



**Report of Michael Laing Director of Integrated Community Services,
Durham County Council**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the joint work underway between partners to prepare for Winter 2021/22.

Executive Summary

- 2 Winter 2021/22 is expected to be one of the most challenging experienced by public services. A “surge” in demand for health and social care is predicted. This “surge” will be caused by a combination of Covid, RSV (a respiratory virus that infects the lungs and breathing passages of children), flu, staffing pressures and current unprecedented demand.
- 3 The Council also has the important and high profile responsibility to manage “cold weather” and “adverse weather events” with other partners.
- 4 It is likely that in Winter 2021/22 public services will experience disruption and normal levels of service will not be provided.
- 5 To prepare for the expected “surge” and to co-ordinate work across partners a Task and Finish Group was set up. This operated up to 31 October 2021. The membership included
 - The Council – Integrated Commissioning, Public Health, Adult Care, Children and Young People’s Services and the Clean and Green Team
 - County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group representing Primary Care

- County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust – district general hospitals, community hospitals and community health services
- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust – some children and young people’s services
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust – mental health services
- North East Ambulance Service

6 The Group has brought plans together in one place, to share information. A presentation to the Board is attached at Appendix 2 with details of the demand pressures we face and measures we are putting in place.

Recommendations

7 Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to note the contents of this report and the presentation at Appendix 2 and receive further reports throughout winter 2021/22.

Background

- 8 Winter 2021/22 is likely to be extremely challenging. Covid admissions to acute hospitals have continued. The Government's health agencies have predicted increased flu infections and RSV. The health and social care system is already dealing with unprecedented demand.
- 9 For the social care sector the care providers commissioned by the Council are reporting staff shortages especially in home care. The Council offers extensive support to care providers. This support is both financial and advice and guidance in managing infections and complying with Government regulations. The Council also works with an employment agency to help care providers to fill vacancies and has created the very effective Care Academy. Care providers have concerns about the effect of the new rules about compulsory vaccination of staff at a time when other employers are recruiting people who may have worked in care homes.
- 10 We work with the County Durham Care Homes Association to help care providers to be sustainable. We have also supported home care agencies and work with them to provide care packages.
- 11 Demand for adult social care assessments has also increased. Assessment Teams have seen increases especially in demand for mental health assessment post the Covid lockdown. The Hospital Social Work Team manages 500 cases each month with colleagues in the NHS. Cases are increasing in complexity and acuity.
- 12 Health partners have been operating at unprecedented levels of demand. Presentations to Emergency Departments are approximately 13% higher than 2019. The Trust sometimes declares the highest level of activity at OPEL 4 (Operational Pressures Escalation Levels). Patients have experienced delays, especially at University Hospital North Durham (UHND). This is because of the acknowledged problems with the physical space and layout of the Emergency Department. Despite increasing the number of beds the Trust is often in the position of having limited beds available to move patients out of the Emergency Department and onto wards.
- 13 The Mental Health Trust has reported similar pressures and has operated at 117% capacity. The Crisis Response Service is working at full capacity and has difficulty finding beds into which patients can be admitted. The Trust is also implementing an Improvement Plan following a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report.
- 14 The Ambulance Trust has called on military and private sector support to deal with demand which has remained at consistently high levels for

a sustained period. This means that requests for an ambulance are sometimes delayed.

- 15 Primary care – including GP Practices – are in a similar position. They are also providing the majority of vaccinations. Recent surveys of patients in our Emergency Departments have shown that they are attending because they do not want to wait for GP appointments.
- 16 All partners are reporting workforce pressures and have measures in place to support staff well-being. However staff have been involved in a national major incident since March 2020 and are now caring for people in a period of high demand.
- 17 Partners have met to share the winter plan to co-ordinate activity and to prioritise work. Our winter plans will be held in one place and Council officers have joined the Winter Plan Operational Group to manage winter pressures.

Next steps

- 18 The Government has published Winter Planning Guidance for the NHS with funding to support additional capacity. Through the Integration Programme we will be bidding with NHS partners for funding to increase our hospital discharge and crisis response capacity in social care. Other funding sources may be available to support care providers.
- 19 Last year the Government required the Council to submit a Social Care Winter Plan. Government Guidance for social care is expected to be published in the near future.

Background papers

- The Government's Covid Winter Plan 2021/22

Author

Michael Laing Tel: 07917513348

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None directly from this report.

Finance

None directly from this report. However funding may be available to support health and social care during Winter 2021/22 to which the partners can bid.

Consultation

NHS partners and colleagues in the Green and Clean Team and Adults and Health Services have contributed to the presentation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The report concerns services for people with health and care needs who may have protected characteristics related to their condition.

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

There is a risk that the Council and NHS partners may not be able to meet demands for services in Winter 2021/22. This is included in the Risk Registers.

Procurement

None