

Axminster Division Report 7th July 2022

Covid update

The unwanted ‘gift that keeps on giving’ is still very much in our local communities in Devon where numbers continue to rise. The increase is being attributed to the new faster-spreading BA.4 and BA.5 sub variants of Omicron, which make up more than half of new infections in England, and more people mixing socially.

While the new sub variants are more transmissible, it is not having the same health impact. So while we are seeing a slight increase in the number of people in hospital with COVID-19, we are fortunately not seeing an increase in those patients in High Dependency Units.

National advice has not changed. If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well, try to stay at home and avoid contact with others.

Face coverings are no longer mandatory in health settings, such as GP surgeries or hospitals, but there are situations where people should consider wearing them e.g. when visiting the GP or hospital, where you are more likely to be in contact with vulnerable people.

The government’s spring booster vaccinations are still available for the moment, and there will be vaccination clinics available over the summer. An autumn booster for vulnerable groups will also become available.

Testing is no longer expected for most people, although it is required for people who are clinically vulnerable in order to access other treatments. However, if people still have any test kits, they could use them ahead of situations where they know they’ll be in close contact with vulnerable people.

Simple hand hygiene is also still important, not just to protect from coronavirus, but also for fighting other infectious illnesses. It’s a simple precaution, but still highly effective.

Shop Local

The results of a Devon wide consumer survey reveals that 88 per cent of local people try to buy Devon-sourced goods whenever possible, which presents a huge opportunity for local businesses.

While still relatively early days, The ‘Made in Devon’ scheme, see <https://www.madeindevon.org.uk/> is beginning to get up a ‘head of steam’, where businesses can advertise that they are a trustworthy business supplying Devon-sourced products whenever possible, and that those claims have been vetted by

trading standards. Membership is also available to Devon-based companies in other sectors including retail, arts, and other services.

The idea of ‘Made in Devon’ is to encourage consumers to keep buying quality local products and services, to bring long-term, sustainable prosperity to the region and to help in the region’s economic recovery, which is being done by encouraging sales and consumption of the incredible range of quality products and services which we have in Devon, supporting local businesses, and establishing Devon as a source of quality local products and services.

The benefits of supporting local are huge. It helps keep money in the community as local businesses have lower overheads like transportation, which, in turn is better for the environment.

It could be the Farm shop down the road, the local producer of skincare and bath products, who lives next door etc; buying local helps them and their businesses survive, but it also helps avoid the supply issues that have been experienced by many national retailers.

Maintaining local supply lines between producers, restaurants, schools, and hospitals for instance, it creates jobs and if businesses can demonstrate that its goods are local it will give confidence to the consumer, this will help ensure that Devon’s economy continues to recover following the worst of the pandemic.

Jobs in Devon

There remains a shortage of people to work in all sectors in Devon, and the Devon Jobs website, see <https://www.devonjobs.gov.uk/> shows a wide range of opportunities in full time and part time employment. Much of the shortfall in people available to work is due to people taking planned or early retirement.

Many posts in the health and social care sectors remain unfilled, in some part due to the lack of affordable housing, and Devon County Council are working with district Councils to try and address this problem.

Integrated Care System

The very recent launch of the 'One Devon' integrated care system, see <https://www.icsdevon.co.uk/> is sure to have passed by many people, but is the biggest shake up of health and care systems in my lifetime. The Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD) is a partnership of health and social care organisations working together with local communities across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay to improve people's health, wellbeing and care, where put simply it is a more joined up approach to improving how people are cared for from G.P. to acute hospital services, to help at Home.