

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 November 2020

**STATEMENT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH, PREVENTION & SUPPORTED HOUSING
PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CAROLINE DICKINSON****Covid Outbreak management**

We have seen a significant increase in Covid-19 cases nationally, regionally and in North Yorkshire since the beginning of September. In response, we have continued to work pro-actively to prevent, contain and manage outbreaks.

Prior to the current national lockdown in England, North Yorkshire was at the lowest level, Medium alert level 1, in the national alert system. Our concern then, as now, was both to protect people from the virus and to ensure that businesses and schools could remain open and that the care sector would both be protected and enable people to keep in touch with their loved ones.

The North Yorkshire Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan sets out the approach we are taking to prevent, contain and manage local outbreaks in high risk settings and to support testing, tracing and isolation of people who are infected and their close contacts.

I would like to thank Members and officers across the County Council, all of our partner agencies and the people of North Yorkshire for their continuing hard work and fortitude in fighting this virus.

Educational Settings

We are monitoring approximately 1,100 educational settings across the county, including nurseries, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, special schools, colleges and the university. Throughout the pandemic, we have supported educational settings with outbreak management and infection prevention and control. We have developed individualised guidance for educational settings taking into account their size and circumstances and we have delivered a series of webinars for school Heads and setting managers in order to support them further and answer their questions. We are also working closely with PHE colleagues to manage outbreaks when they occur.

Overall, we have seen an increase in cases in educational settings compared to the summer term, which is in line with the increasing rates of infection nationally and in North Yorkshire. However, given that approximately 10% of settings have had confirmed cases throughout the term, we believe that the protective measures they have put in place, in combination with their swift actions to trace and isolate close contact of confirmed cases, and our support, have meant as little disruption of students across the county as possible.

Workplaces/Hospitality sector

In March and April 2020, we developed our public health operating model for workplace settings. Our work was subsequently incorporated into PHE Yorkshire and Humber regional guidelines for workplace settings.

In an attempt to proactively understand workplaces at potentially high risk of outbreaks we have utilised local data and contacted large local businesses and those companies evidence would suggest are at higher risk of transmission such as food manufacturers and meat processing plants. We have developed a range of resources to support these businesses to operate in Covid safe ways. We work closely with the Health and Safety Executive, local environmental health teams and PHE to support individual workplaces where there are concerns or outbreaks. We also continue to work with infrastructure organisation such as the North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Federation of Small Businesses to produce targeted communications and respond to the needs of the business community. At the end of October, we were working with 30 workplaces with open incidents. These ranged from small clusters to larger outbreaks involving typically fewer than 30 cases.

Events

North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (NYLRF) has established a Covid-19: Hosting A Covid Secure Event Local guidance for event organisers. The information card provides support regarding:

- Practical actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 – key considerations and principles to manage and mitigate risk
- Key things to consider when planning an event, including licencing, risk assessments and national Government guidance
- Legislation restrictions and requirements (including rule of 6, Test and Trace)
- Key Public Health principles to support the Covid-19 secure environment – detail offered on how event organisers can demonstrate against the principles

An events process has been developed and agreed by the NYLRF which includes an escalation process from the local district Safety Advisory Groups and a response to events that is dependent on the national tier system and NYLRF thresholds.

The Public Health team are working closely with the District Councils to manage high-risk events and seasonal events including Halloween, Bonfire Night and Remembrance Day.

Testing

We have always pushed hard in North Yorkshire for access to testing that works for our local population. We were early adopters of mobile testing units (MTUs), and also worked hard to maintain a stock of swabs that we can mobilise locally to support suspected cases and outbreaks. These have been used to support a range of settings including care homes, workplaces and people in supported accommodation.

We faced challenges throughout September as capacity issues in the national testing labs meant fewer swabs were available locally when appointment slots were reduced in order to manage demand. Although at a local level we had no control over national availability, we managed to increase our allocation of MTUs and also piloted a pathway by which key workers could access our local stock of swabs to maintain business continuity across a range of settings including social care, education, police and fire & rescue services. Over the last few weeks, the national testing capacity has increased, with much greater availability of swabs locally and through home testing kits. We have also increased the number of testing sites available in North Yorkshire – during the final week in October we had 19 MTUs travelling to sites across all seven districts, and we also now have local test sites set up at Harrogate and Scarborough that provide appointments 7 days a week for walk-in testing. Further local test sites have been approved for Skipton, Selby and Northallerton.

Local contact tracing is being introduced on a phased basis from this month.

Healthy Child Programme (update on consultation)

North Yorkshire County Council, in partnership with Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, have commenced a public consultation on the proposals for a new model for the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) in the county. This followed three years of work during which we engaged with young people and families, the wider public and local partners and professionals on the responsiveness of current service to local needs, and reviewed commissioning options.

The new service model also takes into account the significant reductions in the North Yorkshire Public Health grant in recent years, which means it has been necessary to review all services provided through this funding stream. The HCP constitutes approximately one third of all spending through the Public Health Grant.

The new service will continue to focus on health promotion, prevention activities and early support. It will be an integrated 0-19 service that brings together many aspects of what is currently provided by the health visiting (0-5) and school nursing (5-19) services. Protecting children at risk of harm and those in need remains the top priority.

However, in the context of the Public Health Grant reduction we have prioritised intensifying our focus in children under 5 and their families, so that they have the best start in life. This means that the programme will not be able to provide the level of service that has previously been provided to school aged children (5-19).

The focus in this age group will be on supporting vulnerable young people and developing a service to help young people improve their emotional resilience and wellbeing.

We have also learned from how we had to adapt during the Covid-19 pandemic, and are proposing to deliver some of the HCP interventions and activities online and via the telephone. This will be based on a robust needs assessment that takes into account individual family's needs.

We are asking all stakeholders for their views on the new service proposals through an online survey, a series of online events, meetings with and briefings for specific groups. The public consultation runs from 26th October 2020 to 4th January 2021.

We are also in the process of commissioning a School Based and Target Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service (jointly with North Yorkshire, Vale of York and Bradford District and Craven CCGs) and a Specialist Substance Misuse Service for Young People.

Smoke Free NY/smoking cessation services

Living Well Smokefree now has a full team of advisors working across all localities providing stop smoking support for the people of North Yorkshire. COVID-19 has presented Living Well Smokefree with a few challenges in terms of service delivery but has been able to continue to offer a high quality service throughout this difficult period. National guidance recommended the postponement of face to face interventions so the team quickly adapted to providing the same quality service via telephone and video conferencing. Both the team and smokers reacted really positively to this virtual offer and the team has been able to connect with more people than usual.

At the beginning of the national lockdown, referrals into the service reduced but as time has progressed numbers accessing the service have now increased. Quarter 2 this year (July, August, and September 2020) has been our most successful quarter to date in terms of referrals into the service and subsequent quits. Over the past 6 months (April-September 2020) LWSF has received 746 referrals into the service resulting in 440 people setting a quit date with 72% successfully quitting. The national average for people setting a quit date and successfully quitting is 50%.

Living Well

The Living Well team continue to support a wide range of people to build their confidence and reduce their loneliness and social isolation. Increasingly they are also providing help with finances and housing. Living Well has received over 12000 referrals since it was set up five years ago.

Living Well provided an essential service during the Covid pandemic, working closely with other council teams and Community Support Organisations, to ensure a prompt and flexible response to people's needs. This included support for carers. The team provided support by phone or virtual communication and face to face where required. Demand for the service is beginning to return to pre-Covid levels, after a dip in demand in the early months of the pandemic. This is in line with other parts of health and social care.

Living Well continues to work very closely with health and began delivering a social prescribing link worker service in Selby in January and in Harrogate in June. The link workers are based in GP practices and work directly with patients; particularly people who contact the practice frequently; isolated or frail patients and individuals with low-level mental health issues. Link workers provided an invaluable service during the Covid pandemic by helping to make contact with shielded and vulnerable patients.