

Report of the Cabinet Member for Community, Public Health, Transportation and Environmental Services

Introduction

I have been asked to report as follows for Full Council on 25 July 2019:

1. By Councillor Hannaford as follows:

The Department of Health has announced that the HPV vaccination programme will expand to cover boys from September 2019. This means that boys aged 12 and 13 will be offered HPV vaccinations on the NHS - 11 years after the health service began vaccinating girls in 2008. The change follows recommendations from advisers on the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation (JCVI) that there were 'clear health benefits in vaccinating boys'.

Public Health England believes the expanded HPV vaccination programme could prevent 100,000 cases of cancer by 2058, including 64,000 cases of cervical cancer and 50,000 other cancers.

Can the Cabinet member please confirm with council how this will be rolled out, how many boys will be vaccinated, and do we have any public health estimates for Devon in terms of health prevention benefits?

2. By Councillor Atkinson on:

How post office closures will affect Devon, in particular our rural communities.

Response

1. HPV vaccination Programme

Immunisation is the responsibility of NHS England, not the local authority. The screening and immunisation team commissions the delivery of the HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccination programme, which is being delivered in Devon by Virgin Care Ltd.

The programme will now be offered to boys aged 12-13. Boys/young men will remain eligible until they are 18 (as for the girls' programme). There are 6839 eligible boys in Devon this year. The rollout of the programme mirrors that of the girls' programme, in that it is being offered to all year 8's in school (including special

schools) over the next academic year, and there will be provision through appointment clinics for children educated outside of school.

The Director of Public Health has been advised that the service is receiving good numbers of consents and queries about this new element of the HPV immunization programme but there are no data yet; this applies nationally and locally. The high uptake rate of the HPV vaccine among girls has reduced the overall risk of unvaccinated boys and girls coming into contact with HPV. The extension of the programme will strengthen protection by increasing 'herd' immunity and will therefore prevent more cases of HPV-related cancers.

It is difficult to estimate the health prevention benefit of the programme but as a large Local Authority we would anticipate that a significant number of cancers in this population would be prevented in the future. Evidence-based vaccination is an effective and cost-effective public health programme.

Additional Background Facts:

- HPV is responsible for over 99% of cervical cancers. There is also increasing evidence of the association between HPV infection and anogenital and oropharyngeal cancers. On the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), a HPV vaccination programme for girls aged 12-13 was introduced in 2008 to protect against cervical cancer;
- in April 2018 the vaccination programme was extended to men who have sex with men (MSM) aged 45 and under. This was because MSM receive little or no indirect protection from the girls programme;
- more than 150 HIV and sexual health clinics nationally are already offering the programme and NHS England anticipates that rollout will be complete by April 2019;
- in July 2018 the JCVI advised that the HPV vaccination programme should be extended to adolescent boys. On 24 July 2018, the Government announced that HPV vaccination would be extended to boys aged 12-13. They will remain eligible until they are 18;
- the high uptake of HPV vaccine among girls over the last ten years has reduced the prevalence of the types of HPV that the vaccine protects against. This means that the risk of unvaccinated boys and girls coming into contact with HPV viruses, and passing them on, is far lower than before the programme started in 2008. The number of diagnoses of genital warts in England has also fallen sharply in both girls and boys since the vaccination programme started, suggesting that boys are already benefiting indirectly from the girls' programme through 'herd immunity' protection; and
- the criteria for all vaccination programmes aims to target those most at risk or with the greatest ability to benefit. Our priority is therefore to vaccinate adolescents before they reach sexual maturity.

2. Post Office Closures

Devon County Council has been actively engaged in putting forward its views on the future of Post Offices and in April responded to the call for evidence from the Parliamentary Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee's Inquiry into the Postal Network.

The Executive Summary of the evidence submitted is as follows:

- the shift by the Post Office towards a central / devolved model has seen core services fluctuate across the country, including in deprived, or remoter areas;
- the lack of a single national offer and guarantee in banking and service provision is a significant challenge in both policy design and national delivery of community led service provision;
- the focus on third party resilience through the franchise model is of concern to authorities such as Devon with considerable start-up costs and limited support;
- the Post Office has strong brand recognition and strength, but needs to combine with a better defined and consistent community-based offer;
- Government should be aware of the very strong socio-economic supporting role that a comprehensive physical Post Office network plays, including for many businesses and as a central focus for vibrant high streets;
- a national discussion is required about whether a focus only on profitable areas for franchises is sustainable over the long term in terms of the wider economic and social role played by Post Offices;
- Government recognition of the disproportionate impact that Post Office and banking closures and movements of post offices have on other local retail and service hierarchies, including downstream effects on local service provision; the wider public sector costs of sustaining small communities and business rates revenues in Local Authorities;
- recognising the very significant number of personal and business customers who continue to use physical banking services across the country, particularly in rural and coastal areas such as Devon (evidence provided) and the market opportunity this provides for the Post Office network;
- recognising the strong supporting role that Post Offices have in supporting global digital and internet-based commerce and trading by smaller UK based companies;
- recognising the unique role and opportunity for Post Offices to act as a single service provision centre within many communities, offering both postal, financial and retail service in locations increasingly devoid of wider competition. Post Offices are well placed to develop strategic relationships with other retail providers across the country beyond the existing supermarket relationships). This provides improved covenants and surety for landlords and other commercial partners for franchise holders seeking to sustain a store; and
- Government should consider the very strong central role that Crown Post Offices have in maintaining the economic vibrancy of town and city centres and supporting other businesses and local Business Rates revenues. As with smaller Post Offices there is a case for additional franchise support, not just

for those at risk of failing, but also for those seeking to establish or move a franchise.

Included in the evidence submitted was the potential for increasing the role Post Offices play in providing basic banking services, but also potential difficulties.

In principle, the Post Offices shift towards basic banking service should provide them with an inherent market opportunity. With a retraction of the retail banking sector, but a slower movement amongst communities (particularly older and harder to reach communities) towards digital solutions, Post Offices are well placed (at least in the interim) to benefit from a transitional need for localised services. Evidence at successive reviews of community banking identify the need for a residual level of localised banking provision across the country for at least the medium term. As banks rapidly retrench towards an online presence alone in the majority of communities, Post Offices have an opportunity to play a vital and commercial attractive bridging role as banks of first or last interaction with those most in need of localised provision. Opportunities also exist for the Post Office to work more closely with the wider bank sector on extending services within harder to reach communities, filling a void left by the loss of more traditional high street banking networks.

The Post Office network across Devon at present remains fairly comprehensive. A number of small to medium sized towns (up to around 14,000 population) in Devon have, however, been left with no single high street retail bank and the Post Office remains as the only feasible local provider of banking services. Around 30 retail bank branch closures have occurred in Devon over the past 2 years. Mobile banking van provision is patchy and often visits one town for around 1 hour per week, at times that are often not convenient for either personal, or business customers. Retail banks such as Barclays and Natwest have specifically advised customers to shift to using the Post Office for banking transactions when closing branches.

One bank alone, when it closed 10 branches in Devon between 2017 and early 2019, very recently identified 22,381 regular-to-heavy usage personal customers and 4,254 regular-to-heavy usage business customers predominantly using those branches. These numbers are expected to be similar for other banks which have also closed. While some customers will shift to more online transactions, a significant number of these customers will need to transfer their usage to another local banking facility.

Devon, as with much of the UK, is a predominantly small and micro business focused economy with almost 41,000 VAT registered SME and Micro businesses, plus many more smaller trading businesses. Many of these will continue to need to access physical banking facilities to undertake part of their business. While current access to Post Office facilities remains good for most, many are now a significant distance from high street retail banks.

Recommendations were submitted to the Inquiry by the Council as follows:

- Consideration given to the opportunities for further commercial support for rural, coastal and other 'community' critical post office locations, reflecting the

challenges around the franchise model in many of these locations and their centrality to local service delivery

- Consideration made of the potential for Government to better utilise and work with the post office network on wider service delivery, beyond financial transactions, and their potential role in competitive processes around regeneration and deprivation through key socio-economic Departments (MHCLG, BEIS, DCMS, DoH etc)

This inquiry is still open to receiving evidence and the Council's full response can be viewed online at:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/business-energy-and-industrial-strategy-committee/post-office-network/written/101221.html>

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