

Meeting: [Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board](#)

Date: [6 November 2025](#)

Wards affected: [All](#)

Report Title: [Public Health update on Winter readiness and year round resilience to adverse weather and infections](#)

When does the decision need to be implemented? [n/a](#)

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of the work of the public health team and partners in the following areas:
- Maintaining year round resilience and readiness in relation to adverse weather and health
 - Preventing and managing outbreaks through good infection control, and tackling anti-microbial resistance
 - Promoting health through uptake of the Winter vaccine programmes.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The programmes of work described in this report will help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy and prosperous Torbay by helping to prevent and manage poor health through adverse weather and the spread of infections.
- 2.2 There are significant risks associated with excess heat and cold, and these disproportionately affect those who are most vulnerable through poor health, disability, or economic challenge. This paper outlines plans and activities designed to tackle these risks at national and local level.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the report and to support efforts to build and maintain population resilience to adverse weather and infections.

Supporting Information

Preventing and Managing Outbreaks of infection

Local Authority public health teams work with UKHSA on all outbreaks of notifiable diseases. In Torbay we receive notifications of outbreaks in care homes, schools or homeless settings, and link with UKHSA to prepare for outbreaks in any setting that may require our support.

We were part of a regional incident management team to prepare for potential measles outbreaks during the past year. Although there were cases in other parts of the region there were none recorded in Torbay. Part of the mitigation was continued promotion of the MMR vaccine and infection prevention measures for education and care settings.

We continue to mitigate against the risk of a future pandemic which has included attending both regional and national pandemic exercises: Exercise Solaris (regional) and Exercise Pegasus (national).

Infection prevention & management and Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Good infection prevention and control is the cornerstone of the prevention of infectious disease and the spread of infections. NHS and Social Care settings in England are required to follow national guidance in relation to infection prevention and control. This is updated regularly and is used by the Council and our NHS and Care colleagues to promote best practice and monitor compliance.

AMR is effectively part of the infection management strategy. If drugs become ineffective, then infections will be rife; if infections spread, then drug resistance is more likely to develop. The World Health Organisation estimates that bacterial antimicrobial resistance is directly responsible for well over a million deaths worldwide each year and contributes to almost five million deaths.

Torbay Public Health are members of a Peninsula Antimicrobial Resistance Group where partners have developed priorities against the national action plan. Within Devon we have an antimicrobial stewardship group which is currently developing audit processes for the use of antimicrobials within healthcare. And at local level, Public Health convenes a Torbay AMR Group where we are working with partners in the NHS, Environmental Health, Medicines Optimisation (pharmacy), and UKHSA, to turn the national AMR commitments into practice.

A key activity currently is planning for WHO World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 18-24 November 2025, with a range of promotional activities. Last year's work with local schools and early years resulted in Torbay being shortlisted for the Antibiotic Guardian Awards.

Winter planning as part of year round readiness

UKHSA develops an annual adverse weather and health plan which includes preparation for both excess heat and excess cold. This replaces previous Winter only plans.

The adverse weather plan outlines those areas where public, voluntary, health and social care sectors can work together with local communities to develop integrated planning and response in order to:

- prevent the increase in years of life lost due to adverse weather events
- prevent mortality due to adverse weather events
- prevent morbidity due to adverse weather events
- reduce the use of healthcare services due to adverse weather events.

The plan and supporting document is used to produce a local authority cold (and heat) health alert action card linked to the UKHSA and MET Office health alert systems. The action card is a council-wide document which details activities to be undertaken from preparation through to red alert level.

The cold health alert action card is reviewed each Autumn to consider the activities required for departments in response to the cold-health alerts. This includes:

- Public Health
- Emergency Planning
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Events
- Rough Sleeping and Initiative (including the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol)
- Car Parking
- Health and Safety
- Communications
- Human Resources
- Torre Abbey
- Housing

Our processes for both Winter Readiness and Pandemic Response were audited in 2025 and assessed to be robust.

For Public Health, the cold weather action planning process aligns with the Winter vaccination programmes, vaccines being a key protective measure in the prevention of illness and outbreaks and reduction in NHS demand.

Seasonal Vaccination Programme 2025/26

The annual Autumn/Winter vaccination programme provides vital protection to keep people from developing serious illnesses and ending up in hospital during the busy Winter months. Vaccination is also a major defence against AMR, as vaccines prevent infection and therefore the need for medicines.

Overall national uptake for flu vaccination in 2024/25 was 50.2%. In Torbay, uptake for the 65 and over age group was equal to the national rate at 74.86%. For those in clinical risk groups uptake was 40% (equal to the national figure but below the 55% target). Our childhood vaccination rates increased on the previous year to 41% for 2-3 year olds (similar to the national rate), 55% for primary aged children (just above the national rate) and 40% for secondary aged children (below the national rate).

Vaccine uptake in Torbay tends to be slightly below Devon, mirroring the high proportion of deprivation which is a key factor in low uptake. Therefore our efforts continue to be to target vaccine uptake in the higher risk, and the lower socio-economic groups, in particular 'taking the vaccine to where people are' through outreach clinics, and using local trusted voices to get the message across. For winter 2024/25 we worked with the ICB vaccination team to create podcasts aimed at the care workforce in accessing their vaccinations.

The national vaccination campaign for 2025/26 started with two waves. The flu vaccination programme started for cohort 1 on 1 September 2025. This included pregnant women, children and young people. The second cohort started on 1 October 2025, focusing on eligible adults. School vaccinations are due to complete by the end of the Autumn term and all other eligible groups by 31 March 2026.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme started on 1 October 2025 and will end on 31 January 2026. This year saw a change to eligibility, with the age threshold increasing from 65 to 75 years.

Torbay Primary Care Networks are this year offering Covid and flu vaccinations through community locations and their practices instead of the Riviera International Centre. This increases availability at different geographical locations within the Bay.

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust Maternity Service has active plans in place to promote and deliver all three Winter vaccines to pregnant women through the season. This is a group where uptake nationally and locally could be much higher, offering increased protection from infection to both the mother and the child.

This year the Devon vaccine outreach team is committing to running more clinics earlier in the season in Torbay, to help us to reach our target populations in our town centre areas and our homeless community. There are also 36 pharmacies signed up to provide Covid vaccines in Torbay and South Devon, an increase from 23 in 2024.

Winter communications programme

The Winter communications campaign was launched in October. Key messages for this year are:

- Stay strong, get vaccinated
- Choose well: when and how to access your GP, pharmacy, or self-care
- Support for mental health and wellbeing.

Communication campaigns and toolkits are disseminated through the NHS and UKHSA, with plans coordinated locally across NHS, local authorities and other partners. The public health team with partners produces additional communications to be used within local newsletters for audiences including schools, carers, and adult social care providers. As a local authority we also include information on social support in our communications, covering benefits, pension credit, warm homes, food and transport, all of which are important to helping people to stay warm, active and healthy through the Winter months. We have introduced a communications tracker for this season to monitor the distribution of messaging. This will enable us to review any gaps and assess the effectiveness of our targeting.

4. Financial Opportunities and Implications

4.1 None identified

5. Legal Implications

5.1 None identified

6. Engagement and Consultation

6.1 Programmes include communications and engagement plans with local communities and target groups.

7. Procurement Implications

7.1 None identified

8. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

8.1 Anti-microbial resistance is strongly linked with climate change and tackling one can help to tackle the other. Sustainability is a target area in the South West Infection Prevention and Management Strategy which we are all signed up to deliver.

9. Associated Risks

9.1 There are risks to population health and to health and care services associated with Winter infections and poor infection management or response. The aim of the programmes described in this paper is to put in place measures to control and address these risks.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old. 55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. 27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.	Age is a risk factor for infection.	Age guides targeting of infection control measures including vaccine programmes.	
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.	Carers are a risk group.	Vaccine programmes target carers.	
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	Those with clinical risk conditions are at higher risk.	These groups are targeted in the vaccine programmes.	
Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative differential impact based on this characteristic.		

	to the Southwest and is lower than England.			
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative differential impact based on this characteristic.		
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.	Pregnancy, and infants, are at additional risk.	These groups are targeted for vaccination.	
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative differential impact based on this characteristic.		
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative differential impact based on this characteristic.		
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative		

		differential impact based on this characteristic.		
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative differential impact based on this characteristic.		
Armed Forces Community	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.	It is not anticipated that programmes will have a specific positive or negative differential impact based on this characteristic.		
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		People in more challenged socio-economic circumstances are at greater risk of low vaccine uptake.	These groups are targeted for vaccine outreach.	
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)		All programmes are designed to improve population health.	All programmes are designed to improve population health.	
Human Rights impacts		Services and providers will remain cognisant of human rights, including the right to life, health, privacy, education and prohibition of discrimination.		
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council and all staff and Councillors are Corporate	Infection prevention, AMR, and vaccine programmes all have activities targeting children.	Infection prevention, AMR, and vaccine programmes	

	Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.		all have activities targeting children.	
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11. Cumulative Council Impact

- 11.1 Planning for Winter includes all areas of the Council to a varying degree, and relevant teams are involved in preparation and delivery.

12. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 12.1 All of these programmes involve close partnership working across the Integrated Care System, including voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, and all are intended to promote and improve health across the whole of our population.