

## **Axminster Division Monthly Report 9th October 2022**

### **Flu/Covid**

Lower than usual natural immunity has experts predicting flu and COVID-19 cases to climb this winter

As we move towards late autumn and winter everyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster is being urged to take up the offer as soon as they are invited to do so.

It's because cases of coronavirus are already beginning to rise across the UK, and in Devon, and natural immunity against flu is relatively low, because despite it being present last winter, coronavirus restrictions helped protect people from catching it.

People who are older or who have other health conditions that make them vulnerable, are at greatest risk this winter. And study results from early in the pandemic show that people who catch both flu and COVID-19 at the same time are around twice as likely to die, compared to those who only have COVID-19. At the moment, the flu vaccine is being given free on the NHS to adults who:

- Are 65 years old and over (including those who will be 65 by 31 March 2023)
- Have certain health conditions, such as asthma and diabetes
- Are pregnant
- Are in long-stay residential care
- Receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick
- Live with someone who is more likely to get a severe infection due to a weakened immune system, such as someone living with HIV, someone who has had a transplant, or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis
- Are frontline health or social care workers

From mid-October, people aged 50 years old or over (including those who will be 50 years old by 31 March 2023) can also have a free NHS flu vaccine.

All primary school and some secondary school children are eligible for the flu nasal spray this year, which is usually given at school.

GP surgeries are also inviting children aged two and three years old (age on 31 August) for their nasal spray vaccination at their practices.

## **COVID**

As the weather cools down, COVID is making an unwelcome return (if it every went away!) Over the past three weeks those patients in our Devon hospitals i.e. Derriford, RD&E, Torbay, and North Devon) diagnosed with COVID, numbers have moved up steadily from 51 to 138 to 185 so we are in a changeable position.

Thankfully we have not seen a corresponding rise of patients in Intensive Care, currently, Two patients on mechanical ventilation. The media are now talking about a 'Twindemic' with Flu joining up, so do get a flu jab and COVID jab depending, upon your circumstances.

At the moment, those being prioritised for a seasonal booster dose (autumn booster) of the COVID-19 vaccine include people who are:

- Aged 65 years old or over
- Pregnant
- Aged 5 years old and over and at high risk due to a health condition or weakened immune system
- Aged 5 years old and over and live with someone who has a weakened immune system
- Aged 16 years old and over and a carer, either paid or unpaid
- Living or working in a care home for older people
- a frontline health and social care worker

Other people, including those aged 50 to 64 years old who are not at higher risk, will be able to get the booster jab later in the autumn 2022.

## **Police update**

Devon & Cornwall Police has a new Chief Constable. The Police & Crime Panel endorsed the appointment of DCC Will Kerr OBE. He is currently Deputy Chief Constable for Police Scotland. A highly experienced officer, where before his current

appointment he held senior appointments in the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the National Crime Agency.

Hate Crime – 2,564 hate crimes were recorded in the 12 months to June 2022. This is worryingly a 46% increase (+800) when compared to the statistical ‘baseline’ year, the 12 months to June 2019. Despite the observed increase, it is difficult to make objective inferences about performance based on increases or decreases in hate crime; victims may be more confident to report to the police. Conversely, the trend could also be interpreted as negative because it could be reflective of a ‘real’ increase in victimisation. 44% of all hate crimes were public order related and these were predominantly racially or religiously aggravated.

101 call waiting times – 101 or P1 (Priority 1) non-emergency calls are those calls that are identified by the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system as high priority. These include calls relating to domestic abuse, sexual offences, hate crime, missing persons, and road safety. In the year to July 2022, the average wait time on the P1 line was 17 minutes – this is an increase of 11 minutes 57 seconds when compared to the ‘baseline’ year the 12 months to July 2020. Unsurprisingly, fewer calls have been received in the latest period, fewer answered and a higher abandonment rate is evident.

The Police and Crime Commissioner is addressing this as a matter of urgency.