



Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Decision and Action log

TEAM DEVON (LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD)

Date Thursday, 23 September 2021

Present

Tony Gravett, Cara Stobart, Councillor David Worden, Chris Lindsay, Tom Holmes, Councillor Roger Croad, Councillor John Hart, Councillor Andrew Leadbetter and Councillor James McInnes

Apologies

Dr Paul Johnson, Sue Wilkinson, Diana Crump and Dr Louise MacAllister

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42.	<p>Notes of the Previous Board Meeting - 15 April 2021 It was MOVED by Councillor McInnes, SECONDED by Councillor Croad and</p> <p>RESOLVED that the notes of the previous Board meeting on 15 April 2021 be endorsed.</p> <p>The Chair also welcomed Chris Lindsay (Exeter University) and Tom Holmes (Devon and Cornwall Police) to their first meeting.</p>		
43.	<p>Urgent Items from the Health Protection Board The Director of Public Health advised that there were no urgent items for escalation from the Health Protection Board.</p>		
44.	<p>Report / Presentation from the Health Protection Board The Board received a Report from the Health Protection Board on current issues, data and matters for information.</p> <p>The Director of Public Health provided an update on the summer spike which had peaked on 20 August. There had been an impact, as reported in the media, due to the board masters festival and also from tourism on the County.</p> <p>The cases were now in the region of approximately 200 cases per 100,000, so the position was flattening out and there had been a reduction in all age groups except, in the school, college and university age group.</p>		

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	<p>The Board received a presentation of data and statistics on COVID 19 cases on the national picture (vaccination numbers, deaths data, hospitals and patients admitted and virus tests conducted).</p> <p>The local picture was then reviewed.</p> <p>All data was available on the following maps.</p> <p>UK summary: Daily summary Coronavirus in the UK (data.gov.uk) Devon Dashboard: Coronavirus dashboard and data in Devon - Coronavirus (COVID-19) Devon detailed age breakdown: Cases in Devon Coronavirus in the UK (data.gov.uk) Interactive Map: Interactive map of cases Coronavirus in the UK (data.gov.uk)</p> <p>The Director of Public Health reported on schools and testing regimes. He commented on the changing policy decisions that had been made in the summer including pre-supervised LFT prior to commencement of school, close contacts changes and the overall aim of trying to keep children in school.</p> <p>There had been an increase in cases in schools and colleges, which was to be expected. In the last 7 days there had been notification of 700 positive cases in educational settings. The position appeared to be replicated across the country, so was not unique to Devon.</p>		

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	<p>Previously, close contacts would need to be identified by the school and this was no longer the case and it was the responsibility of NHS test and trace. This often caused confusion with trying to establish linkages between cases, therefore the issue had been escalated.</p> <p>There was also a concern among some parents who may choose to keep their child at home in the event of a positive case in their child's class.</p> <p>The guidance set out two main thresholds where educational settings may have to take "extra action" to tackle an apparent Covid outbreak which was five children, pupils, students or staff or 10 per cent of children, pupils, students or staff who were likely to have mixed closely. The Director of Health reported they had asked that this threshold be reviewed.</p> <p>Capacity had also increased in the Public Health team to provide support to schools.</p> <p>Chris Lindsay (Director of Compliance, Governance & Risk) gave an update to the Board on the return of students to university, both on the campus, accommodation and teaching.</p> <p>Last week had been freshers' week and currently they were expecting 30,000 student registrations.</p> <p>There had been a number of strong, focused and regular communications stressing a number of areas including covid awareness, a focus on vaccination and regular testing and pop-up facilities being available. Also, a message on face coverings in shared indoor spaces, pick up points for</p>		

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	<p>masks and community protection messages. This included a community charter which set out the student commitments (respect and safety of others, neighbours, following any national / local guidance and actions to minimise spread). The University also had a commitment to the students in terms of systems to mitigate any spread or outbreak, providing robust cleaning services, the use of space on the campus, support to those that needed to self-isolate etc and activity to control outbreaks.</p> <p>There was also a number of teaching protocols including a focus on the safe management of space and risk assessments.</p> <p>They had undertaken a detailed analysis of the Government Autumn and Winter Plan to ensure there was alignment and familiarisation with the Plan B.</p> <p>The Board noted that there had been a high take up of the vaccine among student populations generally.</p> <p>The Board congratulated the University on their excellent work and preparedness for the return of students.</p>		
45.	<p>Devon as an Enhanced Response Area</p> <p>The Director of Public Health gave an update to the Board on what Devon as an Enhanced Response Area meant. This had commenced on the 27th August for a period of 5 weeks, therefore came to an end on 1 October. At the present time, there was no reason to put forward a case to extend.</p>		

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	<p>A number of tools had been utilised as part of being an Enhanced Response Area, including Wastewater testing to better understand Geno sequencing and variants of concerns.</p> <p>There was large scale communications and marketing exercises and on the ground activities, which included better use of community testing vans, attending areas where there was low uptake of vaccine and encouraging particularly young people. Also, there had been an increase in public health campaigns, to encourage people to get tested if they had symptoms, and to take up the vaccination programme.</p> <p>It was important that people tested regularly using lateral flow tests and the other important public health measures such as washing hands, wearing face coverings in enclosed spaces, and social distancing where possible.</p> <p>This also provided an opportunity to feedback to Government on the ERA on how it had worked in practice.</p>		
46.	<p>Local and National Updates</p> <p>The Director of Public Health provided an update on the launch of the Governments COVID-19 Autumn and Winter Plan.</p> <p>He highlighted that Plan A was very much 'more of the same' including high take-up of the vaccine, supporting partners to manage outbreaks, advising how people could reduce risk, social distancing and good hygiene</p>		

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	<p>measures.</p> <p>He also explained that Plan B could be activated but the current trigger point was unclear, but there remained a focus on the NHS and its ability to manage. Additional measures and interventions under plan B included vaccine certificates, mandating facemasks in certain locations and spaces and working from home.</p> <p>It was unlikely that there would be any local variation in relation to a Plan B.</p> <p>The Board also noted there had been an increase in anti-vaccination demonstrations and protests. The Police highlighted that all operational officers had been given guidance on how to manage this, notwithstanding peoples' rights to free speech and the importance of balance.</p> <p>There would be close working with the police, whether protests took place at testing or vaccine centres and security was being used in some instances so that lawful activities could continue.</p> <p>AGREED that the Governments Winter Plan be circulated https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1017404/COVID-19-response-autumn-and-winter-plan-2021.pdf</p>		

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47.	<p>NHS / CCG Update</p> <p>The Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health provided an update on matters impacting on the NHS and CCG.</p> <p>On a local level, the pattern of admissions and deaths was what was expected and also hoped for in terms of vaccines significantly reducing transmission rates and reducing the proportion of those that caught COVID being seriously ill and / or hospitalised.</p> <p>There were 86 people in hospital across the acute hospitals (23 in the RDE, 20 in North Devon, 16 in Torbay hospital and 27 in Derriford). This accounted for 2.7% of the total bed capacity.</p> <p>The winter peak was in the region of 320 Covid-19 positive patients in hospital across the ICS so the current figure was much lower. The current figure of 86 was also a fall on the levels seen in late August which was around the 140 mark.</p> <p>It was noted that 89% of beds were occupied at present which was high, leaving little flexibility.</p> <p>In terms of care homes, there had been just one significant outbreak, (compared to 8 in the previous week).</p> <p>During the pandemic, there had been 772 deaths in the County with 40% of those being in care homes. Devon was the 2nd lowest in the country (the lowest being Cornwall).</p>		

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	<p>The Board also heard about the current pressures on the SWAST.</p> <p>The Director of Public Health added that in relation to the vaccine programme for 12–15-year-olds, information was being issued to teachers and parents and it was likely to commence in the next week or two.</p> <p>The booster vaccine programme was also starting to rollout.</p> <p>The aim moving forward was to improve the vaccine rates amongst 16–17-year-olds. Whilst just over half had received the first dose, it was hoped to increase those numbers.</p>		
48.	<p>Devons Economy - Recovery and Impacts</p> <p>The Council's Head of Economy and Skills presented a Report and summary paper of key issues relating to the economy and recovery.</p> <p>The Board noted that Devon's economy had been hit hard during 2020 and early 2021, with the immediate economic impacts of COVID-19 for the County as a whole being severe.</p> <p>The Economy, Enterprise and Skills team had been keeping track of the rapidly changing economic situation by using real-time information from a number of sources including Government, commissioning targeted studies, evidence and forecasts and gathering information directly from the business community to keep a track of impacts on the Devon economy.</p>		

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	<p>This information had fed directly into the Team Devon response and recovery work programme and that of partner organisations, including District Councils and had formed the basis of engagement with Government.</p> <p>The Report contained a summary of key impacts including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic output • National and Devon forecasts • Devon Labour market • Self-employed and furlough schemes • Broader business support uptake in Devon • DCC Economic Vulnerability Index • Future impacts and other government support schemes • Business Impacts (national information, Devon jobs market, vacancies by sector, Devon Tourism survey, retail spend) • The Economy looking forward <p>The Report also outlined the range of activity underway and planned to support Devon's recovery from the impact of the pandemic. This included Devon Work Hubs, Natural Capital Challenge Fund, Community Energy Challenge Fund, Brownfield Land Renewal Fund / Self and Custom Build Fund, Future Farming Resilience Fund, Open Up to Skills programme, Made in Devon and Apprenticeships.</p> <p>Of particular note was the current labour shortages in the County with 65,000 vacancies, particularly in agriculture, nusing, ICT and HGV. The</p>		

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	<p>pandemic had made many reassess their lives and there was a higher proportion of people in education and training.</p> <p>Devon also had below average wages and a number of people were classed as 'in work poverty'. The use of food banks had increased and the £20 universal credit reduction would affect 30k households.</p> <p>There had been a 17% rise in house prices and a loss of 70% in the private rental sector, due to rentals becoming Airbnb and second home purchases.</p> <p>The Board noted that whilst the tourism season had been good, it had not been sufficient to offset the losses of the pandemic.</p>		
49.	<p>Public Questions / Other Questions for the Board There were no public questions or other questions raised for the Board.</p>		
50.	<p>Key Messages to be Communicated The Board and Head of Communications and Media considered the key messages coming from the meeting.</p> <p>The key message was that Covid had not gone away and a bumpy autumn/winter was expected. It was noted that the Government's winter plans had been published and Devon's classification as an area for enhanced government support (ERA) in late was due to be reviewed.</p> <p>Case numbers had been falling back and were highest in young people</p>		

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	<p>and the numbers of Covid patients in local hospitals and deaths remained relatively low and stable.</p> <p>The vaccination programme continued to go well and now included an offer to school age population 12-15 plus a booster programme for over 50s.</p> <p>With the start of term for schools, colleges and university students there was potential for cases among young people to rise again.</p> <p>In terms of key Public health messages, people should continue to be cautious and follow basic public health advice and vaccination was seen as key to the continued return to normality and limiting pressure on health and care services.</p> <p>Other key messages included that hospitals admissions for Covid continued to be relatively low and stable but the Ambulance Service and Emergency Departments continued to be under pressure.</p> <p>In terms of mass vaccination, boosters had begun for the most vulnerable and 12-15 year olds would be offered a first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.</p> <p>The Board noted that the JCVI had advised that Flu and Covid-19 vaccines could be administered at the same time where there was opportunity to do so.</p> <p>In respect of care Homes and vulnerable people, rates among older people were relatively low and stable but the whole care sector continued to be under pressure. There had been a high take up of vaccinations and there</p>		

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	<p>remained a small number of significant outbreaks of concern which were being monitored closely. There was a concern that some care home staff would leave as a result of requirement to be vaccinated by mid-November</p> <p>All schools in Devon were open and colleges and university students were returning and attendance was high. Whilst there had been an increase in positive cases amongst pupils, there had been no significant issues and testing and monitoring was in place.</p> <p>There was a new programme of targeted mobile community testing and vaccination planned over coming weeks and targeted promotional activity with national support in areas of concern regarding vaccine uptake (e.g. Ilfracombe and Exeter).</p> <p>As outlined earlier, the tourism sector had done well over summer but not sufficient to offset previous losses. There were labour market shortages, house price rises and 70% reduction in private rented stock all of which were of huge concern.</p>		
51.	<p>Date of Next Meeting Members noted the date of the next meeting as 21st October 2021 at 2pm</p>		