

Stakeholder Briefing

From: Cllr Amanda Hoggood (amanda.hoggood@durham.gov.uk)

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Following the council's Annual Meeting last week, I have been meeting with our new Cabinet members and the council's corporate management team to establish the priorities of the Joint Administration. As the new leader, I look forward to providing you with further updates about our priorities and ambitions in due course and keeping you up to date with our coronavirus response in these weekly briefings.

Public health

Our current seven-day infection rate stands at 13.8 per 100,000, which remains below the England average of 33.6 per 100,000. As of 27 May, there were five coronavirus inpatients across County Durham and Darlington. For the latest data in County Durham and your local area, please visit our [Covid dashboard](#), which has now been updated to provide information about first and second doses of the vaccine, both by age range and vulnerable groups.

Vaccinations

The vaccination roll-out continues to progress well across County Durham. With the programme having been extended to lower age groups, the county's vaccination centres remain busy. People with complex medical conditions or those who are likely to have a reaction to the vaccine are being cared for at a special clinic operated by County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust.

Next week, the mobile vaccination unit will be visiting a number of sites across the county. Work continues to encourage take-up of the vaccination amongst hard to reach groups such as homeless people. Discussions have also been held with Durham University about encouraging students to be vaccinated during the summer vacation when the Government lowers the eligible age limits.

Infection rates and outbreak control

We continue to work with Public Health England and regional colleagues in relation to variants of concern, however, on the most part, this is very much business as usual. Surge testing in areas like North Tyneside is to understand the prevalence of the variant. The control measures to stop transmission remain the same as always: Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air. The main variant circulating (Indian / Delta variant) is more contagious, meaning the more robust you are in following the control measures, the better protected you are. We should also exercise particular caution when mixing indoors, where the virus can spread more easily – socialising outside remains the safer option. It is worth remembering that two doses of the coronavirus vaccination provide the best protection, so I would encourage everyone to attend both appointments when invited to do so, and to please continue following the latest guidance. As always, this can be found at www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus

As Volunteer Week comes to a close, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers who have contributed so much to our response to coronavirus, and who continue to do so. Whatever part you have played, and in whatever strand of work you have been a part of, I sincerely thank you for your time and contribution to supporting and protecting our communities.

Other news

As part of this year's Carers Week, we will be lighting up County Hall on Monday evening, to raise awareness of caring and the challenges that unpaid carers face. The theme of this year's campaign, which starts on Monday, is to help make caring visible and valued, as carers across the county continue to face new challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic.

And, to celebrate World Environment Day tomorrow, artwork drawn by County Durham youngster will go on display at Hardwick and Wharton Park to encourage visitors to think about the environment. The designs, which were all entered into the last year's The Big Draw competition, all raise awareness of climate change.

I will continue to keep everyone up to date throughout these changing and challenging times. Information is available on the council's website at www.durham.gov.uk and our social media channels www.facebook.com/DurhamCouncil and www.twitter.com/DurhamCouncil.

Cllr Amanda Hopgood

Leader

Durham County Council

For the latest government advice on the coronavirus pandemic, visit (www.gov.uk/coronavirus). Updates on changes that may affect our area can be found at www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Public Health England communication materials (posters and social media images) are available for all partners and can be accessed at <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/>.

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