

Service Delivery for Public Health Devon: In-Year Briefing  
Report of the Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity

Recommendation: Health and Adult Care Scrutiny is asked to note the update on the delivery of public health services in 2022.

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## 1. **Background**

1.1 This report summarises the position on the delivery of public health service during 2022-23. Public Health Devon has continued to play a significant leadership role in the ongoing response to Covid-19. The Devon and Torbay Health Protection Board and the Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board have continued to meet during this period. Public Health Devon has also continued to provide leadership and input into key programmes of work supporting some of the most vulnerable people in Devon who have been impacted most by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

## 2. **The delivery of the Council's strategic objectives: public health and health protection**

2.1 Public Health Devon has been at the forefront of the local and regional response to the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic.

2.2 Specifically, Public Health Devon has led the Covid-19 tactical response through a multi-agency Tactical Management Group (TMG), which was chaired by the Director of Public Health. This has enabled Devon County Council to:

- mobilise a rapid response across all key Council services;
- co-ordinate effort across the Local Authority;
- lead work with District Council partners, with the NHS, the police and other partners;
- Support the NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme.

2.3 The Devon Tactical Management Group has continued to operate providing a clear governance structure to enable timely decisions to be taken about the deployment of additional resources, including financial resources, via the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), and key actions to help control the spread of the virus.

2.4 Public Health Devon has since established and has provided continued leadership for:

- The Devon Local Outbreak Management Plan
- The Devon and Torbay Covid-19 Health Protection Board
- Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board
- Devon Tactical Management Group.

2.5 While key operational elements of the COVID-19 response, such as contact tracing and community testing have been stood down in Devon, following national policy decisions, Public Health Devon has continued to support the operational delivery of the NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme.

2.6 The Public Health Intelligence Team have continued to develop and innovate the utilisation of data and intelligence to support access and better utilisation of data. The development of Power BI and interactive dashboards to present COVID-19 data as well as other key public health information such as the Child Weight Management Programme and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment are seen as best practice. The

Team is also in the process of producing a new Cost-of-Living Dashboard to support local response.

### **3. The delivery of the Council's strategic objectives: public health and health improvement**

- 3.1 Public Health's commissioned services continue to innovate and utilise the experience gained through the Pandemic to continue to meet the needs of Devon residents. Following a reduction in service demand throughout the pandemic demand for public health services are starting to increase specifically sexual health services, substance misuse and healthy lifestyle.
- 3.2 Additional national grant funding has been received to support delivery of the recently published national drugs strategy. A new Devon Drug and Alcohol Strategic Partnership has been established which has responsibility to produce a joint needs assessment and a local delivery plan to break drug supply chains, ensure an effective treatment and recovery system and reduce demand for recreational drugs.
- 3.3 The Public Health Nursing Service has continued to face workforce challenges both in recruitment and retention of staff. A service improvement plan has been developed to address this challenge.
- 3.4 Public Mental Health remains a priority post pandemic. Devon County Council has signed up to and supports UKHSA's Concordat for Better Mental Health. An audit was undertaken earlier in 2022 to identify gaps and areas for improvement in relation to the Concordat's framework. The system wide All Age Mental Health group has been re-established to scope and deliver a partnership plan. The plan is structured in line with the evidence base and Concordat's framework and dovetails with the work of Devon's Community Mental Health Framework Programme.
- 3.5 Inclusion health groups are the most vulnerable groups of our society and include those who are homeless; vulnerable migrants; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; sex workers; and victims of modern slavery. While they make up small proportion of population as a whole, they experience disproportionately and significant poorer health and opportunity. The risk of homelessness and disadvantage are worsening but there are many opportunities (and synergies between the groups) for improvement. A health needs assessment is currently underway across each Devon Local Care Partnership area to understand the challenges more holistically and to inform a shift towards alliance working. Strategic vision and governance of this key agenda in reducing health inequalities is currently being scoped.

### **4. Delivery of the budget in line with the previously agreed budget**

- 4.1 The work of Public Health Devon - and all of its commissioned services - are funded from within a ring-fenced grant that is paid directly to Devon County Council from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). There are no actual or projected overspends to report against budget projections at the mid-year point.
- 4.2 There are underspends emerging at the mid-year point for two reasons:
  - As a result of the pandemic, fewer people overall have accessed services in both General Practice and in community pharmacies and while demand is increasing steadily it will take some time to reach pre-pandemic levels.
  - Public Health Devon has utilised the central Government Covid-19 funding, Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF), to support staffing resource and

some services during the pandemic, funding that otherwise would have had to come from Public Health's budget.

However, any underspends represent **delayed** costs, rather than savings. Contained Outbreak Management Funding ceases at the end of March 2023.

- 4.3 Money that hasn't been spent at year end remains within the statutory Public Health ring-fenced reserve, as required by the conditions of the Grant, and it may only be spent on the Grant's defined public health services.

**5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 Health and Adult Care Scrutiny is asked to note the update on the delivery of public health services so far in 2022.

**6. Financial considerations**

- 6.1 Contained within the report, particularly pertaining to the conditions of the ring-fenced Public Health grant.

**7. Legal considerations**

- 7.1 The deployment of the Public Health Grant for specified services is a statutory responsibility under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

**8. Environmental impact considerations**

- 8.1 Contained within the report.

**9. Equality considerations**

- 9.1 Contained within the report.

**10. Risk assessment considerations**

- 10.1 Contained within the report.

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