

Axminster Division Report 5th January 2023

Happy New Year to all of you, where I'm pretty sure it won't be too difficult in one way or another to have a better one than last year, where Devon County Council is doing everything possible that it can to help and support our Communities, in partnership with very many stakeholders across the County.

Back to school advice issued by UKHSA

- The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reports that flu and coronavirus are currently circulating at high levels and are likely to continue to increase in coming weeks.
- High numbers of scarlet fever caused by group A streptococcus, also continue to be reported. Professor Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Adviser for the UKHSA emphasises that it is important to minimise the spread of infection in schools and other education and childcare settings as much as possible.
- If your child is unwell and has a fever, they should stay home from school or nursery until they feel better and the fever has resolved. Lessons learned during the epidemic about the importance of good hand hygiene is also key, so practice regular handwashing at home with soap and warm water for all of the Family remains sound practice.
- Catching coughs and sneezes in tissues then binning them is another simple way to help stop illnesses spreading, as well as adults trying to stay home when unwell and if you have to go out, wear a face covering.
- Flu vaccinations are still available for all eligible groups and is the best protection against the virus. There has been a good uptake in older age groups but vaccination among young children remains low. Flu can be very unpleasant and, in some cases, can lead to more serious illness. Getting children vaccinated protects them and others they come into contact with.
- Eligible children include for free vaccination are:
 - Those aged 2 and 3 on the 31 August 2022
 - All primary school-aged children
 - Some secondary school-aged children.

Keep your New Year resolution with the help of One Small Step

The beginning of a new year can be a great opportunity to create a new habit. One Small Step has many options for support to help you keep your resolution in 2023 or inspire you to make the change. Studies have found some of our New Year resolutions will struggle to make it past 12 January, but with the support of others, we can make them last much longer. One Small Step is a free lifestyle service, funded by Devon County Council to support the health and wellbeing of Devon residents. There are friendly advisors who can help you plan lifestyle changes and support you to maintain a healthier weight, stop smoking, drink less or become more active. Flexible support means they can help you focus on small achievable steps to fit in with your lifestyle and routine. You can reach them by calling 01392 908 139, look at our website at www.onesmallstep.org.uk or fill out a contact form. DCC also

has a team of stop smoking practitioners, so if you are thinking about stopping smoking, and you can also text them by messaging QUIT to 60777. There is 12 weeks of behavioural support on offer, along with Nicotine Replacement Therapy.

Devon's continued support for the people of Ukraine

Devon County Council has given a measured welcome to a Home Office announcement that will see additional payments made to host households participating in the Homes to Ukraine programme. Under the new terms, the hosts of Ukrainian guests who have been in the UK for over 12 months will be eligible for the increased national 'Thank You' payment of £500. The current national amount is £350 per host. This increased national amount is available until month 24 of the guests stay in the UK. But councils will see government funding reduce from £10,500 to £5,900 per guest to provide wraparound support for new arrivals from 1 January 2023. They will however have access to additional funding to help mitigate homelessness, and to help councils with housing responsibilities acquire housing for people fleeing conflict from Ukraine and Afghanistan. In Devon, more than 1,000 people have put themselves forward to be sponsors with over 500 more confirming their interest in becoming a future host. This has meant that over 1,600 citizens from Ukraine have arrived since Russia first invaded the country in February 2022. Devon County Council will continue to work closely with local councils, voluntary and local community organisations to support both hosts and their guests.