

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

At a remote meeting of the **Health and Wellbeing Board** held on Thursday, 8 October 2020.

**PRESENT**

Councillor R.R. Dodd  
(Chair, in the Chair)

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Brown, S.	Morgan, E.
Cowans, D. (substitute member)	Renner-Thompson, G.
Dungworth, S.	Riley, C. (substitute member)
Firth, R.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Jones, V.	Syers, G
Lothian, J.	Thompson, D.
Mead, P.	Watson, J.
McEvoy-Carr, C.	

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Bridges, A.	Head of Communications
Todd, A.	Democratic Services Officer

*The Chair welcomed Councillor H.G.H. Sanderson as the newly elected Leader of the County Council to the Health and Wellbeing Board.*

**53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from J. Mackey, C. Briggs, P. Travers and C Wardlaw.

**54. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on Thursday, 10 September 2020, as circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## 55. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

### 55.1 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

#### **Update on the Northumberland COVID 19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan**

Members were provided with an update on the epidemiology of COVID 19 in Northumberland and developments with the Council's COVID 19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan. (Report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

Liz Morgan, Director of Public Health, introduced the report and updated Members on the latest figures and actions agreed in response to the increasing rates of infection being seen in Northumberland:-

- Over the last week there had be on average 80 positive cases per day recorded with rates of 171.4 per 100,000.
- The vast majority of positive cases were still within the southeast area of the county. However, this was starting to spread with cases now being seen in Amble and Alnwick.
- In terms of admissions there were around 50 people in hospital with a positive diagnosis of coronavirus and 12 within intensive care.
- Alnwick Hospital had closed temporarily today to additional admissions because of patients presenting with COVID 19.
- Since the report was written new local restrictions had been introduced on 30 September. The restrictions were accompanied by a request from the seven local authorities for a significant package of support. It was noted that some of the funding had now started to filter through although not all. It was noted that officers would continue to pursue the entire support package that had been promised.
- In terms of schools, it had been mostly single, one off cases being seen but there were a few with multiple cases being recorded. There had only been a very small number of temporary school closures.
- The Education Team and Public Health Team continued to work with schools to minimise the impact on children's education and help schools adjust practice to accommodate changing guidance.
- There continued to be a large amount of wellbeing support being put in place for teaching staff. This support would also help staff identify children with wellbeing issues who needed extra support.
- In care homes there had been a few individual cases and outbreaks over the last week, but most had been identified through the whole care home testing process. Many of those testing positive, both patients and staff, we not showing symptoms. A comprehensive package of wraparound support for care homes was in place and continued to be aided by the Council and Trust.
- Businesses and workplaces continued to be supported by the Public Protection Team who had reprioritised the vast majority of its normal work to help support COVID compliance.
- It was noted that proactive visits were now underway. A number of visits had taken place in Ashington over the weekend and owners had welcomed the opportunity to have a conversation about their individual setup and gain

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specific advice. It was noted that businesses on the whole had been largely compliant with the restrictions, although one establishment in Bedlington had closed.

- The Northumberland Communities Together Team continued to have a presence at the testing sites in order to help identify individuals who, if they needed to self-isolate, could access support both in terms of financial and practical.
- A pop-up event by the Northumberland Communities Hub was held last week at Cramlington and there had been over 400 conversations with members of the public. The event had been a success and all attendees appreciated receiving advice and information. The event had also helped signpost some individuals to extra support. It was hoped to roll out this event to other towns across the county.
- It was reported that testing rates remained quite buoyant with over 2000 a week being recorded.
- The new testing sites at Ashington and Blyth were now up and running. It was hoped to develop local testing sites in Berwick and Hexham with these proposals currently going through the various processes. If approved, the two new testing sites could be up and running within the next three to four weeks which would provide more consistent access to testing in Hexham and Berwick and the surrounding areas.
- In terms of the new local restrictions, it was noted that it was too early to say whether they were having an impact but there was still plenty of work left to do in terms of getting consistent and straightforward messaging out about collective responsibilities.
- In the northeast there continued to be a drive towards a much more local contact tracing service.
- The Communications Team continued to do a great job in pushing messages both localised and nationally.

Ann Bridges, Head of Communications briefed Members and made a number of comments, including:-

- The Communications and Engagement Strategy had now been completed and would be circulated to members. Part of the work carried out on the strategy was a significant stakeholder mapping exercise. This had helped identify what was working and what was not especially across the care setting, schools and businesses.
- Since the new restrictions a huge amount of work had been generated to inform all of the new measures including utilising local and regional media, social media platforms and radio campaigns.
- Across Northumberland a postcard had been created that would be distributed to every household to advise them on the new local restrictions.
- There continued to be collaborative communication work with other local authorities on clear COVID messages and providing the most up to date information.
- There was to be further engagement work carried out across the southeast utilising supermarkets and other community spaces to ensure the most up to date messages were being delivered to the public.
- The Trust was providing supportive messages to the public and stressing the need to continue to seek medical help if required.

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- Members of the public had welcomed the new COVID 19 dashboard recently published on the council's website.

Members of the board made several comments, which included:

- A query was raised regarding village halls and whether it was still permitted to hold sporting activities where there would be more than six people attending. It was confirmed that clarification was still being sought on this due to the complexity of the legislation. It was felt that the health and wellbeing of people was important and if village halls, community centres and leisure centres were to close it could have a detrimental effect on all who use those facilities. However, issues were also raised about how safe and COVID secure some activities and venues were particularly when attracting the more vulnerable age ranges. It was confirmed an update would be provided once clarification had been received.
- It was noted that there had been a lot of speculation in the press today about moving to a three-tier system and further restrictions in the north. It was confirmed that there had been no communications so far about this new approach. It was hoped that if central government did move to this new system Northumberland would be included in the tier that did not impose additional restrictions at this stage. It was stressed the need for everyone to be informed as soon as possible if there was to be a change.
- It was noted that many local authorities were pushing for a more localised contact tracing processes. Members were advised of the new preferred option which would be to reallocate resource to a localised process. This could help quickly identify connections and links between individuals, workplaces and geography which, at the minute, the national system was not able to support.
- It was reported that mental health and wellbeing issues were a particular area of concern with several suicides being reported within the last week. It was advised that there would be a continued focus to support those struggling with their mental health.
- A query was raised regarding support for people in care homes with dementia and what could be done to assist care homes. It was questioned whether there was any guidance or examples of good practice that could be distributed to care homes regarding this issue of isolation. In response, it was confirmed that work continued to take place with care homes on a regular basis. Some care homes were providing some very innovative and interesting ways of providing a stimulus to some of the more significantly challenging patients. But it was an area that was constantly being reviewed.
- In response to a question regarding ensuring patients with long term conditions and cancer detection were not forgotten about during the pandemic. It was confirmed that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) continued to examine progress against normal business and monitor waiting times for such things as cancer and mental health. It was noted that cancer services had done pretty well but dermatology was one of the areas at the minute where there had seen slightly higher waiting times than average. It was stated that annual reviews for those patients with long term conditions had now been reignited after previously being suspended during the initial first wave of the pandemic. Issues regarding continuity planning remained a concern and discussions continued to take place regarding potential impacts on patients if there was to be a return to limited services only operating. It was reported that it was and continued to be a challenge to keep all normal services running.

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Fortnightly meetings with Northumbria Hospital to examine and monitor issues such as waiting times and restarting of services would also continue to take place with the CCG.

Members then discussed the number of meetings being held to inform all on the latest COVID 19 actions. It was felt that there needed to be more of a consistent approach and less duplication of information at meetings. It was suggested that officers discuss ways to slimdown the number of health related meetings including the subgroups of this Board and report back at the next meeting on 12 November. Members were advised that discussions would also be taking place regarding the Work Programme with a particular focus on how and when to start to reintroduce business back to the Board.

**RESOLVED** that the report and information be received.

**56. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the next meeting will be held remotely on Thursday, 12 November 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

**CHAIRMAN** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_