

Helen Grant MP Covid-19 bulletin no.5 - 01-05-2020

Dear Friends and Residents

Hello again, and I hope you and your loved ones have remained safe and well since my last bulletin a couple of weeks ago.

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced that the country has passed the peak of the viral infection rate and that next week the Government will set out a road map for how the UK's lockdown will begin to be eased. At all times, however, the highest priority will be to prevent the effective reproduction rate of the virus from causing a second peak in infections.

In the meantime, as we all continue to stick to the Government's social distancing instructions, I wanted to provide an update on some developments with our local and national fight against Coronavirus, including;

- Non Coronavirus NHS services still available
- Expanded availability of Covid-19 testing
- New loan scheme for smaller businesses
- Kent police report
- Support Available for People Self-Isolating

NHS STILL OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Our local NHS, including Maidstone and Pembury Hospitals and GP surgeries, are very keen to convey that they are still 'open for business.'

If you have an unusual lump or you are experiencing chest pains for example, you should not be put off seeking medical attention for fear of catching Coronavirus.

All medical assessment facilities have designated 'red' and 'green' areas, to separate patients who may have Covid-19 from those who don't, to minimise the risk of infection.

(Note: If you think you need to see a doctor it is best to contact 111 in the first instance or of course 999 in an emergency).

COVID-19 TESTING AVAILABILITY

There has been a very substantial increase in the availability of Covid 19 testing this week. This means that testing is now available to the following groups of people:

- All essential workers including NHS and social care workers with symptoms.
- Anyone over 65 with symptoms.
- Anyone with symptoms whose work cannot be done from home (for example, construction workers, shop workers, emergency plumbers and delivery drivers).

- Anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus and lives with any of those identified above.

There are a number of ways in which people can access a test including by attending drive through centres or by ordering a home test kit. If you are in one of the above groups then you can arrange a test here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test>

NEW LOAN SCHEME TO HELP SMALL BUSINESSES

This week the Chancellor announced a new 'Bounce Back Loan' scheme which will help small and medium-sized businesses affected by coronavirus to apply for loans of up to £50,000.

The loans are 100% guaranteed by the Government and therefore should be quick and easy for banks to administer so businesses can get the money within days of application. The scheme is available from Monday 4th May and you can read full details here: <https://bit.ly/3bTSsc2>.

KENT POLICE CORONAVIRUS REPORT

Last week I spoke with Kent's Chief Constable Alan Pughsley and Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott about Kent Police's response to Coronavirus.

The vast majority of people in Kent are adhering to the Government's social distancing rules. Within a County population of 1.8 million only 64 enforcement notices have been issued for breaching the regulations. I was pleased to note that police protocol follows '4 Es' when dealing with this issue, meaning they

firstly Engage, Explain and Encourage.....and only Enforce as a final resort.

Appallingly, however, there have been 72 offences in Kent of people spitting at, or coughing on, police officers, before claiming to be infected with Covid 19.

In response, together with several other Kent MPs, I wrote to the Lord Chief Justice asking that our Judges impose immediate prison sentences on guilty parties. The reply we received confirmed that judges can add more weight in their sentencing decisions when ruling on such despicable crimes.

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SELF-ISOLATING

If you are self-isolating and require assistance my previous bulletins contain information on how you can access the help you need. More information here: <https://www.helengrant.org/news/covid-19-bulletin-no4>

If you live in Maidstone there is also the superb 'COVID19 Mutual Aid Maidstone Facebook Group' which you can access here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/482849969285931/>

AND FINALLY.....

A big thank you to everyone across Maidstone who is doing such amazing work to help our community through this hugely challenging period.

I have been particularly inspired this week by Mitu Chowdhury from the Mughal Dynasty <https://www.mughal-dynasty.com/> and Sunahor Ali from Al-Amin Tandoori <http://www.al-amintandoori.co.uk/> who have provided meals to our frontline NHS workers at Maidstone and Pembury Hospitals. I know their efforts will have been hugely appreciated by NHS workers and their families.

A reminder too that my team and I remain on hand to assist you in any way that we can. We are all still working full time, albeit remotely, successfully handling hundreds of incoming enquiries and calls for help. If you have any questions, concerns or think I can be of assistance in any way then please do get in touch at helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk or by calling 0207 219 7107.

Please do continue to stay safe and well.

Very best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen".

Helen Grant MP

Member of Parliament for Maidstone and the Weald



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