

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020



**Chief Executive**

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Good afternoon,

This is the first of our updates to be written in July. We began writing to you in March to keep you up to date with our local response to Covid-19 and at that time we had no idea that three whole calendar months would pass before we would reach this phase of our recovery. This week marks both the publication of our Local Outbreak Plan as well as one of the biggest changes to normal life in recent weeks with the relaxation of lockdown guidance to allow us to safely visit others at home and with more businesses opening their doors, albeit whilst observing social distancing.

At this point, it is important for us to reflect once again on the sacrifices our community has had to make to get to this stage. We want to thank residents and businesses across West Berkshire for their continued efforts to ensure they stay safe and play their part in keeping Covid-19 infection rates to a minimum across the district. The strain this has put on you all is clear but the ongoing benefits are beginning to be felt.

West Berkshire Council is now required, as all local authorities are, to publish a Local Outbreak Control Plan to outline how a further local outbreak and potential future restrictions would be managed. Having done this on 30<sup>th</sup> June, we want to use this week's update to share this with you.

In recent weeks, officers from across the council have been working with partners outside of the organisation, including the NHS, to develop this plan, which will be a key document for all of us in the district in the event of an unexpected further spike in local Covid-19 cases. The plan summarises how we will aim to protect our residents and communities by minimising further spread or recurrence of Covid-19 across the district. It also details the roles and responsibilities in prevention and management of the virus and how we will recognise and respond to outbreaks to prevent the further spread and recurrence of infection. Integral to the success of the plan this will be ensuring that clear communications are delivered to our community and that awareness of what the plan contains is high. Details can be found below and we would urge you to familiarise yourself with it.

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-locp>

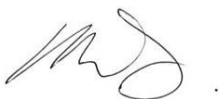
We know from what has happened with the local outbreak in Kirklees and concerns about infection rates in some large towns, such as Leicester, that a fine balance must be struck to keep West Berkshire safe. We all have a part to play in controlling the spread of Covid-19 and in the unfortunate event that a further outbreak came to our district, we will also have a role in fighting it. The best way to do this will be to ensure you receive and follow all of the guidance you need to keep yourself and others safe. We would strongly suggest that you sign up to our e-bulletin to receive timely updates regarding the local Covid-19 response: you can do this here:

[https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWESTBC/subscriber/new?qsp=CODE\\_RED](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWESTBC/subscriber/new?qsp=CODE_RED)

This is particularly important because of the major changes to guidance which come into force this weekend. We will now be allowed to spend time indoors or outside with another household, either at home or at a pub or restaurant. When outside, we may meet up to five people from more than two households so long as social distancing guidance is followed. Not only this; but pubs, cafes, hotels and hairdressers will begin welcoming customers back. We are so proud of the resilience and creativity so many of these businesses have shown since lockdown was announced and recently, since they were given a date from when they might resume operating. We welcome them back to our towns and villages and can assure them that we stand ready to support them to re-open safely and successfully.

Just as you all are, we're looking forward to seeing loved ones for the first time in months and to supporting the local businesses we've not been able to visit in months. Every week we have thanked you for your patience and for your support in helping to bring our district to this point. We would encourage you now to enjoy these new freedoms, which have been hard-earned, and to stay safe and look after each other as we enter this new phase.

Yours sincerely,



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