

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 November 2021

STATEMENT OF COUNCILOR ANDREW LEE

Covid update

COVID-19 Outbreak Management

Cases of COVID-19 have continued to increase across the County since mid-September. This rise has been driven predominantly by school-aged children, with schools presenting as a significant transmission route. There has been subsequent transmission into parent age groups, alongside a gradual increase in the number of cases seen in health and social care. Harrogate has seen the highest rates across all seven districts, peaking at 740 cases per 100,000 people on 16th October, which at the time was one of the highest rates in England.

The public health team continues to work collaboratively with school leaders and the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) to manage cases in schools. General guidance has been sent to all schools with recommended measures to take in response to cases in settings. The COVID-19 Outbreak Hub runs a daily Incident Management Team meeting covering school settings, and provides bespoke advice to any school with concerns.

The key messages for preventing the spread of infection remain the same, including wearing face coverings in indoor or crowded areas, keeping indoor spaces well ventilated, regular hand hygiene, and keeping a respectful social distance from others where possible. The Council's new Respect and Protect campaign continues to highlight these measures as we move into what is likely to be a difficult winter period whilst 'living with COVID'.

Testing

There continues to be good access to PCR testing across the county, with five local test sites in operation daily plus 32 Mobile Testing Unit sessions across the County on a weekly basis.

Although the national offer of workplace testing has now ended, lateral flow tests can still be collected at most local pharmacies or ordered through the gov.uk website or 119. Undertaking twice-weekly lateral flow testing if you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 is still a critical measure for detecting infections and preventing onward spread. Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and get a PCR test.

Vaccination

The vaccination booster programme is now underway for people in JCVI cohorts 1-9, which includes all those over 50yrs, health and social care workers, and people with medical conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19. Individuals will only be able to book a test, either through the National Booking System or by being invited to do so by their GP, once they have reached 6 months post their second vaccine dose.

All children aged 12-15 years are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. This is primarily being rolled out through the existing childhood immunisation service, run by Harrogate District Foundation Trust; however, 12-15 year olds can also access appointments through the National Booking Service based at other vaccination sites. The North Yorkshire Vaccination Assurance Group is working with partners to try to speed up the roll out across North

Yorkshire, particularly in light of the high number of COVID-19 cases in young people over recent weeks.

Peer Review

The Council recently received the feedback report of the Peer Review that was carried out in September into North Yorkshire's response to COVID. The team of peers was led by the Chief Executive of Devon County Council, and included a Director of Public Health and Council Leader. The review was part of a national programme led by the Local Government Association to identify good practice and lessons learned for others. After reading various documents and plans supplied by us, and carrying out a series of interviews with people involved in the pandemic response including frontline staff, managers, people who use our services, businesses and other partners, the Team has given us very positive feedback on how we have responded. Their conclusions included the following:

- we have responded rapidly to the pandemic with a coherent whole-organisation response grounded in effective system-wide collaboration, which enabled delivery at pace and scale;
- our inclusive and agile partnership approach to communications utilises local and multi-agency voices to good effect;
- we have a proactive and user-led approach to engaging with care home, care settings and people who use care; and
- it will be important to create space for staff to reflect, recharge and celebrate what has been achieved, as experiences have left many "carrying scars". These experiences are compounded by significant fatigue and uncertainty about future organisational changes and the ability to adapt to the future pandemic response.

We have started some action planning to address the 10 recommendations from the report, which included the following:

- building on lessons learned and skills developed, we should continue to invest in health protection
- we should create space for staff to reflect, recharge and celebrate what has been achieved to support both personal and organisational resilience and recovery. This will help NYCC to mitigate uncertainties, risks and further support staff welfare.
- we should develop an approach for embedding the transformative, collaborative, and more empowered ways of working, to ensure learning from across the pandemic response informs the design of the new Council as well as business as usual.

Director of Public Health Annual Report

I pleased to bring to the Councils attention and consideration our Director of Public's Health annual report called Making Sense of Covid-19, which covers the period October 2019 to April 2021. The report looks at how the people who live and work in North Yorkshire faced and responded to Covid-19. It not only highlights the hard work and dedication of all involved but also notes lessons to be learned for future pandemics and also how we address public health issues going forward, noting the inequalities in health outcomes that Covid-19 has further shone a light on. I am looking forward to considering the recommendations in this report and supporting action, which will deliver on our public health priorities moving forward.

REACH

The REACH project to support people experiencing homelessness in Scarborough began operations in August. The service comprises a multi-agency team from NYCC, Scarborough

Brough Council, Tees Esk and Wear Valley, NY Police and Beyond Housing to support people with chaotic lifestyles into long-term accommodation. To date three people have been supported into accommodation by the service with an additional 23 receiving outreach and pre-tenancy support

Living Well

Living Well marked its 6th birthday on 5th October. It was an uplifting week of celebrations, sharing some good stories and saying thank you to those people who helped along the way. Each Living Well Team had an informal virtual drop-in during the week for colleagues and partners where they heard what is going on in their local area and found out about some of the people that Living Well has supported. These good news stories were shared with North Yorkshire residents through a series of news articles and with colleagues through the intranet. The team welcomed a number of visitors including councillors to a virtual celebration event with Richard Flinton saying, "I was lucky enough to be able to spend an hour with the team virtually, marking the anniversary and listening to some brilliant stories from a fantastic group of people committed to helping others to improve their lives"

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ANDREW LEE