

Chronicle

Autumn 2020 Special

Lockdown 2.0 Explained

Our Local Response to COVID-19

As we head towards the winter season, we have already begun our second national lockdown. We understand that individuals, families, organisations and businesses will all have their concerns and you may be wondering what this means for our Stevenage community. We learned a lot from our lockdown earlier in the year and want to reassure you that we have quickly set up our incident management systems and our Emergency Committee so that we can continue to support our communities through this second phase.

Our motto 'The heart of a town lies in its people' is an understatement. The 2020 spring/summer lockdown showed exactly how resilient we are in Stevenage. Many people supported friends, neighbours and family who needed help, from shopping for food to collecting medicine and prescriptions. Our recent virtual Pride of Stevenage Awards 2020 – Covid Special showcased some of the incredible people who selflessly helped others of which the SBC team and I are very proud. We have already received many offers of support from local community organisations and we will all be working together to ensure Stevenage is as safe as it is possible to make it.

We will always want to support the vulnerable, elderly, lonely and those experiencing difficulties with their health and wellbeing, and they were

a priority for us as we went into the first lockdown period. We are in the autumnal season which presents a few challenges. We no longer have summer evenings and warm weather on our side. This means we need to consider how we interact with each other carefully and how we keep the 'at risk' groups already mentioned connected with the right information and support services. Our Stevenage Helps service delivered 539 food parcels to vulnerable members of the community and took 739 calls from local people. We reached out to over 730 vulnerable and elderly Careline Alarm customers, continued support to more than 90 Stevenage residents over 70, offering advice, support and a friendly ear to those who may have been feeling particularly isolated. This work will continue to ensure we look after this group in particular.

We know that our businesses have had a tough time this year, during the first lockdown we got over 800 grants out quickly to support those who are at the heart of our local economy. As soon as we are able to do so, we will be providing details of the latest round of grant funding to local businesses that are affected.

The four weeks may not seem too long for a second lockdown in comparison to what we have already experienced this year. However, we need to work together to make sure Stevenage

continues to keep its positive Coronavirus figures as low as possible. The basic guidelines remain the same – washing hands, making space and wearing a mask when going to get essentials.

It is clear #StaySafeStevenage is making a difference to our town, an even better difference. Let's continue to work together and use the town's motto to keep all members of our community as safe as possible. Contact us on 01438 242452 and the email address is community.development@stevenage.gov.uk if you need our help. Herts Help can also provide support and can be contacted on 0300 123 4044 or www.hertshelp.net. You can visit our council website to stay informed <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/town-and-community/emergencies/coronavirus> and look at our Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions to understand the latest guidelines.

**Cllr Sharon Taylor,
Leader of Stevenage Borough
Council**



Our Services during Lockdown 2.0

The health and safety of our customers and staff is paramount during this challenging time. We are doing our best to provide as much of a normal service as we can.

Customer Service Centre

- Our walk-in service is by appointment only.
- For all non-urgent enquiries please use our general enquiry online form.
- You can send documents to us via post.
- You can check your balance and make a payment online.

Suspended services

Unfortunately, largely due to the need to comply with Government restrictions, these services have been put on hold during lockdown 2.0...

- All SBC events
- Community Transport
- Play Centres
- Stevenage Museum
- Regeneration Visitor Centre
- The Gordon Craig Theatre
- Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) this includes:
 - » The Leisure Centre
 - » Swimming Centre
 - » Golf facilities
 - » Fairlands Valley Outdoor Activity Centre

So what services are still available?

- Waste refuse and recycling - collecting residential waste and recycling services to help keep the town clean.
- Supported Housing services - schemes helping people to live independently
- Housing Supply and Housing Options. This includes our Homelessness statutory function, information and advice on housing in the town.
- Temporary Accommodation - the latest updates on short term accommodation.
- Lettings - information and advice about becoming a council tenant.
- Benefit Service - information about financial support available from the government.
- Council Tax Support
- Business rates support
- Rent advice and support
- Community Safety – information and advice on council services to keep you safe.
- CCTV – information about our dedicated control room.
- All statutory Environmental Health Services, including:
 - Food safety and hygiene
 - Health and safety at work
 - Pollution control
 - Cemeteries
- All statutory Licensing Services - information on licences the Council is responsible for administering.
- Planning and Development - planning applications submitted to the council.



Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I get financial advice and support on my Council Tax or rent?

If you are struggling financially, please do not suffer in silence. Contact our Customer Service Centre on 01438 242242 who will put you in touch with the appropriate support.


Can I still come to the Customer Service Centre for my enquiries?

The walk-in service has been suspended to minimise the risk of spreading the virus. You can, however, still contact us on 01438 242242 or by email at csc@stevenage.gov.uk. If you need to pay us money your best option is to use our website to pay online in the comfort of your home.

Economic support

The Government has announced a series of economic support measures to coincide with the national measures:

- Business premises forced to close in England due to local or national restrictions are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 a month under the Local Restrictions Support Grant.
- For properties with a rateable value of £15k or under, grants to be £1,334 per month, or £667 per two weeks;
- For properties with a rateable value of between £15k-£51k grants to be £2,000 per month, or £1,000 per two weeks;
- For properties with a rateable value of £51k or over grants to be £3,000 per month, or £1,500 per two weeks.
- £1.1 billion is being given to local authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable us to support businesses more broadly.
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended with employees receiving 80 per cent of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. The Government has confirmed that partially publicly funded bodies may be eligible to access the scheme where their private revenues have been disrupted.
- The Government announced support for self-employed people will rise to 80 per cent of trading profits during November.

 HM Government



**WASH
HANDS**



**COVER
FACE**

NHS



**MAKE
SPACE**

Lockdown 2.0 rules

Local health services are prepared and ready for an anticipated increase in numbers this winter, and are working closely to manage the situation and help reduce the risk of further cases. Public Health England has been working to contain the virus, including tracing all potential cases.

The numbers of younger people having Coronavirus is increasing in Hertfordshire. Older people or those with weakened immune systems or long-term conditions may experience more severe symptoms, which is why it is important to follow guidance to best protect ourselves and each other.

Socialising

- You should stay at home except for specific reasons including education, work (if it can't be done from home), exercise, medical needs, food and other essential shopping and to provide care.
- You should not mix socially indoors, or in a private garden, with anyone who is not part of your household or support bubble. (A support bubble is when a person living alone or with children under 18 joins another household).
- You can meet one other person at a time from another household, in an outdoors public place (such as a park, a street, countryside, an allotment or a children's playground).
- Children under five, and disabled people who need round-the-clock care, are not counted towards the limit on two people meeting outside.
- Children can continue to move between homes if their parents are separated.

- Support groups of 15 people or fewer are allowed in certain circumstances, such as for new parents or addiction recovery.

Education

- Primary and secondary schools are open, as are nurseries and childcare.
- If a school has Coronavirus cases, local health protection teams will advise what to do.

Going to work

You should work at home if possible. If you have to return to your workplace, your employer must make arrangements for you to work safely.

Other guidelines

- You are not allowed to stay overnight away from your home, whether on holiday, in a second home or caravan, or with anyone you do not live with, or are in a support bubble with.
- You can still move home, but people outside your household or support bubble should not help with moving house unless absolutely necessary.
- You can leave home to visit someone who is giving birth or dying, to avoid or escape risk of injury or harm (such as domestic abuse), to visit someone in a care home, hospice or hospital, to go with them to a medical appointment, or to go to the vets (or other animal welfare services).
- Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies cannot take place except where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover. These

weddings are limited to six people.

- Funerals can be attended by a maximum of 30 people. Linked ceremonial events can continue with up to 15 people.
- Apart from funerals, places of worship will only be open to allow individual prayer or services to be broadcast to the congregation.

Basic hygiene precautions remain the best way of reducing the chances of spreading any virus.

The latest advice and information can be found online here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus. If you need medical advice, please call 111.



Follow our Stevenage local outbreak plans by watching our virtual meeting on our YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/user/SBCComms>

Council meetings for your diary:

Executive meeting - 18 November 2020, 2pm
Executive meeting - 9 December 2020, 2pm
Full Council - 16 December 2020, 7pm