



LRF Communications Briefing – Covid19

17 February 2021

LRFBIZ V50 - ECONOMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY VERSION

Coronavirus Headlines

Message from the LRF: Update on additions to the Shielding List

New research commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer has recently identified an additional 1.7 million people who may be at increased risk of becoming seriously unwell from coronavirus. This is because of a combination of their individual characteristics and their underlying health conditions. These are being added to the Shielded Patients List (SPL) in two batches, starting with those aged 19-69. This consists of 820,000 people nationally who will now be prioritised to receive their vaccination as soon as possible. A second group, aged over 70 will be identified shortly. They should already have received their vaccinations by the time they are notified that they are at increased risk.

Of the first cohort, approximately 8,100 are in Lincolnshire. The patients identified through the risk assessment will be sent a letter in the coming days explaining that their risk factors may help identify them as high clinical risk and that they are included within the support and advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable. They will be invited to receive a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible if they haven't already had the jab, and will be given advice on precautionary measures, including shielding where this is current advice. Their GPs are also being notified. Individuals may contact their GP to understand why they have been added to the list. GPs will have access to the QCovid tool and should be able to talk to patients about their own individual risk score and any proactive action they may wish to take e.g. reducing their BMI. The shielding period will last until 31 March 2021.

Those who have already been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable, of which there are approximately 32,000 in Lincolnshire, are also being advised to shield and stay at home as much as possible until 31 March, except to exercise or to attend health appointments (including vaccination appointments). More information and guidance on shielding can be found [here](#).

Business and Economic Updates

Lincolnshire County Council's New Grant Funds Open Next Week

LCC's four new grant funds for small businesses have been published, including the Business Recovery Fund which will be the first to open for applications next week. This fund is available to those small businesses that have been directly impacted being unable to fully trade, and have not benefited from the other government's Covid-19 support schemes. For more details on the grant schemes visit [here](#).

Subject to budget approval this week, the four grant schemes launched will be:


1. **Business Recovery Fund** - for small businesses who have not been able to access any of the government grants to date
 - LAUNCHES for applications from noon 23 February 2021 until 11.59pm on 25th Feb
 - Application criteria now available.

2. **Digital Voucher Fund** - supporting businesses in improving digitisation
 - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST window will be open between 8 March 2021 and 12 March 2021
 - Application criteria published 1 March.
3. **Invest for the Future Grant** -to contribute towards business expansion
 - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST window will be open between 15th March - 26th March
 - Application criteria published 8 March.
4. **Rural business grant** -for businesses and organisations with projects specifically in rural areas
 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST window will be open between 8 March 2021 and 17 March 2021.
 Application criteria published 1 March.

Workplace Testing Progress and Testimonials

Government announced last week that Institutional Testing was being expanded to offer to businesses with over a workforce of 50 staff. Find out more [here](#).


Workplace testing: Identifying asymptomatic cases to break chains of infection and keep people working



Scaling asymptomatic testing by employers is one pillar of the overall approach to testing and managing the pandemic. Workers can access testing that is tailored to their situation as follows:

1

Community based testing




**<50
Employees**

- Community testing is led by local authorities (LAs)
- Asymptomatic is being scaled for small businesses, where workers cannot work from home
- Fixed and/or mobile sites are available depending on your LA, for businesses with under 50 employees


2

Institutional testing



**>50
Employees**

- Over 90 companies currently running 244 asymptomatic test sites to test their workforce
- Over 6,000 more businesses have signed up to join
- LFD tests currently funded and provided by NHS T&T (to end March)




3


Home-collect testing

In pilot phase

- Where Asymptomatic Testing Sites (ATS) are not practical and community testing is not available, we are building new approaches to testing
- Pilots are currently underway before the offer is assessed and potentially scaled

Workplace pilots reduce outbreaks and staff absence






Andrew Murphy, Group Operations Director, said "Bosses had seen **lower absence, lower cases, lower spread**. That feels really exciting, if you think about what lateral flow tests ... could do for the country at scale."

Other key benefits:


- 45,700 tests with employees
- Saved 6,643 working days for 2,286 staff members



Daily swabs saved **'hundreds of thousands of pounds'** and avoided five potential stops in production at its steelworks in Port Talbot, South Wales.

Other key benefits:

- 5,627 checks and around 12,500 work hours have been saved.



Greg Jackson, CEO and founder of Octopus Energy, said "We started testing in December and it was **so well received by our staff** that we're continuing it this year."

- Though testing is voluntary, 'almost 100 per cent' of staff use the testing facilities'.

NEW £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund

The new £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund offers support to help small businesses adjust to new customs procedures, rules of origin, and VAT rules when trading with the EU.

The SME Brexit Support Fund could give businesses up to £2,000 if for those employing up to 500 employees, with no more than £100 million annual turnover. SMEs who trade only with the EU, and are therefore new to importing and exporting processes, can apply for grants of up to £2,000, to pay for practical support including training and professional advice to ensure they can continue trading effectively with the EU. For more information on the SME Brexit Support Fund click [here](#). Full guidance on how you can use the grant, who can apply and how to apply click [here](#).

EU Transition

New rules for businesses moving goods to the EU

- Businesses must declare any goods sent to the EU, providing details about the consignment and what it's worth, using a customs declaration form. Businesses can get a [customs intermediary](#) to help do this.
- Goods sent using a fast parcel operator or express courier, will have the goods declared by the courier, using the information provided. This option could be beneficial for smaller businesses who aren't looking to get a contract with a customs agent.
- If sending goods by post valued at £900 or less, Royal Mail will provide a customs declaration sticker to fill in and attach to the parcel. For goods worth more than £900, Royal Mail will submit the customs declaration for you, using the information you provide.
- [An Export Health Certificate \(EHC\)](#) is needed to export food or drink that contains products of animal origin such as meat, dairy or eggs.

Support for exporters

- The Department for International Trade's Check [How to Export Goods](#) online tool, provides information on the UK border, and duties and customs procedures for over 160 markets around the world.
 - [VAT guidance](#) has information on the conditions for zero rating VAT on the goods exported, and how to export goods in specific circumstances.
 - Register at the free [Trader Support Service](#) for moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
 - An [online guidance package](#) developed by DEFRA with HMRC to guide fish exporters through each step of the export journey. There's a range of information and support available to ensure the new rules including the [MMO One Stop Shop](#) are followed.
 - HMRC's Customs & International Trade Helpline at **0300 322 9434** is open from 8am to 10pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 4pm at weekends. Or can send HMRC your questions or use their webchat service [here](#).
 - View the new on demand videos which focus on priority topics for businesses, such as exporting can be viewed [here](#).
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Tools, Webinars & Events

Virtual Jobs Fair Returns for Employers and Job Seekers

The LEP virtual Jobs & Career Fairs are gaining momentum and media coverage. Read the Sleaford Standards' coverage [here](#) and sign up for next weeks' event on 25th February [here](#).

Visit Businesses Lincolnshire for the latest events and webinars [here](#).

Fixed key messaging

- **HANDS FACE SPACE**
- Approved vaccines are safe and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
- Visit [Business Lincolnshire](#) for continued support to your business.
- Call the Covid helpline on 01522 782189 and select option 2 for business queries.
- Feed business impacts into [Business Intelligence](#).

The Lincolnshire Resilience Forum has created a Recovery Comms Cell made up of county and district councils, NHS, and LEP/Business Lincolnshire leads to ensure consistency of key messaging. This is not intended as a comprehensive list but to update on new and key messages relevant to economic response and recovery. Follow and tag on Twitter @ [LRF](#) @[GreaterLincsLEP](#) @[businesslincs](#)

CONTACT THE TEAM – IF YOU NEED ANY HELP OR ASSISTANCE PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM						
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