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

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Issued 13 July 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*** |

**£75,000 school trips refund approved**

The Council has agreed to spend £75,000 reimbursing parents who lost money when their child’s school trip had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Emergency powers will be used to support families by providing a full refund to those who were hit financially by abandoned outings.

On 12 March this year, schools were advised by the UK Government to cancel all planned trips abroad due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

It meant some parents lost their deposit. The council has now agreed to pay the £75,000 currently owed to parents across the district.

Some schools were able to successfully negotiate with travel providers to recoup money but others were not and the initial advice was that insurers would not cover the cost of cancelled trips.

**Covid research plan**

More research into Inverclyde’s high covid-19 death rate is set to be carried out.

The news comes as cabinet secretary for health and sport, Jeane Freeman MSP, has given a commitment that Public Health Scotland will carry out further research into data for Inverclyde.

Inverclyde has the highest death rate to covid-19 of any council area in the country and, following the latest weekly release of data from National Records of Scotland, the area has nearly 15 deaths per 10,000 population.

Earlier this month the council’s Chief Executive wrote to the cabinet secretary looking for more answers following a review by councillors of a Greater Glasgow and Clyde report which concluded that an early outbreak and bad luck were the likely causes.

Read the full statement on the [council website](https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/news/2020/jul/covid-research-plan).

**Discontinuation of symptomatic staff testing**

From Tuesday 14 July 2020 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (GG&C) is discontinuing the use of staff testing sites. This decision has been taken due to the falling numbers attending the sites.

However, the ability to quickly resume this service will be retained if the need arises. Today (Monday 13 July 2020) is the last day for referrals using the online form.

All health and social care staff in Greater Glasgow and Clyde who have symptoms are still eligible for testing. Any member of staff who has symptoms of Covid-19 should request a test through NHS Inform.

Staff will be given the choice to either attend Glasgow Airport or request a test kit be sent to you at home.

The advice remains the same for all, if you have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, don’t come to work, self-isolate, request a test and your household contacts should also self-isolate.

**Customer service centre to re-open**

The council’s customer service centre re-opens on a strictly, appointment-only basis for a number of services on Wednesday 15 July 2020.

People will only be allowed into the Municipal Buildings, Greenock at the time of their appointment. The new opening hours are 9am until 3pm.

No payment facilities are being offered and bills should be paid online, by phone, by post or at a Post Office or PayPoint.

For more details visit the [council website](https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/news/2020/jul/customer-service-centre-re-opens-wed-15-july-on-appointment-only-basis).

**Safe re-opening of small businesses**

The Scottish Government has published guidance to help recovery of vital sector.

The safe re-opening of small and micro businesses following the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is being supported by new guidance. The publication provides practical advice for employers on the steps they need to take before and after re-opening.

Key measures include:

* risk assessments to protect the safety of employers, staff and customers
* provision for employees to work from home where appropriate
* consultation with employees, trades unions or employee representatives before re-opening
* infection and control measures such as physical distancing and good hygiene
* staggered break and start times to reduce contact between employees

Read the full statement on the [Scottish Government website](https://www.gov.scot/news/safe-re-opening-of-small-businesses/).

**Breast cancer screening to resume**

The Scottish Government has announced that the breast screening programme which was paused in March because of coronavirus (COVID-19) is to resume safely and carefully from 3 August.

Anyone who was invited for a breast screening appointment before the pause, who was unable to attend for any reason or had an appointment cancelled will receive a letter in the coming weeks.

There will be no change to the screening test itself, however additional measures have been introduced to allow breast screening to take place in a safe environment. Staff will wear necessary personal protective equipment and appointments will be staggered to ensure waiting areas are quieter, allowing staff and patients to adhere to physical distancing.

Read the full statement at the [Scottish Government website](https://www.gov.scot/news/breast-cancer-screening-to-resume/).

**Visiting family and friends in hospital**

Hospital visits are set to be reintroduced.

People in hospital who do not have coronavirus (COVID-19) will be able to have a designated visitor from tomorrow, today (Monday 13 July 2020).

Until now, hospital visits during the pandemic have only been permitted in limited essential circumstances. These include where a patient is reaching end-of-life, where a patient needs a birthing partner to be present or where people with mental health issues would be caused distress if they didn’t receive the benefit of a visit.

In the first phase of this three part plan, hospital visitors will need to adhere to strict public health guidance to ensure patient, staff and visitor safety, and to protect progress made in suppressing the spread of COVID-19. All hospital visitors must:

* arrange a time to visit in advance with ward staff, providing their contact details
* not visit any other patient in the hospital and must not bring anything with them, such as food
* adhere to strict hand hygiene and face covering guidance
* maintain strict physical distancing in communal areas of hospital
* not visit anyone in hospital if they have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19

Specific visiting arrangements may vary between health boards depending on the type of care patients are receiving, and the space available in different care settings to maintain physical distancing.

Read the full statement on the [Scottish Government website](https://www.gov.scot/news/visiting-family-and-friends-in-hospital/).