

**Title: Devon & Cornwall Health Protection
Committee Annual Report 2021/22**

Wards Affected: All

To: Health and Wellbeing Board

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1. Purpose

To present the annual assurance report of the Devon and Cornwall Health Protection Committee 2021/22 for information.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to note the annual assurance report.

3. Supporting Information

Background to the report

Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall Local Authority Public Health teams are partners in the Devon and Cornwall Health Protection Committee which provides assurance that health protection functions are being effectively discharged across the Peninsula.

The Committee prepares an annual assurance report for the constituent Health and Wellbeing Boards, detailing progress against statutory duties and strategic priorities during the previous year.

The report considers the following key domains of Health Protection:

- Communicable disease control and environmental hazards
- Immunisation and screening
- Health care associated infections and antimicrobial resistance
- Emergency planning and response.

The report sets out for each of these domains:

- Assurance arrangements
- Performance and activity during 2021/22
- Actions taken against health protection priorities identified for 2021/22
- Priorities for 2022/23.

The COVID-19 pandemic remained a high priority throughout 2021/22, alongside work to recover mainstream health protective activity, including general screening and immunisation programmes.

There is a delay between the reporting period and the preparation of the report due to the timetable for publication of annual performance data. Because of this time lag, this year's report also contains some information in relation to activities undertaken during 2022/23, to provide a timelier picture of progress.

Key points from the report for Torbay

Management of COVID-19 outbreaks

The report includes the numbers of outbreak by setting type notified to UKHSA. Torbay managed the majority of the outbreaks locally, including those in education, businesses and hospitality settings. This worked well due to officers' local knowledge. Complex care settings continued to be managed in collaboration with UKHSA although the Public Health team continued to take a lead on care sector outbreaks until September 2022 when normal arrangements were resumed.

The report describes the continuing changes to guidance and legislation which required continuing adaptation of working practices and intervention by the Public Health team in partnership with the NHS and local settings. In February 2022 legal restrictions ended in England, resulting in the local contact tracing team being stood down. Rates of non-COVID infectious diseases reported to UKHSA remained lower than pre-COVID figures during the pandemic.

Local areas of innovation and good practice

COVID-19 funding enabled on-site infection prevention support to non health and care settings in the community. Multi-lingual training, resources and checklists were provided to support education, workplaces, homeless settings, businesses, asylum hotels and for events.

COVID-19 testing continued to be coordinated peninsular wide, with targeted community testing, including the deployment of fixed and mobile PCR and LFD testing sites. This included the targeting of testing to specific sites and workplaces where it was vital to keep services running.

Winter 2021 saw a surge in COVID-19 vaccination due to the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. Torbay Public Health team continued to work with the vaccination inequalities programme to run local pop-up vaccination clinics in

areas of high deprivation and low uptake across the Bay. A number of these were supported with door to door leafleting and face to face engagement. Outreach vaccine pop up clinics remain in place.

The flu vaccination programme continued to be a priority during 2021/22 with extension to new eligible groups including school years 8-11, and those aged 50-64.

Local Outbreak Engagement Boards in all areas helped local authorities to keep in touch with key stakeholders. COVID Community Champions continued to be a valued source of support and information, acting as trusted voices in promoting key messages with their local networks, and feeding back local issues and concerns.

Torbay Public Health team established the local health protection response for refugees and people seeking asylum. Coordination is now led by NHS Devon. Health screening of all new entrants is led by local primary care teams, ensuring top up immunisations, screening for active TB, and Covid and Flu vaccination. Practitioners and host families were also offered trauma informed training to recognise the traumatic situations many refugees had experienced and guide their approach to communications.

Screening & Immunisation programmes

All screening programmes suffered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to varying degrees, with the focus during 2021/22 to support providers to implement detailed recovery plans to safely recommence screening and tackle the backlog that had developed during the pandemic.

Good progress was made across all programmes although some areas remain lower than target. In summary:

- Cancer and non-cancer screening services in Devon reported coverage significantly better than the national averages for 2021.
- Immunisation coverage is lower than target for second dose MMR and for some school vaccinations, and these are a priority for the new multi-agency Devon Maximising Immunisation Uptake Group established in 2022.
- The Covid and Flu vaccination programme will continue to promote higher uptake in all risk groups during 2023/24.

Healthcare associated infections

This section covers infections which are acquired through contact with health services and also frequently difficult to treat: *MRSA*, *MSSA*, *C.difficile*, and *E.coli*.

Key challenges for 2022/23 have been to strengthen the antimicrobial resistance programme, continue to support the COVID-19 response, to implement *E.coli* and *C. difficile* reduction strategies, and to ensure consistent information and analysis from community infections.

Trends in these infections showed an overall stable position. The Devon Antimicrobial Resistance Group has been reconvened and will be working in

collaboration with the Cornwall group on programmes to reduce healthcare associated infections further and to promote campaigns to tackle anti-microbial resistance in line with the national 10 year strategy.

Health Protection Committee Priority areas

Progress against the 2021/22 priority areas is described in the report.

Peninsula wide priorities for action in 2022/23 are below:

1. Maintain response to COVID-19
2. Ensure preparedness and system wide resilience to respond to future pandemic or health protection emergencies
3. Recovery of screening and immunisations programmes, with a focus on addressing health inequalities
4. Strengthen community infection management services to prevent and respond to infections, aligning to the broader SW IPC Strategy work
5. Reduce healthcare associated infections and tackle antimicrobial resistance across our communities
6. Work towards continuous improvement in all areas of health protection
7. Maintain a focus on local action to address the climate emergency.

Progress against these will be included in the next annual assurance report.

4. Relationship to Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The health protection agenda is aligned to areas of inequality identified in the JSNA. All areas of action are designed to protect and support individuals and settings at greatest need or risk.

5. Relationship to Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Health protection is inextricably linked to wider health and wellbeing. Actions to prevent and respond to infectious disease are a key part of delivering improvements in healthy life expectancy.

6. Implications for future iterations of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and/or Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

As above.

Appendices

A copy of the Peninsula health protection assurance report 2021/22