

Stakeholders Briefing

From: Cllr Amanda Hopgood (amanda.hopgood@durham.gov.uk)

Date: Friday, 11 June 2021, 15:01 BST



Our current seven-day infection rate stands at 30 per 100,000, which remains below the England average of 53.9 per 100,000. The rising rates reflect that people are mixing more, however, it is positive to note that they are not rising to the extent or speed we observed in winter. As of 3 June, there was one coronavirus inpatient across County Durham and Darlington. For the latest data in County Durham and your local area, please visit our [Covid dashboard](#).

Vaccinations

More than 570,000 vaccinations have now been administered across County Durham, so far. This week, people aged between 25 and 29 were invited to book their vaccine. The mobile vaccination unit has also been visiting the east of the county as well as the Kellow, Coxhoe and Bowburn areas to help boost take-up of the vaccine.

Infection rates and outbreak control

The delta variant of coronavirus remains a variant of concern and we continue to work with Public Health England and regional colleagues to monitor the situation. As we also await an announcement about the date of the final step out of lockdown next week, it is worth reiterating that control measures to stop the transmission of coronavirus (regardless of the variant) remain the same: Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air. Despite being able to enjoy the good weather and cultural and leisure opportunities across the county, it is important to remember that the more robustly we follow public health guidance, the better protected you, your friends and family will be. The latest guidance can be found at www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Adult social care

This week, our employees with caring responsibilities have been invited to attend an informal coffee and chat session. As part of Carers Week, we are also linking in further with Durham County Carers Support, our commissioned provider of unpaid carer services, to support their wider work in the county to identify and assist unpaid carers.

Support for residents

Following a particularly difficult year in which many people have sadly lost family members due to coronavirus, we are raising awareness of the help and support available following the death of a loved one. A Bereavement Support Payment, which is not means-tested can be claimed by those who have been widowed, while residents who are receiving a means-tested benefit can also qualify for a Funeral Expenses Payment. Our Welfare Rights Service is on hand to offer advice, with more information also available on our [website](#).

Other news

Plans to transform Bishop Auckland into a world-class visitor destination of national importance have moved a step closer following the award of £33.2 million government funding as part of the Stronger Towns Fund. This will allow us to progress with ambitious plans to regenerate the town and substantially boost the county's visitor economy, supporting our recovery from the pandemic.

Cabinet will be asked to consider a number of reports when they meet next week. These will include:

A proposal to carry out an options appraisal for the council's new building at the Sands in Durham City and to review options for the existing headquarters site at Aykley Heads and the potential of the area in which it is located to deliver jobs and growth.

A request to review all options for the display and storage of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and archive, which comprises more than 200,000 historic documents and 15,000 objects, as well as the former museum building and grounds.

Proposals to increase community budgets in order to boost local economic recovery and support projects. The plan would see all 126 elected members receive a one-off allocation of £10,000 to support the revitalisation of our towns and villages as part of proposals to change how £4.2 million awarded to our AAPs through our Towns and Villages Programme for 2021/22 is allocated. Our AAPs have supported thousands of projects across the county and brought in millions of pounds of match funding over the years, as well as providing essential support to community groups and volunteers through the pandemic.

An update on plans to submit an application for additional government funding to help improve connectivity for rural communities, reduce transport times and expand economic and cultural opportunities as part of the first round of the Levelling Up Fund. We can submit up to six bids – one per parliamentary constituency area – under the scheme, which must be delivered by March 2024. The first of these bids forms the Bishop Auckland constituency, with bids for the other five areas being submitted in future rounds.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that Durham Brass festival will return this summer, from Wednesday, 14 – Sunday, 18 July. This year, the programme offers a vast range of brass-related live music with coronavirus-safe audiences across outdoor spaces and indoor venues throughout Durham, as well as online streaming from brass artists around the globe.

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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