

Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board: Chair's Update

11 January 2021, v2

Councillor Sam Harvey, Rutland County Council (RCC) Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care

Introduction

The Health and Wellbeing Board is a key meeting point and driver for health and wellbeing in Rutland, and I am pleased to take up the Chair of this Board as part of my new role as Rutland County Council's Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care. I take over from Councillor Walters, who I am sure we would all like to thank for his long-standing commitment and services to the Board.

As the new Chair of the HWB, I would like to introduce an element to our Board meetings which is a Chair's update, bringing together regular, current information on a number of key themes relevant to the business of the Board. Updates will initially be focused on the pandemic as a critical aspect of our work together. The update will evolve over time and I would welcome feedback on what updates would be most valued by HWB members and wider.

Coronavirus update

In line with the national picture resulting from the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant, rates of Covid infection have continued to rise rapidly in Rutland since before the New Year. The seven day rate of Covid-19 cases in Rutland up to 4 January 2022 was **1571 per 100,000 population, a rise of 30% over the previous week¹**. This figure marks the **highest incidence to date in Rutland**, although both the rate, and the rate of increase were **lower than the England average** of 1924 and 38% and the Leicestershire average of 2139 and 50% respectively. Incidence in the over 60s is rising steeply, but remains proportionally lower than the national and Leicestershire averages at this stage (891 per 100,000 60+ population, relative to 1114 and 1230). If similar to the trajectory in the London area, and by continuing the measures in place, the local wave may hopefully peak and start to level off around the end of January.

Health and care pressures

As a result of the pandemic, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland health and care system remains under significant pressure. LLR and local committees and cells coordinating pandemic responses have been stood up once more. Acute services are facing a combination of increasing hospitalisations (because of Covid and/or with Covid), combined with reduced staffing levels due to Covid infection or self-isolation and recruitment challenges. Some key organisations are 15-20% down on usual staffing levels. A national reduction to the duration of self-isolation from 10 to 7 days is likely to be of some help in mitigating this. Meantime, some

¹ Covid-19 cases and deaths in Leicestershire and Rutland: <https://www.lsr-online.org/covid-19.html>

planned hospital appointments are being postponed, and swift discharge from hospital remains a key aspect of maximising bed capacity.

Social care providers are also under pressure locally as elsewhere, with staffing challenges in home care in particular having the potential to impact on the speed of some hospital discharge. Within RCC, Day Opportunities for adults with learning disabilities have not yet been fully reopened for the new year to allow staff to be redeployed into our in-house homecare team, Micare, to support the care at home needed by some for timely discharge.

Dashboards indicate currently that Rutland care homes have either no or very low incidence of Covid-19 and there are no current 'outbreaks' (2 or more linked cases), although they are facing some ongoing staffing challenges. Vaccination rates are very high: 98% of residents are double vaccinated, 95% of them boosted, and with 89% having had their flu vaccination. For staff in care homes, everyone eligible is double vaccinated, as required now by law, with a booster rate of 67%, and flu vaccination rates rather lower at 48%. Supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) are also healthy.

Covid-19 Testing

The ability for people to test whether they are Covid positive and, if so, go into isolation, is important to slowing down disease transmission. This is especially vital as the Omicron variant is sharply more transmissible than previous Covid-19 variants. A reproduction (R) number of below 1 is required for the disease to start to reduce in the community. The [R number](#)² was estimated on 7 January to be 1.2 to 1.5 in the Midlands and in England as a whole (i.e. every 10 people infected will lead to a total 12 to 15 further people being infected).

The availability of lateral flow test kits (for people with no Covid symptoms to check they are Covid-free before attending a workplace, appointment or event) and of PCR kits or appointments (mainly to diagnose those who are symptomatic) has been a widespread issue nationally over the festive period, with some breaks in supply or appointment shortages owing to extreme demand. National adjustments to Covid regulations are hoped to have a stabilising impact on PCR test availability, by removing the need for asymptomatic people who have tested positive on a lateral flow test to confirm with a PCR test.

Some pharmacies are supplied directly to provide lateral flow kits – and some of those have experienced recent delays to replenishment. In addition, RCC's Community Care Services (CCS) are continuing to distribute high numbers of test kits locally, via two routes:

- A van operating 'popups' on a variable number of days per month, setting up at places such as Rutland Water, supermarkets, etc.
- Distribution via [over 60 Community Collect venues or groups across Rutland](#)³, including in many of the smaller villages. Channels include libraries, village and charity shops, village halls, sports centres, good neighbour schemes, churches and community groups. This is particularly targeting people who may be disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 (e.g. in

² Gov't data – R number: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-r-value-and-growth-rate>

³ Community Collect venues: <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/health-and-family/health-and-nhs/health-and-support-services/coronavirus/covid-19-rapid-asymptomatic-tests/community-collect-scheme/>

public facing professions, on low incomes, males, people in ethnic minority groups, older people), or those who would find it more difficult to obtain test kits (e.g. due to disability, not being online or travel constraints).

The supply of kits to the Council was not smooth over the festive period, with a late delivery just before Christmas which was distributed at speed with the help of County Councillors, who got 61,520 kits out to the community in 24 hours. New stock was delayed in the new year, but venues are now being restocked. To sustain supplies for those who are unable to order their test kits online, information is now being given out with Council distributed kits which encourages the public to order their subsequent kits, if they are able to do so, directly from the [government's website](#)⁴.

Vaccination

An extensive vaccination programme continues, with a focus at this stage on boosters for those double vaccinated and vaccinating the younger population who have become eligible more recently. The [latest government data](#)⁵ to 8 January 2022 indicates that, in Rutland, 88.6% of the population has had one dose of vaccine, 83.3% two doses and 67.5% also the booster or third dose, with higher booster rates indicated in the east of the county.

Inaccurate public information was identified before Christmas relating to local booster appointment availability, and this has now been resolved, making it clearer that booster appointments are straightforwardly available within Rutland.

Responding to wider pressures

Further grant funding is coming into place, administered by the Council, including to support the hospitality and leisure sector in light of the Omicron wave. The Council will issue communications about how this can be applied for as soon as arrangements are in place.

Meantime, various voluntary sector partners are highlighting the increasing likelihood of financial hardship and dependency on support services in our communities as a result of a range of factors including rising fuel prices, inflation, and the impacts of the pandemic, for example on household incomes.

Support remains available via the Council for individuals who may be facing practical or financial challenges in self-isolating (contact enquiries@rutland.gov.uk or call 01572 722 577), and from the [Council and Citizens Advice Rutland](#)⁶ for those who require advice and assistance around financial hardship more generally.

We have just received an email from our colleagues at EMAS to advice that Arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Defence for 60 military personnel to work alongside our Urgent Care colleagues, responding to patients requiring inter-facility transfers or who have already been seen by a healthcare professional. At this stage we are not planning to use military colleagues as part of our 999-ambulance call response.

⁴ Gov.uk portal to order lateral flow kits: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

⁵ Gov.uk interactive map of vaccinations: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/interactive-map/vaccinations>

⁶ Financial support in Rutland: <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/health-and-family/health-and-nhs/health-and-support-services/coronavirus/information-and-advice-for-residents/i-need-help/financial-support-including-help-to-pay-your-council-tax/>

Thank you

As a final note, I would like to commend the continuing hard work and dedication of front line workers in Rutland and wider, in health, care and other key sectors, during a very challenging festive period and beyond. I would also like to thank the population of Rutland for their continuing commitment to following pandemic advice to help to stem the spread of Covid-19 and to reduce the threat of vital services being overwhelmed. As we move into 2022, I hope that we will all soon be able to resume fuller and safer lives.