



Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Decision and Action log

TEAM DEVON (LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD)

Date Wednesday, 19 January 2022

Present

Councillor Bob Deed, Hannah Reynolds, Councillor John Hart, Councillor James McInnes, Councillor Roger Croad, Councillor Andrew Leadbetter, Diana Crump, Tony Gravett, Dr Paul Johnson, Chris Lindsay and Sean Mackney

Apologies

Rhys Roberts, Cara Stobart and Sarah Wollaston

No.	Decision/Action/Message	Who Will Communicate / action?	When?
18.	Notes of the Previous Board Meeting - 16 December 2021 The notes of the previous Board meeting on 16 December 2021 were		

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	endorsed.		
19.	<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>		
20.	<p>Report / Presentation from the Health Protection Board The Board received a Report from the Health Protection Board on current issues, data, age profiles and matters for information.</p> <p>Matters included in the Report were as follows.</p> <p>Nationally – the number of vaccinations had increased. There were 94,432 (39% decrease) daily positive cases; 438 deaths reported within 28 days, a 14% increase. The number of patients in hospital: 1,892, a decrease of 2.9%. Testing levels: 1,363,000, a reduction of 22.5% over the past week.</p> <p>Devon – 6088 cases over the past week (below the national average), and 5 reported deaths within 28 days (below national average).</p> <p>The picture in Devon recently showed cases decreasing over the past week (in line with national trend). There had been a decline in all age groups, especially the 20-39 age groups. There was a slight increase in cases in primary and secondary age group populations, but falling in pre-school and</p>		

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	<p>university age groups.</p> <p>The highest case rates were in Exeter and North Devon areas, and higher rates in urban compared to rural areas.</p> <p>Members noted Devon was still seeing outbreaks, mainly in education settings, workplaces and some care homes. Whilst there were reductions in numbers reporting a positive test, there had been changes in policies in not requiring PCR tests and a reduction in the number of Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) and there may be less people now taking LFTs. An easing of restrictions would require some caution to keep community infection rates low.</p> <p>The dashboard pages could be found here. 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>		
21.	<p>Local and National Updates</p> <p>The Director of Public Health reported on testing and contact tracing. He commented that regarding Plan B, there would be a national review of measures due to be announced on 26 January, when restrictions may be</p>		

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	<p>lifted around working from home and testing, which may lead to further mixing and therefore increase in transmission and cases. Less people were reporting positive tests, which may be in part due to less people taking LFTs; there had also been an issue in supply of LFTs which reduced people's ability to regularly test. The council was prioritising testing kits for vulnerable people.</p> <p>The Chair of the CCG then provided an update on vaccination data and boosters and general system pressures, including data on hospital admissions and vaccination status.</p> <p>There was a slight increase in the number of patients in hospital, 222 patients in hospital yesterday tested positive. Data suggested that numbers would peak in the next week but they were currently better than expected. This was partly due to Omicron being less likely to produce severe symptoms combined with a good uptake of the vaccination booster programme, helping to reduce the number of hospitalisations. Only 2 patients were currently in intensive care being treated for Covid, which was much lower than the first two waves.</p> <p>Nationally, 6 out of 10 people in intensive care have not had any vaccination, 3 out of 10 not had the booster, and only 1 out of 10 people in hospital having had all 3 vaccinations.</p> <p>Staff absences – there was a slight drop from 43% down to 39% staff absences over the past week. There was still a significant number of staff not available, but the situation slightly improving.</p>		

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	<p>85% of eligible people in Devon had now had a booster.</p> <p>By 3 February, all frontline staff will have to have had their first vaccination to be double vaccinated by April in line with Government policy - currently 95% of frontline staff have had 2 doses. There was 5% of staff not double vaccinated which would impact on staffing capacity.</p> <p>Members asked questions and the following matters were raised in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voluntary sector was seeing questions raised through helplines, around people needing Boosters but being asked if there was any data around the 1 in 10 people that get ill despite being fully vaccinated? The clinical details or age profiles of the 1% was unknown. However data did show that the level of protection from receiving a booster increased by 85% - and it was mainly vulnerable individuals most at risk of still becoming ill despite having booster. • Regarding queries about oral vaccination treatments, Board Members were advised that there were two treatments becoming available – one was an injection for vulnerable individuals, delivered through the hospital who were notifying individuals, specifically those with weak immune systems and they would receive instructions on being referred. The second was with regard to anti-viral medicines via tablets which would soon be available, again aimed at those individuals with significant immune deficiency and they would also be contacted by the hospitals if they would require treatment. 		

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22.	<p>Schools Update</p> <p>The Head of School Place Planning updated the Board on the return to schools, impacts of case numbers on attendance and also staff absences.</p> <p>He highlighted that there had been a strong return of pupils after the Christmas break, with attendance well above the national average and good testing taking place in secondary schools. New measures around face masks in classrooms had also been implemented. Attendance had dropped slightly due to an increase in cases, but remained above the national average.</p> <p>The main challenge faced by schools was around staffing, and their ability to continue delivering education in person due to staff shortages. Some schools were offering some remote learning for some children. Risk assessments were ongoing, and schools were working extremely hard to keep children on site.</p> <p>In Colleges, compliance was good by pupils around face masks and regular testing. Issues were also being experienced around staffing shortages due to positive covid cases or family infection.</p> <p>The University of Exeter updated that new guidance was issued following Government legislation just before Christmas. New guidance to staff and strong communication around face coverings, testing and vaccinations. They were currently delivering exams, with 20% taking place face-to-face and 80% online tests. Teaching face-to-face continued this term, with 80% of pupils back in residence on campus. 227 cases were reported over the past 10 days, today 24 cases reported. Some staff absence pressures were</p>		

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	being experienced, particularly in ICT and estates staff.		
23.	<p>Economy and Business - Impact of Plan B</p> <p>The Head of Economy and Enterprise attended and updated the Board on the impact on the economy and businesses as a result of Plan B measures.</p> <p>Key points highlighted included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The county was experiencing low levels of business confidence across all sectors, due to rising costs and increases in wages and labour shortages. Evidence from relevant partners (some data predated Plan B), showed that 30% of businesses were struggling financially as the public were not spending due to Omicron. The South West region reported the least optimistic prospects for 2022; however, the manufacturing sector had positive signs of progress around Green Technology. • Realtime wages were in decline with the increase in cost of living • There were ongoing labour market shortages – could find economic cohort reaching saturation in June. • Impact on cash flow – the next 6-12 months would be vital for businesses. • Retail and hospitality sector were experiencing the biggest challenges, around Plan B restrictions and it was expected there would be some business failures. South West Tourism Alliance stated that 52% of businesses say they had seen a 50% decline in turnover, and 75% stated a decline of over 20%. 30% of businesses saw 		

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	<p>cancellation rates above 50% in December, due to a lack of consumer confidence. Regarding cash reserves 25% said they had no cash reserves remaining.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour shortages were the most acute in health and care sectors. <p>Key drivers behind business confidence – an unprecedented inflation rate of 5.8%, the Chamber of Commerce was sighting inflation pressures as a significant factor for businesses requiring more support. National insurance increases also rising, with one manufacturer reporting a £28m increase in its own costs.</p> <p>Other relief measures would also be coming to an end in April, resulting in less support for businesses.</p> <p>The FSB reported that some businesses had reduced their opening hours to cope with staff shortages and increasing costs. The Exeter Chamber of Commerce were lobbying for further support from government, with 40% of its members impacted from rising cost pressures.</p> <p>Devon's Growth Hub had also seen a rapid increase in enquiries around finance – but also an increase in the number of queries around new business start-ups, which was positive.</p> <p>Labour market – there were approx. 30,000 vacancies across Devon, and Universal Claimants of 12,500.</p> <p>Youth unemployment was down everywhere except Exeter.</p>		

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	<p>Households and wage inflation – the average wage in Devon was rising more than national rates. However, that included some local people securing jobs in London and some people from the South East with jobs moving to Devon, which obscured the figures. Devon was also seeing more early retirements and young people staying in education longer. The cost of living squeeze was being seen locally and a recent report predicted that real wages had been falling since May 2021, with further increases in taxes and energy bills impacting households.</p> <p>Stagecoach and South West Rail were also seeing disruption due to absenteeism and had reduced timetables as a result.</p>		
24.	<p>Public Questions / Other Questions for the Board There were no additional questions for the Board.</p>		
25.	<p>Key Messages to be Communicated The Board and Head of Communications and Media considered the key messages coming from the meeting.</p> <p>“Things are looking up, but we can’t be complacent and are still not out of the woods”</p> <p>Everyone should continue to use their common sense to help protect family and friends. Get your booster vaccination, test regularly, and follow national</p>		

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	<p>rules on isolating if positive.</p> <p>A full script was attached to the minutes for circulation by Board Members.</p>		
26.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Members noted the date of the next meeting as 15 February 2022 @ 10.30am</p>		

Covid-19 Outbreak Management CORE SCRIPT – 19 January 2022

“Things are looking up, but we can’t be complacent and are still not out of the woods”

Everyone should continue to use their common sense to help protect family and friends. Get your booster vaccination, test regularly, and follow national rules on isolating if positive.

- Case numbers have been the highest since the start of the pandemic over the last few weeks but are now falling and are now well below the national average in England.
- However, cases in schools are rising slightly (particularly in nursery and primary schools) and we need to keep a close watch on this and its likely knock-on impact within the community.
- Hospital admissions are up but stable and the severity of illness appears to be less with fewer people needing intensive care.
- Deaths linked to Covid remain relatively low and overall death rates remain at the seasonal average.
- Concerns remain about ongoing pressure across the health and social care in terms of both managing increased hospital numbers and the wider impact of staff illness and self-isolation on the whole system.
- Vaccine take-up and the booster programme is still seen as key to helping to offset the impact of Omicron and take-up in Devon has been high with 85% of eligible people having now had their booster.
- People testing positive are now instructed to isolate for 5 days and can return to work following 2 negative lateral flow tests.

Minute Item 25

Key Public health messages:

People should continue to be cautious, use their common sense and follow basic public health advice, and it is very important people continue to conduct regular testing and self-isolate if symptomatic or positive.

Across our hospitals most 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 national rules on self-isolation when positive have changed to five days but people should not return to work/school until two negative lateral flow test results have been recorded.

A national review of restrictions and key messages will take place on 26 January.

Other key messages

Hospitals and health service

- Hospitals admissions for Covid have so far remained stable across Devon Plymouth and Torbay.
- There are increases in hospitalisation with peak predicted over the next few weeks but the severity of illness appears less with fewer people requiring intensive care.
- Hospitals are however continuing to experience extreme pressure.
- Staff absences have dropped over the past week and 95% of NHS staff are fully vaccinated.

Mass vaccination

- Numbers double vaccinated across Devon is high (90%+) but targeted work ongoing to promote where uptake has been lower.
- Around 85% of all eligible people have already had their booster as a result of the winter push (with higher rate in over 50s and those with underlying health conditions).

Care Homes and vulnerable people

- Rates among older people remain relatively low, but there are isolated outbreaks affecting both residents and staff.
- The whole care sector continues to be under pressure and concerns remain over the impact of Covid leading to further staff shortages
- Vaccination programme highly effective with high take up among older people and care staff

Schools and education

- School attendance following New Year has been good and higher than the England average

- There has been an increase in positive cases in schools, particularly in primary and nursery settings, and concerns remain over the impact of staff absences.

Local Community Testing and Contact Tracing

- Issues with the supply of lateral flow tests are easing with increased national supply but our own community testing capacity remains limited
- Local contact tracing is performing well and well above national position

Community support for vulnerable people

- Concerns over impact of inflation and cost of living squeeze

Economy and Businesses

- Low business confidence reported across all sectors with fears over recovery prospects
- Impact on many businesses continues with retail and hospitality experiencing the worst challenges and struggling financially with poor cash-flow and minimal cash reserves
- Labour market shortages continuing
- Some difficulties reported across all sectors related to staff absences

