

OPEN

Adults and Health Committee

24 July 2023

Covid-19 Update

Report of: Dr Matt Tyrer, Director of Public Health

Report Reference No: AH/17/2023-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Adults and Health Committee with an update on the recovery and reset from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, including an update on current epidemiology and vaccination statistics.
- 2 This report links to the aims and objectives of the council's [Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#), specifically its priorities to be an open, transparent and enabling organisation, and one that empowers and cares about people.

Executive Summary

- 3 In January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Covid-19 pandemic to be a global health emergency. Since March 2020 when the UK government first put in place Covid-19 restrictions, Cheshire East Council and partners have worked tirelessly to support residents and communities to be safe and healthy.
- 4 In February 2022, all Covid-19 restrictions ended when the government published its 'Living with Covid' plan. Since then, the council has continued to work with partners and care settings to support vulnerable residents and promote vaccine uptake across the population.
- 5 In July 2022, the UK Covid-19 Inquiry began hearing and considering evidence. Four distinct modules have begun through the Inquiry, investigating:
 - Resilience and preparedness (Module 1)

- Core UK decision-making and political governance (Module 2)
 - Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare (Module 3)
 - Vaccines and therapeutics (Module 4)
- 6 The Local Government Association (LGA) is a Core Participant for the Inquiry and is representing all English local authorities. Cheshire East Council continues to work with the LGA to submit information and evidence as requested to support the combined local authority response to the Inquiry's Modules.
- 7 Further updates to Covid-19 testing were brought into effect from 1 April 2023. This has significantly reduced testing requirements nationally. Testing does remain in place but is more closely aligned to the management of other common respiratory infections.
- 8 On 5 May 2023, the WHO declared that Covid-19 was no longer a global health emergency and reiterated that countries should now manage the virus in the same way as it would with other infectious diseases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Adults and Health Committee is recommended to:

1. Receive and note the contents of this report.

Background

Update on Covid-19 testing

- 9 Changes to Covid-19 testing came into effect on 1 April 2023, to ensure testing continues to focus on those at highest risk, enables appropriate clinical treatment and supports the management of outbreaks in high-risk settings including health and social care.
- 10 Testing in England can now be more closely aligned with the management of other common respiratory infections (such as flu and the common cold), thanks to the ongoing success of the vaccination programme, increased access to therapeutic treatments and higher levels of immunity amongst the population.

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|--------------------------------|--|
| What testing has ended? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine asymptomatic testing, including testing on admission, for staff and patients across all health and social care settings including hospitals and care |
|--------------------------------|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>homes (most of this testing had already been paused since August 2022).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine symptomatic testing of staff and residents in care settings. • Routine symptomatic testing in other settings including prisons and places of detention, homelessness and refuge settings, and asylum settings. • All PCR testing outside of NHS settings. |
| <p>What testing will continue?</p> | <p>Testing will continue – using LFD tests – for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in the community and residents in care or other high-risk settings, if they have symptoms and are eligible for Covid-19 treatment, to enable rapid access to treatment. • Some NHS staff with symptoms working on inpatient wards with severely immunosuppressed patients. • Staff with symptoms who work in hospices. • All patients being discharged from hospitals into care settings. • Outbreak testing in the NHS, care settings, hospices, prisons and places of detention, homelessness and refuge settings, and asylum settings. • Some hospital patients with symptoms, when testing is needed to inform decisions such as ward transfers. |

Update on Covid-19 guidance

- 11 The Covid-19 testing changes have been set out in detail in updated guidance, including for those working in NHS and social care settings, for example:
- *Covid-19 supplement to the infection, prevention and control resource for adult social care*¹
 - *Managing healthcare staff with symptoms of a respiratory infection or a positive Covid-19 test result*²
 - *Covid-19: information and advice for health and care professionals*³

Update on Covid-19 epidemiology (national and local)

- 12 The latest weekly figures for Covid-19 cases (i.e., confirmed cases reported over the most recent 7-day period), up to 7 June 2023, showed:

| Cheshire East⁴ | North West⁵ | England⁶ |
|--|---|--|
| 43 cases (0.0002% of the population) | 537 cases (0.0002% of the population) | 4,331 cases (0.0002% of the population) |
| 8% decrease on the previous 7-day period | 25% decrease on the previous 7-day period | 27% decrease on the previous 7-day period |

It is important to note that, whilst cases and rates of Covid-19 have decreased overall, these figures are likely to also be impacted by the

¹ Department of Health & Social Care and UK Health Security Agency. 2023. *Covid-19 supplement to the infection prevention and control resource for adult social care*. [Updated 25 April 2023]. Available [here](#)

² UK Health Security Agency. 2023. *Managing healthcare staff with symptoms of a respiratory infection or a positive Covid-19 test result*. [Updated 31 March 2023]. Available [here](#)

³ UK Health Security Agency. 2023. *COVID-19: information and advice for health and care professionals*. [Updated 31 March 2023]. Available [here](#)

⁴ GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Cases in Cheshire East*. [Updated 4 May 2023]. Available [here](#)

⁵ GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Cases in North West*. [Updated 4 May 2023]. Available [here](#)

⁶ GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Cases in England*. [Updated 4 May 2023]. Available [here](#)

ending of Covid-19 testing requirements and be an underestimate of the true value and rates per population.

- 13 The widespread rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine programme, together with improved treatments for the most vulnerable and high immunity amongst the population, has underpinned the national policy transition to 'Living with Covid'.
- 14 Accordingly, the approach to Covid-19 surveillance has continued to be reviewed to ensure it is proportionate, cost effective and considered alongside how other infectious diseases (that present similar risk to the public's health) are monitored. As of 21 March 2023, the Office for National Statistics's Coronavirus (Covid-19) Infection Survey has been paused⁷, with UKHSA reviewing its approach to Covid-19 surveillance moving forward.
- 15 While some surveillance of positive tests in hospital patients and care homes will remain, as well as the monitoring of vaccination rates, this decision marks a major reduction in the way Covid-19 is tracked. This is an important milestone in the move to living with Covid-19, using proportionate surveillance systems and genomics capabilities, reporting infection rates and hospitalisations, as well as the risks posed by new variants.

Update on Covid-19 vaccinations

- 16 Covid-19 vaccinations were first rolled out in the UK from 8 December 2020. The first vaccination programme lasted until June 2021 and was delivered in a phased approach based on age and clinical vulnerability^{8,9}. Since 8 December 2020 (through 12 June 2023), a total of 151,248,820 vaccines have been delivered in the UK through different phases of the vaccination programme¹⁰.

Covid-19 spring booster 2023

- 17 The latest phase is the Covid-19 spring booster 2023, which commenced on 17 April 2023 for all eligible people, with vaccinations in care homes being delivered from the week commencing 3 April 2023. The last date that members of the public will be able to book a spring booster vaccine through the National Booking System will be 30 June 2023.

⁷ Office for National Statistics (ONS). 2023. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey*. Available [here](#)

⁸ Department of Health & Social Care. 2021. *UK COVID-19 vaccines (Policy paper)*. Available [here](#)

⁹ Department of Health & Social Care. 2021. *Half of all adults in UK receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine (Press release)*. Available [here](#)

¹⁰ GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Vaccinations in United Kingdom*. [Updated 8 June 2023]. Available [here](#)

18 As per the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), spring booster 2023 vaccinations are being offered to:

- Adults aged 75 years and over
- Residents in a care home for older adults
- Individuals aged 5 years and over who are immunosuppressed

Covid-19 vaccinations in children in clinical risk groups

19 The JCVI has advised that clinically vulnerable children aged 6 months to 4 years old should be offered a Covid-19 vaccine¹¹.

20 Although young children are generally at low risk of developing severe illness from Covid-19, infants and young children who have underlying medical conditions are over seven times more likely to be admitted to Paediatric Intensive Care Units.

21 NHS England has confirmed it will begin offering vaccinations to those eligible in England from around the middle of June 2023. Parents, carers or guardians of eligible children should wait to be contacted before coming forward.

Cheshire East Covid-19 vaccination rates

22 The latest figures for Covid-19 vaccinations, correct up to 7 June 2023, show:

| Cheshire East¹² | North West¹³ | England¹⁴ |
|--|--|--|
| First dose: 323,900 total (86.1%) | First dose: 5,605,863 total (79.3%) | First dose: 43,838,069 total (77.7%) |
| Second dose: 314,043 (83.5%) | Second dose: 5,342,696 (75.6%) | Second dose: 41,832,032 (74.1%) |
| Booster or third dose: 265,902 (70.7%) | Booster or third dose: 4,180,834 (59.2%) | Booster or third dose: 33,218,914 (58.9%) |

¹¹ Department of Health & Social Care. 2023. *COVID-19 vaccination of children aged 6 months to 4 years: JCVI advice, 9 December 2022 (updated 26 April 2023)*. Available [here](#)

¹² GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Vaccinations in Cheshire East*. [Updated 8 June, Accessed 13 June 2023]. Available [here](#)

¹³ GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Vaccinations in North West*. [Updated 8 June, Accessed 13 June 2023]. Available [here](#)

¹⁴ GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK. 2023. *Vaccinations in England*. [Updated 8 June, Accessed 13 June 2023]. Available [here](#)

- 23 Cheshire East Council's Public Health Team continues to work closely with NHS partners, care home settings and other third sector partners to efficiently and effectively roll-out further Covid-19 booster programmes. It also continues to support the NHS Evergreen Offer – which offers first or second doses of Covid-19 vaccine to any eligible person (but is due to end on 30 June 2023¹⁵), and the local Living Well service which can travel to any location in the borough to provide vaccines and free NHS Health Checks.

Preventing transmission of Covid-19 and other respiratory infections in the workplace

- 24 Covid-19 is now managed in the same way as other common respiratory infections such as flu or the common cold. There is no longer any legal requirement for individuals to test themselves for Covid-19, or to isolate if testing positive. However, standard infection control practice should still be followed wherever possible, particularly when working with vulnerable people.
- 25 Updates have been issued to Cheshire East staff through its dedicated Covid-19 staff information page¹⁶. Further to this, all staff will be advised in the 21 June 2023 issue of Team Voice to visit the page to view these updates.
- 26 The updated guidance advises staff to help to prevent the transmission of infections in the workplace by staying at home and avoiding contact with other people if they have symptoms of a respiratory infection, a high temperature, or do not feel well enough to go to work and carry out their normal activities.
- 27 Although there is no longer a legal requirement for individuals to test themselves for Covid-19, or to isolate after testing positive, national guidance is to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days following a positive Covid-19 test result, and for 10 days with people who are at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from Covid-19¹⁷. The latest guidance to staff will continue to be updated to ensure it is aligned with national guidance.
- 28 If a member of staff is in a situation where they have symptoms of Covid-19 or another respiratory illness, but they cannot stay at home and avoid contact with others, they are asked to follow simple, common-sense

¹⁵ Department of Health and Social Care et al. 2023. *Press release: People urged to get Covid-19 jab before offer ends*. Available [here](#)

¹⁶ Cheshire East Council. 2023. *Covid-19 – Information to staff*. Available [here](#)

¹⁷ UK Health Security Agency. 2022. *People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 (Guidance)*. Available [here](#)

measures to keep themselves, each other, and the residents we support safe:

- Try to keep a distance from people they live with, work with or support when they feel unwell and have symptoms of a common respiratory infection
- Ensure good hand hygiene and regular hand washing
- Cover mouths and noses when sneezing
- Consider wearing well-fitting face coverings made with multiple layers of fabric, or a surgical face mask, when living or supporting people whose immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness, despite vaccination
- Ensure rooms and offices are well ventilated
- Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles and remote controls, and shared areas including kitchens and bathrooms
- Advise those around them that they have symptoms, so that other people can take any precautions that they may wish to in order to protect themselves.

UK Covid-19 Inquiry

- 29 The UK Covid-19 Inquiry is the independent public inquiry set up to examine the UK's response to and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and learn lessons for the future. The Inquiry is Chaired by Baroness Heather Hallett, a former Court of Appeal judge. The Inquiry has been established under the Inquiries Act (2005). This means that the Chair will have the power to compel the production of documents and call witnesses to give evidence on oath. Baroness Hallett was appointed to the Chair in December 2021 with the final Terms of Reference received in June 2022.
- 30 The Inquiry will be splitting its investigations into sections, or modules, which have different subject topics. This will ensure that the Inquiry's investigations have sufficient breadth and depth. The Inquiry has commenced four modules so far:
- 1) Resilience, planning and preparedness across the UK
 - 2) Core UK decision making and political governance
 - 3) Impact of the pandemic on health care

4) Vaccines and therapeutics

The Inquiry will announce further modules throughout 2023, which are expected to cover both 'system' and 'impact' issues including: care sector, government procurement, test and trace, government business and financial responses across the UK; health inequalities, education, public services, public sector.

- 31 The Inquiry held its first preliminary hearing for Module 1 on 4 October 2022, with evidential public hearings beginning on 13 June 2023.
- 32 All English local authorities, including Cheshire East Council, are being represented by the Local Government Association (LGA) at the Inquiry. The LGA are classed as a Core Participant, which gives them a formal role in proceedings receiving documentation, being represented and making legal submissions, suggesting questions and receiving advance notice of the Inquiry's report.
- 33 Cheshire East Council has been, and continues to be, committed to assisting the LGA in producing combined local authority responses to the Inquiry's questions and will continue to submit information and evidence as requested moving forward.

Consultation and Engagement

- 34 No consultation or engagement was required to take place for this report as there are no formal decisions that the Adults and Health Committee is being asked to make. This is a retrospective briefing report to update the committee on Covid-19 in Cheshire East.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 35 This report supports the council's commitment to being an open, transparent and enabling organisation.

Other Options Considered

- 36 There were no other options considered. The nature of the report being a retrospective briefing update with no formal recommendations or decisions does not require an options appraisal to be completed.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 37 There are no legal implications expected to arise from this report.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 38 There are no financial implications expected to arise from this report.

Policy

39 There are no policy implications expected to arise from this report.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

40 Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on particular groups, including those from poorer areas, ethnic minority communities, disabled people, care home residents etc. Future vaccination programmes will target those at increased risk of Covid-19.

Human Resources

41 There are no human resources implications expected to arise from this report.

Risk Management

42 There are no risk management implications expected to arise from this report.

Rural Communities

43 There are no implications to rural communities expected to arise from this report.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

44 There are no implications to children and young people, cared for children, care leavers, or children with special educational needs and disabilities expected to arise from this report.

Public Health

45 The information in this report pertains to public health, but there are no wider public health implications expected to arise from this report.

Climate Change

46 There are no climate change implications expected to arise from this report.

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| Access to Information | |
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| Appendices: | N/A |
| Background Papers: | N/A |