

Covid-19 Update

Executive

06 October 2020

Stevenage Response highlights

- Instigated a Multi-Agency Incident Management Team to ensure continuation of essential services and provide support to the community during the pandemic
- Launched the Stevenage Helps Response Team and Helpline to provide support to residents in the form of food supplies and help access essential services
- Launch of an online giving platform in conjunction with the Stevenage Community Trust to support vulnerable people and groups
- Established an Emergency Domestic Abuse Partnership to monitor and respond to an increase in domestic abuse cases. Accommodated and supported over 150 homeless households and rough sleepers
- Stevenage FC – Community Careline that provided a prescription delivery service during the lockdown
- Provided free car parking for users and staff of key emergency services

Stevenage Response highlights

- Provide timely advice and guidance to residents, visitors and employers; launched the #StaySafeStevenage campaign
- Provided financial Support for Stevenage Leisure Limited and Community Associations
- Given local businesses business rate relief totalling £21.5M and distributed £11M in cash grants to 96% of eligible local businesses. Also supported businesses to access other Government support such as through the Job Retention Scheme
- Provided rent and payment holidays for commercial tenants and traders
- Assisted businesses to open safely and Covid Secure working environments for staff and customers. This included the launch of a Covid-19 Assurance Scheme.
- Applied measures to enable the safe usage of high streets and other retail spaces
- Put in place Local Outbreak Plan and local Test and Trace arrangements; and responded effectively to localised outbreaks

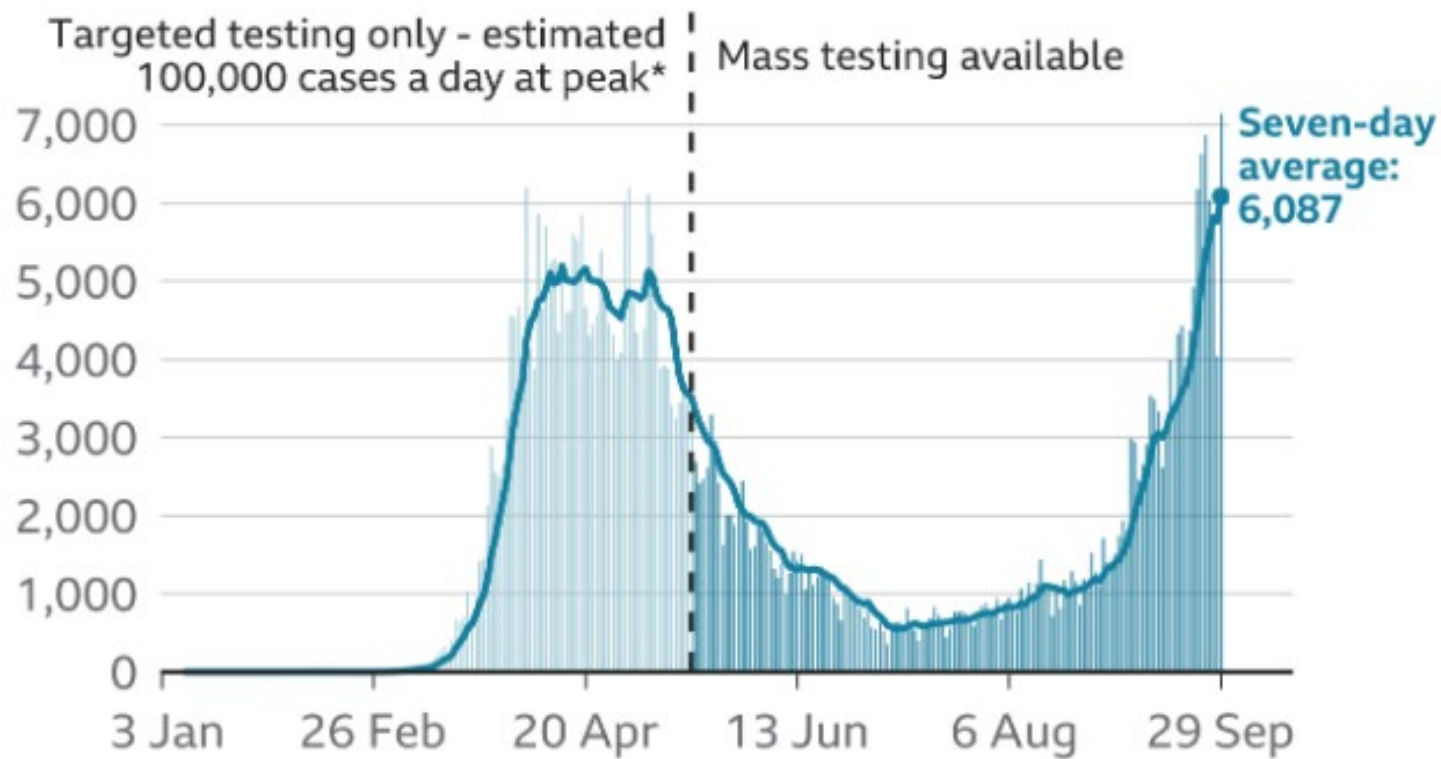
Stevenage Recovery highlights

- SBC Recovery Plans in place and established the Stevenage Recovery Taskforce
- Progressing town centre regeneration schemes e.g. Town Square, Queensway, SG1, Bus Interchange
- Established the Stevenage Development Board that is developing a Town Fund Bid. The board has already secured £1M and could potentially access up to a total of £50M to support a range of projects
- Undertaking work on a number of housing development sites that will deliver 250 homes, including sites at Ditchmore Lane, Shephall Way, Kenilworth Close, North Road and Symonds Green. Plus seeking planning permission on future schemes for approximately 300 more new homes
- Progressing the Stevenage Works and CITB Programmes

Stevenage Recovery highlights

- Adopted a Community Wealth Building Strategy and launched an Inclusive Economy Charter
- Establishing an Equalities Commission to support black lives
- Launched a new community response project, So Active that aims to revitalise the health and wellbeing of keyworkers, older people, children and adults
- The No More Service is continuing to support individuals whose lives are negatively affected by drugs, alcohol and/or offending; and has seen a 157% increase in referrals during quarter one.
- Developing a Housing First Model to support vulnerable rough sleepers and homeless applicants

Epidemiology Update



- Nationally, confirmed coronavirus cases since the end of August have significantly increased to numbers above the first wave peak
- To date hospitalisation and deaths have not seen a corresponding rise
- Unlike in the first wave of cases, there has more recently been a higher number of cases among both 20-39 and 40-59 age groups.

National update



Cases per 100,000 people (as at 30 Sept)
(figure in brackets = rise or fall in cases compared with the previous week)

Current average for England 28

Areas of Intervention

Newcastle upon Tyne	258	(+390)
Manchester	217	(+398)
Leeds	132	(+341)
Leicester	97	(-12)
Cardiff	76	(+154)

Hertfordshire

St Albans	31	(+1)
Watford	30	(+6)
Hertsmere (area of concern)	28	(-10)
North Hertfordshire	18	(+6)
Welwyn Hatfield	14	(+5)
Stevenage	11	(-13)

National update

COVID 19 alert level raised to Level 4, meaning transmission is '*high or rising exponentially*'. In response the government has announced new measures:

- Rule of six both indoors and outdoors and applies to indoor sports
- Hospitality venues must close at 10 pm and with table service only
- Number of people attending weddings reduced to 15
- Employees encouraged to work from home if they can
- Face coverings to be worn by staff in hospitality, retail, passengers in taxis and for customers in hospitality venues not seated at a table
- Organised indoor sports now subject to rule of six.
- £500 for those on lower incomes to self-isolate if they cannot work from home
- Plans for sports and larger venues to have live audiences on hold
- Local authorities to put in place Covid Marshals
- Increased enforcement and new/increased fixed penalties
- Government providing £60 million to support additional enforcement activity

Coronavirus alert levels in UK

Stage of outbreak		Measures in place
Risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed	5	Lockdown begins
Transmission is high or rising exponentially	4	Social distancing continues
Virus is in general circulation	3	Gradual relaxation of restrictions
Number of cases and transmission is low	2	Minimal social distancing, enhanced tracing
Covid-19 no longer present in UK	1	Routine international monitoring

National Update

NHS COVID-19 App:

- App has features that include contact tracing using Bluetooth, risk alerts, QR check-in at venues, symptom check and test booking.
- All SBC premises now have QR codes displayed. We are providing advice and guidance to local businesses and community and voluntary organisations to ensure compliance.

Business and employment:

- A new Jobs Support Scheme will replace the Furlough Scheme in November.
- There are also incentives for employers to retain staff and provide placement and apprentice opportunities for young people.
- Extension of the Emergency Business Loans Scheme and VAT holidays

Care Homes:

- Free PPE for all care homes until end of March 2021
- The Government has published its Adult Social Care winter plan

Stevenage & Hertfordshire Update

	Broxbourne	Three River	St Albans	Watford	Hertsmere	Dacorum	East Herts	North Herts	Welwyn H	Stevenage	Hertfordshire
weekly change	-6	8	-5	2	-18	10	3	3	-5	-10	-18
weekly per 100,000	38.0	31.1	29.6	29.0	25.7	20.7	20.7	17.2	13.0	11.4	23.3
21/09 - 27/09	37	29	44	28	27	32	31	23	16	10	277
Total 31/08 - 27/09	112	82	184	99	160	91	87	89	98	77	1079

- Hertfordshire has seen a general but not exponential increase in the amount of cases over the last month, and cases seem to be stabilising at a slightly higher rate than during the summer.
- Stevenage has seen a total of 77 cases during September and experienced a weekly peak of 32 cases during w/c 7th September
- The total number of cases has steadily reduced over the last two weeks and the current incidence rate is 11.4% per 100,000 population (lowest in Hertfordshire)

Local response developments




A county-wide Events and Gatherings Coordination Group has been established which will pool knowledge on planned events and develop standardised guidance

A multi-agency enforcement steering group has been convened to facilitate consistent application of the most recent powers

Outbreak Tactical Co-ordinating Group now meeting daily to look at number and nature of cases and agree mitigation activity

Local response



Recent communications and liaison activity has included: visiting licensed premises, groups of young people and writing to stakeholder groups. All parents and schools have also been contacted.

Care homes urged to maintain vigilance. HCC producing Winter Social Care Plan.

Operation Shield and Sustain: A response plan and checklist has been produced to respond to a second peak or local lockdown.

Preparing for recovery

- Hertfordshire claimant count was over 38,000 in July 2020, almost double the level in the financial crisis
- Those on furlough reached 28% of all people employed
- Size of the recession could bring potential risks to around 60,000 jobs
- Hertfordshire LEP has released a Recovery Plan to prepare for the future



Local Test and Trace

All districts have been asked to identify suitable locations for Local Test Sites (LTS) which can be stood-up in the event of a local surge in cases

Three categories of LTS are to be planned for – large outdoor, small outdoor and indoor. Potential secondary use as temporary vaccination centres

Since 01 October all Hertfordshire Districts are participating in a local contact tracing pilot

The scheme is designed to follow-up individual cases that have not been contacted by NHS Test and Trace (follows the Blackburn with Darwen model)

Support for communities

Leisure:

Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre remain open and all leisure and community centres have established track and trace protocols.

Equalities Commission:

To support black lives the community development team will be supporting a listening exercise with local communities during Black History Month. An independent chair will be appointed to lead the work of the Commission.

CCIN Action Learning:

Stevenage has led the CCIN Action Learning around Covid-19. 2 Stevenage case studies feature in this related to the Inclusive Economy Charter and the Healthy Stevenage Partnership.

Housing

Homelessness:

The Council is currently accommodating and supporting 150 households in temporary accommodation. The Council has secured revenue funding via the Government's Next Steps Programme which will help enable the Council to put in place a new Housing First Model.

Rent Arrears:

The Council has seen an increase in arrears and complex cases and the Income team are continuing to support households who are experiencing financial difficulties.

Resourcing:

Additional resources have been allocated to strengthen the Council's Income, Independent Living and Housing Options teams

Supporting businesses

Grants:

Over £500,000 payments of Discretionary Grants have been provided to over 60 Stevenage businesses

Economy:

Unemployment levels in March 2020 stood at around 1,500 (3.1%). With an increasing claimant count in August 2020, the figure is now 6.2% (3,470),

Business Engagement:

Stevenage has conducted a local business survey to complement intelligence from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and findings are being drawn together. Initial challenges identified include decreased sales, turnover and cash flow

Council - Finance update

- Medium Term Financial Strategy is modelling Covid-19 impact of around £8.6m
- Funding received from the Government to date is £1.2m, with around £1.5m - £1.7m still to be claimed as part of the income guarantee scheme- **April to July claim est. £762K (1/10/2020) full year projected £1.7M** (£42K lower than MTFS estimate).
- Work underway to develop plans for future years savings - need £1M-£1.3M for 2021/22- **work on 1 year only due to uncertainty**
- Revs and Bens to administer £500 isolation payments from 12 October, guidance issued 30/9/2020
- CPI 0.2% for August due to VAT changes for hospitality - will impact on rent and NDR increases for 2021/22

Communications update

- #StaySafeStevenage initiative, our own localised campaign on social media and bin lorries
- Covid media focus (national, regional and local):
 - Financial impacts
 - Domestic abuse
 - Recovery
- Community interaction – Neighbourhood Wardens engaging local people, distributing of face masks
- Staff briefings on our ongoing response to Covid



Communications update

- #Nanintervention campaign which is targetting 18-25 year olds
- NHS Track and Trace App promotion across Stevenage /SBC buildings



Stevenage Recovery



- Executive approved SBC Recovery Plan and actions are in place, embedded in our Future Town, Future Council reporting
- Stevenage Together Partnership working on a joint recovery action plan for the town, covering areas from health, to jobs and skills, environment, regeneration and support to those who need it the most
- Developing plans for Economic Taskforce to tackle the effects of the impending recession