

Adults, Wellbeing and Health

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 October 2021

COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan



Report of Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health, Durham County Council

Electoral division affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is for Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive an update on the Local Outbreak Management Plan, the Health Protection Assurance Board and the current local COVID-19 activity. In addition this report includes an update on the Government's Autumn and Winter Plan and Contain Framework.

Executive summary

- 2 In County Durham there are established health protection assurance arrangements with key partners working closely on infectious diseases, environmental hazards and emergency preparedness and response. This work reports annually to the Health and Wellbeing Board and has stood us in good stead to establish rapid partnership arrangements, including with the Public Health England (PHE) North East Health Protection Team, for developing the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan and preparing for complex cases of COVID-19 and outbreaks.
- 3 The work is managed by the Local Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB) building on the extensive cross Council and partnership planning and response to COVID-19 and is presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board at every meeting. Recent updates relate to current activity; data; outbreak control; Local Tracing Partnership; vaccination programme; testing programmes; funding; regional collaboration; communications; Covid Champions and national updates.

- 4 The COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan sets out the role of the County Durham system in preventing and controlling COVID-19 with a focus on robust management of outbreaks and providing support for complex settings, communities, and individuals where required. It aims to protect the health of the County's population from COVID-19 and assure stakeholders, and the public, that efficient and effective arrangements are in place.
- 5 The Plan remains a dynamic document which will be updated according to learning and experience in dealing with the COVID-19 response. The Public Health Team will keep the Plan under regular review and amend/update according to local, regional and national developments.

Recommendation

- 6 The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - a) note and agree the report and the robust governance and outbreak control arrangements in place to identify, control and contain COVID-19 cases, clusters and outbreaks.

Background

- 7 The County Durham COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan takes a population health protection approach and has a particular focus on higher risk settings, locations and communities which involves enhanced oversight with a broader range of partners, expertise, communications, intelligence and governance. This process is built on established and longstanding relationships with PHE North East Health Protection Team.
- 8 The Local Outbreak Management Plan is managed by the Local Health Protection Assurance Board which currently meets fortnightly. The plan is presented at every Health and Wellbeing Board along with the current activity update.
- 9 Throughout the pandemic the plan has continued to be updated to include areas of work including the vaccination programme; developments to the NHS Test and Trace Service including the localisation of delivery through the Local Tracing Partnership; responding to Variants of Concern (VOCs); the role of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs), including social and physical distancing, good hygiene and face coverings; self-isolation support and the ongoing work to support those most vulnerable and impacted by inequalities within our population.
- 10 National guidance such as the Contain Framework and the Autumn and Winter Plan help the effective planning and deployment at local level

and underpins what the Government is hoping to achieve. That is, living safely with the virus and acknowledging it will not be eradicated but will become endemic and will continue to circulate in pockets in the community.

Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP)

- 11 The LOMP is a dynamic document, evolving to plan and respond to any changes in the rates of COVID-19 and also major organisation change during 2021/22 including the establishment of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) as well as the implementation of the white paper setting out legislative proposals for a Health and Care Bill.
- 12 The revised plan was assured and commended for several examples of good practice, including the comprehensive assurance provided by the plan, the Spike Detector Tool and Community Spike Outbreak Management Group, the collaborative work with the university (also commended in a Cabinet Office visit and presented nationally) and the Community Champions programme which has been presented at a number of national webinars.
- 13 The plan's objectives are to:
 - Protect the health of our local communities through:
 - Provision of clear prevention messages in relation to COVID-19.
 - Rapid detection of COVID-19 cases, clusters and outbreaks including any new variant of concern or interest.
 - Preventing onward transmission.
 - Provide support to those who need to self-isolate.
 - Develop and apply intelligence, including the knowledge and insight provided by our local communities.
- 14 In addition, the plan addresses:
 - Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC).
 - Action on enduring transmission.
 - Enhanced Contact Tracing, in partnership with HPT.
 - Ongoing role of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs), including social and physical distancing, good hygiene and face coverings
 - Interface with vaccines roll out
 - Activities to enable 'living with COVID' (COVID secure)

- 15 The updated COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan is attached at appendix 2.

Role of the Local Health Protection Assurance Board

- 16 The key purpose of the Local Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB) is to lead, co-ordinate and manage work to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 17 The HPAB meets on a fortnightly basis. The current work of the HPAB includes:
- Delivery of the COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan.
 - Regional oversight of LA7 work.
 - Data and intelligence analysis, including health data from County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CCDFT) and the County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
 - Developments and innovation: e.g. Vaccination Programme and the Spike Detection Tool.
 - Oversight of setting-based intervention, including educations, care homes, community, workplaces, University, etc.
 - Oversight of COVID-19 Testing including PCR and LFD testing strands available throughout the county.
 - Oversight of COVID-19 funding allocation and delivery.
 - Oversight of Outbreak Control.
 - Oversight of the Local Tracing Partnership.
 - Assurance of actions carried out in relation to COVID-19

Current activity aligned to the Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP)

Covid-19 Data

- 18 Since the full easing of restrictions (Step 4 - 19 July 2021) we have seen a gradual upward increase in cases. As of 14 September 2021, County

Durham's 7-day rate is 429.7 per 100,000. This higher level of community transmission of infection aligns with rates across the North East and exceeds levels we would like to see with schools returning. We encourage everyone to continue to act carefully and remain cautious.

- 19 To keep yourself up to date with the latest figures please use our local County Durham [COVID-19 dashboard](#) which provides a summary of cases by rates, ages and Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) along with current vaccination data, hospital bed occupancy and a summary of Covid-19 deaths.

Outbreak control and community transmission

- 20 COVID-19 outbreaks follow agreed PHE joint management arrangements set out in an overarching Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) which covers a number of different settings. The Director of Public Health provides oversight and leadership of all Outbreak Control Teams.
- 21 The dedicated Outbreak Control Team (OCT) reporting to the Director of Public Health (DPH) and the Local Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB) has established strong working relationships with key partners within the Council and across the health and social care system and draws on existing expertise depending on the setting or group of people affected, such as school, workplace, prison etc. They work closely with the HPT in PHE, supporting formally-convened OCTs. The council has committed to continue to fund the team until March 2022.
- 22 From 19 July 2021 statutory guidance outlining local authority powers to impose restrictions was updated following the move into Step 4 of the roadmap. This enables local authorities to restrict access to, or close, individual premises, prohibit or restrict certain events, restrict access to, or close, public outdoor places and also included the enforcement of face coverings in premises, if evidence suggested a serious threat to public health.
- 23 From 19 July 2021, the NHS test and trace in the workplace policy allowed critical workers in specifically approved workplaces who were fully vaccinated (14 days post final dose) and identified as close contacts permission to return to work, in exceptional circumstances where there was a risk to health or safety resulting from staff absence through the provision of a reduced level of care. This would only be invoked as a last resort. This process intended to run until 16 August 2021.
- 24 In this phase of continued caution while managing the risks of COVID-19, the Government continued to work with local authorities. The

Government provided national support to local areas which needed an enhanced response to ensure there was no danger of the NHS facing unsustainable pressure. The support was provided for a 5-week period, and included the option to deliver extra testing within targeted areas, the provision of logistical support to maximise vaccine uptake, and further help for local campaign

- 25 The North East was identified as an enhanced response area following a rise in cases rates, however, due to proportionately low rates experienced in County Durham at that time, County Durham was not a target area for the support and interventions. However, local collaborative efforts to prioritise vaccinations and provide additional support to areas where vaccine rates were lower, have been mobilised.
- 26 The 16 August 2021 saw a change to the self-isolation guidance, in line with step 4 of the government's covid-19 roadmap. Double vaccinated people and those aged under 18 and 6 months no longer have to legally self-isolate if they were identified as close contacts of a positive Covid-19 case by NHS Test and Trace and were advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible.
- 27 Most double vaccinated health and social care staff who are close contacts of cases are able to routinely return to work, provided they have had a negative PCR test. Daily LFD tests are to be taken for 10 days as a precaution. Staff working with clinically extremely vulnerable patients or service users needed a risk assessment to be carried out by a designated person in the workplace before they can return to work.
- 28 The Workplace Daily Contact Testing (DCT) scheme continues, with testing sites offering daily testing as an alternative to self-isolation for close contacts who are not double vaccinated. Over 700 sites nationally are now in operation across critical sectors, and over 1 million test kits have been distributed.
- 29 On 3 September 2021 the Department of Health and Social Care updated their operational guidance for the vaccination of people working in care homes. From 11 November 2021, all care home workers, and anyone entering a care home, will need to be fully vaccinated unless they are exempt. With this in mind the last date for care home workers to get their first dose so they are fully vaccinated by the time regulations come into force is the 16 September.

Local NHS Test and Trace – Local Tracing Partnership

- 30 The County Durham Local Tracing Partnership (LTP) became a pilot site for Local Zero on 6 April 2021 and replaced the national team as the first point of contact for contact tracing in County Durham. The LTP now

accesses positive case details from the national NHS Test & Trace programme at the earliest opportunity to enable rapid engagement and local follow up including welfare and support via the Community Hub.

31 Due to a rise in cases and as society has opened up demand on this service outweighed their capacity and the LTP had to return excess cases to the national team to follow up. The LTP have implemented a demand management and recruitment plan to support the increase in contact tracing.

32 From 3 August the LTP have been operating with priority postcodes. A matrix has been developed to underpin which postcodes are prioritised. This is based upon localities:

- Vaccination status
- Case prevalence over time
- Compliance with Test and Trace contact

Any changes to postcodes prioritised are reviewed by the LTP Oversight Group.

33 The LTP received 1506 cases in August and retained 1484 cases with only 22 returned to the national team.

34 A successful recruitment plan is progressing including the recruitment of casual staff and support of trained staff from substantive roles to support LTP to enable their capacity to respond with changing demand and provide flexibility and resilience for the autumn and winter.

Covid-19 Vaccination Programme

35 The Covid-19 vaccination programme continues to be rolled out successfully and at speed across County Durham. Currently we have seen:

- More than 692,000 doses have been given in total as of 4 August 2021.
- 89.4% of the 16+ population have received their 1st dose with 81.0% receiving their 2nd dose as of 9 September 2021.
- Just under 19,000 people aged 40+ are yet to have their 1st dose. Enhanced work is ongoing to encourage uptake of vaccinations with Comms targeting the top 10 areas with higher rates.
- Champions and Awareness Co-ordinators have formed joined up approach to support vaccine venues to engage with hard to reach and low take up areas.

- All 14 County Durham GP sites and Community Pharmacies to offer booster vaccinations.
- County Hall opened on 10 September 2021 to give flu vaccinations to NHS staff in preparation for Covid vaccinations.
- From 13 September 2021 booster vaccinations started for all health and social care staff from County Hall and Darlington Memorial Hospital.
- Appointments for 16-18 yr olds for single and the first of two doses are available through online booking systems or walk in sites.
- GPs and hospital hubs are vaccinating 12-18 yr olds with health conditions or those living with people with suppressed immunity.
- Work is ongoing with Durham University to offer and encourage returning students to have both vaccines from mid-September using the testing centre on Palace Green.
- Work is ongoing on the 'leaving no one behind' programme for vaccine take up.
- We are focussing on future pop-up clinics for low uptake areas not close to a vaccination site. Community and comms plans are in places to encourage residents to access the vaccine.
- JVICI further guidance is pending regarding the eligibility for the 3rd booster Covid vaccination.
- Planning is underway to prepare for the vaccination of 12 to 15-year-olds in partnership with schools.

Covid-19 Testing Programmes

Testing Oversight Group

36 The Testing Oversight Group provides governance for the range of testing channels currently deployed (below) and recording progress, issues and risks:

- Education: (Secondaries, Primaries, FE, Special Schools, Early Years and PVI).
- Community: (special workforce solutions (F&R, Aycliffe Secure), Workplaces – staff who can't WFH, Staff and volunteers in

contact with Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, and targeted asymptomatic testing.

- Workforce (other): Care Homes, Day Care and Prisons.
- PCR: Static Sites and MTUs.

37 Targeted work with underrepresented groups is underway making links with Gypsy Roma Traveller communities, Foodbanks and School Governing bodies to promote asymptomatic testing.

38 The three key testing channels; PCR testing; LFD testing and surge testing are detailed below:

PCR Testing (Polymerase Chain Reaction)

39 PCR testing is the gold standard of test where swabs are processed in labs and results are reported within 24hrs. Work in this area include:

- The Outbreak Control Team (OCT) works closely to plan and direct PCR testing resources to high COVID-19 rate areas that are identified, and in response to any testing requests from individual Outbreak Control meetings.
- The County continues to be served by Mobile Testing Units (MTU) that are located and moved across the county as demand and rates require.
- County Hall overflow car park is due to re-open Monday to Friday week commencing 27 September to provide additional PCR capacity in the city on students' return, as the Howlands site is to become a university LFD site.
- East Durham College, Peterlee, has agreed to allow the site to continue to operate during term time. This gives a replacement permanent MTU site in the east of the county.
- Consett AFC is no longer available as a site from September to October, the council is exploring using the Karbon Homes site in Greencroft/Annfield Plain at the weekend.
- Durham County Council is considering extending licences for the use of the Etherley Lane (Bishop Auckland) and Riverside (Chester-le-Street) sites to continue the two LTS over the winter.

- DHSC has been trialling mobile processing units (MPUs) at sites in the county over the past few weeks. Aiming to process tests on site and produce test results within two-hour timeframe

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing

- 40 The aim in County Durham has been to develop a rapid and targeted asymptomatic community testing solution to support our actions to control the transmission of the virus.
- 41 From July 2021 testing was re-shaped to deliver a mobile assisted testing site (ATS) service, with a smaller/casual workforce, responding to spikes, high rates, targeting high prevalence area and identified vulnerable groups has been implemented. This service is also available for backup assisted testing responses for surge, schools and workplace testing. Work in this area include:
- New Guidance on LFD testing for nose only tests (ACON flowflex) was published 2 August 2021.
 - All identified community collection points have been stocked with 117 venues available for collection of both home testing packs including libraries, leisure centres and customer access points.
 - Some of our community centres informally became collection points for LFD home test kits, these were given out at foodbank points. The Gypsy Roma Traveller community were supported with testing, vaccinations and self-isolation whilst travelling to and from the Appleby Fair.
 - Currently, a team is in place supporting schools with twice weekly assisted LFD testing for the start of the Autumn term; 700 tests have been taken at Durham 6th Form accessing both testing packs.
 - All targeted collection points – DCC venues / Domestic Abuse refuges / Harbour / GRT team / GRT Nurse / Permanent and temporary stop over sites / DARS Recovery Centres / Family Centres / One Point Hubs have all been supplied with LFD Home Test Kits for distribution.
 - Planning is in place for the reinstatement of local conferences, guidance and risk assessment for managers; threshold based on scale of event, as part of winter planning, including considering the need for testing at these events.

- Durham University's Test to Release programme for students returning home at the end of term had 1194 participants with 88% testing negative including a final PCR with 49 positive tests at the initial start of the programme.
- The University is also continuing its Test to Participate scheme into the new term for new and returning students which includes Welcome Orientation Week.
- Daily contact testing for the workforce is continuing with Co-op Logistics, Fire & Rescue, Lidl and HMP Durham set up.
- Residents can continue to order a home LFD test kit online or from local collection points. More information can be found here, www.durham.gov.uk/CovidLFT

Surge testing

- 42 Surge testing involves increased testing together with enhanced contact tracing to detect and assess the spread of a specific variants. Genomic sequencing of PCR tests are carried out to understand prevalence, to link variant strains and to identify possible routes of transmission.
- 43 The current national programme of surge testing is known as Operation Eagle. Locally, work has been ongoing with partners and led by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to finalise local surge testing plans including a table top exercise to develop the plans. These have been approved by CMT / LRF and HPAB.

Variant of Concern (VoCs)

- 44 When new variants of COVID-19 are identified, rapid research is undertaken nationally and internationally to assess the impact of the variants on factors which might change the impact of the virus on humans: for example, whether it is more transmissible; whether it causes more severe illness; or vaccine efficacy. -
- 45 Within County Durham a VoC Oversight Group has been convened (co-chaired by the Deputy Director in Public Health and a Consultant in Health Protection, HPT). The group meets weekly to discuss VoC cases. These cases are monitored through shared line list and regular updates from HPT and daily systematic review of local data. This group reports to the HPAB.

COVID-19 funding

- 46 The purpose of this funding is 'to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred in

relation to the mitigation against management of local outbreaks of COVID-19'.

- 47 The Outbreak Funding Budget Group continues to oversee the process for managing expenditure from funding received through the Test and Trace Grant and Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).
- 48 The Outbreak Funding Budget Group provide monthly updates to the Health Protection Assurance Board and CMT to ensure those receiving funding follow the Outbreak Funding Briefing and Procedure regarding expenditure, recharge, monitoring and reporting.
- 49 The Group ensures:
 - Lead officers/bid owners complete their monthly expenditure monitoring forms and bi-monthly project progress updates to assess and report to HPAB and CMT.
 - Bids have been RAG rated to clearly identify progress against forecast.
- 50 Where there is a concern with progress/expenditure of funding bids lead officers/bid owners will be invited to a surgery meeting late September to discuss the progress of their bids, and exception reports will be submitted to CMT.
- 51 COMF funding to date has supported work across the Council and with partners with some bids now completed including:
 - Mutual Aid and VCS Emergency Support
 - Portable handwashing stations for schools
 - Re-opening of schools swimming pools
 - Additional support to schools to cover unplanned operating costs during Covid
 - Grandparents plus scheme
 - Testing co-ordination and support
 - Community grants schemes
 - Covid secure temporary accommodation

Regional Collaboration LA7

- 52 The seven local authorities of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, and Sunderland have been working as a collective LA7 since September 2020 focusing on a joint approach to COVID-19.

- 53 The approach is based on a deep understanding of our local communities and informed by data and intelligence which centres around the inequalities that local communities face, either directly or indirectly due to COVID-19. The work has included political leadership and lobbied for interventions specific to the needs of north east residents, businesses and the health and social care system.
- 54 The joint approach has centered around a small set of priorities, informed by Directors of Public Health:
1. Engage our communities and work with them to address inequalities;
 2. Localised, regionally coordinated Test, Trace and Isolate programme;
 3. Roll-out of targeted community testing;
 4. Protection of vulnerable individuals in the community;
 5. Rapid implementation of a vaccine programme.
- 55 These have been revisited in light of the revised policy and guidance:
- To protect our communities and mitigate the significant health inequalities as a direct or indirect impact of covid
 - Built on early intervention, strong public health collaboration, resources to initiate the actions
 - To protect those most vulnerable, keep our schools open and support our businesses and economy and public services
 - To live safely with covid-19 as restrictions are lifted
 - Continued implementation of local outbreak management plans and all actions/support within these
 - Support NHS colleagues to maintain standards
 - Implement Govt guidance
 - Agree updated testing strategy
 - Ensure support for those unable to make personal choices
- 56 The award winning Beat COVID NE campaign informed by insights from local people giving a joint message across the LA7 geography has been a visible and positively evaluated outcome of this collaboration and this work continues to support communication campaigns addressing vaccine hesitancy and the easing of restrictions.

Communications

- 57 Clear and timely communication plays a key part of any effective outbreak response. Throughout the pandemic the Outbreak Control team has contributed to and supported the work of the COVID-19 communications group, providing all members with specialist Public Health advice and information. The team has been involved in all aspects of the outward facing public communications and internal DCC communications, developing a local communication plan aligned to the LOMP. The Drummond Beat Covid North East campaign has now moved to an 'Acts of Kindness' messaging campaign since mid-August.
- 58 Communication activity focus has included:
- Promotion of pop up testing sites and the Melissa bus is ongoing.
 - Targeted comms in low vaccine take up areas and locations of pop up sites.
 - Refresh of hands, face, space assets with the message changed more to thank residents for thinking of others and continuing to wear a mask, keep their distance etc.
 - Communications for return to school and twice weekly assisted testing in the autumn term.
 - Focus on return to work/office encouraging twice weekly LFD testing symptomatic PCR test for close contacts
 - Mandatory vaccines for staff and changes to self-isolation
 - Collective push on testing
 - Ongoing communications; get tested; self-isolate; vaccinations; 'Let's keep life moving'; community collect
 - Autumn/winter planning during September
- 59 Local communications and actions are aligned with PHE and with local, regional, and national partners as appropriate for the best outcomes for our communities and the reduction of community transmission.

Covid Champions

- 60 COVID-19 Community Champions are trusted voices in local communities. As well as us sharing relevant and timely information with communities, Champions share feedback from communities - what's working well, what questions people have, what people think can be done better enabling responses to be shaped by local intelligence.

- 61 Covid Champions have supported our communities to progress through the steps of the roadmap, informing local communities on self-isolation, promoting our testing sites to encourage people to test regularly and supported the vaccine programme, targeting areas for further communication where there have been increases in positive cases.
- 62 To date there are 91 people engaged in the programme who are currently active: 29 Champions Plus and 62 Champions. A recruitment plan has been developed and is underway to recruit more Champions and Champions Plus. The plan continues to welcome generic Champions to join the programme and has a targeted approach – geographically and target populations.
- 63 Champions are currently seeking information from communities re: vaccine hesitancy and 2nd doses. Champions case studies have been developed into a press release promoting the Champions Programme, vaccinations and further activities of the Melissa bus.
- 64 Champions have:
- Shared 90 key messages to date.
 - Expressions of interest for Wellbeing for Life volunteer roles across Easington, Spennymoor/Byers Green and Consett.
 - Given out LFD testing kits in the north of the county alongside food deliveries and walk in food parcel support, at community sessions, the Melissa bus alongside the vaccine campaign and an invite to freshers week with East Durham College providing an opportunity to recruit younger people to the programme.

The Young Covid Champions programme has;

- engaged with coaches, family workers and leaders during the school holidays.
- formed wider links post August with the training/engagement offer to be rolled out to front facing groups, and organisations who interact with children, young people and families.
- focussed on young people's awareness of Covid, behaviour changes and appropriateness of key messages.

National Updates

Contain Framework

- 65 The Government's recently published Contain Framework provided further details of how the lockdown restrictions in England will be ended in [COVID-19 response: summer 2021](#). This marked a new phase in the

government's response to the pandemic, moving away from stringent restrictions to everyone's day-to-day lives and towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others, alongside targeted interventions to reduce risk.

66 The updated Contain Framework sets out:

- *Roles and responsibilities –*
 - LAs; partners; regional and national teams
 - decision-making and incident response structures
- *Core components of outbreak prevention and management, inc. VOCs*
- *The continued requirements of the LA response*
 - local outbreak management plans (LOMPs)
- *The support local authorities can expect*
 - from regional and national teams

67 The emphasis focusses on 5 key areas:

- **Vaccines** – Reinforce the country's vaccine wall of defence through booster jabs and driving take up
 - Drive up vaccination rates in lower uptake cohorts
 - Ensure 2nd vaccinations are completed
 - Autumn / Winter booster programme
- **The move away from statutory guidance** – Enable the public to make informed decisions through guidance, rather than laws
 - Cautious guidance for individuals, businesses and the vulnerable
 - a gradual and safe return to workplaces
 - Hands, face, space, - being outside or letting fresh air in
 - Minimise social contacts
 - Events encouraged to use NHS Covid pass
- **NHS Test and Trace** – Retain proportionate test, trace and isolate plans

- Critical to test on symptoms and to self-isolate until results
 - All positive cases contacted to provide effective support for self-isolation
 - Identifying the contacts of those who have tested positive will remain a priority
 - Where contacts are fully vaccinated, or under 18, the approach will shift. (16 August)
 - For other contacts greater use of daily LFD testing as an alternative to self-isolation
- **Manage risks** – Border response to reduce the risk of variants entering UK
 - Local authorities and DPH supporting border controls - ports of entry- in their local areas
 - Supporting access to primary health care locally
 - Supporting compliance with testing and quarantine regimes
- **Contingency for the unforeseen** – Retain contingency measures to respond to unexpected events, while accepting that further cases, hospitalisations and deaths will occur as the country learns to live with COVID-19
 - Locally the prevention and management of outbreaks
 - The ability to respond swiftly and robustly to a variant outbreak with the support of HPTs and national teams
 - Gov to maintain contingency plans for reimposing economic and social restrictions at a local, regional and national level (as a last resort).

COVID-19 Response – Autumn and Winter Plan

68 The Government has published the 'COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan' on 14 September 2021. Steadily, over the course of this year, the whole United Kingdom (UK) has seen life return closer to normal. Between March and July this year, the Government's roadmap for England reopened the economy and lifted restrictions in four steps. The country is learning to live with COVID-19, and the main line of defence is now vaccination rather than lockdown. The Test, Trace and Isolate system is reducing the number of positive cases mixing in the community. Rules and regulations have mostly been replaced with

advice and guidance on the practical steps people can take to help manage the risks to themselves and others.

69 Over autumn and winter, the Government will aim to sustain the progress made and prepare the country for future challenges, while ensuring the National Health Service (NHS) does not come under unsustainable pressure.

70 In summary the Government plans to achieve this by:

- **1. Building our defences through pharmaceutical interventions:** vaccines, antivirals and disease modifying therapeutics. The Government has three priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme in England for the autumn and winter:
 - Maximising uptake of the vaccine among those that are eligible but have not yet taken up the offer, (*this links nicely to our local leaving no-one behind work*).
 - Offering booster doses to individuals who received vaccination in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme (priority groups 1-9).
 - Offering a first dose of vaccine to 12-15 year olds.
- **2. Identifying and isolating positive cases to limit transmission:** Test, Trace and Isolate. The Test, Trace, and Isolate system remains critical to the Government's plan for managing the virus over the autumn and winter.
 - The Government will continue to expect everyone with COVID-19 symptoms to self-isolate and take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. The legal requirement to self-isolate for 10 days if an individual tests positive for COVID-19 will remain in place in order to prevent those who are infected from mixing in the community and passing on the virus.
 - Regular asymptomatic testing will continue to help find cases and break the chains of transmission. It will be particularly focused on those who are not fully vaccinated, those in education, and those in higher-risk settings such as the NHS, social care, and prisons. Community testing will continue to support local authorities to focus on disproportionately-impacted and other high-risk groups.
 - Testing for students in Secondary schools, further education and higher education, will continue for the rest of this term.
 - At a later stage, as the Government's response to the virus changes, universal free provision of LFDs will end, and individuals and businesses using the tests will bear the cost. The Government will engage widely on the form of this model as it is

developed, recognising that rapid testing could continue to have an important, ongoing role to play in future.

- Contact tracing will continue.
 - The use of the NHS COVID-19 app will continue to be encouraged
 - The Government will continue to offer practical and financial support to those who are eligible and require assistance to self-isolate. The Government will review the future of these regulations as well as this support by the end of March 2022.
- **3. Supporting the NHS and social care:** managing pressures and recovering services.
 - The Government announced on 6 September that there will be an additional £5.4 billion cash injection to the NHS in England to support the COVID-19 response over the next 6 months. This includes £1 billion to help tackle backlogs in elective procedures caused by COVID-19 and the delivery of routine surgery and treatments for patients
 - To support those with long COVID, the NHS continues to expand its long COVID services including assessment clinics, paediatric hubs and an enhanced service for general practice.
 - The proven effectiveness of the vaccine rollout across the entire population has reduced the risk of serious illness from COVID-19. This also applies to CEV individuals, the majority of whom will be well-protected by the vaccine. Third doses have been offered for those with severely weakened immune systems and to maintain protection, the former CEV group will be prioritised for a booster
 - The Government recommends as many people as possible receive a vaccination against flu this autumn and winter. The NHS has begun to roll out the annual campaign for the flu vaccination from August 2021. A free flu vaccination will still be available for all previously eligible groups:
 - Primary school children.
 - 65 year olds and over.
 - Vulnerable groups.
 - Pregnant women.
 - The Government has also extended eligibility for a free flu vaccination this year to include:
 - Secondary school children
 - 50-64 year olds

- For those not eligible for a free flu vaccine, some employers offer these vaccinations through workplaces, and vaccinations are available for a small fee from pharmacies.
- **4. Advising people on how to protect themselves and others: clear guidance and communications.**
 - Safer behaviours and actions that reduce the spread of COVID-19. It remains important for everyone, including those who are fully vaccinated, to follow behaviours and actions that reduce transmission and help to keep people safe. Following the recommended actions will also help limit the spread of seasonal illnesses, including flu.
 - The behaviours encouraged to prevent the spread include:
 - Let fresh air in if you meet indoors. Meeting outdoors remains safer.
 - Wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed settings where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
 - Get tested, and self-isolate if required
 - Try to stay at home if you are feeling unwell.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.
 - Download and use the NHS COVID-19 app to know if you've been exposed to the virus.

71 To support businesses through the autumn and winter period, the Government will continue to provide up-to-date Working Safely guidance on how employers can reduce the risks in their workplace.

72 The Government will support improved ventilation in key settings by:

- Providing further advice and support to businesses to help them check their ventilation levels and introduce Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitoring where appropriate.
- Conducting further scientific research to assess ventilation levels in a range of business settings.
- Investing £25 million in c.300,000 CO₂ monitors for schools.
- Improving the management of ventilation across the public sector estate alongside bespoke guidance to maximise the effectiveness of existing mechanical and natural ventilation. This has included

deploying CO2 monitors in courts as well as targeted rollouts and trials of these monitors in other settings.

- Continuing to support and promote pilots of how to limit transmission through ventilation or air purification

Conclusion

- 73 The Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) provides assurance, governance and future direction to ensure the ongoing ability for all settings to respond rapidly to any outbreak situation to protect the health of the residents and workforce of County Durham.
- 74 The Outbreak Control Team are revising the LOMP based on updated guidance, the Contain Framework and Winter Plans so that we are ready to work through Autumn/Winter.

Background papers

- Included in Plan

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

N/A. Health Protection: Legal and Policy Context¹

The legal context for managing outbreaks of communicable disease which present a risk to the health of the public requiring urgent investigation and management sits:

- With Public Health England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With Directors of Public Health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With Chief Environmental Health Officers under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- With NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups² to collaborate with Directors of Public Health and Public Health England to take local action (e.g. testing and treating) to assist the management of outbreaks under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With other responders' specific responsibilities to respond to major incidents as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- In the context of COVID-19 there is also the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Finance

Local Outbreak Management Funding to be allocated to Local Authorities still to be confirmed.

Consultation

Ongoing consultation with the key partners, community representatives and PHE members.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Vulnerable populations must be reached and supported.

Climate Change

N/A.

Human Rights

N/A

Crime and Disorder

¹ ADPH, FPH, PHE, LGA et al (2020) Public Health Leadership, Multi-Agency Capability: *Guiding Principles for Effective Management of COVID-19 at a Local Level*. <https://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guiding-Principles-for-Making-Outbreak-Management-Work-Final.pdf>

N/A.

Staffing

Staff time across all key stakeholders for the ongoing planning, prevention, and support for the outbreak management to protect residents.

Accommodation

N/A.

Risk

Risks are identified throughout the LOMP.

Procurement

N/A.

Disability issues

N/A

Appendix 2: COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan

COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan – See separate file