

CORONAVIRUS AND WEST EDINBURGH – 1/04/2020

Including: COVID helpline; how to volunteer; supermarket deliveries; emergency powers; health screening; help for those at greater risk; PPE; support for businesses

An update from our local MSP, Alex Cole-Hamilton

*please note- due to volume, it is very hard for me to deal with correspondence via social media, if you want to contact me, please email alex.cole-hamilton.msp@parliament.scot in the first instance.

SUPPORT WITH CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS

If you develop symptoms consistent with Coronavirus/COVID19: a fever and/or a new cough and require advice **call the new helpline on 0800 028 2816.**

Please only call 111 if you think you have COVID19 and are struggling to breathe. 111 is now dedicated to acute COVID cases only.

For all other health needs phone your GP in the first instance or 999 in an emergency.

VOLUNTEER TO HELP

There is a new 'Scotland Cares' campaign to encourage people to volunteer during the virus pandemic. Volunteers have three options which are signposted from the Ready Scotland website:

Returning NHS workers will be directed to existing voluntary arrangements in NHS Scotland To support public services, including the NHS and councils, people will be directed to a site co-ordinated by the British Red Cross To charities or community groups in their area people will be directed to Volunteer Scotland

You can read more on www.readyscotland.org.

Businesses who can offer support should email covid19response@gov.scot.

SHOPPING AND SUPERMARKET DELIVERIES

Home deliveries from supermarkets remain vastly oversubscribed. Please keep delivery slots free to those who are shielding and cannot leave their homes.

Today in Parliament I asked the Minister for Older People to commence a scheme similar to the one operating in England where those who are over 70, or shielding at home for a health reason, could register with the government and receive priority delivery allocation with local supermarkets. I received a commitment that this will be established shortly.

In the meantime, the Edinburgh community volunteer network is running free delivery services during the coronavirus outbreak called Doorstep Market. Their goal is to care for those households who are self-isolating by crowdsourcing free delivery from volunteers across the city. You can find out more here: <https://www.doorstepmarket.co.uk/>.

EMERGENCY CORONAVIRUS POWERS

Over the past week, both Parliaments have agreed emergency powers to enable us to cope with the virus. It is now a criminal offence to disobey the strict public health guidance.

The new regulations include powers to enable Police Scotland to enforce restrictions on the closure of all businesses and venues in which activities would lead to prolonged social contact, and to allow businesses or services that are considered essential services, such as food retailers and pharmacies, to continue to operate with appropriate social distancing.

The reasons people who aren't essential workers can leave their home includes:

- Shopping for food, essential household and medical supplies
- Exercise once a day near your house and for no more than 1hr
- Medical assistance
- Travel to work where work at home is not an option
- Attending a funeral of a member of their household, a close family member or in the event that no family or household member is attending the funeral, of a friend
- Providing care or assistance to others
- Meeting legal obligations or accessing critical public services

The regulations include powers to enable Police Scotland to enforce restrictions via fine or dispersal. These penalties are doubled for each repeat offence up to a £960 cap, with no reduction for early payment.

If you wish to report a violation of the new restrictions, please call the police on 101 (do not call 999).

HEALTH SCREENING

There is a temporary pause on several health screening programmes to divert NHS resources and staff to the Coronavirus crisis.

- Breast Screening (mammograms)
- Cervical Screening (smear tests)
- Bowel Screening (home test kits)
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening (ultrasound of abdomen)
- Diabetic Retinopathy (Eye) Screening (images taken of the eye)

Pregnancy and Newborn Screening Programmes, including tests offered during pregnancy and just after birth, will continue where logistically practical.

Results for those who have recently been screened or who have completed and returned home test kits will continue to be processed.

The suspension will be reviewed after 12 weeks at the latest.

This allows staff to be re-allocated including to COVID-19 laboratory testing and covering for colleagues who are unwell or self-isolating.

HELP FOR THOSE AT GREATER RISK

The new support for people with certain medical conditions will be made available through GPs and local resilience partnerships to help access medicines and services, and also access to food and supplies.

Local Resilience Partnerships are to set up Humanitarian Assistance Centres (HAC) or an equivalent arrangement. **PLEASE DO NOT WAIT FOR A LETTER INSTRUCTING YOU TO SHIELD YOURSELF IF YOU FALL INTO ANY OF THESE CATEGORIES, YOU MUST SELF ISOLATE NOW:**

The six categories of risk are:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients
2. People with specific cancers: a. People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer b. People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment c. People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer d. People having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
3. People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
4. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
5. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
6. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
7. People who are pregnant with significant congenital heart disease

If you are in one of these categories they will be in touch, but do not wait before you begin to self-isolate.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

There are new measures to protect health and social care staff and emergency workers:

- Eight weeks' worth of PPE to all GP surgeries to be delivered by the end of this week
- PPE delivered to local cluster points for onward distribution or collection by social care providers
- Extra staff to prepare orders for social care, plus additional delivery drivers, longer delivery hours and use of more external delivery companies to increase capacity
- Police: FFP3 masks, gloves, boot covers, coveralls and goggles have already been issued to more than 600 officers. In the meantime, a flexible response unit in possession of full kit will be deployed to support officers.

Adding to well-established arrangements in hospitals, all health boards now have a single point of contact to manage local supply and distribution.

Over last four to six weeks, around 34 million items have been delivered to hospitals. You can read more below:

<https://www.gov.scot/news/protection-for-health-and-social-care-staff/>

SUPPORT FOR DENTISTS & SELF CATERING ACCOMMODATION BUSINESSES

The Scottish Government has issued a revised funding package for NHS dentists. This will provide 80% of the average income from items of service and patient contributions. This is a more equitable funding solution. Read more here:

<https://bda.org/advice/Coronavirus/Documents/Scotland%20Financial%20Sustainability%20Measures%20for%20Independent%20Dental%20Practices%20300320.pdf>

Self-catering accommodation and caravans will be eligible for both the one-off £10,000 grant for small businesses, and the one-off £25,000 grant for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors where this is a primary source of earned income and the property is let for 140 days or more. Details below:

<https://www.gov.scot/news/supporting-tourism-through-coronavirus/>

COMPANIES BREACHING GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON SAFE WORKING OR ALLOWING WORKERS TO SELF-ISOLATE

The Scottish Government have established a department for MSPs to report any companies failing to observe government guidance on self-isolation, essential work definitions or safe working through social distancing. You can report any such activity or behaviour to me directly at alex.cole-hamilton.msp@parliament.scot.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others-social-distancing/pages/overview/>

As ever, if the team can do anything to help, please let us know.

Best,

Alex

<http://www.edinburghlibdems.org>