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| **Coronavirus (Covid-19) – briefing**  |

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Issued 11 May 2020

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| **Below is the latest briefing on the activity in managing the response to coronavirus (Covid-19).** **Local updates, council service changes and links to trusted sources of health guidance are published at *www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus*** |

**Changes to advice on going outdoors**

The advice on how often people can venture outdoors is being changed from today (Monday, May 11) by The Scottish Government.

The advice will now be that people can go outside more than once a day to exercise. This activity should continue to be undertaken close to home. Those going out to exercise should either go alone or with members of their household.

The change does not allow people to mix with people from different households, to gather in groups, or to go out to relax outdoors.

**Additional testing capacity call**

Inverclyde Council’s Chief Executive, Aubrey Fawcett, has written to the Scottish Government seeking additional community testing support for the area.

In his letter, to health secretary Jeane Freeman MSP, he wrote:

Inverclyde Council has the highest proportion of Covid 19 deaths in the country with 13 deaths per 10,000 compared with a Scottish average of 5 per 10,000. It has been well established that testing plays a vital role in establishing who has the virus and helping to bring it under control.

Concerns have been raised about access to testing for essential and key workers and the wider community who are not covered under the NHS/Care worker testing programme. The drive through testing hub at Glasgow Airport is a welcome addition to opening up testing facilities to others however access to this will be problematic for those employees in both the Council, and the wider community of essential workers, who do not have convenient access to transport facilities to get there.

Inverclyde has been identified as the authority with the largest local share of deprived areas, with 45% of data zones among the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. Access to private vehicles and engagement with home testing facilities are likely to be significant issues in enabling testing to be as effective as it could be. In addition there is no facility for general community testing to help identify hotspots in the spread of Covid 19.

The Council would like the following to be considered by the Scottish Government as potential tools to help Inverclyde fight this disease and to bring down the devastating death toll in this area.

* Where local testing units have available capacity this being opened up to local workers with transport issues to help prevent the longer journey to the Glasgow Airport testing unit.
* Increasing local testing capacity to additional sites within Inverclyde, either through deployment of mobile units or new sites created.
* Open out testing capacity to vulnerable groups and communities to help prevent and control community spread.

Effective testing programmes have been proven as a key factor in control of this disease, with countries with such programmes in place showing reduced levels of infection and lower death rates.

Establishment of such programmes in localised areas which have been disproportionately affected by this disease could prove to be an effective tool in bringing it under control and reducing the death rate for the area. This will be especially important as recovery programmes are put into place and lock down is eased.

**HSCP staff testing self-referral**

All HSCP staff should now be able to self-refer for covid-19 testing throughout the health and social care partnership including care home and other providers using this link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=veDvEDCgykuAnLXmdF5JmgW9YoY5w-BDlHK7ghonYUBUN0Q0NjJDQkNSV1VHRFlWVjFDMjc1V0VaOSQlQCN0PWcu>

Details on testing arrangements for council key workers is published at the ‘Covid 19 Testing for Inverclyde Council key workers, employee families and household members’ page at: [www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**Landlord loan scheme**

All landlords registered with Inverclyde Council will be emailed by council officers to update them that the Scottish Government PRS Landlord (non-business) Covid-19 Loan Scheme is now available for applications.

This is a short-term emergency interest free loan, available to landlords who have five or less rental properties and will fund lost rental income from a single property.

Landlords should still engage with their tenants as detailed in the guidance <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-landlord-and-letting-agent-faqs/>

**Second Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill**

The Scottish Government has laid further emergency legislation in front of the Scottish Parliament today.

A statement from the Scottish Government highlighted key elements of the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Bill include a proposed additional £19.2 million investment in Carer’s Allowance Supplement, the introduction of notice to leave periods for students in purpose-built student accommodation and halls of residence, and additional protections for those facing bankruptcy.

If passed, the Bill will raise to £10,000 the minimum debt level that an individual must owe before a creditor can make them bankrupt. It will also raise the upper threshold for the availability of the minimal asset process (MAP) to £25,000. This means more people who find themselves in debt will be able to avoid a costly and lengthy bankruptcy process.

Together with the extended moratorium in the last Act – which now gives people six months protection from their creditors while they think through their options – and the changes to the Debt Arrangement Scheme made last year to help those people who can pay off what they owe, but need more time to do so, these changes will help ensure solutions are there for anyone pushed into unsustainable debt by the pandemic.

There are also recommended legislative changes in areas including non-domestic rates relief, proceeds of crime and the wider operation of Scotland’s criminal justice system.

Notice to leave periods will also be introduced for students tied into existing contracts or those looking to enter into contracts for the next academic year in halls of residence and purpose-built student accommodation.

The [Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Bill](https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/coronavirus-scotland-no2-bill) can be read here.

**Help and support for businesses in Scotland**

The Federation of Small Business (FSB) Scotland is hosting a special webinar on Wednesday 13 May. Below are the details and here is a link to register: <https://www.workcast.com/register?cpak=4935606016897719>

**Coronavirus: Help and support for businesses in Scotland - Wednesday 13 May 2020, 2pm**

This FSB webinar will cover the new package of support that’s available to Scottish businesses impacted by the Coronavirus.

Our panel will provide guidance on all of the public support on offer for Scottish businesses, and will look more closely at the new package of grant funding for the newly
self-employed and businesses in the tourism and creative sectors.

In addition, we will be discussing how to apply for the expanded grant funding for those with multiple properties. Submit your question on social media with #FSBScotlandHelp