

Note from the Editors

We have decided to distribute this special addition to our newsletters to keep you all updated on the current plans in place to deal with the outbreak of COVID-19. As the information changes we will do our utmost to keep you informed.

You will find current Government advice along with information from the Bucks NHS Trust, Public Health England and updates and advice from local services and Health Centres to guide you through the recommended isolation period. We have information from the new budget and good news about the TV licencing rules.

As we compiled this, more and more communities across the county are pulling together to ensure that they look out for their older and more vulnerable neighbours so look out for parish councils, nextdoor.co.uk, neighbourhood watch, street associations are all mobilising .

This situation does bring out the very best in people & there have been many who want to help but unfortunately it also brings out the worst who are out to trick and scam you so please be careful who you trust and ask for identification if necessary. Remember that no legitimate person will mind you asking for ID or if you close your door while you phone someone to check.

This virus has meant that we have had to cancel all of our planned events to ensure the safety of our members but we hope to reschedule once the social distancing rules are no longer necessary, we also know that some planned events have already been postponed which we have added on page 6 Dates for the Diary.

In the meantime, keep washing your hands, keep in touch with friends and family via the phone and social media if you have it, and know that although we can't physically be there, we are at the end of a phone wanting to help if you need us.

Please stay safe and stay in touch,

Paula and Andy

Bucks NHS Trust Update regarding COVID-19



A small number of patients at Wycombe Hospital and Stoke Mandeville Hospital have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). The patients are being cared for appropriately at the hospitals where they continue to be monitored and treated. Staff and others who have come into contact with the patients are being informed and advised about what precautions they may need to take. The wards affected are temporarily closed to new admissions and visitors. Patients affected by the temporary closures will be contacted directly.

Update 19th March from the Trust

In line with national guidance BHT is suspending all non-urgent operations. Urgent and emergency cases and cancer treatments will continue as normal. We know many people waiting for treatment will be disappointed or worried & we will contact everyone affected as soon as possible. Outpatients appointments are continuing and will do so until the Trust are told not to. Some departments are struggling with staff who are self-isolating and the picture changes daily but they are trying their hardest to keep as much as they can normal.

If you have a query regarding a scheduled appointment at a hospital and need to contact them, please be patient. It's likely to take longer to get through



COVID-19 The Basics

Here's a useful summary of what we know about Coronavirus (Covid-19) pulled together by our friends at Age UK. However, this virus is new so there's still a lot that scientists don't yet know and precaution advice is based on what is known about other viruses such as flu

What is coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a virus that causes an illness called COVID-19. It affects your lungs and airways. For most people, it causes mild symptoms while for others it can be more serious and require hospital treatment.

There are simple, effective things we can all do to reduce our risk of catching COVID-19 or transmitting the virus to other people.

What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

The symptoms are:

- a cough
- a high temperature
- shortness of breath.

These symptoms are similar to lots of other illnesses, like common colds and flu. If someone has these symptoms it doesn't necessarily mean they have coronavirus. Equally, those infected with coronavirus might not have all the symptoms and some people don't have any symptoms

How can I reduce my risk of getting coronavirus?

One of the most important things you can do to reduce the risk of infection for yourself and the people around you is to **wash your hands**, frequently and thoroughly, with soap and hot water. You should wash your hands more often than you would normally.

You should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or for two rounds of the song 'Happy Birthday', especially when you get home after going out, before eating or handling food, and after sneezing or blowing your nose.

Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. You should also make sure you catch coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve – not your hands – and put used tissues in the bin. Then wash your hands.

If you have a new, continuous cough or a high temperature the Government has advised that you stay at home for 7 days.

I'm worried about someone. What should I do?

If you care for someone who has a new, continuous cough or a high temperature it's important that they stay at home for 7 days. We would advise carers to call 111 for specific advice and it may be a good idea to contact your GP too. If someone's been advised to self-isolate, is very worried about going out or decides they'd prefer not to, there are still plenty of things you can do to help.

Stay in touch over the phone, by post, online or by popping over for a chat (assuming the person is allowed to have contact with others, and you take the precautions outlined above). See if people need any shopping or help by running some errands. Encourage people to stay active around the house and keep moving.

Things we don't know

1. At what point people are infectious before showing symptoms
2. How long the virus stays on surfaces
3. Once you have recovered, if you are immune

Treatment

For most people who get coronavirus, it will be a particularly nasty flu-type illness from which they will fully recover.

There is currently no specific treatment and antibiotics do not help, as they do not work against viruses. Treatment aims to relieve the symptoms while your body fights the illness. You'll need to stay in isolation, away from other people, until recovered.

Ibuprofen Warnings about using Ibuprofen to treat symptoms have been circulating in the press and this is **latest advice from the NHS**

There is currently no strong evidence that ibuprofen can make coronavirus worse. But until we have more information, take paracetamol to treat the symptoms, unless your doctor has told you paracetamol is not suitable for you.

If you are already taking ibuprofen or another non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) on the advice of a doctor, do not stop taking it without checking first.



Those who need to be especially careful

Here's the list of people who need to be especially careful at this time include:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result

of conditions such as HIV and AIDS or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy

- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)

There are some people who are at an even greater risk of "severe illness" from COVID-19.

People in this category are:

- People who have received an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment
- People with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- People with severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)

Advice for visitors and those who provide care for others

You should contact your regular social visitors such as friends and family to let them know that you are reducing social contacts and that they should not visit you during this time unless they are providing essential care for you.

Essential care includes things like help with washing, dressing, or preparing meals. If you receive regular health or social care from an organisation, either through your local authority or paid for by yourself, they will be contacting you to explain the precautions they are taking to keep you safe and contingencies in place for continuing your care in the event that their staff get ill.

If you receive essential care from friends or family members, speak to them about extra precautions they can take to keep you safe and their back up plans for you.

If you are caring for someone who is vulnerable or you are receiving care or support, there are some simple steps to reduce risk.

- All visitors should use hand sanitiser before entering your home and wash their hands

before giving help.

- Live in carers should wash their hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser
- Phones should be cleaned regularly
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) if cough or sneeze
- put used tissues immediately in the bin and wash hands afterwards
- do not visit if you are unwell and make alternative arrangements for their care, or if you are a live in carer/partner, contact NHS 111 for advice, ,

If the person you care for starts feeling unwell and showing symptoms contact NHS 111

It is critical that carers (including family & friends giving support) look after their own well-being and physical health during this time.



How to prevent germs from spreading

Germs can be spread from person to person or by touching unclean equipment or surfaces. To stop the spread of germs, focus your efforts on cleaning areas in the house where germs are more likely to spread, such as the kitchen and toilet.

Use either soap and hot water to rinse the germs away, or a disinfectant to kill them. Make sure you dry surfaces such as worktops and chopping boards thoroughly afterwards as dampness helps any remaining germs to survive and, if there's enough water, multiply.

You should clean germ hotspots on a regular basis after use, rather than a once-a-week deep clean. Cleaning aids, such as cloths or mops, must be germ-free or they'll spread germs to other surfaces.

Here are some general cleaning tips to help prevent the spread of germs in your home:

Cloths and sponges Use disposable cloths or paper towels when possible. Reusable cloths should be disinfected or washed at 60C (140F) after each use

Washing-up brushes Wash brushes in a dishwasher regularly or clean with detergent and warm water after each use

Mops and buckets should be cleaned and dried after each use

Toilets Use a toilet cleaner and brush every few days. Limescale should be regularly removed using a descaling product. Keep the toilet seat, handle and rim clean by using a disinfectant

Baths and sinks. Clean baths and sinks frequently. Use disinfectant if they've been used by someone who's ill

Kitchen. Ensure food-preparation surfaces are clean before use and clean surfaces immediately after use. Regularly clean and dry high traffic areas like handles taps etc

Floors Clean floors regularly with warm water and detergent to remove visible dirt if soiled with vomit, urine etc, the floor should be cleaned using a disposable cloth and warm water, then disinfected and dried

Laundry Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry. If labels allow, use a 60C wash otherwise 40C with a bleach-based laundry product to prevent germs. Don't leave laundry in the washing machine as any remaining germs can multiply rapidly

How can I get assistance with foods and medicines

Ask family, friends and neighbours to support you and use online services if you are able to. In most cases, friends and neighbours will be only too happy to help. Your local pharmacies will also be able to assist with your prescriptions. If this is not possible, then the public sector, business, charities, and the general public are gearing up to help those advised to stay at home.

It is important to speak to others and ask them to help you to make arrangements for the delivery of food, medicines and essential services and supplies, and look after your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

BCC are pulling together a directory of groups, networks and organisations that BOPAG, Age UK Bucks etc can signpost you to if you need advice and this should be available very soon.

BUT please be vigilant. Sadly, times like these bring out fraudsters too. Be wary of unsolicited offers of help. Genuine people will be happy for you to shut the door and phone to check their legitimacy

Stay Connected

We will all find that social distancing can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people. This is completely understandable.

Draw on support you might have through your friends, family and other networks during this time. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone, by post, or online. Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling. You won't be alone!

Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust and in doing so you may end up providing support to them too.

On the back page we've some ideas to help you keep sane through all this



BUDGET 2020

Here's our round up of what featured in the Budget in March. The emphasis was on dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak but even so, it was disappointing that there was so little that related specifically to pensioners. Nevertheless, here are the things that were included that may possibly impact you

Tax

Inheritance tax threshold from April 2020 moves to £500,000 including property, making the tax-free sum for married couples £1million

Wine, beer, cider and spirits duties all frozen this year

Tobacco duty rose by RPI + 2%

Hand rolling tobacco duty rose by RPI + 6%

Tampon tax abolished (the 5% VAT charged on women's sanitary products) from January 2021

Vehicles and petrol

Fuel duty frozen for the 10th year in a row

Growth figures and Treasury rules

Massive increase in borrowing per year - up from a projected £33.3bn in 2023/24 to £60.2bn

Treasury's 'fiscal rules' limiting borrowing are likely to be ripped up

GDP growth sinks to just 1.1% this year, down from predicted 1.4%

Debt to stay high at 75.2% of GDP in 2024/25 - and that's before coronavirus is factored in

NHS & Social Care

£6bn of 'new' NHS funding announced including £100m in 2020/21 to make progress on Boris Johnson's 40 'new' hospitals

Health Department capital budget to rise by £683m in 2020/21

But there is NO new funding for social care in the Budget (apart from the coronavirus support fund) despite a cash crisis

Immigration Health Surcharge rises to £624 a year for non-UK nationals to use the NHS

Travel

Air Passenger Duty frozen on short-haul flights at £13 but APD rises by £2 for long-haul economy, £4 for long-haul premium classes, and £13 for long haul private jets (just in case any of you do?)

A £2.5bn drive to repair 50 million potholes over the next 5 years. £27bn investment in English roads between 2020 and 2025 in total £500 million over the next five years for fast-charging network for electric vehicles

Businesses

Treasury is expected to start talks with the industry on protecting cash machines for the poorest

Environment

Funding for flood defenses is expected to double to £5.2 billion over the next six years
A new Green Gas Levy that may add £5 a year to energy bills (see below)

£120m will be available immediately to repair flood defenses damaged this winter
Another £200m will be provided directly to local communities to build their local resilience.

Manufacturers will be charged £200 a tonne on non recycled plastic from April 2022
Freeze the levy on electricity from April 2022 but raise the levy on gas to help tackle the climate crisis

And the things that were easy to miss

Death nell for RPI?

Unions sounded the alarm after the Budget was used to launch a review of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) measure of inflation. The government claims RPI has "shortcomings" in how it's measured and has proposed aligning it with the lower Consumer Price Index rate after February 2025. But the higher RPI is used to calculate many people's pension payments and pay uprating, according to the GMB union. So removing it will mean a hit to future payments.

£5 'Boiler Tax'

The Chancellor briefly said "from April 2022 "I'm freezing the levy on electricity and raising it on gas." What does that mean? The small print shows he was talking about a consultation on a Green Gas Levy, a tax on gas suppliers in order to fund the production of bio-methane. Treasury has stated that it will cost £1 per household per year initially, rising to £5 per year by 2025. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health warned it was "deeply worrying" as this effectively makes energy more expensive for everyone and has urged the Government to clarify their intentions and outline how they will support those living in fuel poverty."



2020

Contact Details for the Bucks Older People's Action Group

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Changes to the TV Licence delayed

The BBC and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport have announced that in light of the current Coronavirus situation, changes to the TV licence for people aged over 75 due to come into effect on 1 June have been delayed.

They have stated that the BBC's priority over the coming period will be to do everything they can to serve the nation at this uniquely challenging time.

They have also advised that their current plan is to bring in that changes on the 1st August but this like everything else is subject to change.

BBC The BBC have a daily Coronavirus update at 4:30 on BBC1 everyday if you want a daily fix of the pandemic news

Positive.News

Need positive news and stories to make you smile? Check out www.positive.news . You'll love it!



BOPAG has a Facebook page

Paula is working her magic already and has set up the BOPAG Facebook page which you'll find at www.facebook.com/bopag.org where we'll post latest information. You can access Facebook on tablets, phones and your computer. Twitter and LinkedIn to follow!

Newsletter info

If you know anyone who would like to receive our newsletters, please get in touch. We can email or post them to recipients.

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 22nd April Information Fair for Older People 11am– 4pm. Chalfont Community Centre, **Postponed**

Wednesday June 10th 11am – 2.30pm, The Great Get Together Elgiva Theatre, Chesham. **Postponed**

Things to keep yourself busy

Try some meditation

Isha Kriya: A Free Guided Meditation - Sadhgurulsha Kriya is a simple, free guided meditation designed by Sadhguru. Watch this video for the guided instruction...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwQkfoKxRvo>

Join an online choir

The Sofa Singers is a free & weekly online singing event that aims to bring people together from around the world to spark joy and human connection. <https://www.thesofasingers.net/>

Let's go back to letter writing but you might need to ask someone to get you stamps and post the letters

Tackle some of the jobs you've been putting off. Andy's 70 year old brother in law in Spain is painting 2 rooms, Andy herself is planning on sorting a box of old family photographs and here's some other ideas we're adopting in the Trueman household . Sort a cupboard a day? Read a book that you've been meaning to get round to. Create a 'Honey Do' list for your partner (it's a to do list for someone else!). If you have a garden—so many spring jobs!

We'll post more on Facebook as we hear about them

Help for Elderly Shoppers

Supermarkets are introducing measures to help the elderly get their essential provisions

Sainsbury are giving priority to older shoppers in the first hour of opening

Tesco have announced vulnerable and elderly customers will be prioritised one hour every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning between 9-10am (except in their Express stores)

Iceland have also announced priority to elderly customers in the first hour of opening

John Lewis/Waitrose have launched a £1 million Community Support Fund to be distributed by Waitrose shops to local communities and will be introducing protected shopping time for the elderly and the vulnerable across its Waitrose stores.