

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.

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