



Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Decision and Action log

TEAM DEVON (LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD)

Thursday, 16 December 2021

Present

Councillor John Hart, Councillor James McInnes, Councillor Andrew Leadbetter, Steve Brown, Tony Gravett, Dr Paul Johnson, Chris Lindsay, Sean Mackney, Rhys Roberts, Cara Stobart, Sue Wilkinson and Sarah Wollaston

Apologies

Councillor Roger Croad, Diana Crump and Shaun Sawyer

| No. | Decision/Action/Message | Who Will Communicate / action? | When? |
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| 10. | Notes of the Previous Board Meeting - 18 November 2021 The notes of the previous Board meeting on 18 November 2021 were | | |

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| | endorsed. | | |
| 11. | <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> | | |
| 12. | <p>NHS Update The Chair of the CCG presented an update on the NHS including vaccinations and the Booster rollout.</p> <p>Booster campaign:- before Sunday's announcement, Devon had delivered 400,000 Boosters to those eligible (800,000). There was now an expectation to deliver 112,000 per week from now until the end of December; previously 55,000 were being delivered so now the number of weekly boosters had to double. Additional capacity had been added to the booking system and large vaccine centres were extending their opening hours across Devon – Home Park Plymouth stayed open until 2am until the last person received their booster.</p> <p>The NHS had been inundated with offers of volunteers in Devon which was fantastic. 122 GP practices were being brought in as part of the booster campaign; some were under pressure to deliver needs in their community and staff shortages, so would be working with those surgeries. Community Pharmacies were also part of the booster campaign, along with the Hospital Hub opening in North Devon and Piloting a drive through service at</p> | | |

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| | <p>Greendale. The flow of traffic at Greendale had been an issue but overnight workman had laid an access road and more parking spaces over one night to help tackle the backlog of people arriving for walk-in appointments.</p> <p>Managing housebound individuals: 10,000 individuals required the booster vaccine who were housebound. The 15min observation period previously required for the Pfizer vaccine had now been lifted which meant teams visiting at home could now do more each day. Community nurses were also assisting ,so all those housebound would be covered and should be boosted by Christmas Day.</p> <p>NHS providers had been supportive of the booster delivery rollout as a priority for the next 3 weeks. It would not impact on emergency care, and any redirected resources for the booster campaign would not be taken from emergency care, both primary and secondary care. However, there would be a stepping down of some routine appointments and messages would be going out to the public to advise of this.</p> <p>People were encouraged to book their COVID Booster online where possible, drop-ins were available, but booking was helpful.</p> <p>The impact of Flu on NHS services was always significant at this time of year as well, so it was important to also push the flu vaccine at the same time as COVID vaccine.</p> <p>Delivering Booster – in 3 days Devon had delivered 43,000 vaccines and was therefore on target to achieve rollout targets. People were getting their</p> | | |

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| | <p>Booster which was very positive, and with the extra resources Devon was on target to achieve booster jabs by end of December.</p> <p>There were 131 individuals in hospital as of 15 December, some of those were vaccinated and most were stable – 18 on intensive care. The RD&E had a COVID capacity of 150 beds, as a result there was not a lot of scope to cope with an increase in COVID patients and still be able to do other emergency care. Staff absences also presented an issue and this was expected to become more of an issue with Omicron; currently just over 2,000 staff were absent, of which 30% were COVID related absences.</p> | | |
| 13. | <p>Report / Presentation from the Health Protection Board</p> <p>The Board received a Report from the Health Protection Board on current issues, data and matters for information.</p> <p>Matters included in the Report were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nationally – there were 78,610 daily positive cases, a steep increase of 19% in a week. Deaths within 28 days: 805, numbers were currently stable currently but were usually 2 weeks behind case numbers, therefore they were likely to increase. Patients in hospital: 5,964, an increase of 10% in the last week, again this lags behind case trends. Testing levels: 8,700,982, increased by 15% over the past week. - Devon – 4,899 cases over the past week (above the national average), between 4th to 10th December, again this would have increased in the past few days. - The picture in Devon recently showed cases decreasing over past week | | |

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| | <p>(against national trend), due to the previously high levels of Delta cases reducing. It was likely that Omicron cases would now significantly increase, with metropolitan areas like London experiencing significant case numbers, and it was expected over the next few week cases would also increase in Devon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devon was still experiencing higher cases rates in the younger age groups 0-19 years of school age population, as well as the working age population. - Highest case rates were in the South Hams area, Newton Abbot, Tiverton, Barnstaple, Plymouth and Torbay. <p>The dashboard pages could be found here.</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>Key messages from Government included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were now two viruses, a reduction in the Delta variant and an increase in Omicron now becoming the dominant variant; - Booster vaccinations do provide higher level of protection, but it was unclear if hospitalisation rates would rise in response to Omicron at this stage, however it was important to remember that even a small | | |

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| | <p>increase in hospitalisation would put significant strain on Devon hospitals. Case rates were doubling every 2 days; and,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures – the public were advised to be careful about socialising on the run up to Christmas. | | |
| 14. | <p>Local and National Updates</p> <p>The Director of Public Health reported on the latest announcements regarding the launch of the Governments 'Plan B', including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The introduction of Covid passports and increased lateral flow testing; - A policy shift away from the previous requirement of self-isolation for close contacts. Previously if you had been double vaccinated and a close contact of a positive person, people were required to get a PCR test and isolate whilst awaiting results, and if negative could then go out. The position now was that if a person is a close contact of a positive case and is double vaccinated, they must take a Lateral Flow Test every day for 7 days, but do not need to isolate; and, - There had been an increase in the home delivery of Lateral Flow Tests by Royal Mail. <p>The Head of Education and Learning updated the Board on the impacts for schools, in light of new DFE guidance and the implications of the Plan B announcements. Schools had not seen any significant changes as a result of Omicron, due to the high cases in Devon already had meant schools had in place enhanced measures such as face masks; therefore, there had been no changes to risk assessments. Schools were seeing a significant</p> | | |

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| | <p>increase in cases, however all remained open and operating. There had been an increase in the number of teachers testing positive, which was impacting on school's ability to teach, with further issues around the provision of supply teachers and teaching assistants.</p> <p>There continued to be some uncertainty about what will happen in January, given the changes that occurred over Christmas last year; however, schools were planning on opening on the first day of term with children either testing at home before they returned, or operating tests on school sites.</p> <p>In Devon's colleges, home testing had continued to be effective, with students being compliant around mask wearing. For the return in January, students had been advised they must test at home before they return to college. Where there were external visitors entering college site, they had to demonstrate either a COVID passport or negative test. Colleges were on standby for any additional guidance that may come in over the Christmas break.</p> <p>The University of Exeter updated with the following: there was a significant reduction in cases compared to 12 months ago and the University was not seeing any increase in case rates. There had been a good take up of vaccines, however some small increase in the numbers of cases amongst staff due to family infection. The University was planning a winter break plan, with students now having left for Christmas. There had also been an uptake in the demand for testing by students, with pop up vaccination centres experiencing constant queues, and compliance amongst staff and students. Constant messaging was going to students, including matters around vaccine passports and travel etc. Also reiterating COVID hygiene</p> | | |

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| | <p>and reviewing corporate risk assessments and updating Outbreak Management Plans.</p> <p>The Head of Communities reported on the Household Support Fund, external funding to support communities and free school meals (FSM).</p> <p>Regarding FSM – funding had been provided for the Christmas holidays via electronically accessible supermarket vouchers of £50 per week – this would be provided for Christmas, February half term and the Easter holidays, including the over 16's at colleges. The Council had also provided £250 per pupil from additional funding – helping over 19,000 children across Devon.</p> <p>£1m funding had been allocated to district welfare schemes, with high demand in North Devon, Teignbridge and Exeter; those families with children had been most affected.</p> <p>£500k was allocated to Children Centres across Devon, including Early Help schemes, activity programmes, and healthy start boxes.</p> <p>£200k funding was allocated via the Devon Community Foundation to help food banks, community kitchens and wider food support programmes.</p> <p>£250k to Citizens Advice for the Energy Relief Scheme, for support for fuel bills.</p> <p>£250k was allocated to BAME groups in order to help support harder to reach communities.</p> | | |

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| | <p>The Council had worked alongside partners to develop learning and conducted research around food insecurity as an indicator of wider poverty and the impacts of the pandemic to Devon's communities.</p> <p>Businesses had been significantly impacted by the high rates of cases and the recent announcements regarding the Government's Plan B. People in Devon had already been complying with social distancing measures, which had been seen locally where people were limiting social interactions; this had impacted on the hospitality industry which had seen huge numbers of people cancel Christmas lunches at a time when there was no Government support available. Reports across the hospitality industry indicated cancellations rates at over 50%, with the public operating their own lockdown procedures and choosing not to go out. Businesses and the Council continued to lobby Government for more support, during this festive season which many businesses relied upon to survive. It was also noted that in smaller towns that had seen significant outbreaks since November, people had been self-policing in areas like Bideford, and as a result hospitality venues had experienced a loss of trade for several months.</p> | | |
| 15. | <p>Public Questions / Other Questions for the Board No further questions were raised.</p> | | |
| 16. | <p>Key Messages to be Communicated The Board and Head of Communications and Media considered the key</p> | | |

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| | <p>messages coming from the meeting.</p> <p>These included 'Spread Cheer not Covid', Omicron was spreading rapidly and was in the community, so it was important to use common sense to help protect family and friends. Get the booster vaccination, get tested before meeting with others and follow national rules on face coverings.</p> <p>A full script was attached to the minutes for circulation by Board Members.</p> | | |
| 17. | <p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Members noted the date of the next meeting as 19 January 2022 @ 10.30am</p> | | |

Covid-19 Outbreak Management CORE SCRIPT – 16 December 2021

“Spread Cheer not Covid-19 this Christmas!”

Omicron is spreading rapidly and is in the community so use your common sense to help protect your family and friends. Get your booster vaccination, get tested before you get together, and follow national rules on face coverings, etc.

- Case numbers across Devon are still above the national average for England but have fallen slightly. However, national cases of the Omicron variant which appears far more transmissible are rising rapidly and are expected to impact Devon significantly over the coming weeks.
- Cases in Devon are still highest in the school and college-age population, which has been driving cases.
- However, higher than average case levels are not currently reflected in hospital admissions or deaths which remain relatively stable but are predicted to rise rapidly.
- The vaccine booster programme is seen as key to helping to offset the impact of a new wave of Omicron and is now being offered to all adults with the NHS and partners working flat out to deliver to all that want it over before the end of December.
- Overall vaccine take-up in Devon has been high, with 90% of eligible people having had their first and second doses; and around 56% of all eligible people having already had their booster (higher rate in over 50s and those with underlying health conditions).
- Concerns remain about ongoing pressure across whole health and social care system in terms of both managing a new wave of hospitalisation and the wider impact of positive cases and self-isolation on staffing.
- Close contacts of people testing positive are now instructed to conduct daily lateral flow test for a period of 7 days rather than self-isolate for 10 days.
- LRF emergency called to ensure all partners can assist NHS to deliver on booster programme.

Minute Item 16

Key Public health messages:

People should continue to be cautious, use their common sense and follow basic public health advice on hand washing, the use of face masks in public spaces, regular testing and/or testing before meeting up, self-isolating if symptomatic and regular testing if a close contact with someone with a positive Covid case, etc.

People should avoid unnecessary close contact indoors where possible but where people do meet up over Christmas they should test before-hand, be mindful of basic hygiene, and ensure good ventilation.

Vaccination (for both Covid and Flu) and getting a Booster as soon as possible is seen as key to helping to manage the expected wave of Omicron and limiting pressure on already stretched health and care services.

Across our hospitals some of the sickest patients in intensive care are not vaccinated. You stand the greatest chance against Covid if you are triple vaccinated, and if you haven't had any yet, it's not too late. The more you do to progress your vaccination status the better protected you are against Covid.

Coronavirus vaccination take up in Devon has been high and this needs to be the same for the booster programme.

People should observe national guidance as it changes to help keep their families and loved ones safe and help protect the NHS and social care system from being swamped.

Other key messages

Hospitals and health service

- Hospitals admissions for Covid have so far remained stable across Devon Plymouth and Torbay but are predicted to rise.
- Hospitals are already experiencing extreme pressures with the Ambulance Service and Emergency Departments very busy.
- NHS and other frontline staff will need to be redeployed to support the booster programme leading to likely cancellation of some non-urgent work.
- Primary care services will focus on urgent clinical need as well as supporting the vaccination programme. Patients should continue to contact their GP practice for urgent health advice but are urged to consider calling in the new year if it can wait, or if they can get help from another service such as a pharmacy.
- Cancer checks will continue to be prioritised. People who are concerned about symptoms which could be cancer should continue to contact their GP.

Mass vaccination

- Numbers double vaccinated across Devon is high (90%+) but targeted work ongoing to promote where uptake has been lower.
- Third doses for people with underlying conditions are progressing and the housebound and vulnerable are being prioritised with plans in place to deliver the required 10,000 vaccinations to people who are housebound by Christmas day.
- **Booster vaccinations are now available to all eligible adults, and demand is high.**
- Around 56% of all eligible people have already had their booster (with higher rate in over 50s and those with underlying health conditions).
- **A major acceleration in the booster programme will take place over the next few weeks.** Meeting the national target of ensuring everyone can have a booster jab by the end of January means doubling the weekly rate in Devon from 55,000 to 112,000 doses.
- Extra capacity is being put into the national booking system (people should not ring their GP for a vaccination appointment)
- Large vaccination centres will scale-up to operate 7-days per week with extended opening hours. Vaccinations will be offered at the majority of sites on the Bank Holidays of Monday 27, and Tuesday 28 December (but staff will be given a well-earned break on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day).
- Additional local drop-in and pop-up clinics are being planned alongside more GP-led Primary Care Network centres and additional Community Pharmacy capacity. Drop-in/pop-up clinics will be advertised through media and social media when they are available and when sites have availability.
- **Local people are asked to be patient with staff and volunteers, who are continuing to work tirelessly.**
- **People should book their vaccines wherever possible**
- Extra volunteers not currently needed due to existing offers of support but this under constant review.

Care Homes and vulnerable people

- Rates among older people are relatively low generally, with some isolated instances of outbreak. However, the whole care sector continues to be under pressure.
- Previous vaccination programme highly effective with high take up among older people and care staff but concerns over long term effectiveness mean winter booster programme now being rolled out,
- Concerns remain over the impact of Covid leading to further staff shortages

Schools and education

- Despite higher case rates among school-age population, school attendance has been higher than the England average

Minute Item 16

- Increase in positive cases in many schools with cases in Primary schools age children now exceeding that in secondary schools
- All schools remain open but ongoing concerns over teacher absence through Covid.
- Schools already using additional measures to try and reduce the risk of transmission including enhanced testing.
- Additional plans in place for return in January
- Vaccinations continue to be offered to all healthy 12-15 years olds, to be administered through schools or via a local vaccinations centre.
- 16 and 17 year olds are eligible to receive a second dose 12 weeks after their first.

Local Community Testing and Contact Tracing

- The programme of targeted mobile community testing and vaccination is continuing, jointly with NHS Devon colleagues.
- Testing capacity will be extended to help meet demand
- Reassurance has been given over the over the future availability of LF testing kits and PCR tests via national booking system despite some issues caused by high demand

Community support for vulnerable people

- £5m Household support fund in place to deliver support to end of March
- Includes free school meals over school holidays and extra at Christmas
- Also £1m through district council welfare schemes and funding via Childrens Centres and Early Help Teams
- Funding via Devon Community Foundation and Citizens Advice plus specific funding for BME groups

Economy and Businesses

- Public already being very cautious, self-policing and cancelling events.
- Related impact on the hospitality sector and on the high street already being seen.
- Impact also being seen in the tourism sector and at Exeter airport
- Businesses are suffering and additional business support is likely to be needed to avoid business failure.