



FORTNIGHTLY UPDATE - 17.05.2020

A warm welcome to this update. I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well.

It's been a busy few weeks. Inevitably, there's a focus in this update on healthcare here in Gloucestershire. And given that the number of COVID patients in the county's ICUs is now down to four, the tempo of routine work is increasing as the local NHS works hard to clear the backlog. There are Gloucestershire NHS videos which you may wish to view if you are worried about [cancer](#), [chest pain and stroke](#), or [mental health](#). The message from local clinicians is clear: "Don't delay, act today".

Red/Green

As part of the recovery process, the Trust is proposing a "red/green" plan to stream cases between the two hospitals. Cheltenham would be the "green", non-emergency site and would handle the county's elective caseload.

I of course recognise the need to be pragmatic in these extraordinary times, particularly if it means CGH can start to ramp up cancer treatment. **But I feel very strongly that Cheltenham needs a fully functioning Type 1 A&E. COVID-19 cannot be the pretext to quietly abandon the commitment to A&E in Cheltenham, which we secured after a hard fought campaign last year.**

So I wrote to the Trust to seek cast-iron reassurances, and also discussed the proposal at length with the Health Secretary, Matt Hancock. You can read my questions and the Trust's response on my Facebook page [here](#), but I was pleased to note the following paragraph in their letter to me:

"Finally, One Gloucestershire has publicly committed to the continuation of a Type 1 Emergency Department at Cheltenham General Hospital as part of the commitments made under our Fit for the Future (FFTf) programme and this proposal for temporary change does not detract from that commitment."

Cheltenham Updates

You can also find updates below on changing rules regarding **access to green spaces**,

the opening of **recycling centres**, and the latest updates in Cheltenham's **cyber vision**.

There are some important statistics too about Government **grant support to Cheltenham businesses**. Over £20 million has been distributed to local enterprises to help tide them over.

Ministerial Updates

There are updates on the Domestic Abuse Bill which I am helping to take through Parliament. In recent days I also authorised the release of Ministry of Justice funding to support law centres like the Gloucester Law Centre, and there are updates on statutory instruments that I have signed to, for example, make it easier for legal aid barristers to draw down money they are owed and ensure that bailiffs are socially distanced.

Thank you for reading.

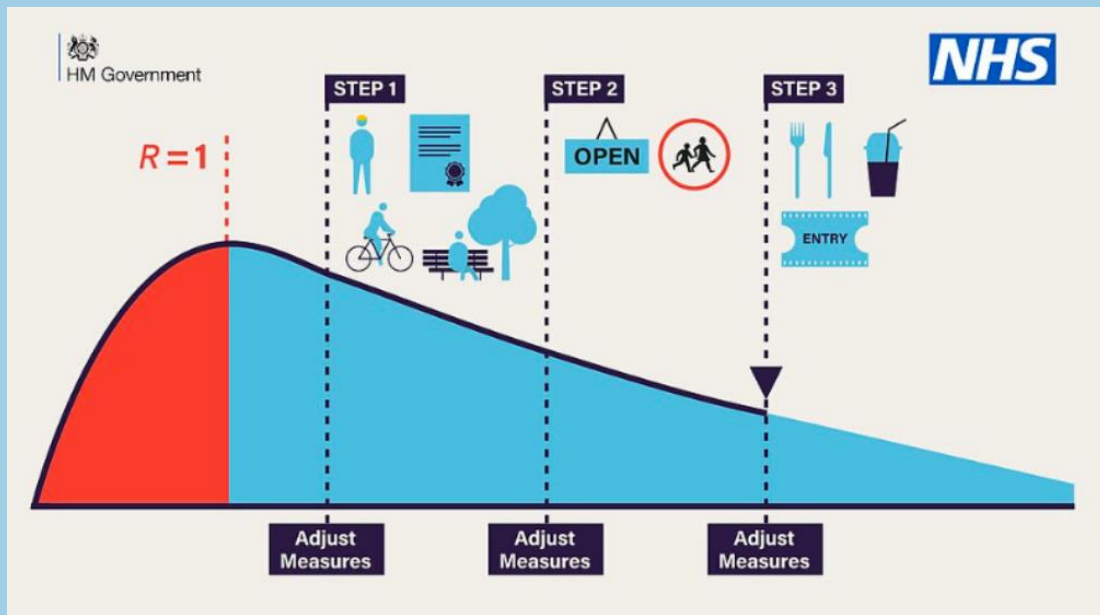
Best wishes,



Alex Chalk MP

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UPDATED NATIONAL GUIDANCE



Step 1. (Now)

Current measures in place: work from home if you can, try to avoid public transport. You can take unlimited exercise outdoors either alone or with members of your household.

Step 2. (1 June at the earliest)

Small businesses could start to reopen. Reception, Year 1, and Year 6 pupils could return to school - 'R' rate allowing

Step 3. (1 July at the earliest)

Possibility of some hospitality services opening including cinemas, bars, and restaurants - 'R' rate allowing

(All of the above with social distancing in place.)

Click [here](#) to read the full recovery strategy.

Outdoor sports facilities...

That can open, include:



Basketball &
tennis courts



Playing
fields



Golf
courses



Water
sports

That remain closed



Playgrounds



Outdoor gyms



Outdoor pools

CHELTENHAM IN NUMBERS

SOME COVID-19 LOCAL STATISTICS

- Total **confirmed cases** in South West: 7,006
- Total confirmed cases in **Gloucestershire**: 1,330
- Number of COVID-19 patients in Gloucestershire Hospitals **ICU: 4** (capacity over 90); a further **56** COVID-19 patients
- Number of people being tested at Pillar 2 Local Resilience Forum temporary **mobile testing unit** at Oxtalls: c.200 per day (capacity 300 per day) - service available to all essential workers and members of their households that are isolated, as well as people over the age of 65

As at 15.05.20.

NON-COVID GLOUCESTERSHIRE NHS RECOVERY

- Further utilisation of Winfield (Gloucester) to see **non-complex urgent/cancer surgery** to support recovery. Plans in place to utilise Nuffield (Cheltenham) in coming weeks. Anaesthetic and theatre equipment being moved between hospitals in readiness
- Staff previously redeployed to support COVID response being returned to re-provide outpatient capacity
- **Fertility and IVF services have resumed**


ALEX'S MINISTERIAL DUTIES



[Alex on the front bench for the Second Reading of the Domestic Abuse Bill]

PROGRESSING DOMESTIC ABUSE BILL THROUGH PARLIAMENT

Alex, together with Home Office ministers, is responsible for taking the Domestic Abuse Bill through Parliament. The landmark legislation will transform the response to domestic abuse, and includes a new duty on local authorities to assess need and provide support for victims and their children in safe accommodation. The Domestic Abuse Bill was debated at Second Reading on Tuesday 28 April and has now been sent to a **Public Bill Committee**. The Committee is scheduled to report by Thursday 25 June.



We see you.
We hear you.
You are not alone.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Alex has ministerial responsibility for supporting victims of crime.

In that role, Alex worked with colleagues in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office to secure an **emergency funding package of £76 million for victims**.

There's an extra **£28 million** from the Ministry of Justice to support victims and survivors of **domestic abuse** and their children. £10 million of that will be channelled to Police and Crime Commissioners to roll out in their areas - including here in Gloucestershire.

There's an extra £10 million in enhanced support services for victims and survivors of sexual violence - already part-funded by the Government in Gloucestershire through organisations such as GRASAC.

And there's £3 million per year until 2022 going towards supporting Independent Sexual Violence Advisers to help victims feel informed and supported at every stage of their recovery journey.

[Read more here.](#)



Law Centres Network ✓ @Law... · 15h ✓
£5.4 million to support the legal advice sector during the #COVID19 pandemic: thank you to minister @AlexChalkChelt and @MoJGovUK for your support to Law Centres and other specialists in giving people #accesstojustice at a difficult time!

PROVIDING £5.4M TO SUPPORT LEGAL ADVICE SECTOR

Alex signed off on a funding package for Law Centres and not for profit organisations across England and Wales, which help those most in need access legal advice. This includes people seeking help with housing, debt, discrimination and employment problems.

Alex said:

"Law Centres and charities in the advice sector play a vital role in helping people access justice and resolve their legal problems. That is why they should be supported to continue to operate safely and effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic. This additional £5.4 million support fund will help do just that – giving providers the support they need to boost remote capability and help as many people as possible during these challenging times."

Read more here.

ALSO IN THE LAST FORTNIGHT

As part of his other ministerial duties, Alex has:

Signed Statutory Instruments

- Signed the following statutory instruments. For more information on what a statutory instrument is, click [here](#):
- - Criminal Legal Aid (Coronavirus, Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 – **making it easier for Crown Court barristers to access hardship funding**

- Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, to make legal aid more accessible for **domestic abuse victims**
- Taking Control of Goods and Certification of Enforcement Agents (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 to ensure safe distance is maintained by **bailiffs** while social distancing is in place.

On Monday the Ministry of Justice will lay the Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 to ensure work done at asylum and immigration tribunals through a new online procedure is properly remunerated.

Select Committee

Given evidence to the Justice Select Committee regarding legal aid.

Parliamentary Questions

- Answered 15 Written Parliamentary Questions on issues ranging from marriage during lockdown to funeral arrangements ([see here](#)).

International Law Committee

Continue to chair the International Law Committee – a group focused on protecting and enhancing the interests of the UK legal services industry as we tackle the challenges of Covid-19 and look towards new opportunities in a post-Brexit society.

Meetings/Talks

- Held talks with:
 - the President of the Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane QC
 - Home Office and MHCLG ministers regarding coordination of domestic abuse support
 - Chair of the Bar Council
 - Chair of the Criminal Bar Association
 - Chair of the Law Society
 - Chief Executive of Barnardo's
 - The Domestic Abuse Commissioner
 - Diana Johnson MP regarding potential abortion-related amendments to the DA Bill
 - Updated TheCityUK Legal Services Group
-

GRANTS AT A GLANCE

OVER **697K** BUSINESSES
HAVE RECEIVED
GRANTS

OVER **£8.6 BN**
PAID OUT

£20.6m IN GOVERNMENT GRANTS PAID OUT TO 1651 CHELTENHAM BUSINESSES

Under the Government's £12 billion grant scheme for small businesses, over £8.5 billion has already been paid to almost 700,000 businesses across England. That's over £1 billion paid out in the South West alone.

Here in **Cheltenham**, **£20.6 million** has been paid out to over **1,651 local businesses**.

SELF-EMPLOYED INCOME SUPPORT SCHEME

APPLY FROM THIS
WEDNESDAY
AND HAVE IT DEPOSITED BY
25TH MAY

SUPPORT FOR SELF-EMPLOYED NOW OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

As of Wednesday 13 May, the Government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme

(SEISS) is now open for applications.

If you have filed a self-employed tax return from 2018-2019, and over half of your income was from self-employment, then you could be able to claim up to 80% of your average profits up to £2,500 per month. Payments are expected to land in bank accounts by the end of May.

[Find out more here.](#)

Encouraging Cycling and Walking

Funding will improve cycling and walking infrastructure to encourage healthier and greener travel habits



£2BN FUND TO BOOST CYCLING AND WALKING

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has recently announced plans to boost greener, active transport. Pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle corridors will be created in England within weeks as part of a **£250 million emergency active travel fund** - the first stage of a £2 billion investment.

[Read more here.](#)



£28,000 PAID TO LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

£50k funding from **Gloucestershire County Council** and £50k from **Cheltenham Borough Council** has been allocated to cover additional costs community groups may incur and have insufficient resources to meet, due to an increase in activity or function.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, leader of Gloucestershire County Council, said: "The county council understands how important community and voluntary groups are to local residents during the coronavirus outbreak, so we are pleased to offer help.

"These payments will enable them to continue providing vital services to ensure those most vulnerable are able to access the support they need."

To date, 16 local organisations have received grants totalling £28,880.

Application guidelines and forms can be downloaded online: www.cheltenham.gov.uk/communitypride.



A&E UPDATE - text of Alex's Facebook post of 12 May - read in full [here](#)

Cheltenham A&E Update

As promised, I wrote to the Trust leadership yesterday raising the points set out in my earlier FB post. I am grateful to Laurence Robertson MP (Tewkesbury) and Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP (Cotswolds) for co-signing the letter and their support.

I have now received a (very quick) response from the Trust, and the relevant passages of their letter are set out below. It's a detailed document and I would invite you to read it carefully. Regarding my central concern, namely that suspension of A&E could pave the way for its removal, I was pleased to note the Trust have now gone further and have made an ironclad commitment to the future of A&E in Cheltenham as follows:

"Finally, One Gloucestershire has publicly committed to the continuation of a Type 1 Emergency Department at Cheltenham General Hospital as part of the commitments made under our Fit for the Future (FFTF) programme and this proposal for temporary change does not detract from that commitment."

I will be speaking to MP colleagues and local stakeholders today before deciding next steps. But this is very welcome reassurance.

The full response from the Trust is below:

"Q1) How can we be sure Cheltenham A&E will re-open, given that COVID-19 will likely be with us for some time?"

Common sense tells you that the longer any service is suspended, the more difficult it is to reinstate. Shifts change, clinical staff make personal and professional adjustments, which means that suspensions can't always be reversed at the drop of a hat.

If supported, these proposals would be implemented as a temporary emergency change under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which we have in place with the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). The MOU allows an emergency change to be established on a temporary basis for an initial three month period, at which point the ongoing necessity of the change would be reviewed in light of the nature of the pandemic at that time.

The proposals are such that they can be easily reversed and staff are aware that any changes implemented would be temporary in their nature.

Finally, One Gloucestershire has publicly committed to the continuation of a Type 1 Emergency Department at Cheltenham General Hospital as part of the commitments made under our Fit for the Future (FFTF) programme and this proposal for temporary change does not detract from that commitment.

Q2) Why does it make sense to mix all the county's COVID-19 patients with the sickest patients in a single A&E?

The proposal does not mix COVID and non-COVID patients, rather it serves to support a greater degree of separation between patients with COVID and those without. It is not possible at this stage of the pandemic to guarantee a "COVID free" environment but our clinicians believe these proposals considerably reduce the risk of COVID transmission and especially to our most vulnerable patients i.e. the elderly, those with underlying health conditions and those with cancer.

The layout of Gloucestershire Royal Emergency Department and its critical care unit means it is considerably easier to separate confirmed non-COVID patients from confirmed and suspected COVID patients. These proposals would allow us to establish a non-COVID critical care department and specialist imaging department at Cheltenham General Hospital thus enabling us to retain complex cancer surgery locally whilst enabling elderly and shielded patients to access diagnostic care, with minimal risk.

Q3) If Cheltenham's Emergency Department remains open to any patient who walks in (as proposed), how do you stop COVID-19 patients getting into Cheltenham General anyway?

The reference to walk-in patients is our commitment to a "safety net" for anybody who presents to Cheltenham, as an unexpected emergency. In line with government guidance, people with symptoms of COVID-19 should use the symptom checker on the NHS website and/or call 111; if it was concluded that somebody had symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they would be directed to the most appropriate location which in Gloucestershire would be GRH Emergency Department. Any patient presenting to Cheltenham ED as walk-in patient, and who was assessed as requiring admission, would be tested for COVID-19 and cared for in an appropriate isolation area until their results were known, before being admitted to a COVID or non COVID ward on the relevant site.

Q4) Why Cheltenham? Where else in the country is this red/green approach being taken - other than at Chorley and South Ribble Hospital which has also in the past faced an A&E closure threat?

The sole purpose of these proposals is to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to use the two site nature of the Trust as an opportunity to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, especially to our most vulnerable.

Proposals have been designed around a set of guiding COVID-19 recovery principles set by NHS England, namely

- Designing care which reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission
- Establishing greater separation between urgent and planned care by site and by pathway
- A focus on managing emergency admissions through controlling access to the "front door" of hospitals

These proposals are aimed at reducing the risk of transmission between patients and staff whilst promoting public confidence in the safety of our services. We are fortunate in Gloucestershire that we have two acute hospitals and our clinical teams have developed proposals which enable us to make the best use of each site, during the second phase of this pandemic. The proposals reflect the suitability of each site for the different service models and the availability of staff to run a more complex pattern of services during this pandemic.

I hope that these responses provided you with the additional information and assurances you are seeking with respect to the temporary nature of the proposals under consideration and the underlying driver of the proposed changes i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic."



Covid-19: Gloucestershire Community Help Hub #GlosCommunity

OVER 3,800 VULNERABLE PEOPLE HELPED BY LOCAL HUB

As of 12 May, **over 3,800 people have been helped**. Of that number, 2,789 registered for help and a further 1,087 recorded that their neighbour or friend required support. The service continues to effectively connect these people to its small army of volunteer helpers.

Find it online [HERE](#) or call 01452 583519.

LOCAL "EMERGENCY LIVING FUND" TO HELP THOSE IN HARDSHIP

The County Council has created a new Emergency Living Fund to help people who are in financial hardship because of COVID-19. The Welfare Support Scheme already provides practical support to those in financial hardship for things like **food deliveries, rent, gas and electricity top-ups**.

The new fund expands on that support. It will offer more help, and now covers the **replacement of white goods that have broken down, supermarket vouchers and cash** when necessary.

[Read more here.](#)



Need to talk?

We're **online** now to help until
10pm

NEW FREE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE LAUNCHED ONLINE

Qwell is one of the new mental health services put in place by the county council in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone adult in Gloucestershire can now access free anonymous counselling from qualified counsellors via an **online chat based platform** at www.qwell.io. Chats can be accessed through a drop-in service or booked sessions; there is no referral needed from a health professional, no waiting lists, and no criteria to meet to get support.

A similar service for young people aged 11 to 18, called Kooth, will be rolled out shortly.

[Find out more here.](#)

IMPORTANT LOCAL UPDATES



CAR PARKS FOR GREEN SPACES REOPEN

Cheltenham Borough Council have announced the decision to open all car parks attached to parks and open spaces. The decision to reopen car parks is considered in line with the latest Government guidance. The reopening took place on Monday and was accompanied by new signage to inform users of their responsibilities in using the sites. All users of the parks and gardens **must continue to adhere to social distancing** whilst taking their daily exercise.



RECYCLING CENTRES REOPEN FOR ESSENTIAL VISITS

Swindon Road Recycling Centre has been reopened by Cheltenham Borough Council, though for essential visits only. **Social distancing measures remain in place** and there are restrictions on access, so long delays are likely for users. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, and those in self-isolating households, must not visit. Please do read the full advice from CBC (available [here](#)) before attempting to use the recycling centre.



[A CGI vision of Cyber Central]

'CYBER CENTRAL' PROJECT OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

Alex's long-standing vision for Cheltenham as the cyber capital of the UK is now one step closer, after Cheltenham Borough Council launched their search for a development partner for a major **£400million project as part of the Golden Valley Garden Community**.

This world-class mixed-use development will be located on a 200 hectare site adjacent to GCHQ that will feature Cyber Central: the UK's first campus focused around the rapidly growing cyber-tech sector, as well as providing over 3,000 homes.

Read more [here](#).

And also [here](#).

SUPPORTING CHELTENHAM CHARITIES



ONLINE SUPPORT SESSIONS AVAILABLE FROM GBSN

The Gloucestershire Breastfeeding Supporters' Network has been running support sessions online in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, over 100 video appointments have been provided across the county. Find out more about their excellent work [here](#).



VOLUNTEERS PRODUCING SCRUBS FOR NHS

A team of volunteers has been fundraising for fabric to cut and sew scrubs and wash bags for the NHS in our local hospitals.

[Find out more here](#).



CHELTENHAM CHILD CONTACT CENTRE GOES ONLINE

The National Association of Child Contact Centres provides safe spaces where children can meet the parents they don't live with, after parents have separated. Family Space (Cheltenham's Child Contact Centre) is now running online sessions to allow **children to spend time with a parent supervised by a contact worker over FaceTime**, easing anxieties that the resident parent has about the safety of the child with that parent.

[Find out more here.](#)

WHILE OUR NATIONS KEY WORKERS
ARE LOOKING AFTER US,
WHO'S LOOKING AFTER THEM?



WE ARE.

KEY WORKERS CARE PACKAGE OFFERS WELLBEING SUPPORT

Cheltenham's Isbourne Foundation have created the Key Workers Care Package, a series of free online videos aimed at helping to reduce stress, combat anxiety and help with sleep. The videos have been specially curated with key workers in mind and includes meditations and sound baths that have been scientifically proven to improve mental health.

[Find out more here.](#)



DONATIONS NEEDED FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE BUNDLES

Gloucestershire Bundles, a local charity who support pregnant women and families with children up to the age of eleven, are in need of donations. The charity relies on volunteers and those who donate, either financially, or by **donating clothes, equipment, or new toiletries**. Every item makes a difference, and goes directly to those in need.

[Find out more here.](#)

OTHER NEWS



IT'S M.E. AWARENESS WEEK (11-17 MAY)

Today is the last day of ME Awareness Week, and the ME Association have organised a campaign to raise awareness of ME - Myalgic encephalomyelitis and other invisible illness that are little-known in both the medical community and wider society.

The "2020 MillionsMissing" event in Gloucester would have taken place yesterday, and so the ME Association have launched an online campaign as an alternative to draw attention to those suffering with invisible illnesses such as Lyme Disease, Fibromyalgia, and Ehlers Danlos Syndrome.

[Read more here.](#)



CHELTENHAM FILM FEST GOES ONLINE (8-14 JUNE)

The Cheltenham International Film Festival (CIFF) 2020, scheduled for the end of May, has been moved online. During festival week, audiences will have an opportunity to select and watch up to **35 new films from some of the world's best emerging**

filmmakers. Many of the films to be screened during the festival are not available on any other streaming platform and audiences will have an opportunity to question filmmakers after selected film screenings.

Tickets will be available online shortly, so keep an eye out [here](#).



ADVICE FOR OLDER DRIVERS DURING LOCKDOWN

The Gloucestershire Older Drivers' Forum have provided several bulletins offering important advice for older drivers and their families during the lockdown period. The bulletins cover car care, maintaining driving skills and planning to get back on the road, when it is safe to do so. There is also advice should an older driver decide this is an appropriate time to retire from driving.

[Read more here.](#)



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