

Stakeholders Briefing - 23 July 2021

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Our current seven-day infection rate stands at 820.4 cases per 100,000 which continues to be above the England average of 537.7 per 100,000. The rates continue to be the highest we have seen, with a similar picture across the region. As a result of these high rates, all twelve local authorities in the north east are being provided with enhanced government support from Monday to encourage uptake of vaccinations and continue additional measures such as testing programmes. It will also see targeted intervention in communities where vaccine take up is low.

While rates are still rising in County Durham, they are rising at a slower pace at the moment and we are still seeing positive news in the vaccine take up and age range of those testing positive for coronavirus. Although we moved into Step 4 of the Government roadmap on Monday (19 July), we must continue to be cautious to help protect each other and our communities. For the latest data in County Durham and your local area, please visit our [Covid dashboard](#).

Vaccinations

GPs, community pharmacies, pop-up clinics and the Melissa bus continue to offer vaccinations across County Durham. We are also starting to vaccinate vulnerable children aged 12 and over or those who live with people who have compromised immunity using the Pfizer vaccine.

Third dose vaccines are likely to begin in September, prioritising vulnerable people and frontline health and social care staff. Meanwhile, guidance about flu vaccinations for 2021/22 extends the flu vaccine to children and places responsibility on social care and health employers. We continue to work with partners in the NHS to coordinate the flu and third Covid vaccinations.

The Government has also published draft regulations, which are likely to come into effect in October, requiring the registered manager of care homes to make sure that staff and professional visitors have

had two Covid vaccines. In practice, this means care home, council and NHS staff who visit care homes must be double vaccinated. However, this does not apply to the friends and family of residents.

Infection rates and outbreak control

New guidance has now been introduced to support care settings affected by significant staff absences. From Monday (19 July), health and social care staff who have been identified as a contact of someone

who has tested positive for Covid and who have been fully vaccinated for more than 14 days, may be able to continue in their role. This should only be in exceptional circumstances where there is a risk to health or safety resulting from staff absences through the provision of a reduced level of care. The decision to allow health and social care staff to attend work should be made on a case-by-case basis following a risk assessment, and authorised by the organisation's local director of infection prevention and control, the lead professional for health protection, or Director of Public Health relevant to the organisation. Our local public health team will be supporting and advising services who need to consider this intervention, balancing the risk of onward transmission compared to the risk to delivery of critical services. For the latest local coronavirus information and guidance, please visit www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Support for residents

Following further Government funding as part of the Covid Local Support Grant, we have issued 26,000 vouchers to families eligible for free school meals to support them over the summer holidays. The vouchers, which are worth £80, help to ensure vulnerable households with children have enough food over the holidays. The scheme complements our Food and Food programme to support families who might find the summer challenging.

Other news

This week, County Durham has launched its bid to be named UK City of Culture 2025, with the hope the accolade will provide a major boost for the entire county. We have submitted the initial bid on behalf of Culture Durham, a partnership of organisations that is backed by businesses. Uniquely, the bid aims to secure the title for both the county and the city, meaning people and communities across the county would benefit from the national spotlight.

Two County Durham schools are set to benefit in the second round of the Government's School Rebuilding Programme. Sugar Hill Primary School and Woodham Academy, both in Newton Aycliffe, will now be considered for a major rebuild, partial rebuild or refurbishment, with the Government expected to make its decision early next year following a feasibility study.

Next week, councillors and stakeholders will be able to contribute to a review of the future of the DLI Collection and Archive, the former museum building and its grounds during a meeting of our Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management board. The meeting, on Wednesday (28 July) at 1.30pm, will be broadcast live on our [YouTube channel](#).

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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