



Dear resident

Due to a sharp rise in the number of coronavirus cases across the capital, all London boroughs, including Hillingdon, have moved to Tier 3 (Very High) COVID-19 measures.

I know that this is not the news that any of us wanted to hear at the end of the year but without urgent action, cases will continue to rise leading to an increase in hospital admissions.

Latest figures from the ONS show that almost 1 in 3 infected people in England show no symptoms of having the virus but are still able to pass it on, so I encourage residents to continue to play their part to prevent the situation from worsening.

Household mixing is one of the contributors to the rise in transmission and I urge residents to not socialise indoors with other people not in your household or support bubble.

You can continue to meet people outdoors in open public spaces in groups of up to six.

Under the Tier 3 measures, you should reduce the number of journeys you make and avoid travelling outside the area unless for work or education.

All pupils should continue to attend school and colleges, unless required to self-isolate, and residents are encouraged to work from home where possible.

Bars, pubs and restaurants must close under the new restrictions, except those selling food via takeaway, drive-through or delivery.

We know that this is a worrying time for many business owners who have worked hard to keep customers safe, and the government has agreed further grant funding for businesses.

Shops will remain open. While we encourage everyone to support local businesses during the festive period - please do so safely by washing your hands or using a hand sanitiser, wearing a face covering (unless exempt) and maintaining your distance from others.

Gyms and leisure centres will also remain open but indoor entertainment venues must close.

Thank you for making some adjustments to your lives and day-to-day activities to help save the lives of others. I urge you to continue so we can lower rates and keep Hillingdon safe.

You will have heard the news that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is being administered nationally by the NHS and prioritised for those who need it the most. The NHS will contact you directly when it's your turn to have the vaccine but, in the meantime, it is vitally important that we all continue to follow the national public health guidance.

Locally organised asymptomatic testing is now underway in the borough to identify those who unknowingly have the virus, with rapid lateral flow swab tests initially being offered to essential workers.

The self-isolation period has, this week, been reduced from 14 days to 10 days. I would like to remind residents that if you have COVID-19 symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, a change to or loss of smell or taste), self-isolate and get a test. Book an appointment for a test or order a home testing kit via the NHS COVID-19 app, the government's website www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

You are required to self-isolate by law if you test positive for COVID-19, are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service or if you live with someone who has tested positive. No matter how mild your symptoms are, you must book a test immediately. Those who fail to comply face a fine of £1,000. Fines go up to £10,000 for those who offend repeatedly.

During the Christmas period, the rules around meeting people will change for five days between Wednesday 23 December and Sunday 27 December and you can form an exclusive 'Christmas bubble' with no more than two other households. Remember, you do not have to form a Christmas bubble and should consider the risks before doing so.

When meeting your Christmas bubble, you should be vigilant by continuing to wash your hands frequently and keeping socially distanced from anybody you do not live with as much as possible.

Coronavirus is still a deadly virus, and we cannot be complacent this festive season. I urge everyone to follow the government guidance which is vital to staying protected, saving lives and reducing the spread of the virus.

+ KEEP HILLINGDON SAFE +

LOCAL COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL: VERY HIGH

What this means:

✘ You must not:

- Socialise with anyone you don't live with indoors or in private gardens
- Meet in a group of more than six people in public outdoor areas, such as parks

! You are advised to:

- Work from home if you can
- Reduce the number of journeys you make where possible
- Avoid travelling outside your area unless necessary (i.e. for work or education)

✔ You can still:

- Go shopping with your household only
- Go to school, college or university
- Use gyms and leisure centres
- Visit your place of worship with your household only
- Take part in outdoor sports

[Read more](#)

Facility closures

Some of our facilities have once again temporarily closed, including our museums.

Gyms and sports facilities will remain open for individual exercise and exercise in single households or support bubbles only, but indoor group activities and exercise classes cannot take place.

Our libraries will remain open. They are also offering a reserve and collect service and continue to offer a range of online resources.

Despite being closed, the Battle of Britain Bunker Exhibition and Visitor Centre also has a variety of online resources on its website.

The Rural Activities Garden Centre, adult learning centres and civic amenity sites remain open.

[Find out more](#)



Business update

Certain businesses must close from Wednesday 16 December including restaurants, bars and cafes, and indoor entertainment venues such as indoor theatres, soft play centres, cinemas and museums. Hospitality venues can still provide takeaway and delivery services and shops can remain open.

Hotels, hostels and other accommodation should only open for those who have to travel for work purposes and some other exemptions.

Venues that can remain open include leisure and sports facilities, personal care and close contact services such as hairdressers and beauty salons, recycling and waste centres, car parks, and public toilets. Workplaces that are allowed to remain open should follow COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect customers, visitors and workers.

If you have any concerns about COVID-19 secure requirements in any Hillingdon businesses, email COVID19hub@hillingdon.gov.uk or call 020 3949 5786.

We are doing all we can to support all local businesses and grants and financial support are available.

[Read more](#)



Christmas bubbles

From Wednesday 23 December to Sunday 27 December you may choose to form an exclusive 'Christmas bubble' with no more than two other households, unless you have coronavirus symptoms or are self-isolating.

A Christmas bubble will be able to spend time together in private homes, including second homes and caravans, to attend places of worship, or meet in a public outdoor place. You can only be in one Christmas bubble

If you do form a Christmas bubble, you should not meet socially with friends and family you do not live with in your home or garden unless they are part of your Christmas bubble.

You cannot meet your Christmas bubble in any other indoor setting, such as a pub, hotel, shop, theatre, or restaurant.

Remember there are other ways to celebrate Christmas this year without bringing households together or travelling between different parts of the country, such as the use of technology and meeting outdoors.

From 28 December, you must follow the guidance for Tier 3. You should reduce contact with people you do not live with for the two weeks following your last meeting with your Christmas bubble, including the new year period.



[Find out more](#)



Ceremonies update

Weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and funerals must only take place in COVID-secure venues or in public outdoor spaces.

You can have up to:

- 15 people for wedding or civil partnership ceremonies – but receptions are not permitted
- 30 people for funerals
- 15 people for wakes or linked ceremonial events before or after the funeral

You can attend places of worship for a service, but you must not mix with anyone outside of your household or support bubble.

[Find out more](#)



Get tested

If you have any coronavirus symptoms, protect yourself and others and self-isolate and get a test immediately.

Self-isolating means staying at home and not letting anyone come to your house (only leave to get tested). You should also organise shopping deliveries for the period you're isolating. The period of self-isolation is 10 days.

You can book an appointment for a test or order a home testing kit via the NHS COVID-19 app, the government's website www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

[Get tested](#)

Support for residents at risk

A range of support is available for residents at risk.

The NHS Volunteer Responders service is open between 8am and 8pm and can be contacted on 0800 196 3646.

Individuals who may be experiencing financial difficulties and unable to purchase food, can call our Community Hub on 020 3949 5786 or email COVID19hub@hillington.gov.uk (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday).

For more information visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk/community-support.

Those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income from self-isolating may be eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500. For more information visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk/individual-financial-support.

It's important to take care of your mind as well as your body. Every Mind Matters has a range of expert advice on how to look after your mental wellbeing whilst you're at home. Their [website](#) also includes guidance if you're feeling worried or anxious about the pandemic.

Shop safely and enjoy free parking

While we encourage everyone to support local businesses and to shop locally this festive period, if you're shopping for gifts or essential items, please do so safely and follow the guidelines to keep yourself and others safe. Continue to wash your hands or use hand sanitiser, wear a face covering (unless exempt) and maintain a safe distance from others.

You can also enjoy free weekend parking in our car parks and on street parking bays this Christmas by using your Hillingdon *First* Card. Our new pay and display machines, which have been recently installed now also accept card payments.



[Watch our new parking machine video](#)

Learn something new this year

Full-time and part-time adult learning courses available

[Find out more](#)

Courses starting soon

Childcare and support work in schools

Digital skills and IT

English, Maths and ESOL

Floristry and gardening

Art, media and leisure

Modern foreign languages and BSL