

Media Release

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Community support needed now if essential services are to be protected as COVID-19 case rises have significant impact

- COVID-19 cases having large impact on delivery of essential services due to staff absences**
- Community support for range of measures essential to help alleviate current pressures**
- Hospital is very stretched and needs to be protected**

The Civil Contingencies Authority has today reviewed the current impact of rising COVID-19 case numbers on the delivery of essential services and has strongly urged the Bailiwick community to increase their uptake of sensible mitigations to help slow the spread of the virus.

Current data shows there are 2,574 known active COVID-19 cases. There are likely more cases within the community that are either unknown or have not been reported. The most vulnerable members of our community are also approaching six months since they received booster, which means their immunity against the virus is waning.

While the number of cases where the individual has become so ill that they need hospital treatment remains low, the impact on some of the island's essential services and critical infrastructure – that all members of the community rely on day-to-day – are severely strained.

Urgent measures that community need to support

The whole Bailiwick community needs to support the following measures if we are to protect key services:

- Face coverings strongly recommended in enclosed indoor spaces
- Businesses encouraged to adopt continuity plans to enable increased home-working where possible
- Stay at home if you are unwell or have COVID-19
- Take a lateral flow test if you have symptoms, but also before visiting vulnerable people or attending an event

- Test daily for seven days if you are a household contact of COVID-19 and consider minimising your contacts as far as possible
- Ensure indoor spaces are well-ventilated by opening windows
- Respect people's personal space and social distance where possible
- Everyone needs to follow good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

Impact on essential public and private services

Hospital and community services are very stretched. The hospital is almost at capacity and many staff are currently absent. It is this combination of factors, rather than the increase of patients in hospital with COVID-19, which has led to the urgent need for community support to help protect our only hospital – something that the island has collectively achieved throughout the pandemic.

Many other essential services, including those part of the island's critical national infrastructure, are reporting approximately 10% of staff who are currently off as a result of either having COVID-19 or for reason linked to the virus. Retail sector businesses are also reporting significant staff absences.

Education settings are also facing difficulties at the moment, with about 50% of schools reporting significant staffing concerns. It remains the expectation that all staff (primary, secondary and post-16) wear face coverings in communal areas and all secondary and post-16 students do the same.

While all services are coping at this stage, the situation is challenging and any further deterioration could have a material impact on the services islanders received.

Deputy Peter Ferbrache, Chair of the Civil Contingencies Authority, said:

‘When we announced that we were removing legal restrictions last month, we made it clear that COVID-19 had not gone away and that the community needed to continue doing the right things. While we have sought to continue communicating those key messages during the last month, it has been clear that a significant portion of the community have relaxed to the point of no longer doing the basics that we have all become familiar with in the last two years; wearing face coverings where needed, staying at home when unwell, and taking sensible precautions like good hygiene and giving people space. We are now at a point where it is really essential that the community supports these measures with some urgency so we can reduce the spread of the virus and the impact it is having on essential services and the island's businesses more widely.’

Dr Nicola Brink, Director of Public Health, said:

‘While a large number of cases is not, of its own, necessarily a cause of concern, when those cases are having a detrimental impact on the delivery of essential services that all islanders rely on, we have to collectively as a community take action to help alleviate that pressure. We have seen in recent days the hospital coming

under increasing pressure, due to the combination of a busy period in terms of admissions and large numbers of staff who are off with COVID-19. But the hospital is not the only critical service that is struggling at the moment, as we know from colleagues in Education that schools are dealing with significant staffing pressures as are other public services. This is also being reflected in the private sector too. We really need the community's help and urgently. We're urging everyone to follow these strongly recommended measures.'

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