



e-UPDATE #94 - 07.02.21

Welcome to this update.

The vaccine rollout continues to proceed at pace. At the time of writing over 11.5 million people have received their first dose nationally (over 100,000 in Gloucestershire). Yesterday lunchtime the UK hit 979 vaccines *per minute*.

I know we are all so grateful to the caring and professional staff at **Cheltenham East Fire Station** who are leading the local effort. I have received so many glowing emails in the last fortnight from constituents praising their efficiency and care.

We have the 'jabbing' capacity to go faster still, and the limiting factor remains supply. But we are very well placed in the UK by international standards. It's also encouraging that studies have found that the reduction in *transmission* amongst those who had received a dose is "substantial".

There are updates below on the **new walk-in COVID testing site** that has opened in the lower High Street.

In my ministerial capacity, I am delighted to have signed off on **£40m of funding to support victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse** in Gloucestershire and nationwide - see my op-ed in *The Sun* below. I am also weighing up with colleagues whether to ask Parliament legislate in the Domestic Abuse Bill so that *threatening* to publish intimate images (so called 'revenge porn') should be made a criminal offence. Publication already is an offence, but the issue is whether threats should be criminalised too.

Thank you to those who organised Cheltenham's 'Act of Remembrance for Holocaust Memorial Day' which lost none of its poignancy and impact despite being conducted remotely.

Finally, I'm delighted to support the [No Child Left Behind](#) (NCLB) team at the council who have worked with Cheltenham Learning Partnership (CLP) and [Cheltenham Education Partnership](#) (CEP) to provide children in Cheltenham with laptops for learning. To donate your unwanted laptops, tablets or iPads in a COVID-safe way, use the drop-off locations listed at: nclbcheltenham.org.uk/laptops-for-learning.

Thank you for reading. The tide is turning. Thanks to the ingenuity of our scientists, we can echo with growing confidence the memorable observation of the late Captain Sir Tom Moore: **tomorrow will be a good day.**

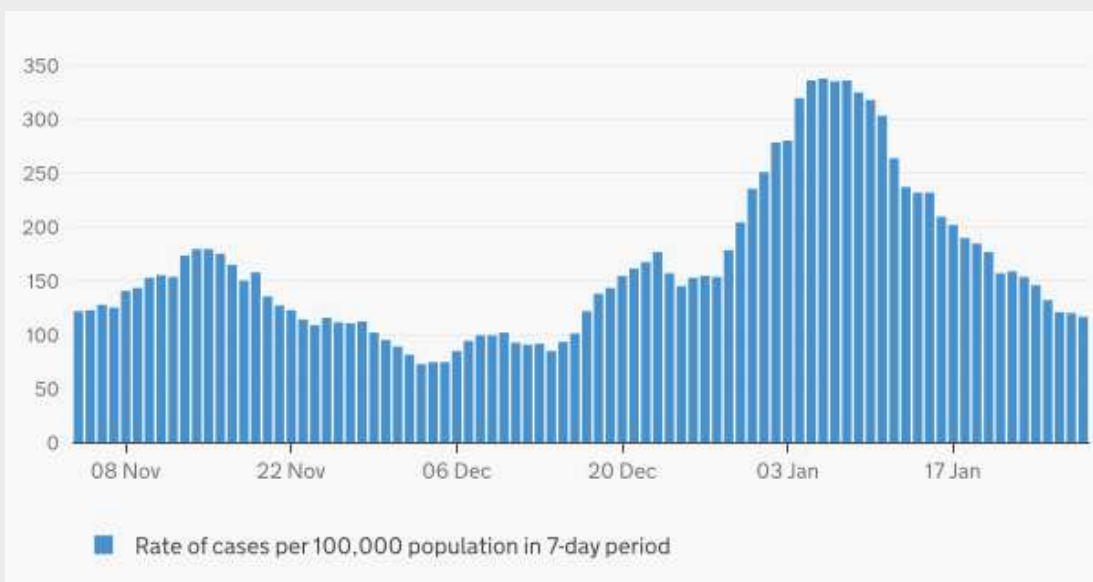
Best wishes,



Alex Chalk MP

In line with data protection regulations, Alex Chalk's office processes constituents' data for policy and casework purposes under the lawful basis of public task. In instances where this lawful basis is not sufficient and explicit consent is required, a member of staff will get in touch with you to establish consent. You can find the full privacy notice on Alex's website [HERE](#)

COVID UPDATE



[The graph shows the 7-day rate of cases per 100,000 in Cheltenham. At 28 January, it had dropped to 116.9 per 100,000, the lowest rate since 16 December. Source: DHSC]

COVID Hospital Patients:

On 3 February, there were 141 COVID positive patients at at Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHFT). Critical care remains full.

Cases in GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

Cases in last 7 days: 728 (w/e 1 Feb).

Rate per 100,000: 147.4 (w/e 28 Jan). This is down considerably on 379.9 at the start of the current lockdown (w/e 4 Jan).

Total cases: 20,140 (1 Feb).

Cases in CHELTENHAM:

Cases in last 7 days: 113 (w/e 1 Feb). This is down from 154 in the previous 7 days, and down from 389 in the 7 days up to the start of the current lockdown (w/e 5 Jan).

Rate per 100,000: 116.9 per 100,000 (w/e 28 Jan). Again this is down considerably from 336.2 at the start of lockdown (w/e 5 January). See the graph above for the rate of decrease in recent weeks.

Total cases: 3,374 (1 Feb).

Gloucestershire Death Registrations Mentioning COVID-19:

27 in last 7 days (w/e 1 Feb).

Testing in Gloucestershire:

34,737 tests were undertaken via P1 and P2, this is more than the previous week. Positivity is 3.5%, down from 6.7% last week.

Mobile Testing Unit Location:

University of Gloucestershire, Entrance 3, Park Campus, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH (6-7 Feb).

New Cheltenham Testing Site Opening:

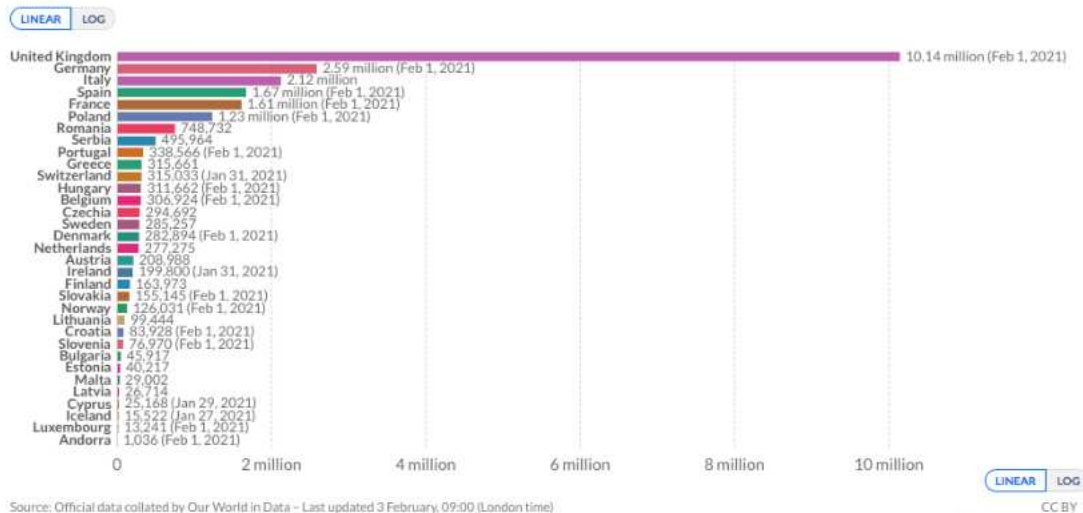
A new COVID-19 testing site has opened in Cheltenham for symptomatic cases at High Street Car Park (GL50 4AL). It forms part of an expansion to open more 'walk-through' testing sites, to complement the network of drive-through sites.

VACCINATION UPDATE:

Cumulative COVID-19 vaccination doses administered, Feb 2, 2021

This is counted as a single dose, and may not equal the total number of people vaccinated, depending on the specific dose regime (e.g. people receive multiple doses).

Our World
in Data



[Source: World in Data. Click for more info].

c.12 MILLION DOSES ADMINISTERED IN UK SO FAR

Nearly 12 million doses of the vaccine have been administered in the UK. This is more than the next six best-performing European nations combined (Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Poland, and Romania).

Around 15% of the UK population have received their first jab, with almost half a million receiving their second dose.

In Gloucestershire, over **100,000** people in the top priority groups have had their first dose of the vaccine, out of 129,000 who are eligible in those groups.



ALEX PRAISES CHELTENHAM NHS'S 'STUNNING ROLLOUT' ON POLITICS LIVE

During a recent appearance on Politics Live, Alex pointed to Cheltenham's outstanding record in vaccinating the priority groups, as well as the UK's success more broadly.

[WATCH HERE](#) (Alex is introduced at 1.28.00, and discusses vaccines from 1.34.38).



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

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020 7210 4850

Alex Chalk MP
House of Commons
Westminster
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SW1A 0AA

25 January 2021

Dear Alex,

I am writing to update you on the fantastic efforts of your local Covid vaccination teams. I am delighted to inform you that Cheltenham Peripheral PCN is one of the highest performing Covid vaccination areas in the country, having now covered over 91% of those over 80.

Britain is leading the global fightback against the virus, being the first country in the world to approve a clinically-trialled vaccine and now deploying the vaccine on the ground faster than almost any other country in the world. And this is down to the tireless efforts of all those involved – especially those on the ground in our communities, from nurses, to GPs, to pharmacies, to volunteers, and so many more.

It's incredible to see this community spirit, as people pull together to lead us collectively out of the pandemic. I hope you will join me in thanking and congratulating all those involved in your area for the part they are playing in this national effort.

Yours ever,

MATT HANCOCK

HEALTH SECRETARY PRAISES CHELTENHAM'S VACCINE TEAM AS ONE OF 'HIGHEST PERFORMING IN THE COUNTRY'

In a letter to Alex, the Health Secretary Matt Hancock has praised the work of Cheltenham NHS staff and volunteers in delivering COVID-19 vaccinations (see above).

This came after **Cheltenham was specifically commended by the Prime Minister** at a Downing Street press conference for its performance in delivering the vaccine rollout. The PM rightly observed that Cheltenham has been 'shooting the lights out'!

CHELTENHAM UPDATES:



[Pictured: The planned mixed-use Golden Valley development].

CYBER PARK UPDATE:

As regular readers will know, progress on delivering Alex's long-held vision for Cheltenham as a national cyber hub is well underway. Following the recent progress on the **£22m West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme** (see more [HERE](#)), a contractor has now been awarded the contract to deliver **new homes** on a 154-acre site to the west of Cheltenham, which will form part of the wider mixed-use Golden Valley Development (read more [HERE](#)).

The **£400m Golden Valley Development site**, adjacent to GCHQ and the National Cyber Security Centre, will include delivery of **3,000 new homes** and a mixed-use Cyber Central Cluster, bringing together leading cyber businesses and innovators alongside academic facilities dedicated to cyber and technologies.

Alex has been clear that any new housing development must not be excessively large. There is no need for urban sprawl all the way to the M5, particularly where there are brownfield sites in Cheltenham town centre (eg North Place car park) which could and should be redeveloped. Alex is also calling on the Council to require any new homes to be **zero carbon**.



[Pictured: New testing centre off lower High Street]

TESTING UPDATE:

A new testing centre has opened for people with symptoms to book appointments at the High Street Car Park in Cheltenham.

The new facility has been set up as part of the Government's UK-wide drive to continue to improve the accessibility of coronavirus testing for local communities.

Testing at this site is only available for those with coronavirus symptoms - a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Anyone with one or more of these symptoms should book a test at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119.



[Pictured: Planned J10 improvements. Source: GCC].

COUNTY COUNCIL LAUNCHES CONSULTATION ON FUNDING FOR GROWTH AND JOBS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Last year, the **Government awarded £219 million to Gloucestershire, to upgrade Junction 10 of the M5**, so as to provide access from the motorway both northbound and southbound into Cheltenham. This will open up land for housing and employment in the north and west of Cheltenham and provide a huge boost to the local economy.

Gloucestershire County Council plans to produce an Infrastructure Recovery Strategy (IRS) to recover funds from development sites that benefit from forward-funding. This IRS would generate funds for future investment from developments benefiting from the J10 scheme.

The county council is running a 6-week consultation on its plans for the IRS from the 28 January until the 11 March 2021. You can respond to the **consultation** [HERE](#). Find out more about the **J10 upgrade** [HERE](#).



[Visit Gloucestershire will soon be launching its new plan too boost the county's Visitor economy]

MORE FUNDING BOOSTS FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE

£100k for Gloucestershire's visitor economy post-Covid:

The county council are investing £100,000 in the **future of the county's visitor economy**, to ensure it recovers and thrives in a post-Covid world. The team at Visit Gloucestershire, backed by the county council and supported by the GFirst LEP, borough and district councils, as well as destination marketing organisations, are working to ensure the county's visitor economy is well positioned to thrive in the years ahead. Their joint new plan 'Together for Gloucestershire' will be published in March.

Read more about their plans [HERE](#).

£300K for Local Community Groups:

Gloucestershire County Council has announced the allocation of £300k of new funding to support the work of the Community Help Hub. The money will help to **provide support for the clinically extremely vulnerable**, with everything from accessing food, maintaining all-important social contact and other daily tasks that they can't complete while shielding. It follows a similar investment of £300k by the County Council earlier in the pandemic.

£200K for Laptops for Vulnerable Children in Gloucestershire:

The county council has announced an extra £200,000 to provide laptops for vulnerable children. The boost is expected to provide 400 extra laptops. These will be in addition to [1,558 laptops provided by the Government in summer](#) and [781 announced by the Government earlier this month](#), giving a total of **2,739 laptops** for Gloucestershire children.



[Alex pictured in summer 2020 with local officers]

FURTHER BOOST IN POLICE NUMBERS FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Alex has welcomed news that **91 new police officers** have been recruited in Gloucestershire since the start of 2020, taking the total up to **1,251** police officers in the county. That's 21 extra officers since October 2020.

Nationally, **6,620 new officers** have joined forces across England and Wales since the major recruitment drive was launched.



[Source: GCC].

COUNTY COUNCIL WILL PROVIDE FREE SCHOOL MEALS DURING HALF-TERM

Children in Gloucestershire who are entitled to receive Free School Meals will again be supported with **vouchers over February half-term**.

All eligible pupils who registered and received support during the October and Christmas holidays, will automatically receive vouchers for February. Parents and carers do not need to register again.

Any families who believe they are eligible, but who have not already registered by either of these routes, can apply for the support [HERE](#).

ALSO IN CHELTENHAM:



[Pictured: how the new fusion power plant could look]

ALEX SIGNS LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S BID TO HOST NEW NUCLEAR FUSION SITE

Alex has signed a letter of support for a joint bid to develop a new nuclear fusion site in both (or either) of Berkeley and Oldbury power stations.

The Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) Project is an ambitious programme to design and construct a prototype fusion power plant.

The joint bid from Gloucestershire County Council and South Gloucestershire Council has been backed by Alex, who argued that these two sites would be a natural fit for the STEP Project, due to the county's infrastructure readiness and its great nuclear expertise.

If the bid were successful, it would allow the county to play a key role in delivering the UK's Net Zero target, by producing cleaner, greener, energy, and could bring vital regeneration to the West Midlands and South West.

Find out more about the STEP Project [HERE](#).



ALEX JOINS CHELTENHAM SERVICE FOR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Alex took part in 'Cheltenham's Act of Remembrance for Holocaust Memorial Day'. Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on 27 January each year and is a time to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The service was hosted by members of Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation, Three Counties Liberal Jewish Community, Cheltenham Borough Council and Stroud District Council. The evening was led by Dame Janet Trotter DBE, CVO, and included prayers, poems, music, and reflections.

The service has been posted online for anyone to watch. [SEE HERE.](#)



[Alex pictured second from left on the bottom row on 'Brew Monday']

SINCE THE LAST UPDATE, ALEX HAS:

- Hosted a Q&A with [TURF Cheltenham](#), an association of businesses in the **hospitality sector**
- Held a virtual constituency **surgery**
- Successfully **reclaimed benefits payments on behalf of a constituent** after they fell victim to fraudulent furlough claims by their employer
- Expedited the DVLA's decision to return **driving licences to two constituents** whose licences had been temporarily revoked on medical grounds.

Received Briefings from:

- NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group about the **vaccine rollout** in Cheltenham
- **Vaccines Minister** Nadhim Zahawi
- Schools Minister Nick Gibb, regarding **schools reopening**.

Held Talks with:

- Cheltenham **travel businesses** regarding implications of new quarantine rules for their sector
- **Early years providers** in Cheltenham, regarding impact of lockdown on their sector
- The new Head Teacher of **St Edward's** Cheltenham
- **University of Gloucestershire** Students' Union to discuss students' concerns.

Attended (Virtually) the Following Events:

- AGM of the Gloucestershire Branch of the armed forces charity Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (**SSAFA**)
- **'Brew Monday'**, a virtual get-together for MPs to hear more about the important work that the Samaritans and their volunteers are doing (see pic above)
- Cancer Research UK's **World Cancer Day** meeting, to hear more about the impact of COVID-19 on cancer services and research (see below).



ALEX'S MINISTERIAL ROUND-UP

Since the last update, Alex has:



ANNOUNCED EXTRA £40M TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF RAPE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Alex has announced that victims of rape and domestic abuse will be helped by a major £40m funding boost for **specialist support services**. It comes as charities have reported a 200% increase in calls and people accessing webchat services since the first lockdown, with some victims feeling at greater risk of harm or deciding to report abuse for the first time.

The new investment will allow support organisations to recruit more staff, keep helplines open for longer and adapt to remote counselling where necessary – ensuring help remains available for those who need it.

Around £20.7 million of this funding will go towards local, community-based sexual violence and domestic abuse services, helping to reduce the amount of time survivors have to wait for support. **Key local services in Gloucestershire** are expected to benefit from a slice of that funding, including:

- Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS)

- Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (GRASAC)
- Hope House Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

Crucially, £16m will fund the recruitment of more independent sexual violence and domestic abuse advisers across the country. They provide emotional and practical support for victims, while guiding them through the criminal justice process which many can find daunting.

A new government advertising campaign, **#ItStillMatters**, seeks to raise awareness of **sexual violence services and ensure victims of rape and sexual abuse know where to get help** – encouraging them to take the often difficult step of seeking support for the first time.

The funding also builds on an unprecedented £76 million pledged by Ministers in May to help the most vulnerable in society during the pandemic, as well as an extra £125 million for local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

[READ MORE HERE.](#)



Alex was interviewed about the new £40m funding package on Talk Radio. Click the image above to listen to the interview (Alex features on the 16.30-17.00 episode and is introduced after 3.50 mins).



To mark the launch of the #ItStillMatters campaign, Alex wrote a column in the Sun, urging people to reach and get support if they need it, regardless of when they were abused. You can read the article by clicking [here](#).



[Click the image to watch]

ANSWERED PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS ON TOPICS INCLUDING NIGHTINGALE COURTS AND EVICTIONS

Alex was at the Despatch Box to answer Oral Parliamentary Questions on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

Alex answered a range of questions, including on the role of **Nightingale Courts** in alleviating the impact of the pandemic on the caseload in courts ([SEE HERE](#)). The caseload has been declining since August, and is also declining in the Crown Court.

Alex also confirmed that bailiffs were unable to **enforce evictions** during the pandemic, except for in the 'the most exceptional and egregious circumstances'. ([SEE HERE](#)).

ANSWERED 24 WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Alex responds to questions from MPs on a wide range of issues. See below some examples of Alex's recent responses, including on "**revenge pornography**", and the steps being taken to ensure hearings for **domestic abuse protection orders** are not delayed due to COVID-19.

Q. To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to criminalise the offence of threatening to share explicit images without consent.

Alex responded:

"Activities involving sharing or threatening to share intimate images are captured by existing offences tackling "revenge pornography", harassment, malicious communications, blackmail, and "coercive or controlling behaviour".

However, the Government recognises that there is concern over the growth of new technology and the impact on the law in this area.

We have asked the Law Commission to review the law in this area to ensure victims are properly protected. The Law Commission intends to publish a public consultation paper shortly with a view to announcing findings later this year, which the Government will consider carefully."

Q. To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that protection orders hearings to protect people experiencing domestic violence are not delayed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex responded:

"The Government recognises that the restrictions imposed during the pandemic have increased risk for many victims of domestic abuse and we are working across government and with the sector to do all we can to ensure they can access the support they need.

Within our courts, domestic abuse cases are a top priority, with emergency protective orders having been placed in the highest category of work in the magistrates' and family courts since the start of the pandemic. HMCTS have also provided additional guidance to operational staff to ensure they continue to prioritise these urgent applications, with remote hearings being used where appropriate."

You can see the full list of answered questions [HERE](#).

ALSO SINCE THE LAST UPDATE, ALEX HAS:

Held Meetings/Talks with:

- The Domestic Abuse Commissioner
- Victim Support, an independent charity for people affected by crime and traumatic events in England and Wales
- Sheila Coates MBE, of Rape Crisis England and Wales (RCEW)
- Fay Maxted OBE, CEO of The Survivors Trust
- Gabrielle Shaw, CEO of the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)
- Sir David Green QC, President of the Law Society
- Daniel Bonich, Chair of the Criminal Law Solicitors' Association
- Derek Sweeting QC, Chair of the Bar
- James Mulholland QC, Chair of the Criminal Bar Association
- Dr Keiran Mullan MP
- Dame Vera Baird, Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales.

IN THE MEDIA

SINCE THE LAST UPDATE, ALEX HAS:

- Been interviewed on a range of topics on Daily Politics on BB2, as well as on Politics Live
- Discussed the new **£40m funding** to support rape and domestic abuse victims on Talk Radio
- Written a column for the Sun to mark the launch of the **#ItStillMatters** campaign. Alex has urged victims of rape and sexual abuse to seek support if they need it, regardless of when they were abused. [READ HERE](#).

Alex has also written three articles for the Gloucestershire Echo, in which he:

1. **Paid tribute to local NHS staff and volunteers** for their fantastic work delivering the COVID-19 vaccination programme, who have also hailed by the Prime Minister. [READ HERE.](#)

2. Welcomed signs that the lockdown is working, and reiterated that the emphasis must be on getting **children back to school** as soon as it is safely possible. [READ HERE.](#)

3. Welcomed further good news that research suggests Oxford-Astrazeneca's vaccine may **prevent transmission**, and become **more effective** with a gap between doses. [READ HERE.](#)

OTHER LOCAL NEWS



[Wall mural painted by local artist Tim Martin]

LOCAL CHELTENHAM GRAFFITI AND MURAL ARTIST IS RUNNING VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

Talented Cheltenham artist, Tim Martin, who specialises in murals, graffiti, and other illustrations, is running online graffiti workshops during the pandemic. Aside from workshops, Tim also offers a range of services, including commissioned illustrations,

maps and cityscapes.

Tim says:

"Offering competitive rates, I will work with you to create a design of your choosing which will be customised to fit any location. Depending on the location, scale and style of the mural, I work alone or alongside skilled artists local to the Cheltenham Area. Contact me today to arrange a viewing of the site , discuss designs and get a quote."

View more of his excellent work [HERE](#).



'LAPTOPS FOR LEARNING' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES – CAN YOU HELP HIT TARGET OF 500 LAPTOPS?

The No Child Left Behind #LaptopsForLearning campaign is underway to support all schools in Cheltenham by providing children with additional laptops, tablets or iPads for their home learning.

The [No Child Left Behind](#) (NCLB) team have worked with Cheltenham Learning Partnership (CLP), representing local primary schools, and [Cheltenham Education Partnership](#) (CEP), representing local secondary schools, as well as IT Schools Africa, to fully understand the need for laptops to support home learning. Current estimates show that local schools need in the region of 500 laptops.

To donate your unwanted laptops, tablets or iPads in a COVID-safe way, use the drop-off locations listed at: nclbcheltenham.org.uk/laptops-for-learning.



Cheltenham Education Partnership

CHELTENHAM EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP (CEP) LAUNCH NEW WEBSITE

The Cheltenham Education Partnership have launched a new website to keep people updated on their activities. See here: www.CEPCheltenham.co.uk.

CEP's mission is to expand the horizons of young people in Cheltenham and to help them realise their full potential, working together with schools and other supporting partners.

In recent months, the CEP has supported collaboration across the schools and University of Gloucestershire, facilitating a number of staff networks to share ideas around best practice, teaching methods during the pandemic and opportunities for running a number of joint activities.

Find out more at the above link.



MAGGIE'S MARK 'WORLD CANCER DAY' WITH FILM ABOUT THEIR AMAZING WORK

For World Cancer Day (4 Feb), Maggie's have produced a short film to share how they

have been supporting people with cancer throughout the pandemic. The network of Maggie's centres across the UK (including the Cheltenham branch) offer fantastic support to those suffering cancer, and their families.

Watch their film [HERE](#). To find out more about Maggie's Cheltenham, [CLICK HERE](#).

RAIL TRAVEL UPDATE- NO TRAINS TO PADDINGTON ON SUNDAY 7 MARCH

GWR will be carrying out rail improvement works on Sunday 7 March, when Network Rail will be working on the overhead line equipment (OHLE) between London Paddington and Acton Main Line. Completion of the work will help to reduce the impact on services in the event of an incident that requires the OHLE to be turned off.

No trains will be able to run to/from London Paddington on this day. Most long-distance services from across the network will terminate at Reading. Limited local services will run between Reading and Ealing Broadway, operated by GWR and TfL Rail.

Find out more [HERE](#).



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send you these updates unless you request to be removed.

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