Covid-19 Outbreak Management

**CORE SCRIPT – 24 September 2021**

**“Covid has not gone away and we can expect a bumpy autumn/winter…”**

* Government’s winter plans for dealing with Covid have been published
* Devon classified as an area for enhanced government support (ERA) in late August following a high number of cases over the summer – to be reviewed in next week. No plans to extend beyond 5 weeks duration.
* Case numbers are now falling back after the high August peak, below England average; Cases highest in young people.
* Numbers of Covid patients in local hospitals and deaths remains relatively low and stable
* Vaccination programme continues to go well and has generally proved successful in reducing number of cases and severity of illness – now on offer to school age population 12-15 plus booster programme for over 50s
* Schools, colleges and university now back and impact will be closely monitored with potential for cases among young people to rise again
* Concerns remain about ongoing pressure across whole health and social care system with concern over likely impact of flu and other respiratory illnesses during autumn/winter

**Key Public health messages:**

People should continue to be cautious and follow basic public health advice on regular testing, self-isolation if symptomatic, and hands, face, space, etc. and avoid close contact indoors where possible.

Vaccination (for both Covid and Flu) is seen as key to the continued return to normality and limiting pressure on health and care services. Other actions will be considered if a rise in case numbers or the impact of cases in an area becomes significant or of concern.

Uptake among unvaccinated groups is being encouraged with a booster programme for vulnerable people over 50 and a programme now targeting school age children 12 -15 with parental consent.

**Other key messages**

**Hospitals and health service**

* Hospitals admissions for Covid continue to be relatively low and stable
* The Ambulance Service and Emergency Departments however continue to be under pressure

**Mass vaccination**

* Booster vaccinations have begun for those who are most vulnerable to Covid-19.
* All 12-15 year olds will now be offered a first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. This will generally happen within schools, with alternative provision for those who are home schooled or not attending for other reasons.
* Parents, guardians or carers will be asked for consent in line with existing school-based vaccination programmes
* 6 in 10 18-24 year olds are now fully vaccinated.
* **The JCVI has advised that Flu and Covid-19 vaccines can be administered at the same time where there is an opportunity to do so. However, it is important people take up the offer of both vaccines when they receive it, so people are encouraged to get both vaccinations as soon as possible rather than waiting for the possibility of getting them together.**

**Care Homes and vulnerable people**

* Rates among older people are relatively low and stable but whole care sector continues to be under pressure
* Previous vaccination programme highly effective with high take up among older people and staff but concerns over long term effectiveness mean winter booster programme now being roiled out
* There remains a small number of significant outbreaks of concern which are being monitored closely
* Also concern that some care home staff will leave as a result of requirement to be vaccinated by mid-November

**Schools and education**

* All schools in Devon are now open and colleges and university students returning
* Early indication is that attendance is high
* Increase in positive cases amongst pupils
* No significant issues to date but testing and monitoring in place
* Vaccination programme now being offered to all 12-15 years olds through schools
* Some concern over this being a target for anti-vax activity

**Local Community Testing and Contact Tracing**

* New programme of targeted mobile community testing and vaccination planned over coming weeks
* Targeted promotional activity planned with national support in areas of concern regarding vaccine uptake (Ilfracombe and Exeter)

**Economy**

* Bounce back quicker than expected but not evenly spread across county
* Tourism sector done well over summer but not sufficient to offset previous losses and Covid loans soon need to be paid back
* Labour market shortages causing pressures with 65,000 vacancies
* Use of food banks increased
* Huge house price rises and 70% reduction in private rented stock