

Axminster Division Report 6th April 2022

COVID updates

There is understandably some confusion with a number of matters relating to the COVID Pandemic, as we move into a largely open society once again. As April arrived, so did a new phase of living with COVID-19, where the virus will be managed like other respiratory illnesses.

But the pandemic is clearly not over, and how COVID-19 will develop over time remains uncertain, so we all still have a part to play in helping keep ourselves and each other safe and protected.

The government has published important advice for people with symptoms of respiratory infections, such as COVID-19; people with a positive COVID-19 test result and their contacts; and advice on safer behaviours for everyone.

It's a lot to take in, so I have attached a separate summary sheet setting out guidance and advice for all of us, with thanks to Devon CCG and DCC Public Health Teams for their contributions.

The following and other information you might find helpful, particularly with regard to vaccination, booster vaccinations and eligible groups.

- Vaccinations for all 5-11s began on 5 April.
- Spring boosters are available for over 75's, residents in a care home for older adults, and people aged 12 and over who are immunosuppressed (have a weakened immune system) including patients with chronic leukaemia or lymphoma, and those who have had immunosuppressive treatment following an organ transplant or have had radiotherapy or chemotherapy
- Free general Covid-19 testing has ended, but some people are still eligible
- In Devon, a total of 2,716,251 doses were given between 8 December 2020 and 27 March 2022. This includes 994,896 first doses, 943,496 second doses and 777,859 first boosters/third doses.
- Free general testing for Covid-19 has ended but the Health and Social Care Secretary has announced that people at risk of serious illness from COVID-19, and eligible for treatments, will continue to get free tests to use if they develop symptoms, along with NHS and adult social care staff and those in other high-risk settings
- Under the plans free symptomatic testing will be provided for: A) Patients in hospital, where a PCR test is required for their care and to provide access to treatments and support ongoing clinical surveillance for new variants. B) People who are eligible for community COVID-19 treatments because they are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID19. People in this group will be contacted directly C) People living or working in some high-risk settings.

- Booster vaccination - people who are 75 before the end of June can appointments in advance; however, they should not be vaccinated until they have had their 75th birthday.
- People do not need to wait to be contacted before coming forward. (The best time to have the booster is around 6 months after the previous booster, although the minimum interval is 3 months.)
- Appointments can be booked via the NHS National Booking System.

Ukraine

Events in Ukraine and the awful news we see and hear on a daily basis are never far from anyone's thoughts and the impact is felt by all of us and Devon stands with Ukraine.

Local authorities across the County are supporting local residents who want to provide sanctuary to the Ukrainian refugees who have been forced to flee their homes and the dedicated DCC web site at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/supporting-ukraine/> is being very regularly updated with the latest news on how residents can help

DCC is now receiving the latest information from the government on the Devon sponsors who have registered and are carrying out DBS checks on the sponsor families.

And Devon's district authorities are using a common approach to assess each sponsor's accommodation, which will help better assess any potential safeguarding risks.

This initial phase of the Homes for Ukraine scheme is designed to supplement the Ukraine Family Visa for people in the UK to support friends and colleagues. We are now seeing several hundred people in Devon being matched and, following permission to travel, we will start to see those families arrive in Devon.

As you will appreciate the situation is evolving quickly, with updated guidance coming through from government daily, but all 'Team Devon' partners are working together to develop a rapid response.

- Anyone who is interested in offering accommodation can register their interest via the government website at <https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine> – [Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukraine](#). The link also contains some frequently asked questions (FAQs) for would-be accommodation providers (sponsors).
- Those wishing to offer donations on the ground are advised to make financial contributions, particularly to the Disasters Emergency Committee at <https://www.dec.org.uk/>

Voluntary Sector, grants and funding

The voluntary sector plays an increasingly important part in our everyday lives, but in many cases requires funding and grants to survive, which can be something of a minefield, particularly for new enterprises.

A good starting point is the DCC Funding News, where you can sign up for regular online updates and another particularly helpful source of information at which to begin can be found at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/useful-links/>

I find the Rural Services Network another valuable resource in pointing people and organisations in the right direction and this month's digest, which can be found at <https://rsnonline.org.uk/rural-funding-digest-april-2022> has a mixed bag of 'something for everyone', and I would encourage members to sign up for this newsletter as well.