ceremony date.

We will be working to arrange appointments as quickly as possible.

Re-registration of Birth following a Marriage or Civil Partnership:

For the time being, we are unable to offer appointments to re-register a birth following marriage or civil partnership of natural parents or to add the father's details if they were not included in the original registration.

Correcting an error in a Registration:

For the time being, we are unable to consider applications to correct an error in a register entry unless a correction is imperative.

Further information on how the Council's services have been affected by Covid 19 can be accessed at the following link: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-services-affected-by-covid-19

4. What is GCC doing to support public transport operators with PPE?

The Council has spoken with Stagecoach and Pulhams (who cover almost all bus services between them) and they are following the guidelines set by the Confederation for Passenger Transport (CPT - bus operators advocacy group) and they are using their risk assessments. This involves:

- Minimising cash fares, encouraging smart cards and contactless payments
- Enhanced cleaning regime every day
- Perspex screens on all Stagecoach and the Pulhams 99 (their busiest route)
- Hand sanitiser issued to every driver
- Social distancing being enforced, signage on buses
- The Council has offered to help secure further PPE if the operators think this is necessary.

5. How is GCC supporting residents to look after their mental health during the crisis?

The work of the multi-agency mental health and wellbeing 'cell'

The council and its partners recognise the impact that the Covid-19 outbreak may have on mental health and emotional wellbeing both in the short and longer-term. Uncertainty, concerns over health and finances, bereavement, the pace of social change, and the impact of self-isolation and social distancing will all be contributory factors. There is a need to take action to promote positive wellbeing and alleviate emotional distress.

To oversee this work, a Mental Health and Wellbeing multi-agency 'cell' (chaired by Gloucestershire County Council) has been established; reporting into the Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG). The primary purpose of the cell is to oversee action across the system to provide residents and the workforce with information and support to enable them to look after their mental health and emotional wellbeing during both the outbreak and the recovery phase.

The cell is focusing on a number of work-streams, including: providing information and support to the general population about looking after your mental health and wellbeing; providing targeted advice and support to people or groups which might be at higher risk of poor mental health; building capacity within the system and community to respond; supporting workforce wellbeing, and suicide prevention. The cell includes representation from providers and commissioners of mental health services, the police, the voluntary and community sector, and district councils.

Key areas of work

To date the cell has been taking forward a number of areas of work, including:

- creating a designated area on the [council website](#) to provide information on looking after your mental wellbeing, and signposting to further support;
- taking forward a proactive communications campaign to promote the key messages, including social media adverts, work with local media, a short film

(produced in conjunction with Gloucestershire Health and Care and [available to view online](#)); and a planned 'mail drop' of information to households, including local sources of support for mental health.

- working with partners and the providers of mental health services to understand current trends in need and demand for mental health support among Gloucestershire residents during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Developing and adapting services

Mental health support will need to be available for people with different levels of 'need' (i.e. from milder anxiety through to more severe mental health issues or 'crisis' situations). The way we provide services also needs to be adapted in light of social distancing; moving from face to face services to online, video-chat or telephone delivery.

Lead Cabinet Member approval has been given to [introduce a number of new mental health services for adults, and children and young people](#) in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. These will work alongside the county's existing services (such as the Let's Talk service, Self-Harm helpline, and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services). The new services will help to ensure there are a range of options available to provide people with different levels of support appropriate to their need.

The new services include:

- Two digital mental health support platforms; one for adults and one for young people, for individuals experiencing issues with their emotional wellbeing, such as stress or anxiety. The platforms will be open access (i.e. no referral is required) and will provide online self-care resources, access to moderated peer support via online forums, and online counselling.
- A funded programme of 1:1 counselling for individuals whose mental health has been more seriously impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak (for example due to bereavement, or the exacerbation of existing mental health issues). The service will be targeted at adults (18 plus) whose circumstances mean they would not normally be able to fund and access this type of counselling.
- An open access, anonymous helpline for young people aged 9-21 years struggling with mild or temporary emotional wellbeing and mental health issues due to the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The services will launch between May and June, in addition to existing mental health services in the county, such as Let's Talk. The following Council webpage details some of the main mental health services available locally and nationally:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/covid-19-information-and-advice/advice-on-covid-19/looking-after-your-wellbeing/>

Support for community volunteers and other responders

The council has commissioned two short online training courses targeted at community volunteers (and other individuals involved in the Covid-19 response) to

enable them to act as mental health ‘first aiders’ and provide basic advice on wellbeing and mental health to vulnerable individuals they come into contact with.

Recognising that we also need to support the emotional wellbeing of volunteers themselves, the council is commissioning a pilot programme of emotional support for volunteers which can be scaled up if required.

Additional initiatives

NHS England funding for Suicide Prevention - Gloucestershire is due to receive an allocation of £125K per annum (for a three year period) under the national NHS England Suicide Prevention Transformation programme. The council’s original proposal submitted to NHS England in January, mainly focused on community based interventions to support suicide prevention. NHS England has indicated that local areas will be able to adapt their proposals to respond to the Covid-19 situation; and commissioners are awaiting further guidance on this.

Government funding for Mind - The government has announced a £5 million grant, to be administered by the national mental health charity Mind, to fund additional services for people struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time. The grant funding will be available for voluntary sector mental health organisations in England. It opened for applications on 16th April. The National Survivor User Network (NSUN) will administer part of the fund to ensure that smaller community organisations who might not meet all the standard eligibility criteria can also apply. Further information is available on the [Mind website](#).

Gloucestershire VCS Alliance is working with the local VCS in Gloucestershire to bring forward bids.

6. We must do more to ensure the health, safety and well-being of BAME people during this pandemic and after it. Please could the report on BAME Covid-19 deaths be addressed actionably and immediately?

Reducing inequalities is one of the Council’s priority areas, and it is working to understand the impact locally, identify mitigating actions and appropriate tools to support this and understand how its Covid-19 response structures can contribute to this agenda.

Mitigating its effects during and after this pandemic will require an understanding of how health inequalities are intertwined with Covid-19. This can be addressed by seeking to better understand and mitigate impact through each of the following four dimensions:

- Wider determinants
- Risk and protective factors
- Unwarranted variation in access to service provision
- Gaps in health outcomes

National data

Emerging UK and international data suggest that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are being disproportionately affected by Covid-19. PHE review of Covid-19 disparities published on the 2 June, confirms that the impact of Covid-19 has replicated existing health inequalities and, in some cases, exacerbated them further (these analyses do not take into account the existence of comorbidities):

- Age: The largest disparity found was by age. Among people already diagnosed with Covid-19, people who were 80 or older were seventy times more likely to die than those under 40.
- Gender: Working age males diagnosed with Covid-19 were twice as likely to die as females.
- Deprivation: People who live in deprived areas have higher diagnosis rates and death rates than those living in less deprived areas. The mortality rates from Covid-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double the least deprived area
- Ethnicity: People from Black ethnic groups were most likely to be diagnosed. Death rates from Covid-19 were highest among people of Black and Asian ethnic groups. This is the opposite of what is seen in previous years, when the mortality rates were lower in Asian and Black ethnic groups than White ethnic groups. People of Bangladeshi ethnicity had around twice the risk of death than people of White British ethnicity. People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity had between 10 and 50 per cent higher risk of death when compared to White British.

When compared to previous years, the review also found a particularly high increase in all cause deaths among those born outside the UK and Ireland; those in a range of caring occupations, including social care and nursing auxiliaries and assistants; those who drive passengers in road vehicles for a living including taxi and minicab drivers and chauffeurs; those working as security guards and related occupations; and those in care homes. The full review can be found [here](#).

Local intelligence

There is limited data available for local analysis, but this generally is in line with national figures showing higher rates in older population, men, urban areas and deprived areas.

Gloucester city has a higher rate of confirmed cases over the last four weeks. The reason for is likely to be a multifactorial possibly including; higher levels of deprivation, greater proportion of BAME than other areas, being at different point of pandemic curve and difference in eligible population for testing.

There is currently much discussion about the reasons for the disproportionate impact but, as yet, no definitive answers; the situation is evolving, and the evidence needs further analysis before concrete conclusions can be drawn.

As part of the response to Covid-19 there are a number of groups which have been set up specifically to reduce the impact for vulnerable groups. These include; a

community resilience cell, a homelessness cell and the recovery cell is actively reviewing information and action to reduce inequalities. In Gloucestershire the acute hospital trust have sent out communications to all BAME staff and posted on their intranet sources of support. BAME staff are encouraged to contact the occupational health team to discuss individual circumstances. In addition, staff have been signposted to local and national sources of support. There is an active BAME network which is providing support on this issue.

7. I am very worried about the impact of the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' condition on families and young people during this public health emergency. What support is in place to help victims of domestic abuse?

No recourse to public funds (NRPF) is a condition imposed on someone due to their immigration status. Section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 states that a person will have 'no recourse to public funds' if they are 'subject to immigration control'.

[Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service \(GDASS\)](#) do work with victims of domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds (there are currently three clients where it is directly impacting their support needs).

GDASS will support clients to make relevant applications to address their circumstances, and they may be able to apply for temporary leave to remain under the Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession. However this only applies to Spousal Visas, where there are added complications around different types of Visas GDASS rely on partner agencies to help provide support i.e. [Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers \(GARAS\)](#), Karma Nivarna, Southall Black Sisters.

The local district housing authorities do not have any housing duties in relation to victims with no recourse to public funds and it is very difficult to get these victims into refuges. There are specialist refuges but they are usually full, other/ non specialist refuges may be willing to take referrals but are limited to taking very low numbers as there are obvious funding implications that the refuge will have to meet themselves. If a victim has children then social care can be approached for support with meeting housing costs as part of their duty to protect the children (GDASS have had a client in a place of safety under these conditions).

For further information - even when a client has been awarded Temporary Leave To Remain, GDASS are being asked to provide funding in lieu of their benefits being paid to the refuge, which GDASS are unable to do.

8. What actions have been put in place by GCC to support homeless people during the outbreak?

The county council has underwritten the costs of block purchased hotel accommodation to allow homeless outreach services and district councils to accommodate rough sleepers and those at imminent risk. This is to make sure individuals are kept safe and have the ability to follow government guidance regarding social distancing and 'stay at home'.

Homelessness and housing options assessments are completed by the district councils to identify appropriate next steps during this period. They will be ready to

act when the current restrictions regarding moves within the 'housing system' are lifted.

Drug and alcohol services are continuing to be provided by GCC's commissioned provider Change, Grow, Live. Mental health support continues to be provided by Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust.

F GCC staffing and continuity arrangements during the Covid-19 outbreak

1. What advice is GCC providing to its staff?

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday 23 March, a message was sent to all staff from Pete Bungard asking staff in essential services who can work from home to do so, and all staff in non-essential services to stay at home.

Despite the easing of some restrictions, those who can work from home are still being advised to do so. Some services cannot be delivered from home and therefore may need key workers to travel into an office or other place of work. GCC is currently working to make its buildings safe and this will involve measures for maintaining social distancing, limits to desk usage, one way systems, limits on lift usage, reduced capacity for meeting rooms and extra handwashing reminders.

2. Do you have an update regarding staff testing in Gloucestershire?

Health and care organisations in Gloucestershire are continuing to test their staff for Covid-19 to ensure more can get back to work, helping local people to stay safe, healthy and well.

A drive through, appointment only testing centre is operating in Brockworth, Gloucester, where up to 160 staff or members of their household can be swabbed each day.

NHS and care staff – including NHS hospital, community and mental health staff; GPs and practice staff; pharmacists, ambulance workers and care home and domiciliary care staff are all eligible for testing through the service if they are exhibiting symptoms.

Test results are processed within the county or neighbouring laboratory and are available within 48 to 72 hours, meaning the member of staff can quickly return to work if it's confirmed they, or a member of their household, does not have Covid-19.

This service is in addition to the regional testing being provided, which is accessed via the national Gov.uk process.

The Gloucestershire service is increasing capacity to:

- Reduce journey times for staff who can use their nearest site
- Enable better data collection to identify hotspots and outbreaks
- Simplify the process to speed it up and reduce administration
- Ensure results are received as quickly as possible

Tests are available **by appointment only**, with staff being referred through their own in-house referral routes.

3. What continuity arrangements are in place for GCC?

Each service has a business continuity plan in place to proactively respond to the current situation. A GCC Business Continuity Management Cell has been set up to make sure critical services continue to function and details of non-essential staff are known. The work that many staff are doing has already changed to support this urgent situation and ensure that we support our most vulnerable residents.

4. What arrangements have been put in place for the Council to continue to make decisions?

For urgent decisions, the usual rules will apply as set out in the constitution. The chair of the relevant scrutiny committee must agree that the decision needs to be made urgently, and a notice will be published giving the reasons for urgency. During the Covid-19 crisis, working practices have been changed so that the vice-chair of the relevant scrutiny committee is contacted at the same time as the chair regarding urgent decisions. Where it is necessary to implement a decision urgently without call-in, the constitution requires the Chair of Council along with the relevant scrutiny chair to agree that it is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

Where a decision is outside the council's policy framework or budget, the constitution requires prior consultation with group leaders.

For routine decisions that were scheduled to be taken by the Cabinet, they will now be taken as Cabinet Member decisions. The usual requirements around publication of forthcoming executive decisions, decision reports and decision statements will continue to apply. The implementation of some of these decisions may be delayed or deferred in light of the current situation.

Please see links below for information on decisions that have been made by the Council during the Covid-19 outbreak:

- Forthcoming executive decisions, (referred to as the cabinet forward plan), can be viewed on the council website at the following link:
<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?&RP=0&K=0&DM=0&HD=0&DS=1&Next=true&H=1&META=mgforthcomingdecisions&V=0>
- Officer decisions, (with a financial saving or expenditure of between £250,000 and £499,000, or where there is likely to be a strong public interest), can be viewed on the council website at the following link:
<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mglistofficerdecisions.aspx>
- Decisions taken as urgent decisions using the council's special urgency rules can be viewed at the following link:
<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgWhatsNew.aspx?bcr=1>

G The response from partners to the Covid-19 crisis

1. What has been the response from Gloucestershire Constabulary?

Gloucestershire Constabulary has issued a statement about their working arrangements. Officers will still be visible across Gloucestershire and will be ready to respond when needed, although they may have to adapt the way they work in line with public health advice. They are encouraging police staff to work from home where possible, splitting up teams to work in tactical locations across the county, and limiting face-to-face contact with officers to ensure we can protect the frontline. Neighbourhood policing teams will continue looking after older and more vulnerable members of our communities.

If you haven't already done so, it might be useful to sign up to the Police community alerts, which provide useful information on incidents and events in local communities, at www.yourcommunityalerts.co.uk.

2. What has been the response from the NHS in Gloucestershire?

The NHS in Gloucestershire is taking responsible steps to plan ahead and respond to the Covid-19 situation. Here is a link to the latest information from the NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group on service advice and developments in the County: <https://covid19.glos.nhs.uk/>

3. Please can you explain what dental provision there is in Gloucestershire?

Please see the below information from Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust as part of the national NHS England requirement. They are unable to comment on other providers.

What emergency dental centres do we have and where:

- We have one central 'virtual' urgent care dental hub with an online portal for all referrals, run by Gloucestershire Health and Care Foundation Trust.
- Emergency treatment is defined by new pathways from NHS England. The hub triages and can offer a video consultation and then a face-to-face emergency slot if required.
- Face-to-face care is being offered at Southgate Moorings (Gloucester) and St Pauls (Cheltenham) – both Gloucestershire Health and Care Foundation Trust sites.
- NHS England have negotiated with some high street practices to take urgent referrals from us but there is no confirmation on which or when this will be available.
- Vulnerable patients are physically seen at Southgate Moorings (Gloucester) and Covid-19 positive patients at St Pauls (Cheltenham)

How to get an appointment

Contact your own dentist, they can refer you on the portal mentioned above. If your dentist is not available call Southgate Moorings on 0300 421 6440 or the out of hours service on 111 and they will complete a referral and enter you onto our online referral hub.

How do private patients get a referral?

Same referral process as above for private patients.

When will people be able to access an emergency dentist?

The central hub opened on 10 April.

When will people be able to access a dentist for routine treatment and check ups?

In England, dentists can return to work from 8 June 2020. Many practices will not be able to offer all treatments from 8 June, but practices will need to prioritise patients based on their need.

4. Are GCC and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) talking to local businesses or the university?

GCC and the LEP have good working relationships with local universities and businesses. GCC has recently been given a further single point of contact for the universities in Gloucestershire that will be followed up by the Deputy Director of Public Health. The University of Gloucestershire dials into the Local Resilience Forum Tactical Co-ordination Group meetings to stay up to date with local developments.

The LEP is actively engaging with businesses. There is a considerable amount of information on their website about what they are doing: www.gfirstlep.com

5. What funding is available from other organisations to help charities and others during the Covid-19 outbreak?

The Gloucestershire Funders Group (GFG) is a collaboration between eight charitable foundations and organisations who can provide funding for charities, groups, people and activities, in Gloucestershire.

The first grants have been awarded and others are being considered.

Organisations, communities and groups should first discuss their application by calling Georgia Boon of the Barnwood Trust on 07516 030263 or emailing Georgia.Boon@barnwoodtrust.org.

All ideas will be shared with the Gloucestershire Funders to identify potential longer-term sources of support.

H Advice for residents during the Covid-19 crisis

1. How can people help others safely at this time?

The Government has issued guidance on how to help people safely. This can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely--2/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely>

Community volunteers involved in providing support for people who are shielding because they are extremely vulnerable (e.g. shopping or dropping off medication) should follow the principles of social distancing and guidance on effective handwashing, which should be sufficient.

2. What advice is being given regarding scammers exploiting the crisis?

The Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) has released a campaign to raise awareness of scammers exploiting the crisis. More information can be found at the following link: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2096996/5193-coronavirus-scam-postcard-v3.pdf

Guidance has also been issued regarding fraud control in emergency management. This can be accessed at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/fraud-control-in-emergency-management-covid-19-uk-government-guide.

3. How is public transport being affected across the County during this time?

Information on the latest changes to public transport in the County can be found at the following link: <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/westcovid19>

From Monday 15 June 2020 everyone must wear a face covering when travelling by public transport in England. [Find out more on the government website.](#)

[Read the Safer Travel guidance for passengers.](#)

4. What is the response to those who require housing during this time?

Gloucestershire's COVID-19 Emergency Accommodation Protocol (CEAP) humanitarian response has been activated to provide people with emergency accommodation who would not normally be eligible.

5. What can residents do if they are unable to top up electricity/gas meters?

Information can be found regarding this on the websites of some of the main power suppliers:

- British Gas - www.britishgas.co.uk/covid19
- EDF - www.edfenergy.com/coronavirus-advice
- E-on - www.eonenergy.com/coronavirus-update

- N-Power - www.npower.com/help-and-support/coronavirus/prepayment
- Ecotricity - www.ecotricity.co.uk/customer-service/coronavirus

6. What will happen if a resident's Blue Badge is due to expire during the crisis?

Blue Badges that are due to expire during Covid-19 have been 'extended'. Penalty Charge Notices will not be given to citizens using Blue Badges with an expiry date of 1 January 2020 onwards. This relaxation of enforcement against expired Blue Badges should continue initially until 30 September 2020. Residents with a Blue Badge due to expire are still encouraged to renew their Blue Badges online if possible.

7. What is the advice to residents planning social gatherings?

From 15 August you can:

- meet in groups of up to two households (your [support bubble](#) counts as one household) in any location - public or private, indoors or outdoors. You do not always have to meet with the same household - you can meet with different households at different times. However, it remains the case - even inside someone's home - that you should socially distance from anyone not in your household or bubble. This change also does not affect the support you receive from your carers
- when you are outside you can continue to meet in groups of up to six people from different households, following social distancing guidelines
- additional businesses and venues, including restaurants, pubs, cinemas, visitor attractions, hotels, and campsites will be able to open - but we will continue to keep closed certain premises where the risks of transmission may be higher
- other public places, such as libraries, community centres, places of worship, outdoor playgrounds and outdoor gyms will be able to open
- stay overnight away from your home with your own household or support bubble, or with members of one other household
- sports facilities and venues, including such as indoor gyms, fitness and dance studios, indoor swimming pools and indoor water parks, can open
- Bowling alleys, skating rinks and casinos to reopen for the first time as well as indoor play and soft play centres which comply with new Covid-19 Secure guidelines
- Beauty salons, tattoo studios, spas, barbers across England will be able to offer all close contact services and treatments
- Wedding receptions for up to 30 people to resume – and indoor performances with socially distanced audiences will recommence
- Sports and business events pilots to resume
- in order to help contain the spread of the virus as we open up more premises, face coverings are now required in shops and supermarkets – in addition to public transport where they were already required. People are also strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in other enclosed public spaces where there are people they do not normally meet

You still cannot:

- socialise indoors in groups of more than two households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household) – this includes when dining out or going to the pub
- socialise outdoors in a group of more than six people from different households; gatherings larger than six should only take place if everyone is from exclusively from two households or support bubbles
- interact socially with anyone outside the group you are attending a place with, even if you see other people you know, for example, in a restaurant, community centre or place of worship
- hold or attend celebrations (such as parties) where it is difficult to maintain social distancing and avoid close social interaction – even if they are organised by businesses and venues that are taking steps to follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines
- stay overnight away from your home with members of more than one other household (your support bubble counts as one household)

It is against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces). Businesses and venues following [COVID-19 Secure guidelines](#) can host larger groups provided they comply with the law. This can include weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and funerals (which we advise should be limited to no more than 30 people), religious ceremonies and services, community activities and support groups.

I Information on schools during the Covid-19 crisis

1. What is the situation for schools?

As of 1 June 2020, children in early years settings, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, and children of critical workers and vulnerable children could start to return to school.

Secondary schools and further education colleges have also started to provide some face to face contact with Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year, in support of their continued remote, home learning.

From 1 September:

- schools, nurseries and colleges will open for all children and young people on a full-time basis
- universities are working to reopen as fully as possible

A dedicated phone line and email address has been set up to help parents with all school related enquiries in Gloucestershire, including questions relating to Free School Meals. Tel: 01452 426015 Email:

COVIDSchoolenquiries@gloucestershire.gov.uk. A series of FAQs for parents, key workers and early years providers is also available via GCC's Community Hub webpage: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/schools-and-key-workers/

Guidance on safe operating and deep cleaning, HR FAQs, and Traded Services updates have been issued to schools.

Adult Education classroom-based provision ceased from Monday 23 March, and the same for our subcontractors. Work is underway to put in place a remote learning offer for our classes. We are contactable for enquiries on [0800 542 1655](tel:08005421655)

2. Please can you explain the testing and isolating procedure for schools, particularly what happens with cases within "bubble" groups?

Any child or member of staff who has symptoms of Covid-19 must inform their school or childcare setting immediately (even if they are not at the school/childcare setting when they become unwell) and follow the [self-isolation guidelines](#).

The school/setting will then notify the Public Health England regional Health Protection Team (HPT). The HPT will risk assess the situation and agree the best course of action (e.g. identify contacts, identify those requiring a test, identify those required to self-isolate).

Either the school/setting or HPT will then contact all individuals who need to take action and they will be told what they need to do and who to contact if they have any questions.

Every situation will be different and will also be dependent on the context (so for example if there is a known outbreak in the area a higher level of testing and isolation would be required).

Public Health England HPTs are very experienced in dealing with these complex situations and they will act in the public's best interests in order to prevent transmission.

3. What is happening with regards to children who receive Free School Meals?

All children currently attending schools are provided with Free School Meals (FSM). FSM for children attending school will be provided a meal through Caterlink, which will continue to be prepared and delivered as usual.

Schools are also responsible for providing FSM for all eligible children who currently remain at home, either through the provision of lunch packs, food hampers or vouchers. Some schools and academies are still trying to work out the best way of getting FSM to eligible children currently not attending school. They have been offered advice and guidance from GCC but this will need to be managed locally.

If a family is eligible for FSM they can claim supermarket vouchers. More information on FSM and how households can sign up is available at the following link:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/covid-19-schools-frequently-asked-questions

4. Has there been an increase in applications for free school meals?

There has been an increasing number of families applying for free school meals. Some of these will be families who previously relied upon the universal free school meals offer for their children and have now registered due to benefit reasons to access the national voucher, but the majority are families whose financial circumstances have changed with Covid-19 and are relying upon universal benefits.

Since the start of lock-down 1078 applications for individual children (a number will be from single families) have been processed and who are now receiving support, and meals are being provided for a further 56 whilst they go through the benefits system so their eligibility can be validated.

5. What provision is there to support students, especially children with Special Educational Needs, at home, particularly if they need ICT and access to broadband?

Children with all ranges of needs are continuing to be supported by schools, and where other professionals such as social care are involved, they are working in partnership to provide the technology to children who need it.

This provision is made either directly by the schools concerned or by using the pupil premium funding. Where a child has additional needs and is in receipt of a Direct Payment from social care we have agreed to use this funding differently at this time

to enable parents to purchase items which are individual to the child's needs, this can include IT kit and/or access to broadband. Where a child has additional needs we are continuing to work in partnership with our voluntary and community sector, such as Barnwood Trust to support applications for ICT needs including access and funding for mobile data and broadband.

The local authority provides a range of equipment to support children and young people with SEND which fall outside of the schools remit. This includes communication aids, radio aids and non standard computers. We already have systems in place for these to be used both at home and school. Schools or parents are signposted to Third Sector organisations such as The Gyde Trust who provide grants to buy individual ICT systems e.g. iPads, Kindles, Switches for children with SEND.

The local authority Advisory Teaching Service (ATS) is providing a range of support for children with SEND at home, including:

- Access to a specialist advisory teacher advice
- Regular contact e.g. weekly for children with SEND who have complex or profound needs who are known to ATS, e.g. weekly advice sheets about activities to undertake at home for children with a Hearing Impairment.
- Rapid response to concerns raised by parents.

Secondary schools and many primary schools have well-developed virtual learning environments (VLEs) for children. Schools have made arrangements for children to have access to a range of home-learning resources. The local authority has dedicated pages on Schoolsnet which signpost teachers to a full range of resources and educational websites.

From 29 June, laptops and tablets, which have been supplied by the Department for Education (DfE), will be making their way to 1558 vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in the county to support them to learn at home.

6. Thousands of secondary age children in the county travel to school either by public transport or privately operated bus schemes. What guidance is being given to schools and operators about arrangements for pupils returning to school either before or after the summer break?

For the return of secondary school students from Monday 15 June GCC has instructed all transport operators that full 2 metre social distancing is to be adhered to on all school buses and at bus stops.

Also it is strongly advised that all who board a vehicle to school use a face covering to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Operators are also using enhanced cleaning regimes to further reduce the risk.

The return of schools in September has not yet been addressed. There has been no decision regarding how schools are going to operate, if all students will be attending or if year groups will be split etc. Given the rate of change at the moment, this is being closely monitored, and scenarios are being worked through to prepare as best as possible, however no advice will be given to anyone until we are sure of the approach to avoid unnecessary confusion.

7. What support is available for childcare during the school summer holidays?

The DfE have confirmed that schools will not be required to open over the summer holiday to provide child care. Some schools do operate holiday clubs as part of their usual offer and this will continue. Most other summer childcare is managed by private providers – the details of which can be found on the [glofamilies directory](#).

It is still the Government's ambition that providers running holiday clubs and activities for children over the summer holiday will be able to open if the science allows. A number are already accepting bookings in anticipation of this. The council is undertaking a scoping exercise to understand which providers are planning to run, should this be possible. This will help to identify any potential gaps in provision and support provided accordingly.

J Advice for members during the Covid-19 crisis

1. What is the latest advice regarding elections?

LGA Guidance explains that local elections, mayoral elections and police and crime commissioner elections have been postponed until 2021. No other elections, by-elections or referenda should be held.

The Winchcombe and Woodmancote by-election due to be held on 26 March 2020 was suspended.

2. Should I still be holding ward surgeries and engaging with the public?

No. As detailed in the LGA Guidance, all councillors should follow the guidance in place at any given time on avoiding unnecessary contact. The LGA Guidance details the role that councillors can and should play in an emergency response period. This Guidance can be accessed here: www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-outbreak-councillor-guidance

3. Are councillors included in staff or key-worker testing?

Anyone in England and Wales who has symptoms of coronavirus are now eligible for testing. Tests can be booked at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-for-coronavirus/>

4. What should I do if a voluntary organisation or resident needs emergency funding?

Each district council has received £50k from the county council to use as a Community Float and for other emergency needs, for example, infrastructure.

Community groups should contact their districts if they're getting into financial difficulty. Some councillors are using the Growing Our Communities fund to support charities in their response to Covid-19, but it is not a process that is particularly quick so not suitable for emergencies. A further list of emergency funding available to groups is available here: <http://www.glosvcsalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Emergency-funding-bulletin-May-2020-3.pdf>

Front-line food aid charities can apply for a grant of up to £100,000 to help continue to provide food to the vulnerable - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-apply-for-the-food-charities-grant-fund>

Individuals needing emergency support can contact the Community Help Hub by filling in an online form here: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/i-need-help>. Please refer to Question 7, Section B of this FAQ for further details on the Community Help Hub.

The Covid-19 Emergency Living Fund launched on Monday 4 May and applications for help will be reviewed within 24 hours, with people who are approved for support getting the help they need another 24 hours after that.

The Welfare Support Scheme already provides practical support to those in financial hardship for things like food deliveries, rent, gas and electricity top-ups, and essential household items such as furniture and white goods.

The new fund will offer more help, and now covers the replacement of white goods that have broken down, supermarket vouchers and cash when necessary. In addition to this, another specialist support scheme for vulnerable children and families has also been extended.

Previously only social workers could refer children and families for support but this has also been changed so now any professional can refer them for help. For more information on who can receive support and how to apply or refer someone, visit www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/covid-19-emergency-living-fund

5. Can GCC share the NHS vulnerable list with members? Local supermarkets are using it to priorities deliveries, so please can members use it to assist their constituents?

The Council is not allowed to share the NHS shielding list under any circumstances, not even with district councils. With regard to the Community Help Hub, the seven local authorities have signed up to a Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding for the sharing of personal data.

Clause 2 of this states:

The personal data must only be used for the purposes of developing and coordinating the Community Help Hubs, recruiting and managing volunteers and the provision of assistance to those who have been identified as needing help during the COVID-19 emergency. Personal data may also be used for scientific, statistical, historical and research purposes where such processing is compliant with Article 89 of GDPR. If any of the Parties wish to use the personal data for any other purposes then they are responsible for demonstrating compliance with data protection legislation.

This may be subject to interpretation by the district council who may apply their own data sharing protocol to comply with GDPR.

6. Will GCC committee meetings be held remotely?

Yes, Committee meetings have now resumed remotely.

7. What is the process for scrutiny during the Covid-19 emergency?

Members are kept informed during this emergency, and are given the opportunity to ask questions through the following:

- Covid-19 briefings to members
- This FAQ has been developed
- A system for managing member questions is in place

- Group Leaders are being briefed every week by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, and can inform the wider group of the information
- Executive decisions will continue to be published on the Council website
- The process of implementing urgent decisions has been amended to include both the chairs and vice-chairs of scrutiny committees
- Publication of forthcoming executive decisions, and officer decisions with a financial expenditure or saving of between £250,000 and £499,000, or where there is likely to be a strong public interest, on the Council website
- Members have access to important intelligence of what is happening in their patch
- Committee chairs and vice-chairs continue to have access to their DSU support officer to discuss work planning
- Each member has a contact officer within DSU who they are in regular contact with. This allows a rapid response in the event of an urgent issue being raised.

Scrutiny briefings and Q and As for scrutiny briefings were organised in June, and scrutiny committee meetings recommenced in July.

8. Where can I go to get ICT support?

The Critical Service Team are working from home but are still accessible through the usual email address and telephone number: criticaluser@gloucestershire.gov.uk
01452 425252

Please note: Please keep your iPads charged and do not turn them off. If you lose power, your fingerprint logon will not work when the iPad restarts and you will have to enter the password which was set months ago. This password cannot be reset remotely so if you do not know what it is, your iPad will have to be returned to Shire Hall for a rebuild. Please do try to avoid this, however please let the Critical Service Team know if this happens so that we can maintain contact with you.

9. Who can I contact with any further queries?

Please email any questions you have to the Democratic Services inbox (DemocraticServices@gloucestershire.gov.uk). We will collate member questions each day and pass them across to Sarah Scott's team. Response to the issues raised will be covered in the update emails sent by DSU.

Each member has also been allocated a dedicated member of staff in the DSU team that they contact should they have any queries or need any support. Members will be contacted by their dedicated member of staff on a weekly basis.

If there are any urgent enquiries, a dedicated email has been set up (healthprotection@gloucestershire.gov.uk); please only use this when absolutely necessary.