

Update from NHS Devon

January 2024

Covid and Flu Vaccination Programme

The South West has again achieved the highest uptake for covid and flu vaccinations in the country. The Devon system has provided over 737,000 covid and flu vaccinations this autumn, including vaccinating over 92% of care home residents.

It is a fantastic collaborative achievement between all our Primary Care Network, community pharmacy, hospital, vaccination centre, outreach and NHS Devon teams who work hard to maximise protection for vulnerable people against winter viruses.

We currently have uptake levels across Devon of 62% for Covid and 73% for flu and are asking primary care colleagues to continue to contact patients to invite them in to be vaccinated or to advise them where they can get their vaccinations.

Although the National Booking Service is now closed, people can still access covid vaccinations through their GP, community pharmacy or vaccination centre until 31 January, with primary care being able to offer flu vaccinations until 31 March.

For any queries people can contact the Vaccination Support Team at d-icb.devonvaccinationsupport@nhs.net

Financial update

The forecast financial out-turn for our NHS system as a whole in Devon, after delivering a very challenging savings plan of £212 million, is a planned deficit of £42.3 million in 2023/24. We are working extremely hard to deliver the plan but some unexpected issues, including industrial action, are making this challenging.

As a system, we remain in the lowest segment (segment 4) of the NHS Oversight Framework. This means we get 'intensive' support from NHS England – which includes additional reporting requirements and financial controls.

We are in this position due to a range of challenges including service performance (such as urgent and elective care), people, leadership, finance and strategy.

NHS England has made it clear to us that we need to increase our focus on

achieving the criteria for moving out of NOF4. In the short-term, we will be re-focusing and reprioritising our work, our efforts and some of our resources and staff. Doing so will give us more control over our future – helping us to provide safe, timely and affordable care, as well as focusing on the long-term priorities that we are all keen to work on.

We have already shown we can do it – for example, we have made excellent progress in reducing the numbers of people waiting more than two-years for care, and each month.

Elective care

The finalised October position shows that the Devon Integrated Care System (ICS) has not met the submitted 104 and 78 week wait trajectories but has met its trajectory for 65 week waits. However, we are close to clearing our 104 week waiting list with an expected completion date of the end of January.

Ongoing issues with activity lost as a result of industrial action has been a factor that has impacted on recovery of activity and performance levels detailed within the operating plan.

Industrial action

We have now seen over a year of industrial action across the NHS and staff continue to work hard to provide patients with the best possible care under the circumstances. Industrial action has impacted over a million hospital appointments across the NHS in England, as of the 15 December 2023.

According to [data published by NHS England](#), in Devon, more than 1,500 NHS appointments, including inpatients, outpatients and mental health, were cancelled as a result of industrial action in December 2023.

The latest junior doctor strike action took place from Wednesday 20 December until Saturday 23 December and Wednesday 3 January until Tuesday 9 January.

The NHS in Devon triggered the highest level of escalation on Friday 5 Jan in light of the continued pressures during a period of winter pressures, staff sickness and industrial action. That level was reduced Tuesday 9 January, but Devon hospitals still continue to experience pressure.

Pharmacy closures

There are a number of Boots Pharmacy closures currently being processed across the UK, including in the south west.

The NHS South West Collaborative Commissioning Hub (SW CCHub), in partnership with NHS Devon, is undertaking a local engagement process to ensure a clear understanding of any concerns being raised by local community pharmacy providers, GP practices, Healthwatch and Local Authority Public Health teams. The Health and Wellbeing Board will be included as part of this engagement process.

These concerns inform how we support patients and providers leading up to and after the closure.

Where previous market exits have taken place, we have seen neighbour pharmacies take a variety of different steps to be able to support patients who are seeking an alternative pharmacy. In addition, nearby pharmacies who are likely to be impacted by a closure, are contacted to discuss the potential increase in activity, allowing them to share any concerns they may have.

Liaison with local GP practices is also undertaken to ensure they are supported with any patient queries, and the SW CCHub work with the outgoing provider to ensure a safe closedown process is in place.

NHS Devon Chief Executive Officer

NHS Devon has appointed Steve Moore as its new Chief Executive Officer following a competitive, national recruitment process. Steve will join NHS Devon on 12 February 2024.

Having worked for the NHS for most of the last 30 years, Steve has extensive expertise and knowledge at a senior level, including most recently as the Chief Executive of Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales, a role he has held since January 2015.

Steve knows Devon and the wider South West well, as has led NHS organisations in Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Bill Shields will remain as interim CEO until Steve takes up the post.

Winter pressures and industrial action at University Hospital Plymouth

University Hospital Plymouth (Derriford) faced extreme pressure in early January. Hospitals typically see a peak in demand for urgent care services in winter due to rises in respiratory illnesses such as flu and covid, and the cold weather.

This year also saw the longest period of industrial action ever seen in the NHS with a junior doctor strike for 6 days from 3 to 9 January 2024. A critical incident was declared on 5 January (day 3 of industrial action) and stood down on the final day of industrial action, 9 January.

The hospital and local NHS, social care and third sector system partners have been working hard to provide alternatives to the Emergency Department and to increase discharges from hospital.

Planning for the winter period is important and this has resulted in additional capacity for people leaving the hospital with packages of care, into community beds or with voluntary sector support to settle people back at home.

Resources have also been directed towards essential urgent and emergency care to make sure anyone with a life threatening or serious emergency can receive the treatment they need.

Information about urgent and emergency care services and discharge is available for the public on a [Stay well This Winter portal](#). This includes video advice from clinical staff about, for example, when to use the [Emergency Department](#) and services offered by [Urgent Treatment Centres and Minor Injury Units](#), as well as other Choose Well messaging.

Discharge to Assess primary care service procurement

The Plymouth commissioning team of NHS Devon are pleased to announce a new provider for primary care services for people in intermediate care beds in Plymouth.

These are patients who are benefitting from a stay in a bedded care facility to help them recover after a spell in hospital or as an alternative to being admitted to hospital.

From 1 April 2024, Reimagining General Practice (RGP) will be the new provider and they will be working closely with the Plymouth commissioning team and other local partners to ensure a smooth transition of patients to their care.

Additional service capacity this winter for people with Acute Respiratory Infection and to reduce demand into hospital services

Winter months sees higher rates of acute respiratory infection amongst children and adults, so having the right services and some more capacity particularly during winter months has been a priority for our healthcare system.

NHS Devon has funded an acute respiratory service with four Primary Care Networks in Plymouth delivering this. These services are accessed as part of the usual offer from GP practices and are providing additional capacity to support patients and our providers this winter.

There is also an 'admission avoidance' service, with funding taken up 20 GP practices proactively identify people who, with some additional proactively offered support, will be more likely to stay well at home this winter and beyond.

Virtual Wards

The Plymouth health system has created the potential for up to 50 people at any one time to be in the care of University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust but within their own homes rather than needing to be admitted to a bed in hospital.

A video has been created [Virtual Wards - helping patients receive care in their own home \(youtube.com\)](#) to demonstrate how this works and some positive feedback from people.

Using digital technology and with the support of community teams, people are able to safely remain at home with treatment as needed to support their recovery.