

NEED A LITTLE HELP?



TRANSPORT TO VACCINATION CENTRES:

Bedfordshire Rural Community Charity run the Greensand Country Community Transport which covers our area. You don't have to sign up as a Member to request a ride to a vaccination centre but a donation is requested to the BRCC Transport Team to support their work and they require a minimum of 2 days notice. They cannot accommodate mobility scooters but do take walkers and wheelchairs and have extended their range to include Stevenage, Luton and Dunstable and Milton Keynes. Ring them on 01234 834933.

The Bedfordshire and Luton Adult Care and Support Services Directory 2020/21



gives details of Home Support, Specialist Care, Care Homes and Useful Contacts. Please contact us and we will deliver one to your door. online copies are available at

www.carechoices.co.uk/publication/bedfordshire-care-services-directory

Bedfordshire Employment & Skills Service Lockdown restrictions might still be in place but BESS are continuing to deliver FREE online and home based courses and workshops helping adults to learn new skills and boost job opportunities. Courses include English and Maths, IT and Digital Skills, Working in Early Years settings and schools, health and social care, business administration, warehousing and customer service. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is also available, as well as courses on employability skills.

Learning is currently delivered using tutor supported online platforms and group video calls. Tutors help with the IT skills and confidence to access and use online learning, which helps to stay connected with others and use IT communication skills for work. They can give one to one support to help you to find the right course and then they can help with enrolment.

<https://forms.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/officeforms/BESSAdultLearning.ofml>

Visit www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk to view our newsletter online and register to save paper by receiving it in your mailbox.



Biggleswade Community News

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SPRING IS IN THE AIR AND THE OUTDOORS BECKONS

Through the success of the vaccination roll out, from March 8th we can once again meet a friend outdoors – and sit! Schools will be back and we can hold hands with our loved ones in care homes. By the end of March outdoor sports can be enjoyed instead of just the exercise walk. But for some the threat of the virus is ever present – our front line workers. Central Bedfordshire Council has therefore set up Rapid Flow testing centres with results in an hour. Our local one is at Saxon Gate Pool. And a second vaccination site has gone live at Biggleswade Hospital. (p.3)

If you have been unfortunate enough to have lost your job, help is at hand from the Bedfordshire Education & Skills Service. (p.8)

Thanks to Biggleswade Good Neighbour volunteers this newsletter is now being delivered to all their 470 client households, keeping them up to date with what is going on in Biggleswade and Central Bedfordshire.

So not absolute freedom to roam anywhere just yet, but hope that cases will continue to fall, and new treatments will prevent people from serious illness. The shoots of spring are here, with the hope of a summer of recovery from the dark days of this Covid winter lockdown.



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NEWS FROM ORGANISATIONS



Update from Biggleswade Sandy Lions Club

We are continuing with the provision of Message in a Bottle, Message in a Wallet and Spectacle recycling. Like you we are getting frustrated with the forced inactivity due to Covid 19 but we are still here to serve the needs of our community. We have been assisting with the provision of computer equipment during lockdown plus other help where it falls within our remit. We pride ourselves that the majority of the money we raise is spent on local projects helping alleviate hardship where we can. Phone 01462 814 693 / 0345 833 9749 if you know of any problem where we may be able to help or please visit

<https://bslions.org.uk/contactus.html>

Every request for help is checked by our service committee and a decision made on what help, if any, we can provide. The Club's decision is final and we do not provide a reason why a particular project is accepted or rejected.



The Royal Artillery Association exists to bring together serving and retired members of the Regiment and to further the welfare of past and present Gunners and their dependants. We aim to create and foster a bond of comradeship between all who have served, or are still serving as "Gunners" in any capacity, regardless of rank, and to encourage and organise social reunions.

We liaise and work with, other Public and Service organisations which concern themselves with the Welfare of Ex- Service people and their dependants, and with the various Ex- Service charities to ensure Ex- Gunners are given full consideration.

The local Branch usually meets on the first Wednesday each month in the Biggleswade Sea Cadets Hall in Station Road and will recommence as soon as possible. During the Covid 19 period we keep in contact with all members by monthly newsletter. For further details please contact our Chairman Ted McKenzie on 07900 806235 or exboysra.tm@gmail.com

LOCAL RAPID TESTING FOR FRONT LINE WORKERS, PREGNANT WOMEN AND THEIR PARTNERS

Rapid testing is available to anyone who lives or works in Central Bedfordshire, are unable to work from home and are in a customer facing role, including those working in social care, retail cashiers, childminders, bus and taxi drivers and tradespeople like plumbers, electricians, construction workers, etc. If you go into other people's homes or come into contact with other people as part of your job, then regular testing is important.

Around one in three people who are infected with Covid-19 have no symptoms so could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Identifying positive cases more quickly will help to break chains of transmission and control the virus. No need to book, just turn up. But take ID that identifies you and your job and a smartphone if possible, on which you will need to register and be sent your results. Help is on hand for those who might need it.

Rapid-turnaround lateral flow tests are easily self-administered and processed there and then on-site, giving results in less than an hour. We strongly urge people who are coming into contact with other people through their work to get tested twice a week, ideally 3-4 days apart.

The rapid testing is also available for pregnant women and their partners prior to attending key maternity appointments. Further information can be found on the council's website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtests

Anyone with symptoms – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – should book a standard PCR test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119.

Central Bedfordshire Council has set up rapid test centres at:

- Flitwick Leisure Centre - open 7 days a week, from 8am to 8pm
- The Dunstable Centre - open 7 days a week, from 8am to 8pm
- Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre, Biggleswade - open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday, from 8am to 8pm

Home to school and college travel assistance policies consultation Closes: 22 April 2021

Where they meet certain criteria, Central Bedfordshire Council currently provides transport assistance to pupils of school age and those attending post-16 education. These policies are now being reviewed following listening events for parents, carers and professionals.

The feedback highlighted a number of improvements that could be made to ensure they are clearer and fairer. The Council also looked at similar services provided in other areas. Professionals felt that policies were hard to find and interpret.

Parents' comments included

- The eligibility criteria for school transport is unclear
- Policy information is too long and does not have enough emphasis on children's needs
- Flexibility needs to be considered if a child lives in two homes
- For children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the policy focuses too much on their education, health and care plan (EHCP), rather than the individual's specific needs
- There is no guidance for people over the age of 19 and in education

In response the Council is proposing that they extend the eligibility criteria to cover more groups of children. While keeping the criteria the same they also propose to update the policy to make it easier and clearer for parents to understand, as well as creating a policy setting out the eligibility criteria for over 19s. Any changes to the policies will come into effect for the September 2022 intake of pupil admissions. Visit the Council's Consultations page at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/38/consultations or email consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to request an accessible version of the consultation document.

MAYFLOWER CLUB

Moving to the Social Club in Church Road, Biggleswade, in 2019, meant we had much more space in which to meet. As soon as Covid restrictions are lifted for meeting indoors again, and the Social Club can re-open, our Friday sessions will resume. Unfortunately due to lack of space that might not be the case for our Monday Bingo and Wednesday Rummikub sessions. For more details or to join ring Iris Bull on 01767 318434

Volunteers needed for Biggleswade Community Hospital

Volunteers are playing a critical role in the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine programme.

Can you help at the new vaccination centre at Biggleswade Community Hospital?

Volunteers are needed to undertake a range of roles, including:

- Car park marshals – outdoor and on foot. Warm clothes necessary (also waterproof when rain is forecast).
- Front of House – meeting and greeting patients to check they have appointments, may also be outdoors
- Internal marshals – ensuring the flow of patients through the centre and monitoring the post-vaccination area (a seated area whereby patients wait for 15 minutes before they leave).

Volunteers should be able to offer to undertake a minimum of 4 hour shifts. Rotas are covering 8am to 8pm, 7 days per week.

Volunteers who could commit to a pattern of shifts either weekly, fortnightly etc, are especially welcome.

Appropriate training, supervision and PPE will be provided to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and patients.

If you are interested in volunteering, please email bedsccg.Covid.workforce@nhs.net specifically mentioning Biggleswade Community Hospital in the subject line, and then include your name, contact details and availability in the body of the email.

Clinical Commissioning Group* (CCG). Its 2021-2024 strategy was recently approved by the Council's executive. Its new priorities reflect feedback from the public and the issues most important to them which are best dealt with in partnership.

Drug dealing was highlighted as the number one concern for those residents who took part in the 2020 Safer Central Survey, which helped form the strategy. Additionally raising awareness of domestic abuse with earlier intervention and access to support for the vulnerable will be prioritised.

The CSP will also focus on tackling cyber crime, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggesting that people are more likely to become a victim of cyber crime and fraud than any other type of crime, and it is under reported. We regularly inform readers of any local scams.

Reporting crime has become easier. Visit <https://safercentral.org> to report a problem. It can be dog fouling, graffiti, anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, nuisance motorcycles, fly tipping, a non-emergency crime, knife crime, cyber crime, hate crime, modern day slavery, or child sexual exploitation. Or you can phone 101 and speak to the neighbourhood policing unit.

*Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) CCG commissions most of the hospital and community NHS services in their local area, including deciding what services are needed for their diverse local populations, and ensuring that they are provided.

LATEST PHONE SCAM If you ever receive an unexpected telephone call from the "HMRC" or any other similar organisation or enforcement agency which starts with an automated recorded message, hang up immediately as it is a scam. These organisations never use recorded messages. Report it via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline at 0808 223 1133.

COVID SERVICES AND INFORMATION

- ◇ Daily cases are falling in Biggleswade but overall deaths in Central Bedfordshire are taking longer to fall and are still stubbornly high compared to before Christmas.
- ◇ East London Foundation Trust who provide Community Mental Health Services at Biggleswade Hospital, Potton Road, SG18 0EL are opening a second vaccination centre at the hospital from March 1st. As with the Weatherley Centre and the Stevenage mega centre, bookings will be via the national booking website. Details of how to book will be in the NHS letter sent to you when your priority group is triggered.
- ◇ Appointments depend on vaccine availability, and new ones are added through the day. When sites have no appointments available they disappear from the system. If you take a little too long you may find your first choice appointment is no longer available! Patience helps. Volunteers are being recruited to help at the site and if you are interested please email bedsccg.Covid.workforce@nhs.net
- ◇ 1.7m more people have now been added to the NHS 'shielding' list and to the priority lists for vaccinations. They will be sent vaccination letters and also letters detailing the support available to them.
- ◇ If you are contacted by the national Track and Trace system, and meet their criteria you may be entitled to a £500 one off payment. Visit Central Bedfordshire Council for more details at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/26/public_health/839/corona_virus_self-isolation_payments or phone their switchboard at 0300 300 9300
- ◇ Bedford Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the local NHS and has a Covid vaccination help line at 0300 7900267.