

Stakeholder Briefing

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

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I am pleased to report that our current seven-day infection rate has sharply reduced this week. It now stands at 452.7 cases per 100,000 and is the first reduction we have seen since the introduction of Step 3 on 17 May. The rates have also reduced across all age bands which is another positive indicator. However, rates across the north east still remain higher than the England average of 351.4 cases per 100,000, and the effects of Step 4 (19 July) and the full opening up of society will start to be reflected in the figures in the coming weeks. Therefore, at this point, we do not know if these reductions will be sustained. We will continue to monitor these figures closely and, as always, you can find the latest data for County Durham and your local area on our [Covid dashboard](#).

I would like to thank everyone for their continued efforts to help protect each other and our communities. It is evident that people are being cautious when out and about and continuing to apply control measures such as Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air. For the latest local coronavirus information and guidance, please visit www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Vaccinations

As I mentioned last week, all twelve local authorities in the north east are being provided with enhanced government support to encourage uptake of vaccinations and targeted intervention in communities where vaccine take up is low. To support this, in the coming weeks, we will continue to provide more walk-in and pop-up vaccination events across County Durham.

Adult social care

Care homes across County Durham are being offered support in preparing for mandatory vaccinations of staff, from November. This will include advice on areas such as fast track routes to vaccinations and

Care Academy support.

Other news

I am pleased to inform you that the Chief Officer Appointments Committee has advised that John Hewitt is our recommended candidate for the permanent role of Chief Executive following an interview process. This is, of course, subject to formal confirmation by full council in September. John has done a fantastic job in carrying out the role on an interim basis since December and leading the council through some

challenging times. I am confident that, with your support, he will continue to do a fantastic job for the people of County Durham and all those who work, visit or invest here.

Our Durham Business Recovery Grant has supported over 300 businesses and safeguarded over 3,500 jobs. The grant was launched in January to help companies overcome the challenges caused by the pandemic, as part of our commitment to supporting the local economy. To date, it has helped 318 businesses across the county.

We are helping to bring vacant properties in Bishop Auckland back into use in a scheme to increase visitors, boost footfall and restore the high street. We will use £1 million from the government's £19.9 million Future High Streets Fund to help businesses and investors find new uses for vacant buildings in the town. The scheme aims to revitalise the high street and contribute to the town's economic growth by diversifying its visitor offer.

And, organisations and groups in Chester-le-Street and surrounding areas are being invited to bid for thousands of pounds worth of funding to help their communities tackle the impacts of Covid. More than £100,000 is available through the Chester-le-Street and District AAP to fund projects which support residents and businesses to recover from the challenges of the pandemic.

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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