



Dear resident

We continue to focus our efforts on supporting residents and local businesses during these challenging times.

It's good to see that coronavirus (COVID-19) rates are declining across the country as a result of the current lockdown and the good news is that the NHS's vaccination programme is going well across the borough. I am confident that Hillingdon will meet the government's target of offering a vaccination to all over-70s, as well as those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, those living and working in care homes and health and social care workers by 15 February.

When the NHS offers you your vaccination, I encourage you to receive it as soon as possible. It is safe and effective, it gives you the best protection against coronavirus, and it offers the best hope of us returning to some level of normality soon. You will find more details about the vaccination programme below.

While vaccinations progress, we are asking everyone, whether they've had the vaccine yet or not, to keep following the government's lockdown guidance to stop the spread of the virus. Please stay at home unless you need to leave for essential reasons, and keep following the basic principles of 'hands, face, space'. For everyone's safety, we are working closely with the Metropolitan Police to take enforcement action against rule breakers – so please adhere to the rules.

We are naturally concerned that a small number of cases of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa have been found in England, including some in London and the South East. With robust contact tracing and enhanced testing taking place within certain postcode areas (W7, W13, N17, CR4, WS2, EN10, ME15, GU21, PR9) to tackle this variant, I urge people to remain vigilant and work from home wherever possible.

I also encourage residents – particularly those who need to leave home for work - to get tested regularly for the virus at one of our lateral flow testing sites. Please see below for more details.

I would like to reassure you that we continue to provide essential services during this current lockdown. More details on these, plus information on where you can access help if you need it, can be found at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/coronavirus.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the many people across Hillingdon who continue to volunteer their time to support frontline services or lookout for their friends and neighbours.

Keep safe

Vaccination update

The NHS is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to people most at risk.

The vaccine is safe and effective, and gives you the best protection against coronavirus.

It is given as an injection into your upper arm, and you will receive 2 doses with each given approximately 11 to 12 weeks apart.

The NHS is vaccinating people in priority order. The first four groups are:

- residents in care homes for older adults and their carers
- all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
- all those 75 years of age and over
- all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals

If you are aged 70 or over or clinically extremely vulnerable, you can now book a vaccination through the NHS website or calling 119 - even if you haven't yet received a letter.

If you do not fall into these categories, your GP will write to you or phone you when it is your turn. It's important not to contact the NHS for a vaccination before then.

The programme has gathered pace during the past month, and more than 10 million people have been vaccinated across the UK, including 46,840 residents (as of 3 February).

The vaccine, like all vaccines in the UK, has been approved for use after meeting the strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

So far, reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare. No long-term complications have been reported. The COVID-19 vaccine also does not contain any egg or animal products.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective, so you should continue to take recommended precautions (including social distancing) after vaccination to avoid infection and further transmission.

Please be alert to scams. Be aware that the NHS will:

- never ask for payment – the vaccine is free
- never ask for bank details
- never arrive at your home unannounced to provide the vaccine
- never ask you to prove your identity by asking you to send documents like your passport



[Find out more about the vaccine](#)

Testing for residents who do not have symptoms

Free rapid lateral flow tests are available at five sites across the borough (Hayes, Uxbridge, Northwood, South Ruislip and Harlington) for essential workers and residents who are not showing any COVID-19 symptoms.

As many as 1 in 3 people who have COVID-19 show no symptoms but could be passing the virus on to others.

Testing those who do not have symptoms enables those who test positive, and their contacts, to self-isolate, which can help to drive down transmission locally and save lives.

The process is simple – all you need to do is book, attend the centre and self-swab, and results are often provided within an hour (sometimes they can take up to 24 hours).

All sites are open Monday to Friday, with some open Saturdays and up to 8pm, to enable as many people as possible to get tested.

You must book an appointment in advance and one appointment must be booked per person. For those without digital access, tests can be booked by calling the council's Community Hub on 020 3949 5786.

Do not make an appointment for this test if you have any COVID-19 symptoms (a new, continuous cough, high temperature or change in your sense of smell/taste) or if you have received a positive COVID-19 result within the last 90 days.



[Book now](#)

+ KEEP HILLINGDON SAFE +

NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS: STAY AT HOME

What this means:



You must not:

- Leave your home unless for a permitted reason
- Meet socially with anyone you don't live with, except your legally permitted support bubble
- Travel outside your local area unless for a permitted reason (e.g. for work)



You can still:

- Shop for basic necessities
- Go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home
- Exercise in your local area once a day alone, with your household or support bubble, or with one other person
- Attend education or childcare - if eligible
- Seek medical assistance or leave home to avoid injury/harm

[Find out more](#)

Become a Community Champion

The vaccination programme is being delivered by the NHS and not the council. We are supporting health partners and the rollout by sharing NHS information and messaging to ensure that residents are well informed about the COVID-19 vaccine.

The council is encouraging residents to have the vaccine when they are told that it's their turn so that they can protect themselves, their friends, families and local community – and keep Hillingdon safe.

The council is also working with H4All (a collaboration of local charities) to deliver a Community Champions scheme to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take-up by providing advice as well as tackling misinformation.

The council has already built a strong network of community, faith and voluntary sector groups since the start of the pandemic, working closely with health partners. The Community Champions scheme will further strengthen this by working with trusted local champions from faith and community groups to help reach older people, disabled residents, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

If you are aware of any residents or community groups who may wish to get involved as a Champion or in general in supporting community engagement, please encourage them to email community@h4all.org.uk.

Share your vaccine stories

If you have had your vaccine or if you're getting one soon, or know someone who has had one and would like to be featured in our vaccination publicity campaign, please send a photo or a video, and a sentence or two explaining why you're getting the vaccine (if you send a photo rather than a video) and your name and area to corporatecommunications@hillingdon.gov.uk.

Testing for residents with symptoms and self-isolation

If you have any COVID-19 symptoms (a new, continuous cough, high temperature, or loss or change to sense of smell or taste) it is vital that you self-isolate immediately and book a test by visiting the government website or calling 119.

You must not leave your home except to get a COVID-19 test if:

- you have COVID-19 symptoms
- you have tested positive for COVID-19
- you have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

While you are self-isolating you must not:

- go to work
- go shopping
- go out for exercise
- meet with friends or family



[Book a COVID-19 test](#)



Support for residents at risk

If you are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable, you are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

If this applies to you, you should not attend work, school, college or university, and you should limit the time you spend outside your home - only go out if it is essential, for medical appointments or to exercise.

The council's Community Hub is available to provide additional support. It is open from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and can be contacted via email at COVID19hub@hillingdon.gov.uk or by calling 020 3949 5786.

Please contact the hub if you are experiencing financial difficulties and are unable to purchase food - they can refer you to a local food bank or signpost you to other support services.

If you receive a positive COVID-19 test result or you are told by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate because of close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you may be eligible for a Test and Trace Support payment if you are on a low income and you cannot work from home while you are self-isolating.

[Read more](#)



Support for businesses

We are providing a range of targeted support and guidance to businesses throughout the pandemic, ensuring that financial assistance is given to those who are eligible.

In light of the lockdown, further grant schemes have been made available by the government.

So far, we have paid out £7.8 million of the new Local Restrictions Support Grant and are working through the outstanding applications as quickly as we can as we realise how important this support is to businesses at this time.

Visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk/local-business-grants for more information and updates.

Workplaces that are currently allowed to stay open should be following COVID-19 secure guidelines to keep customers, visitors and workers safe. If you have any concerns about a Hillingdon business being open or not operating in a COVID-19 secure way, email COVID19hub@hillingdon.gov.uk or call 020 3949 5786.

Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

Research shows that since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, adults and children have been experiencing an increase in a range of mental health conditions such as low mood, sleep problems, anxiety and depression.

Having good mental health helps us to relax and achieve more. If you're lonely, struggling with change, have money or job worries or finding that staying at home is affecting your wellbeing, Public Health England's Better Health – Every Mind Matters campaign has a range of resources, expert advice and practical tips to support your mental health and wellbeing.

Physical and mental health go hand in hand. Loads of the things you do for your body, like getting active or eating better, will boost your mental wellbeing too – and Public Health England's Better Health campaign has the tools, advice and support to help you.



[Read more](#)



Improve your health and wellbeing this Heart Month
A range of free online events and activities on offer

[Find out more](#)