**Important update on testing in Oxfordshire**

We’ve been made aware of a worrying trend of people turning up at our hospitals in Oxfordshire, asking to be tested for Covid-19. This is possibly as a result of the national issue with testing capacity, where people have struggled to book a test online.  We are therefore supporting our NHS and Public Health colleagues in pushing out the extremely important message that people with symptoms must NOT go to a hospital.  Testing does not take place in hospital settings and by turning up people are putting extra strain on resources by having to turn people away and also potentially putting vulnerable people at risk.

We would be really grateful if you could also share this message in your towns and parishes. If you’re aware of anyone struggling to book a test online the advice is to keep trying as it’s only possible to book a slot when one becomes available. Slots become available throughout the day so it may take a few attempts at different times of the day.

The other key message is to only book a test if you’re displaying symptoms.  You can book a test by calling 119 or by registering online via [gov.uk/getting-tested-for-coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/getting-tested-for-coronavirus).

**Some Covid-19 news** **from the Local Government Association**

The Government has recently announced that the [NHS COVID-19 app that is currently being trialled will be launched on Thursday 24 September](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA5MTEuMjY5OTEzNjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5nb3YudWsvZ292ZXJubWVudC9uZXdzL2J1c2luZXNzZXMtdXJnZWQtdG8tcHJlcGFyZS1mb3ItbmhzLWNvdmlkLTE5LWFwcCJ9.p5rh90Xx_0awaCRZj7qRIthKoBA-MhiCoNUAzJh4Hzg/s/593450711/br/84638818560-l) in England and Wales, following trials in Newham and on the Isle of Wight.

As the app will include the ability to check into venues through a QR code, we are encouraging businesses to ensure they have the NHS QR code posters displayed in a prominent place ahead of the launch. The app will allow contact tracers to track down customers in order to provide public health advice in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak. Businesses who are already using their own QR system are being encouraged to switch to the NHS Test and Trace QR code.

Venues must also have an alternative check-in method in place to collect the details of any visitors or customers without the app, for example a handwritten register.

**Help for residents struggling financially from Covid-19**

The government has given us some emergency assistance funding to support any of our residents who are struggling financially as a result of the pandemic.

We are working closely with local information and advice centres to help us identify residents who might be in this situation and to help provide support.

If you become aware of anyone in this situation, please signpost them to one of the following:

* Citizens Advice – 0300 3309042
* Wantage Independent Advice Centre – 01235 765348

It’s important we manage their expectations as there is strict criteria that residents must meet to receive support, and it’s important they’re aware that any support they receive is emergency support while we work with them along with other relevant agencies to put in place an ongoing package of help.

It is also worth noting that these are limited funds, which we’re expected to spend by 31 October 2020 at the latest.

**The Government’s White Paper on planning**

Don’t forget – the government’s consultation into its proposals to reform the planning system ends on 29 October, so make sure you get your responses in. More information is [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future)

**Testing the waters**

Our Thames Champion Cllr Jo Robb needs your help in her campaign to improve the quality of the River Thames in South Oxfordshire.

Cllr Robb is looking for as many people as possible to take part in the Thames WaterBlitz to help test the water quality of the river in our district. You will only need to be available for 30 mins between 25 and 28 September but you’ll need to register by this coming Monday. Visit [earthwatch.org.uk/waterblitz](https://earthwatch.org.uk/waterblitz) to sign up.

**Electric Blanket testing**

The county council is offering free electric blanket testing as they do every year, but because of Covid restrictions the process will be a bit different.

They’ll post a special plastic bag to the address for residents to put their electric blanket in, and then someone will come and collect the blanket from their homes, take it away to be tested and then return it once it’s done.

The tests will be carried out across Oxfordshire in October. Book now by calling 01865 895999 Option 1 or emailing [communityengagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityengagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk) – there’s more info in the attached flyer.

Comms Team

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

[www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/) @southoxon

[www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/) @whitehorsedc