

# Devon Health and Wellbeing Board Update

## April 2022

### 1. COVID-19 and vaccination

The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 in Devon remains high.

It has risen to more than 400 people; more than double the figure from a fortnight ago and higher than at any other point in the pandemic.

High COVID-19 numbers are having a very significant impact across Devon's health and care system. The last time COVID-19 numbers were this high was in January 2021, before most people had the benefit of COVID-19 vaccines.

A small number of COVID-19 patients are currently in intensive care, but far fewer than previously, thanks to the success of the incredible COVID-19 vaccine programme. In Devon, a total of **2,716,251** doses have been given between 8 December 2020 and 27 March 2022.

### 2. COVID-19 Testing from 1 April

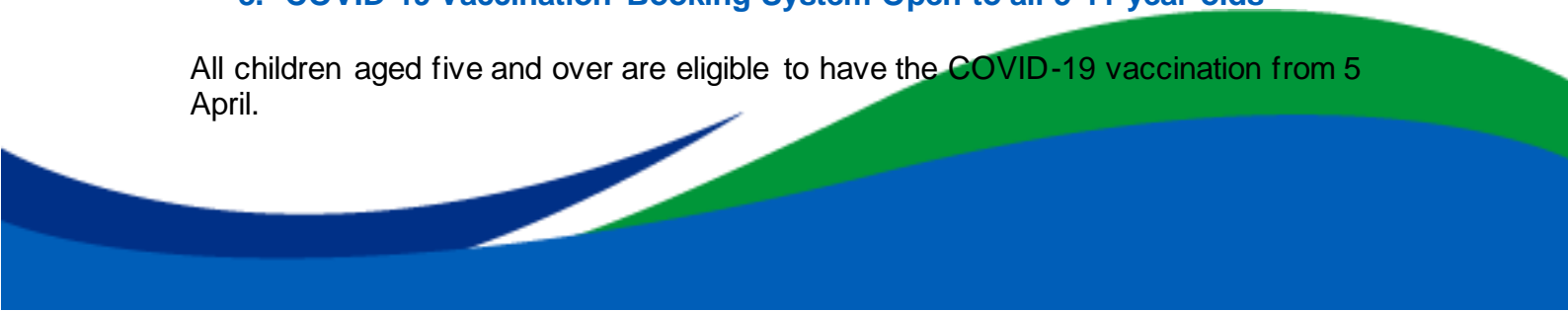
Free COVID-19 testing has ended but people at risk of serious illness from COVID-19, and eligible for treatments, will continue to get free tests to use if they develop symptoms, along with NHS and adult social care staff and those in other high-risk settings.

Free symptomatic testing will be provided for:

- Patients in hospital, where a PCR test is required for their care and to provide access to treatments and to support ongoing clinical surveillance for new variants;
- People who are eligible for community COVID-19 treatments because they are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. People in this group will be contacted directly and sent lateral flow tests to keep at home for use if they have symptoms as well as being told how to reorder tests; and
- People living or working in some high-risk settings. For example, staff in adult social care services such as homecare organisations and care homes, and residents in care homes and extra care and supported living services, NHS workers and those working and living in hospices, and prisons and places of detention (including immigration removal centres), where infection needs to be identified quickly to minimise outbreaks. People will also be tested before being discharged from hospital into care homes, hospices.

### 3. COVID-19 Vaccination Booking System Open to all 5-11 year olds

All children aged five and over are eligible to have the COVID-19 vaccination from 5 April.



Bookings can be made online or by calling 119. The vaccination is not being given to this age group in school.

Having the COVID-19 vaccine reduces the likelihood of further disruption to their education, developing Long Covid and passing the infection onto vulnerable family members and friends.

For most children COVID-19 is a mild illness that may require a few days off school but rarely leads to complications. For a very few children, the symptoms may be more serious or last longer.

While the current Omicron variant appears to be particularly mild in children it is not known whether future variants will be as mild.

In line with recommendations from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) children will be offered the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Each vaccine is a third of the dose of the vaccine that is given to older children and adults. Most children will be offered two doses of vaccine 12 weeks apart.

Children who are at greater risk of serious illness if they catch COVID-19, such as those who have a learning disability, weakened immune system, Down's Syndrome, severe neurodisabilities or a long-term serious condition, will need two doses of vaccine, eight weeks apart.

#### **4. Cases of flu, norovirus and COVID-19 on the increase in Devon**

Cases of COVID-19 – and other diseases that normally circulate in winter – are rising.

Increased social contact is thought to be one of the factors behind an increase in illnesses, which include flu and norovirus, sometimes known as the “winter vomiting bug”.


Although most of England's Covid-19 restrictions have ended, the health and care system in Devon remains busy, with continued high numbers of people in hospital with COVID-19 and staff absent due to the virus.

Flu and Norovirus cases are increasing, although still currently lower than normal levels. The flu season generally lasts through to March but people can catch either virus at any time of the year.

#### **5. Final Integrated Care System Non-Executive Board Appointments Announced**

The Integrated Care Board will be made up four executive members, six non-executive directors and four partnership members as well as the chair, Dr Sarah Wollaston, who was appointed in November 2021.

The latest appointments mean all the non-executive roles have been appointed to.



### **NED for quality and performance – Professor Hisham Khalil**

Hisham is a practising ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultant at University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust and Associate Dean and Faculty Head of the Peninsula Medical School.

A current University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust NED, Hisham has held a similar role at the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust. Hisham is an active clinical researcher with an interest in new models of healthcare delivery and ENT.

### **NED for health inequalities and population health – Professor Sheena Asthana**

Sheena has been the director of the Plymouth Institute of Health and Care Research since 2020 where her research focused on closing inequality gaps in access to health care, education and other public services.

Throughout her career, Sheena has been active in advocating for, and informing policy change in, health inequalities.

### **NED for citizen and community involvement – Dr Thandiwe Hara**

Thandie is trained in public health and epidemiology and has vast experience in developing partnerships, public engagement, promoting evidence based practice, and applied research. Currently, she is jointly appointed to lead on Regional innovation and Engagement at the University of Oxford, and as the Strategy Development Executive at OxLEP.

She is also a non-executive Board member of the NIHR SW Clinical Research network and a Trustee for Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council. She has previously served as public governor for University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust.

### **NED for finance and remuneration – Kevin Orford**

Kevin is an experienced board director who has held executive, non-executive and trustee positions on NHS, charity and government body boards for over 25 years.

Having held roles in acute and community trusts and strategic health authorities, Kevin is currently a NED for Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust and the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust.

Kevin is committed to equality and diversity and was a board member of Stonewall Equality Ltd during the successful campaign for equal marriage. He is also a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

### **NED for audit and risk –Graham Clarke**

Graham has held several high-profile executive and non-executive positions including in his current role as a NED for the Department of Health and Social Care, including its Audit and Risk Committee and COVID Therapeutic Task Force.



In previous roles, Graham has chaired the Audit and Risk Committees of the UK Health Research Authority and MIND (the mental health charity). Graham also has extensive experience of the pharmaceutical industry in a number of senior commercial roles including at GlaxoSmithKline and his own company, ImmBio.

### **NED for primary care – Judy Hargadon**

Judy Hargadon has been undertaking a similar role for the CCG over the past few years and will continue to do so on an interim basis while a recruitment process for a permanent member is undertaken.

### **6. Partners lead the way with GP Locum Service**

The NHS in Devon is working with partners to lead the way in developing digital solutions for general practice with its 'GP in the Cloud' digital locum technology.

At a time when NHS organisations are seeing sustained high demand on services while managing high staff absence due to Covid, this ground-breaking technology is a welcome addition, providing much-needed extra resources for general practice.

The innovative technology enables a GP to be located anywhere in the UK to carry out online consultations to patients across Devon via the internet, using a secure cloud-based virtual desktop (VDI), based within the Devon information technology infrastructure.

The digital locum service offers many uses, including:

- Support for clearing a backlog of digital work at busy times to help free up staff on the ground to do more face-to-face clinics
- Providing short-notice extra GP cover
- Cover for annual leave or other planned absences.

The 'Digital Locum Service' is delivered through a partnership of Devon Clinical Commissioning Group, Delt Shared Services Limited, National Association of Sessional GPs (NASGP) and Lantum.

### **7. Working together to hear local views - Engagement on Protected Elective Capacity**

The NHS and Healthwatch have been working in partnership to hear local views as part of a local engagement programme on measures that could help protect planned operations from being postponed when hospitals face very demand for their urgent care services.

Known as protected elective capacity (PEC), this way of working means separating planned care from emergency care to avoid the current challenge where emergency cases can disrupt routine operations and cause cancellations or delays.



The engagement programme, which began in March and ends on the 14 April, has involved a series of online focus groups set up to listen to local people on waiting lists for care, NHS staff and key system partners.

