

AGENDA ITEM

**REPORT TO HEALTH
AND WELLBEING
BOARD**

25TH OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF
DIRECTOR OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**

**HEALTH PROTECTION
WINTER PLANNING UPDATE**

SUMMARY

This paper provides an update by the health protection collaborative on ongoing work with a focus on winter planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Board is asked to:

1. Note the content of the update.
2. Support the key messages to staff on Winter wellness including vaccinations.

DETAIL

Winter Planning

1. Winter 2022/3 presented significant challenges to communities and the health and wellbeing system with cost-of-living pressures, ongoing Covid circulation, flu and other respiratory infections.
2. The picture for this Winter is not yet known but planning is underway to monitor and mitigate the impacts as well as prevent escalation where possible. The Tees Valley Local A&E Delivery Board (LAEDB) has oversight of the NHS planning and coordination with partners, feeding into regional (Northeast and North Cumbria) arrangements. A winter planning event has taken place on 12 October across the ICB NENC footprint, to consider pressures from last Winter and collectively plan for this Winter based on the learning. Ongoing risk of respiratory infections including emerging variants, vaccination and impact of strikes were key considerations. Infection prevention and control continues to be crucial in preventing and mitigating communicable disease.

3. Cleveland LRF is also holding a winter planning meeting on the 18 October and is instigating Project Viper – a system for identifying those at risk who will need immediate assistance in the event of a major incident (including adverse weather events) e.g. those on oxygen at home, those with significant mobility needs.

Surveillance

4. The main national monitoring system for Covid population prevalence through the ONS was stopped earlier this year. Recognising the ongoing need of broader surveillance than hospital data, a smaller version of the survey is being reinstated from October 2023 to ensure ongoing population surveillance.
5. According to the latest England data for COVID-19 infections, the percentage of people with COVID-19 increased Hospital admissions increased by 29% (for w/o 25 September) compared to the previous week and were highest in the 85yrs+ age group; they remain however significantly below those seen in Spring 2023 and Christmas 2022. COVID-19 ICU admissions and deaths are also increasing.
6. As expected for time in the year, Influenza infections remain low, although there has been a higher rate of rhinovirus infections (common cold) in recent weeks. Higher influenza rates are most common between December and February.
7. A new COVID strain (BA2.86) was detected mid-August. It has been identified in several countries within a short time, suggesting rapid transmission. It has been classified as a variant of concern (VOC) due to its large number of mutations, with consequent potential to escape existing immunity.
8. UKHSA confirmed that BA.2.86 is causing an early increase of cases, hospital admissions and deaths across England. Data remains limited but there is no evidence to suggest that BA.2.86 is more likely to make people seriously ill than other circulating variants, while vaccination is likely to provide continued protection. UKHSA has determined the most appropriate intervention with the greatest potential public health impact is to vaccinate all those eligible, quickly

Covid / flu and vaccinations

9. Tees Valley Vaccination Board continues to have oversight of the flu and covid vaccination programmes and reports into the regional ICB immunisation board. Public health continues to monitor population coverage and works with the ICB to identify and plan targeted vaccination clinics for areas with lower vaccination coverage and higher risk groups.
10. Advice by the Joint Committee of Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) is to protect against new variants with boosting the immunity of those who

are most vulnerable. Delay may put vulnerable groups at greater risk so the decision was taken to start vaccination for flu and COVID earlier than planned on the 11 September. Vaccines are being evolved constantly in response to the virus.

11. The Covid autumn booster vaccination programme started with adult care home residents and over 75yr olds. There are no plans to widen the availability of the vaccine; under 65s are considered at lower risk of serious disease from current strains, and there is some residual immunity from vaccine/exposure. Appendix 2 sets out eligible groups.
12. Care home roll out started on 11 September 2023 with a view to be completed by 22 October.
13. From 18 September 2023, the NHS started to invite people for their Covid vaccination in priority order of risk and those eligible will be able to book an appointment through the National Booking Service website or by calling 119.
14. Three of the four Primary Care Networks (PCNs) in the borough have signed up to deliver the Covid vaccination programme themselves and one PCN is working with the GP Federation (H&SH) to deliver on their behalf. (please find list of GP practices/ PCNs in appendix 4)
15. Community pharmacies also offer flu and covid vaccinations to those who are eligible. Flu vaccinations can also be purchased from community pharmacies by population groups who are not eligible for a free flu jab through the NHS. Covid vaccinations are not available for purchase. (Please find a list of community pharmacies who have signed up to offer COVID-19 and Flu vaccines in appendix 5)
16. Co-administration of covid and flu vaccines is permitted and promoted, where this is available. The national booking system is providing the opportunity to book both vaccinations.
17. By the 8 October 14,600 out of 85,000 eligible residents already had a covid booster. The average uptake was 17.3% with substantial variation across the borough. As in previous covid vaccination campaigns uptake is lowest in the most deprived areas.
18. Appendix 3 sets out eligible groups for the flu vaccine. Flu vaccinations for 2-3-year-olds, school-age children (reception to year 11) and children in clinical risk groups started in September, delivered by the school immunisation service (now Intrahealth commissioned by the ICB). The aim of the school-age programme is to complete all school-based flu vaccinations no later than 15 December 23.

19. National comms to promote flu and covid vaccinations has been disseminated widely. Locally SBC comms and NHS comms colleagues continue to work together. SBC is also supporting messaging on Covid and flu vaccines through our community wellbeing champions network. Funding has already been provided to the NENC ICB to support addressing vaccine inequalities; some behavioural insights work has been commissioned to support this.
20. Occupational health flu and covid vaccination programmes have started in NHS trusts and primary care.
21. Free flu vaccinations for SBC employees are provided again this year by the Council's Occupational Health team with the aim to vaccinate 800 staff starting in October 2023. To reflect the changes in eligibility in the national flu programme, all SBC staff are eligible, but vaccination of frontline health and social care workers are prioritised.

Work with settings and communities

22. People most at risk in winter and more vulnerable from cold weather include
 - people aged 65 and older
 - babies and children under the age of 5
 - people on a low income (so cannot afford heating)
 - people who have a long-term health condition
 - people with a disability
 - pregnant women
 - people who have a mental health condition
23. Work is continuing with the care sector through provider forums and monthly newsletters, as established in the height of the pandemic. This provides the opportunity to disseminate key messages and resources, 'temperature check' with providers on impact of Winter illness and provide support as required.
24. The Social Care Protection Group continues to oversee key updates and resources for the coming Winter months, including public health key messages on infectious illnesses, the Covid / flu vaccination programmes, and the increased risks to health for older populations from cold weather plus interventions that can mitigate these risks. Any urgent updates are also shared as needed by email and webinars such as updates on the immunisation programmes. There are also plans to work further with care home managers on perceptions and uptake of key vaccinations among staff and residents including flu, Covid and pneumococcal infections.
25. The Health Protection Collaborative continues to meet every two months, reporting to Health and Wellbeing Board to maintain system oversight of

the current position and facilitate joint working on health protection matters e.g. in social care settings.

26. A Winter health conference by SBC took place on 19 September in Stockton town centre with the aim to empower VCSE sector and community groups with information, networks and resources to support the community this Winter. The event provided a platform for sharing information, experiences, good practice and building relationships, with presentations from a wide range of speakers with over 50 attendees from a wide range of communities and organisations.

Local health protection response

27. There is no indication of a shift in national policy in managing Covid. Therefore, general health protection principles and measures will apply into the Autumn and Winter. Should there be a new variant that warrants considering a step-up of response, we will liaise closely with UKHSA on this and a further update will be brought to the HWB. In the meantime we continue to monitor the position, liaise with UKHSA and offer support and advice to particularly our care sector as required.

28. Dissemination of consistent and clear messages on keeping well in Winter remains important and includes.

- Good hand and respiratory hygiene
- Avoiding to pass on infections – Stay at home if you are unwell.
- Flu and covid vaccinations – Get vaccinated.
- Keeping warm and getting help with heating.
- Getting advice if unwell (pharmacy, 111, GP)
- Looking out for others

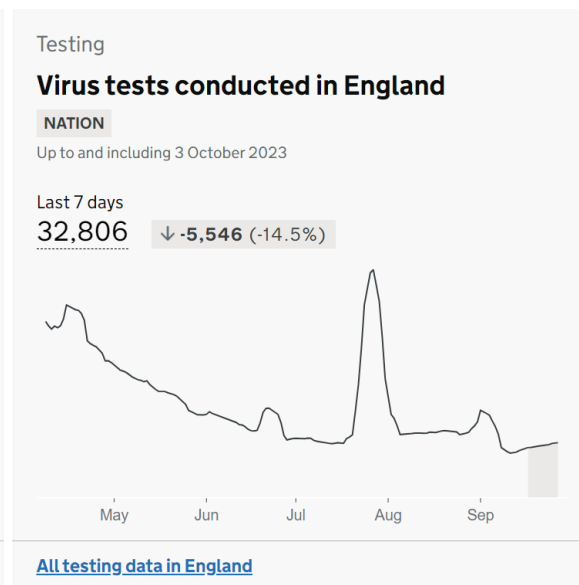
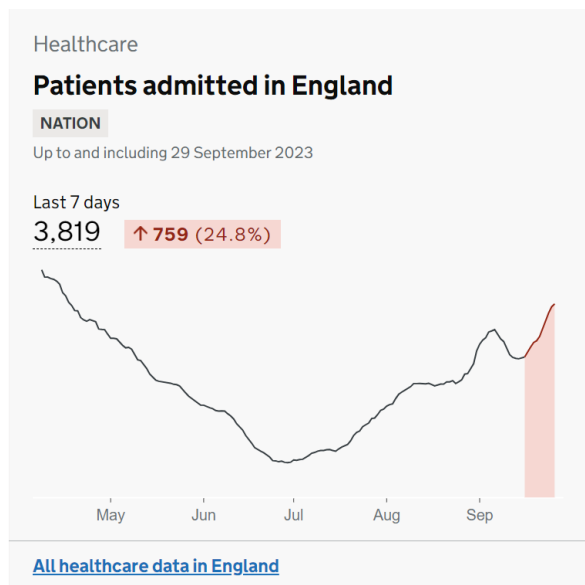
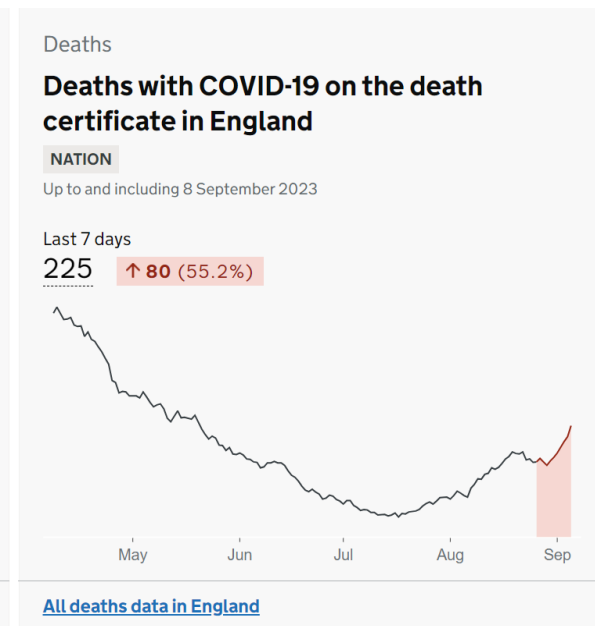
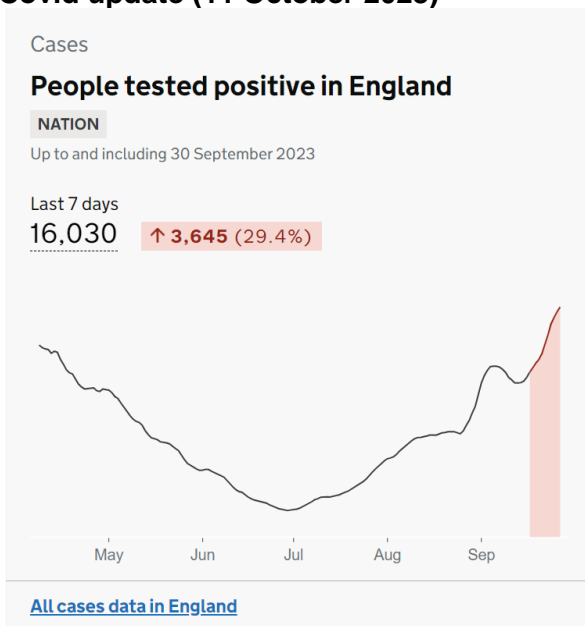
29. The Warm Homes Healthy People programme in Stockton offers support with boiler repairs, emergency heating, energy saving as well as debt and benefits advice. <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/Warm-Homes-Healthy-People>

30. Advise and support with the cost of living pressure is available through a wide range of programmes and organisations. Please find further information at <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-hubs>

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Covid update (11 October 2023)



Appendix 2 Covid vaccination eligible groups

- Residents in a care home for older adults
- All adults aged 65 years and over
- Persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group
- Frontline health and social care workers
- Persons aged 12 to 64 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression

- Persons aged 16 to 64 years who are carers and staff working in care homes for older adults

Appendix 3

Flu vaccination eligible groups

- those aged 65 years and over
- those aged 6 months to under 65 years in clinical risk groups
- pregnant women
- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2023
- primary school aged children (from Reception to Year 6)
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers in receipt of carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- frontline workers in a social care setting without an employer-led occupational health scheme

All frontline health care workers, including both clinical and non-clinical staff who have contact with patients, should be offered a flu vaccine as part of the organisations' policy for the prevention of the transmission of flu to help protect both staff and those that they care for.

Appendix 4

PCNs/GP practices offering flu and covid vaccinations

- All GP practices are offering flu vaccinations to eligible patients
- BYTES PCN, Billingham PCN and Norton PCN are vaccinating their patients including care home residents and housebound patients, housebound and immunosuppressed patients
- H&SH is vaccinating care home residents on behalf of Alma, and offers vaccination sessions via the national booking system at Tennant Street practices
- Queens Park and Tennant street practices are vaccinating care home residents and housebound patients

Appendix 5

Community pharmacies offering flu and covid vaccinations

| Ward | Participating Pharmacy |
|---|--|
| Billingham | The Pharmacy, Abbey Health Centre Harry Hill, Kenilworth Road |
| Yarm | Cohens Chemist Whitworth Chemist |
| Ingleby Barwick | Coulby Newham Pharmacy at Ingleby Barwick Community Hall |
| Eaglescliffe | Eaglescliffe Pharmacy Pharmacy Express |
| Mandale and Victoria | Pharmacy Express |
| Roseworth, Hardwick and Salters Lane | Pharmacy World |
| Stockton Town Centre, Newtown, Grangefield | Knights Pharmacy 365 Well Pharmacy Synergise Pharmacy |
| Fairfield, Hartburn, Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree | Fairfield Pharmacy |