

**Director of Public Health**

**Prof Jim McManus, FFPH, CPsychol, FBPsS,**

**CSci, FRSB, Chartered FCIPD**

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| **Briefing Note****Covid-19 next steps beyond July 21st 2021****Version 2 UPDATED WITH NEW GUIDANCE** | Hertfordshire County CouncilCounty Hall**CHO231****Pegs Lane****Hertford SG13 8DE****Tel: 01992 556884**Jim.mcmanus@hertfordshire.gov.ukJuly 12th 2021 |
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Dear Councillors and colleagues,

**Next Steps on Covid-19:**

The Local Outbreak Member Board requested that a briefing be prepared for all elected members in Councils in Hertfordshire, and stakeholders, on the next steps beyond 19th July 2021.

This board oversees the work of the Health Protection Board, and the Member Board, Chaired by Councillor Richard Roberts - Leader of the County Council, comprises the 11 Leaders of Hertfordshire Councils, The County Council’s Public Health and Community Safety Executive Member, Cllr Morris Bright MBE and the Police and Crime Commissioner

**Frequent questions**

We are seeing an increase in questions from members and residents on issues ranging from how to get vaccinated to testing requirements for travel. The appendices at the end of this briefing contain information you may wish to share with residents and stakeholders.

**What has government announced for 19th July?**

Government has announced today that the move to Step 4 (lifting of most remaining legal requirements **but not all** ) of the roadmap will be taken on 19th July. Both the Secretary of State for Health during his statement in the House of Commons at 3pm and the Prime Minister in his press conference at 5pm **said there was no easy date for unlocking and this step is NOT irreversible**. We need to continue with caution to keep numbers of infections down in order to keep moving out.

The Prime Minister’s statement as delivered can be found <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-confirms-move-to-step-4>here and the slides which accompanied the press conference can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-12-july-2021).

Government says numbers of infections and deaths are currently well within modelled expectations, but are clearly concerned at rises in infections and the fact we are, as stated in the press conference, in a Third Wave. Opening in September would risk a major Autumn wave and now is the right time. “It is absolutely vital that we proceed now with caution….this pandemic is not over…this disease continues to carry risks for you and your family. We cannot simply revert instantly on Monday 19th July to life as it was before Covid.”

* Legal restrictions will be removed, the instruction to work from home will be removed and those areas of the economy formerly closed (eg nightclubs) will be allowed to open and those services restricted to capacity (eg pubs) will be able to move to full capacity.
* Guidance for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable will be produced
* The Test, Trace and Isolate System will be kept in place
* The vaccination roll-out will continue
* Government is strongly advising venues like nightclubs to make use of vaccine certification
* Guidance on when to wear face-coverings (indoors, and on public transport) will be published but the legal duty will be changed from 19th July

**Does this mean all covid-19 measures end?**

No. A number of measures will continue because we are still in a third wave of infections, with infections rising rapidly. As Sir Patrick Vallance said “thanks to vaccination the risk of hospitalisation is four times lower and the risk of death ten times lower but it still exists.”

1. Travel controls to and from other countries remain including duties to test and quarantine
2. The duty to self-isolate when required continues
3. The Health and Safety Executive guidance on safe workplaces and safe businesses continues and can be enforced
4. Some measures in care homes will remain
5. While legal requirements to wear face coverings and removed, guidance to wear them in crowded indoor places continues and individual business and employers can and are insisting on them in certain circumstances
6. The Test, Trace and Isolate System will be kept in place

**What does the new government guidance say?**

Government has stated that existing guidance and legal measures continue until July 19th and thereafter new guidance which can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread) will come into force.

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| **Extract from Government guidance** “This [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread) will come into effect when England moves to step 4 of the roadmap. Read the current step 3 guidance on [what you can and cannot do](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do). While cases are high and rising, everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious. This is why we are keeping in place key protections:* testing when you have symptoms and targeted asymptomatic testing in education, high risk workplaces and to help people manage their personal risk.
* isolating when positive or when contacted by NHS Test and Trace.
* border quarantine: for all arriving from red list countries and for those people not fully vaccinated arriving from amber list countries.
* cautious guidance for individuals, businesses and the vulnerable whilst prevalence is high including:
	+ whilst Government is no longer instructing people to work from home if they can, Government would expect and recommend a gradual return over the summer
	+ Government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport;
	+ being outside or letting fresh air in
	+ minimising the number, proximity and duration of social contacts.

encouraging and supporting businesses and large events to use the NHS COVID Pass in high risk settings. The Government will work with organisations where people are likely to be in close proximity to others outside their household to encourage the use of this. If sufficient measures are not taken to limit infection, the Government will consider mandating certification in certain venues at a later date.” |

**What does this mean for exiting the Pandemic?**

Government has made the decision that there is no perfect time to exit restrictions and it is better to do so now than in winter. But three of the four tests which government set out to continue along the path to exit restrictions have been met. I set these out here, *along with our local additional test on vaccine uptake*.

***Table 1: Four tests for roadmap easing***

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| **GOVERNMENT FOUR TESTS FOR ROADMAP EASING ASSESSMENT AS OF 12TH JULY*****This is dynamic and updated locally as the situation changes*** |
| **Test** | **National** | **Hertfordshire** |
| **1.** The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.  | **YES. Government says this has been met** | **Yes.**  |
| **2.** Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.  | **Yes.** **Not 100%** | **Yes.**  |
| **3.** Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHSThere is an expectation by government that cases and deaths will still rise  | **While admissions are significantly below first two waves and rising more slowly, but still at an exponential rate** | **Similar** |
| **4.** The assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new variants of concern. MET | **Yes.**  | **Yes** **requires careful watching.**  |
| **Local Hertfordshire Test[[1]](#footnote-1)** – The vaccine Uptake gap between eligible populations between those with best and lowest uptake is less than 15 percentage points | ***On track to meet*** ***AMBER***  |

**Living Safely with Covid is not the same as allowing uncontrolled infections**

* The Chief Medical Officer shared his assessment of scientific consensus on Step 4
	+ There is significant broad consensus across the spectrum of scientific opinion
		- That the Four week delay in June had a beneficial impact
		- That there will be an exit wave at step four.
			* The slower we take it the fewer hospitalisations and deaths.
	+ There is Less agreement on date. All dates have downsides. If we exit too early not everyone will be vaccinated. If we exit too late there will be a major winter peak.
	+ The vaccine has weakened **BUT NOT SEVERED** the link between infection, hospitalisation and death.

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| 814,666 people in Hertfordshire have received a first dose of vaccine and 615,532 a second dose. While we are doing very well compared to England, this means we still have over 400,000 people who are either not eligible for the vaccine or have not yet received full protection and who remain susceptible to infection. We will continue to work on this at pace. And from figures presented by Sir Patrick Vallance today, up to 30% of those vaccinated could still become infected, because no vaccine is 100% effective. |

* The objective of keeping cases of COVID-19 as low as possible whilst moving closer to normality is a pragmatic approach.
	+ Nobody wants endless cycles of restrictions and lockdowns but the idea of being relaxed about rising case numbers is wrong and damaging to public health. We should proceed carefully.
	+ Business representative organisations say most employers and businesses want this because it is safer for their workforce and customers, and better for business. Businesses are also saying they need very clear guidance because of the potential liability for any business not taking measures to protect staff or customers.
* We should continue to draw from our toolbox of public health measures and messages that work with a particular focus on handwashing, working from home wherever possible, face coverings in crowded and high-risk situations such as on public transport and in health settings and encouraging outdoor socialising.
* The Government has said it will produce further guidance on robust plans for the safe return of schools in September.
* Simple public health measures and looking out for one another will put us in the best possible position to weather a difficult Autumn and Winter. We must not risk the gains we have made or push public services to the brink unnecessarily.
* Living with COVID-19 is not the same thing as letting infections happen uncontrollably and government has made clear local outbreak plans and health protection arrangements should remain in place

Government has made very clear that we need to be cautious in our next stages.

**What work will be done locally?**

There is still much work to be done locally. Our Outbreak Plan can be found at. [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outbreakplan](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outbreakplan) Some key tasks for the next few months are:

1. refresh our plans and continue to work to suppress infection and manage outbreaks
2. continue to promote increase uptake of vaccination especially in areas with low take up
3. We will be required to continue with Test, Trace and Isolate
4. Local Businesses and local residents say they still want support in managing the next stage safely.
5. support employers as they re-start safely
6. prepare for the new school year in September
7. ensure the modelling of infections is undertaken to enable the NHS to plan for increased demand
8. refresh our communications campaigns
9. continue to support care homes, social care and schools in being covid-secure
10. Continue to plan for new variants emerging

The Association of Directors of Public Health started advocating for a ‘living safely with COVID-19' approach from February of this year and produced [guidance](https://www.adph.org.uk/2021/02/guidance-living-safely-with-covid/) which was endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer and formed the basis of many aspects of refreshed Local Outbreak Plans.. The objective of keeping cases of COVID-19 as low as possible whilst moving closer to normality is a pragmatic, rather than a perfect, strategy.

We need to challenge an unhelpful assumption: public health measures are an enabler of recovery, not a roadblock. Public health interventions can boost public confidence and create safe public spaces for everyone. Many older and vulnerable groups will understanably be anxious about the easing of restrictions, they deserve guidance and support. Polling shows strong support for keeping some of our tried and testing approaches in place for the time being.

* We should continue to draw from our toolbox of public health measures and messages that work - handwashing, testing, contact tracing, economic support for isolation and quarantine, physical distancing, vaccination, wearing a face covering and strict border controls.
* We believe it is right for the Government to promote as it has done, working from home wherever possible, insist on face coverings in crowded and high-risk situations such as on public transport and in health settings and encourage outdoor socialising.
* It is essential to keep up the momentum of the vaccination programme, reaching out to the considerable number of adults who are yet to receive the protection of two jabs. The Government also needs to collaborate on robust plans for the safe return of schools in September and to invest in ventilation for public buildings.

Consequently, the headline short and medium term task for the Health Protection Board is to continue to keep infections as low as possible so we can continue to ease restrictions and eventually move out of them. The longer-term task of eradicating the virus is one which will be more difficult. The key components of our short and medium term goals will be to:

All of this and more is detailed in our Outbreak Plan which you can find at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outbreakplan](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outbreakplan)

**Scenarios from July to December 2021**

The key next goals are to get to September and to December without major surges in infection which result in hospitalisations and deaths increasing beyond a level we can cope with.

We model scenarios regularly, including infections, spread and NHS service demand. We have been doing this throughout the pandemic. This modelling work will continue, but there are three scenarios broadly, outlined below. We are planning for each of these but doing everything we can to avoid the third scenario. We want to avoid restrictions **and** infections. I provide below a high level overview of potential scenarios

***Table 4: High level overview of scenarios***

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| **Scenario** | **Example Elements** |
| **Current Third Wave** *All current models conclude that new infections could continue rising into and through August before peaking in mid to late August* | **Sub-scenarios*** A) Wave ends in early August (currently unlikely)
* B) Wave continues to late August with rise in NHS demand but manageable (most likely but needs people to take steps to help reduce infection and take up vaccination)
* C) Wave continues to September (avoidable if we continue to be cautious)
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| **Winter 2021**Scenario A: Most desired possible scenarioEndemic Plateau with multiple variants | * continued endemic transmission at a plateau of infection, at low numbers but with periodic spikes, and variants circulating
* THIS IS DEPENDENT ON everyone taking measures to control spread , and very high uptake of vaccination and booster
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| **Winter 2021**Scenario B Growing infections with more symptomatic people  | * large numbers of outbreaks and cases caused by new variants short of a fourth wave
 |
| **Winter 2021**Scenario CFourth wave of Infections caused by new variant or failure of control | * Large surge wave of new infections with hospital admissions increasing and vaccine failure.
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These scenarios above are necessarily being worked on and re-modelled continuously.

As government has said, we need every person and every workplace to do the basic things they continue to need to in order to keep up the progress which has been made over the last months: Hands,.)

Our public campaign **#PlayYourPart** emphasises this. Materials and resources can be found here: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/campaign-toolkits/play-your-part-campaign.aspx>

Yours sincerely



**Jim McManus**

**Director of Public Health**

**Appendices Below**

* Links to vaccination booking and walk in clinics
* Links to campaign and public information materials
* Advice on Travel Regulations and Requirement
* Be Covid Safe Advice

**Booking vaccination**

Anyone aged 18 or over should be getting a vaccine and a range of ways of getting it from booking to walk-ins are available. The latest list of where and how to get vaccinated is at [www.covid.healthierfuture.org.uk](http://www.covid.healthierfuture.org.uk)

**Links to materials for social media**

Covid hasn’t gone away and we still need people to take precautions to be safe. You can find updated messages here [Play Your Part campaign | Hertfordshire County Council](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/About-the-council/News/campaign-toolkits/Play-Your-Part-campaign.aspx)



Covid-19 is still here. Cases are rising locally. And those who have not been fully vaccinated (2 doses) are most at risk. While people will be excited at the prospect of restrictions being lifted on 19 July, others will be fearful or apprehensive. We all need to be kind to each other as we move into this next phase.

* Most people don’t know they’re infected until they have infected others
* Face coverings in shops, on public transport and indoors cut infection rates and help reassure people
* Get rapid tests regularly [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest) especially if you socialise or mix with a lot of people
* Young people in hospitality and shop settings won't yet be double vaccinated. Do your bit to protect them from infection. You can stop them becoming ill and needing to self-isolate
* Help us keep infections low. There are many people needing healthcare for non covid reasons who have been waiting for some time. If covid cases still rise, people will have to wait longer for hospital and health care.

It’s important to recognise that everyone’s circumstances are different and what feels comfortable to one person might not feel that way to another.

**Do it safely- Covid is still here**

**Your actions matter now more than ever.**

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| **Get Vaccinated if you are aged 18 or over** |
| There are a range of ways to book or walk in for your vaccine. Find out more here [www.covid.healthierfuture.org.uk](http://www.covid.healthierfuture.org.uk)  |
| **Make informed choices** |
| * If you have symptoms or have been told to isolate, do so. Contact Herts Help for support
* Avoid closes spaces with poor ventilation
* Avoid crowded places
* Consider the spread of Covid-19 in your community including variants
* Follow advice for places you go to (eg workplace advice)
* Think about the impact on your household if you or others in your household need to self-isolate
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|  **Being Covid Safe** |
| While vaccines roll out, people can still get infected and outbreaks can still happen. Keep choosing lower-risk settings to protect you and others. Vaccines do not replace the need for other measures such as personal preventive steps below |
| **Risk is lower when** | **Risk is higher when** |
| * You keep close contacts to people in your immediate household
* You meet people not from your immediate household outdoors
* You and those around you PLAY YOUR PART : hands, face, space and ventilation
* Places you go (restaurants etc) have measures like hands face space in place to reduce spread of Covid-19. This is even more important as new variants emerge
* Places you go are well ventilated with fresh air from a ventilation system or open doors and windows
 | * You increase close contacts with people outside your immediate household
* You spend time in closed spaces with poor ventilation and crowded places with people outside your immediate household
* You are those around you are NOT using hands face space or fresh air
* The places you go don’t have measures in place like hands face space
* The places you go are poorly ventilated
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Keep others and yourself safe from Covid-19 so we can keep opening up. Low covid means less disruption

## Advice if you are travelling outside the UK this summer

## Before you travel from England to your destination, or back, it is vital to check with the [Travel abroad: step by step - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/travel-abroad) to identify conditions of travel and whether the country you are travelling to is Green, Amber or Red. You are also strongly advised to check with your travel company (airline or rail/ferry provider) and if needs be the Embassy of the country you are going to.

## Please remember, it is your responsibility to check and observe all the latest health and country [entry requirements](https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/incident/coronavirus/entry-requirements). Different rules may apply if you are leaving from or returning to an airport or entry point in Scotland, Wales and N Ireland.

## From Monday 19 July at 4am, UK residents who are fully vaccinated through the UK vaccine rollout, and children under 18, will no longer have to self-isolate when returning to England from amber list destinations. You can find out more information on the [UK Government website](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england).

## Leaving England

Before you travel from England to your destination, you must check the [UK Government website](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice?step-by-step-nav) to find out if you need a COVID-19 test and proof of being fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to arrival, and any supplementary conditions. **Every country** has its own regulations (for example France requires a declaration form, Italy requires you register with a local covid helpline within 48 hours of arrival. You MUST check the advice for each country.) If you need a negative COVID-19 test to enter your destination, you must use a private test provider in the UK.

**NHS tests or tests organised through the County Council’s testing portal cannot be used for the purpose of pre-departure testing.** You can identify private providers here [Private providers of COVID-19 testing: what you need to know - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-private-providers-of-coronavirus-testing/list-of-private-providers-of-coronavirus-testing) Some travel companies and airlines offer their own discounted list of providers so speak to . There are specific conditions for travel to Ireland and you should check these here [Ireland travel advice - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ireland)

#### **Demonstrating your vaccination status**

Your covid vaccination pass (a specific document, the app itself is **not** acceptable proof) is available using the [NHS app](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/demonstrating-your-covid-19-status#how-to-access-the-nhs-covid-pass), via the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-pass/) or by requesting a [letter in paper format](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-pass/get-your-covid-pass-letter/) . [Find out more about demonstrating your vaccination status](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/demonstrating-your-covid-19-status)

#### **For some countries you may still have to test even if you have been vaccinated**

Even if you have been fully vaccinated (two doses), many countries still require proof of a negative COVID-19 test and isolate on arrival – please check the [entry requirements for your destination](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

## Before returning to England

**You must check whether the country you are going to has its own exit test or quarantine requirements in addition to UK requirements.** Wherever you’re travelling from to the UK, you **must** show evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test at your departure point, taken no earlier than 3 days before your return to England. The test must meet the [rules and standards](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-people-travelling-to-england) outlined by the UK Government. On arrival in England, you must then follow the [arrivals testing rules](https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/incident/coronavirus/covid19-tests#arrivals). You must also check quarantine rules. [Entering the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control) Some travel companies and airlines offering discounted testing outside the UK through their own linked companies. Check with them. Different rules may apply if you return to Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales as part of your journey

1. This is important because a further wave of infections will hit these populations hardest, and they are typically more exposed [↑](#footnote-ref-1)