



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

Area Partnership: COVID-19 Update

12 January 2021



COVID-19

Current Trend

- Pre-Christmas the number of cases of COVID-19 locally were on the increase
- That increase has accelerated significantly, in part due to the circulation of the new, even more highly transmissible variant of the virus in the region
- The continued rate of increase and the impact that this has on health services is significant and deeply worrying
- It goes without saying that it is essential that everyone follows the current guidance and abides by the restrictions in place
- Fundamentally, the message is 'Stay at Home' and minimise all face-to-face contact with those outwith your household



COVID-19

Testing

- Due to high case numbers in the Hawick area, a Mobile Testing Unit has been deployed into the town at Teviotdale Leisure Centre as part of its rotational schedule.
- This facility is shared between the Scottish Borders, East Lothian and Midlothian. Tests can be booked via the UK Government online portal as normal.
- In addition, a walk-in testing facility has also been opened at the Langlee Complex in Galashiels.
- This is for symptomatic testing, with people able to book tests in advance through the UK Government portal or walking in without a booking.
- The Council is involved in initial discussions with the Scottish Government and other partners about the potential for asymptomatic community testing facilities in the Scottish Borders.



Service implications of latest lockdown

General approach

- In general, there are no direct impacts of this latest lockdown on SBC services over and above what was already in place during the short Level 4 period which came into effect on Boxing Day
- For example, waste and recycling services will continue, including Community Recycling Centres
- However, where the service implications may come from is the need to ensure that we are able to continue to deliver essential frontline services and support communities throughout the latest lockdown period
- This will likely result in the need to deploy staff to support certain services, which will result in others having to scale back on their operations



Service implications of latest lockdown

Community Assistance Hubs

- Community Assistance Hubs remain operational to co-ordinate support within localities
- They continue to work closely with Customer Advice & Support and Social Work colleagues and a range of partners locally.
- Whilst updated Shielding advice has been provided to those affected, there is currently no indication that we are returning to the intense levels of contact and support arrangements required during previous lockdowns
- The Hubs will remain operational and can be readily scaled up to previous levels if the need arises
- Increases in referrals are already rising, and due to the continued increase in COVID cases, staff are making more calls to those isolating to ensure they are aware of the support available
- Anyone in need should call 0300 100 1800 to access support



Service implications of latest lockdown

Education

- From 11 January until at least the start of February online and remote learning is being provided for all pupils, with in-school arrangements for invited young people and the children of key workers
- Key worker criteria is as per the previous lockdown and an appeal process is available. However, many more services are operating whose employees believe they are key workers
- In line with the national guidance, and to minimise the risk of COVID-19 to our young people and key worker families, we must ensure that the number of people in school is minimised at this time
- Were any teacher or key worker child to test positive, all those in contact will be required to self-isolate, meaning that those key worker children could no longer attend school and at least one key worker parent would be unable to attend work. This in turn places additional strain on critical services and businesses.



Service implications of latest lockdown

Education

- Whole workforces or entire groups of staff should not be designated as key workers. Doing so would undermine the collective effort we must all make to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives during this lockdown period
- Remote learning arrangements - P1-P3:
 - Pupils in P1 to P3 will be provided with home learning packs. These will be accessible online and in hard copy by arrangement with individual schools
- Remote learning arrangements – P4-S6:
 - The Inspire Learning programme will be fully utilised to support remote learning for all P4 to S6 pupils
- Any planned senior phase assessments will be postponed. This will have no detrimental impact on pupils. Whilst these assessments are not essential, we believe they are an enhancement to support accurate evaluation data and will be carried out when possible, with appropriate preparation time provided.



Service implications of latest lockdown

Live Borders

- In light of the lockdown restrictions all Live Borders facilities are closed to the public
- Digital services ranging from online fitness classes to online library access continue to be offered and can support home learning
- Live Borders' focus during the lockdown is on providing support to NHS Borders and SBC's COVID response efforts through use of available staff and resources
- Live Borders will continue to keep their membership updated



Support for communities

- Our Community Assistance Hubs should be the first port of call for anyone in need of support during lockdown
- They can be accessed via 0300 100 1800. Our hub staff are also contacting directly those who have tested positive for COVID-19 where they have agreed for their details to be shared
- Financial assistance may be available to those in need. The Council's Financial Inclusion Team is able to help with a wide range of advice and support, which can also be accessed via 0300 100 1800
- More information on the help and support available can be found via www.scotborders.gov.uk/coronavirus
- Information relating to fuel poverty assistance can be found via www.scotborders.gov.uk/affordablewarmth



Support for businesses

- A range of business support is available for firms experiencing difficulty
- This includes access to funding support administered by the Council on behalf of the Scottish Government
- Information on this support is available online at www.scotborders.gov.uk/covid19business
- All eligible businesses are encouraged to apply. Where entitlement changes due to changes to the Levels of restrictions in place then this is automatically reviewed, without the need for repeated applications
- Businesses are encouraged to use the national Find Business Support website (www.findbusinesssupport.gov.scot) to check all available funding support, including that being administered by other partners



Support for businesses

- We continue to work with South of Scotland Enterprise to ensure the most appropriate business support is made available to businesses most in need
- Information on all current funds which are public and open for applications is available on the Find Business Support website
- There are a number of significant ongoing daily discussions at a senior level with the Scottish Government and partners about future business funds and we will announce details as soon as we can, as the Scottish Government did yesterday regarding funding for the hospitality sector
- We are acutely aware of the need for further future funding to support businesses and we take that very seriously and are working with partners, including SOSE, to identify the requirements
- We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge and we are working hard to ensure there is an appropriate response