

## Covid-19 update – February half term 2021

We wanted to send you a different sort of update for half term this week.

If you click on the following link, you will be able to view our half term update on Sway. This update intends to step back from the day to day running of your groups and to offer some bigger picture ideas for staying afloat during the pandemic and reducing loneliness in your communities, with inspiration from other groups within the district and across the country.

### Staying afloat|18 Feb 2021

We are in the midst of a third lockdown and midwinter, though recent spells of sunshine have helped to ease it. This has the potential to be a dark time for many. The high of coming togethe...

[Go to this Sway](#)

Two other brief updates for this week, as we won't be sending the usual e-bulletin on Thursday.

### PPE for carers

The Government has confirmed that unpaid carers across the country, who do not live with the people they care for, can now benefit from free Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through a new national scheme. Locally, if someone is a carer to a relative, and requires PPE, they could be entitled to free PPE until the end of June 2021. They will need to email [ppe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ppe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) to request an order form. PPE can then be collected from a PPE Hub in the county – these are based in Peterborough, Huntingdon, March, Cambridge (Trumpington).

### Half term activities

We are seeing the vaccine roll out happen at great pace and over 12 million people have now received their COVID-19 jab. It is also very encouraging to see infection rates start to fall. This is mainly driven by the current lockdown and social distancing. However, the drop in positive cases will take longer to filter through to the number of deaths and hospitals are still under huge pressure. There are reasons to be hopeful and it is good to see the sacrifices of lockdown making a difference, but to ensure infection rates and hospital admissions continue going in the right direction, and to keep ourselves and those around us safe, it remains as important as ever to continue following the rules.

The County Council will be sharing ideas of things to do with children during half term on their social channels ([Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)), and would encourage you to share these posts within your communities if you find them helpful.

Best wishes for the half term  
Bill Handley

Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, Health & Wellbeing  
South Cambridgeshire District Council

## Covid-19 update – 11 February 2021

The big announcement this week has been the change in message about the vaccination programme: anyone who is over 70 and who has not yet been invited for the vaccine is now being asked to [book their vaccination appointment online](#) or by calling 119. The rollout is still on track to offer the vaccine to the top four priority cohorts by the middle of February.

There is also a focus on encouraging as many Frontline Health and Social Care Workers in our area to take up the offer of a vaccination – there are FAQs specifically for this group on the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group's website – the CCG is running the local vaccination programme](#). Also, the vaccination is now available to all frontline health and social care workers, both within the NHS and in private provider organisations. Please signpost any frontline health and social care workers to [this page](#) for advice on how to access the vaccine.

The CCG regularly posts about the COVID-19 vaccination programme on its [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) accounts and welcomes the sharing of their messages within your communities

Meanwhile, our case numbers in South Cambridgeshire continue to decline – but slowly – so we all need to keep doing all the right things to keep the numbers going down. For those of you who are looking ahead to a half term break – whether from home-schooling or work – I wish you a restful time. I am sure that everyone who has not seen their friends for some time may be itching to do so, especially young people, but we all need to continue to pull together at half term and ensure that the lockdown is fully complied with.

## Half term food vouchers

Cambridgeshire County Council will be providing vouchers to all children who usually receive Free School Meals for use during February half term. The £15 supermarket vouchers will be issued automatically by 12 February, ready for use during the half term week. Vouchers will be sent by email and text message to parents/carers.

Those families who have not previously applied for Free School Meals, or whose name has recently changed, or feel [they now meet the criteria](#), can visit the [County Council's website](#) to apply.

Vouchers will be provided to families via the government-funded Winter Grant Scheme that we are working on with the County Council. For further information about the Winter Grant Scheme and the other support available during this challenging period, please visit the [County Council's website](#).

## **Laptops for Children Appeal by the County Council**

Businesses and local residents are being asked to donate spare laptops to support young people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who do not have access to a computer or the Internet at home. During the pandemic, many young people can keep up with online lessons and schoolwork at home. However, there are many who are far less fortunate. Despite government investment, a survey of schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has identified around 8,000 pupils that still lack suitable equipment or internet access at home, meaning they are unable to benefit from online resources, support from teachers, or even interact with classmates.

The County Council is now asking businesses and residents to consider [donating any spare or unwanted laptops](#), or making a financial donation, to make sure no pupil continues to go without and is able to engage with their teachers and peers. Find more information via the website, including where to donate an unused device (local libraries are accepting laptops as part of this initiative), how to check technical requirements, or how to make a financial donation ([gofundme](#) portal).

## **Cambridge Online Winter Support Grant**

In addition to the appeal above, I want to remind you that [South Cambridgeshire District Council](#) awarded [Cambridge Online](#) a £5,000 grant to help digitally excluded children to get online. To apply or ask questions please email [help@cambridgeonline.org.uk](mailto:help@cambridgeonline.org.uk) or phone 01223 300407.

## **Local testing for people without symptoms who go out to work**

There are six new rapid testing centres in Cambridgeshire where key workers, or other people who cannot work from home, are invited to book twice-weekly lateral flow tests. These tests are for people who do not have any symptoms of covid-19.

With 1 in 3 people who have the virus not displaying any symptoms, this regular testing of people without symptoms will help us to break the chain of transmission, giving workers more peace of mind and protecting others in the workplace. Find the latest information about testing sites and how to book on the [County Council's website](#). The six current sites are:

- The Hub, High Street, Cambourne
- Queen Mary Centre, Queen's Road, Wisbech
- Soham Town Rangers Football Club, Julius Martin Lane, Soham
- The Coneygear Centre, Butts Grove Way, Huntingdon, PE29 1PE – opens today (11 February)
- The Meadows Community Centre, 1 St Catherine's Road, Arbury – opens tomorrow (Friday 12 February).

Each site will be open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Saturday. The lateral flow test takes about 15 minutes and results are available within an hour.

People with symptoms will not be tested at the rapid testing sites. Anyone with one or more of these symptoms – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – should book a test at [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119.

## **Enabling safe and effective volunteering during coronavirus**

The Government has updated the [guidance](#) to help organisations and groups understand how they can safely and effectively involve volunteers during the pandemic. The update includes new information on political campaigning and volunteers eligible for vaccines.

## **Practical grief advice**

[The Good Grief Trust](#) brings together many different organisations and types of advice for bereavement and loss. Many of us may have lost someone or know someone close to us who has. The current [government rules](#) may clarify some aspects for the bereaved but finding the right type of help can be difficult, especially during the pandemic, whether logistical or emotional. On the Good Grief Trust site [there are a number of useful links and resources](#).

Best wishes

Bill Handley

Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, Health & Wellbeing  
South Cambridgeshire District Council