

## Covid-19 Outbreak Management

**15 April 2021**

**We welcome the easing of restrictions and the opportunities it presents to re-start our local economy, but urge people to remain vigilant and to continue to act responsibly.**

- Case numbers continue to fall in all age groups and we continue to have one of the lowest rates in the country
- Numbers now are the same as late summer last year
- Low and falling numbers of patients in local hospitals and fewer deaths
- Vaccination programme is continuing to go well. The number of new cases, and severity of illness, is much reduced.
- Covid is still in the community however with continued sporadic outbreaks related to workplaces, care homes and other settings – caution needed
- Schools – on Easter holiday right now – are open for all pupils, and we are continuing to monitor their progress. Attendance at Devon schools prior the holidays was higher than national attendance averages
- Regular testing, using the rapid lateral flow tests, is now encouraged of ALL adults. **See Community Testing paragraph below.**
- Schools (especially) and adults (generally) have been encouraged to continue to take their lateral flow tests, twice a week, during this Easter holiday period. Students are being reminded to take their test before returning to school/college.

### **Key Public health messages:**

As restrictions are easing, it is vital that we all remain alert to the risk of coronavirus, which is still in our communities.

- Follow the rules
- Remember that although groups of up to six people, or two households of any size, can now meet, it must still be outside. Please do not socialise indoors.
- Although overnight stays away from home in England are now permitted, and self-contained accommodation can reopen, it must be used by members of the same household or support bubble.
- When you are out, remember to maintain social distancing, wearing face coverings when indoors in public spaces, and wash your hands regularly.
- Devon is welcoming visitors to the county, but is asking them to be respectful towards other people and the environment, (eg dispose of litter, park responsibly etc)

**HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh**

With the sad announcement of the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, last week, people are reminded to follow public health messages regarding coronavirus. The public are asked to a **national e-Book of Condolence**, available via the Royal Family's website, rather than 'physical books of condolence'. Similarly, national messaging supported locally asks people not to leave flowers at locations, and instead suggests **making donations to charity**.

## **Other key messages**

### **Hospitals and health service**

- Hospitals admissions continue to reduce and are now very low
- 111 First service continues to be promoted to help manage non-urgent cases and ensure people get access to care at the right time in the right place. This is also to relieve pressure on A&E services.
- The NHS are promoting EConnect – an online route for patients to access GP services

### **Mass vaccination**

- Vaccination on track and going well
- Over 650,000 people in Devon (including Plymouth and Torbay) have now received first dose of vaccine. 100,000 people in Devon have had their second dose of vaccine
- More than 90 per cent 50-54's have had their first dose, as have at least 94 per cent of older age groups.
- The Government announced this week roll out to priority group 10, over 45s. They can book appointments online, and GP practices are continuing to offer the vaccine and will be in touch with patients directly
- Devon has taken delivery of the first batch of the new Moderna vaccine this week. Moderna is the third Covid-19 vaccination to be offered by the NHS and uses RNA technology; similar to the Pfizer vaccine.
- Campaign to reach out to underrepresented groups including BAME communities and people in rural areas continues

### **Astra Zeneca**

- The NHS is reassuring people that the Astra Zeneca vaccine is safe, effective and has already saved thousands of lives.
- The MHRA, advises that evidence of a link (with extremely rare, unlikely to occur blood clots) is slightly stronger but still needs work and the benefits of the vaccine far outweigh the risks for the vast majority of adults.
- The MHRA estimates the overall risk of blood clots for the Astra Zeneca vaccine is 4 in every million people who receive the jab
- The MHRA advises people should have their second dose unless they experienced serious side effects regardless of age.
- The MHRA advises the incidence of blood clots is slightly higher in younger age groups

- JCVI advise it is preferable for eligible people aged under 30, with no underlying health conditions to be offered the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

### **Key public messages:**

- **Being vaccinated reduces your risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID. But you can still catch it and pass it on so everyone must continue to adhere to restrictions and public health guidance**
- **People need to book an appointment before turning up at a vaccine centre and let them know if they cannot attend to reduce wastage**
- **Over 45s can now book an appointment. This can be done online, otherwise the NHS will get in touch with you when it's your turn**
- **Do not call your local hospital or GP practice about getting the vaccine (unless you have been invited to). Otherwise the NHS will contact you when it's your turn.**

### **Local Rapid Testing and Contact Tracing**

- Devon County Council has significantly expanded its offer, with mobile community testing sites visiting locations across the county.
- Booking at those sites is not required currently
- Details of where those locations are, and their opening times are on [devon.cc/testing](https://devon.cc/testing)
- Asymptomatic testing is available now in numerous ways to Devon residents:
  - (1) Our mobile community testing sites, where visitors can be tested or they can collect home test kits to do themselves at home
  - (2) Lateral flow tests are available to collect at NHS PCR testing sites at certain times
  - (3) They can also be ordered online, via the NHS, to be delivered by post to people's homes.
- Home test kits are also available from pharmacies that are part of the Pharmacy Collect scheme
- Some workplaces are offering testing to their employees on-site or at home and businesses are being encouraged to register
- Carers, personal assistants, front line social care staff and Devon County Council employees can also order and collect home testing kits from DCC PPE hubs
- All local tracing cases are now coming directly to us for tracing, rather than going to national tracing teams. Local tracing is having a good success rate in reaching people who have been in contact with positive cases

### **Key Public Messages:**

- **Everyone, who is asymptomatic, is encouraged to take a lateral flow test twice a week**

- **Alongside vaccine rollout, regular testing is at the heart of plans to reopen society and the economy, helping to suppress and control the spread of the virus and variants**
- **These tests are important because 1 in 3 people with coronavirus do not show symptoms, and these tests will help identify those likely to be carrying the virus**
- **Regular lateral flow testing helps stop the spread of coronavirus**
- **These are tests to find cases and NOT a test to release. A lateral flow test is useful for picking up asymptomatic positive cases so that people can isolate and not spread to others. A negative test does not give people a green light and they must continue to adhere to national restrictions and public health guidance at all times**

### **Business and economy**

- From this week:
  - Non-essential retail can open, including personal care premises such as hairdressers.
  - Hospitality venues can open for outdoor table-service.
  - Indoor leisure and sports facilities can reopen.
  - Self-contained holiday accommodation can open so long as they are used by members of the same household or support bubble.
  - And most outdoor attractions can reopen.
- A new campaign has been launched to encourage organisations to bid for **Community Renewal Funding**. It is looking for innovative schemes to kickstart the local economy by investing in skills, helping people into employment, supporting local businesses to grow and develop, and helping local communities become more resilient and sustainable. It is a one-year Community Renewal Fund pilot, worth up to £24 million across Devon this year

### **Care Homes and vulnerable people**

- Significant outbreaks in care homes continues to fall and severity of illness and deaths are much reduced
- Nearly all of care home residents and most care home staff have had first dose vaccination. Moving onto to second doses.
- From this week, care home residents can name up to two people who can come for regular indoor visits, either together or separately.
- Vaccination programme continues to reach out to housebound and other vulnerable groups
- Campaign to boost uptake by health and social care staff ongoing

### **Schools and education**

- Face coverings should continue to be worn in secondary school and college classrooms when students return after the Easter break.
- Attendance at Devon schools has been high. In the week leading up to the Easter school holidays, attendance at all Devon schools was 95 per cent, compared to a national figure of 91 per cent. 97 per cent attendance at Devon Primary Schools, and 94 per cent at Devon Secondary Schools.

### **Concluding summary:**

**Devon is still in a good place, with one of the very lowest rates of coronavirus in England. Alongside the ban on international travel, we anticipate a good number of visitors into the county this holiday season.**

**However, to visitors and Devon-residents alike, the message is that we must stay alert to coronavirus, which is still in our communities.**

**While restrictions ease, and as we move into better weather, we must not be tempted to move to fast. We are not yet in normal times, and we must not behave as if we are.**

**To keep case rates down in Devon, we must all continue to follow the rules, and support each other to stay safe and well. And that way, help us to recover quicker.**