

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of the Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly Health Protection Committee, Annual Assurance Report 2022-23

The report provides a summary of the assurance functions of the Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly Health Protection Committee (DCIOS HPC) and reviews performance for the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. In many work areas, the reporting period was dominated by recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition back to previous working practices.

### Assurance Arrangements

Local authorities, through their Directors of Public Health, continued their assurance role in protecting the health of their populations. The Committee is mandated by the Health and Wellbeing Boards to provide assurance, via the report, that adequate arrangements are in place for the prevention, surveillance, planning, and response required to protect the public's health.

### Prevention and Control of Infectious Disease

UKHSA South West Health Protection Team provided the specialist response to infectious disease and hazard related situations across Devon and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, supported by local, regional, and national expertise. The winter of 2022-2023 was a busy season with COVID-19, influenza, avian influenza, and a group A Streptococcal national outbreak. The team responded to outbreaks in a variety of settings including, but not limited to, care homes, educational settings, asylum seeker settings and custodial institutions.

### Screening Programmes

All screening programmes successfully recovered from the impact of the pandemic with additional offers made to those whose appointments had been delayed. For some programmes, this required significant regional and national investment, to increase capacity and clear the backlog of appointments. All screening programmes have returned to a business-as-usual footing. The additional investment has been designed to ensure more robust and sustainable services in the future. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the ability to meet national standards was impacted during this period.

### Immunisation Programmes

In addition to the routine immunisation programmes, the COVID-19 vaccination programme continued to be delivered in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation

(JCVI) guidance. In 2022-23 there was a successful autumn-winter programme, and a spring booster programme for those at higher risk. There were challenges meeting some national uptake and coverage standards in some programmes and for these areas, action plans and improvement plans were put in place alongside the recovery plans.

### Healthcare Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance

There were significant challenges within Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) work including financial constraints and access to sufficiently trained/experienced staff. Management of COVID-19 moved towards being considered alongside, rather than separate to other Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs). Capacity to support non-NHS settings with IPC through the Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) continued in 2022/23 across the three Devon local authorities, which maintained the links built with these settings during the pandemic. The COMF IPC practitioner post ended in March 2023. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) work was impacted by recovery, as capacity for meeting attendance was low. This area of work will be taken forward in the next reporting period with the creation of the Peninsula Antimicrobial Resistance Group (PARG). A new AMR National Action Plan is expected in 2024 and aspects of this will need implementing at the local level by Integrated Care System partners.

### Emergency Planning, Resilience and Response

Emergency Planning, Resilience and Response was led across the region by the NHS with the support of local authority partners as part of the multi-agency partnership, the Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum. Despite the stand down from pandemic response, extreme pressures persisted throughout the year. Relevant forum members responded to many significant incidents in 2022-23, including extreme heat, July 2022; the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, September 2022; suspected infectious disease, November 2022; fire and evacuation of properties in Newquay, December 2022; severe winter weather, December 2022 and large-scale industrial action across the health sector.

### Climate and Environment

At a National level, UKHSA launched their Centre for Climate and Health Security in October 2022 with a mission to deliver a step change in capabilities. The extreme heat, drought and water supply shortages in both Devon and Cornwall in 2022 highlighted that

action must be taken to prepare for weather events exacerbated or caused by climate change. A new section has been created in the report, to emphasise the importance of climate work. Climate related issues are included in the Devon Joint Forward Plan and are intrinsically linked with health protection topics.

### Priorities Areas of Focus

New rolling priorities for the DCIOS HPC have been set, against which subsequent annual reports will report. These will be reviewed and updated as part of the annual reporting process. To ensure relevance and timely reporting, the next Health Protection Committee assurance report will report against these refreshed priorities and subsequent reports will be published 6 months after the reporting period (financial year) ends.