



Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Decision and Action log

TEAM DEVON (LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD)

Date Tuesday, 15 March 2022

Present

Councillor Bob Deed, Councillor John Hart, Councillor James McInnes, Councillor Roger Croad, Steve Brown, Diana Crump, Tony Gravett, Dr Paul Johnson, Chris Lindsay, Sean Mackney, Cara Stobart and Sue Wilkinson

Also in attendance: Simon Chant, Councillor Alan Connett, Tom Holmes, P Norrey, Andrew Yendole, Sean Mackney, and Julia Hulland

Apologies

Councillor Andrew Leadbetter, Shaun Sawyer and Sarah Wollaston

No.	Decision/Action/Message	Who Will action?	When?
No.	Decision/Action/Message	Who Will Communicate / action?	When?
37.	<p>Notes of the Previous Board Meeting The notes of the previous Board meeting on 15 February 2022 were endorsed.</p>		
38.	<p>NHS Update toThe Chair of the Clinical Commissioning Group presented to the Board data on NHS pressures, admissions, hospitalisations and vaccines.</p> <p>Of note, he highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive cases were increasing (as in the Community) and whilst the severity of sickness was relatively low (only 4 patients in intensive care across the Trusts) this was impacting in terms of increasing staff absences (approximately 1000 off due to C-19) and clinically with patients separated into general wards (with C-19 protection measures) rather than in specialist wards and this also impacted in terms of increased numbers of delayed discharges; • the relatively low severity of sickness was a testament to the vaccine/booster programme but there was increasing pressures in terms of non-covid treatment, particularly within elective surgery; and more strict control of visiting times was still being maintained; • the general message was that the community should maintain good PH practice - facemasks, regular hand cleansing and social distancing - and the position would continue to be monitored; and • vaccine programme developments included provision of a second booster (after 6 months) for over 75s and the clinical vulnerable; and a vaccine offer for 5 – 11 year olds. 		

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39.	<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>		
40.	<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>Of note: the significant increase in positive cases nationally, and locally the higher rate against current national levels; differing rates according to age profile, the higher level of testing in Devon; no major increases in deaths since July/August 2021; and locally the higher infections rates in South Devon compared against Northern Devon.</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>		

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41.	<p>Local and National Updates The Director of Public Health updated the Board on 'Living with COVID' (published in February 2022), contact tracing and testing.</p> <p>Points of note included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the increase in cases 7 to 10 days following the return to school, the national cessation of contact tracing; the removal of the legal requirement for social isolation; and a recent Mygov survey which suggested that up to one third of people with symptoms would continue to go out to work despite PH guidance; another contributory factor to the increased rates was the reduction in testing within education settings for example and generally of people with no symptoms; • an example of infections in a care home of both flu and C-19 which was particularly challenging; and the continued support from PH for residential care/nursing homes to help control any outbreaks; • the PH message to live 'safely' with COVID; and • the continuing sequencing programme nationally to pick up any variants as quickly as possible, noting that the BA2 sub strain of Omicron was dominant in Devon (with the same interventions as before). 		
42.	<p>Future of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board It was agreed that the Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board would continue for a further three months (dates below) and then the position would be reviewed to include an option to increase frequency of meetings according to developments.</p>		

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	Dates agreed: 26 April (2 pm), 24 May (10 am); and 20 July (2.30 pm)		
43.	<p>Public Questions / Other Questions for the Board No questions were raised.</p>		
44.	<p>Key Messages to be Communicated The Board and Head of Communications and Media considered the key messages coming from the meeting.</p> <p>These included: if unwell stay at home, and continue to use face coverings in public, particularly in health care settings. A script for Board Members to circulate was attached to the minutes.</p>		

Covid-19 Local Outbreak Management Board

CORE SCRIPT – 15 March 2022

“Case levels nationally, and in Devon, are rising. We must decide for ourselves to take the right steps to protect ourselves and others. Staying at home if unwell, wearing face coverings in public indoor spaces and testing, are all still strongly advised.”

Case levels of coronavirus in Devon are rising, with the largest and fastest rise among the working age population. With no legal requirement to self-isolate, with symptoms or testing positive, the public health advice is still to do so. As the availability of free testing ends for most people this month (there are exceptions), Devon residents are encouraged to continue to test and to respond appropriately. The fourth jab (a second booster) for over 75s this Spring will help protect those whose earlier protection is now waning.

- Case rates in Devon are above the national average. We've had a 25% increase in cases just over the weekend, with the MSOA map indicating that Devon has seen a 63.4% increase in cases in a 7 day period
- Testing in Devon remains higher than the national average, (which partly explains higher case rates in the county)
- Case rates are highest in the working age population but are increasing in all age groups, including those aged 80 and over, both nationally and locally.
- Residential care homes are seeing high numbers of outbreaks, with the majority of Devon's care homes reporting two or more linked cases among residents and staff. We are continuing to support homes with bespoke advice for those experiencing outbreaks.
- The government has stepped back from the mandatory requirement for health and care staff to be vaccinated. Staff are therefore strongly encouraged to take up the vaccination, but not obliged to.
- The numbers of people in hospital in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay with COVID-19 have risen considerably. Case levels in hospital are reaching a similar level to when Devon had its highest peaks. Not all are admitted because they have coronavirus, but they may be in hospital and have tested positive for coronavirus. ICU levels, however, remain low and stable.
- Hospital pressures are compounded by a rise in staff absence due to illness.
- Vaccine take-up is good in Devon, although additional effort is being made to encourage certain groups to take up the vaccine, e.g. care workers, unpaid carers, and other specific groups with lower take-up.

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Key Public health messages:

The public are advised to stay home if they have symptoms of coronavirus or other infectious illnesses.

Devon residents have tended to be good at following public health advice throughout the pandemic. Public health experts are urging people to continue to behave responsibly: take up the vaccine when invited to do so, and to follow advice around staying at home when feeling unwell, wearing face coverings in public indoor spaces, and testing regularly. Washing hands regularly is still strongly advised, to protect against a wide range of illnesses.

The results of a straw poll that the council has been running are encouraging. The majority of people are indicating that they will stay home if unwell; they will continue to wear face coverings; and they feel safer meeting others outdoors. Respondeees are split equally on whether or not they will continue to test once tests stop being available free of charge to most people, this month.

Care homes are under a lot of pressure, since restrictions were dropped, to keep residents and staff protected from COVID-19. Visitors will be asked to work with care homes to help manage the rise of infection among residents and staff.

The public health advice is that anyone who shows symptoms of infection, e.g. sore throat, cough, high temperature, vomiting or diarrhoea, should not attend the workplace or school.

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 stay at home if symptomatic or positive.

Other key messages

Hospitals and health service

- Hospital admissions have risen considerably across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. NHS Devon is asking people not to visit friends and family in hospital if they have symptoms of coronavirus or other infectious illnesses, eg flu or norovirus.
- There is high demand for emergency care, and NHS Devon is asking people to choose the right NHS service for their needs.

- Hospitals are experiencing an increase in staff absence due to sickness
- NHS Devon are reminding the public that they are still required to wear face coverings when visiting health services, eg their GP and hospital
- SW Ambulance Trust is continue to experience considerable pressure

Mass vaccination

- An additional booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to all adults over 75 years old, and to the most vulnerable over-12-year-olds in the UK this spring.
- 5–11-year-olds are to be offered the Covid-19 vaccination
- Unpaid carers are being urged to come forward for the vaccination
- In Devon, a total of 2,694,943 doses were given between 8 December 2020 and 27 February 2022. This includes 992,970 first doses, 937,460 second doses and 770,193 boosters/third doses.
- You can find your nearest walk-in clinic on NHS England's site finder here. Appointments can be booked via the National Booking System

Care Homes and vulnerable people

- The majority of care homes in Devon are experiencing outbreaks (2 or more linked cases among residents and/or staff)
- The whole care sector continues to be under pressure and concerns remain over the impact of COVID-19 leading to further staff shortages
- Vaccination programme highly effective with high take up among older people and care staff
- There is now no mandatory requirement for health and care staff to be vaccinated, but it is strongly encouraged

Schools and education

- Devon teaching staff absent with covid 19 related absence is in line with the national average at the end of the Spring half term. Data is indicating a higher than national increase in teachers returning to work compared to national comparators.

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- School attendance in Devon (currently around 91.5%) remains above the national average, but still below pre-COVID levels. Schools are working hard with young people to help those who have been off school unwell, or learning remotely, to re-engage them in the classroom.

Local Community Testing and Contact Tracing

- Outreach teams are continuing to support the vaccination programme. Teams are in the process of winding down the community testing programme, which will end on the 31 March, in line with the government's 'Living with Covid' plan
- Contact tracing ended in February

Economy and Businesses

- The impact of coronavirus on the Devon and south west economy is likely to be seen for some time to come