

Report by Cllr Ray Bloxham
Devon County Councillor
24th June 2020

An update on Covid 19 in Devon.

Around 1100 confirmed cases but the likely infection rate is 3 or 4 times higher.

Around 125 deaths.

This is low in the national context - Devon is 146 out of 150 Council areas.

Current position at time of writing this is that Devon has had 19 confirmed cases in the past 14 days which is very low in a population of 800,000. We are currently getting new 0-2 cases a day.

There has been no change in the overall downward trend direction since the Government announced relaxations on 11th May. Having seen an influx of visitors to the County we have seen no significant change.

In care homes, the SW is the lowest region of incidents with Devon being the lowest in the SW according to Public Health England data.

Devon is one of five counties in the country where there have been less care homes deaths than one would normally expect in normal times.

Devon has done a lot of work on PPE to ensure that supplies are available.

Those shielding have been supported with around 5000 getting food supplies.

In schools, the County has been between 50-60% above national attendance rates with good attendance of vulnerable children.

All of this has taken pressure off the NHS.

The County established a Pandemic Incident Management Team under the lead of the Director of Public Health. This drew together resources across the county to provide a rapid response cutting across usual delegated limitations. Despite very flexible and fast working, detailed records have been kept which will figure in a detailed review in due course to identify lessons for the future.

DCC has 3500 staff working remotely and they will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Good use has been made of technology and flexible working which will no doubt influence how things are done in the future. We

await to see what the Communities Secretary will say about how much of these flexible arrangements can continue. But we expect to see the future as more flexibility, more home working and more use of technology.

Staff welfare has been important and we have tried to ensure that staff working remotely are well managed and supported. A recent survey returned a 92% satisfaction rating.

DCC is one of 11 Beacon Councils nationally leading on track and trace. DCC's Chief Exec is the SW lead and has weekly meetings Nationally and locally with both Government and Districts.

We can expect to see an increase in infections as restrictions are relaxed and tourism recovers. Track and trace will focus on local outbreaks.

To date the costs of Covid in Devon has been just over £39m with the Government refunding £36.7m. DCC will cover the difference. No doubt there will be some further costs that will need to be met. Most of the costs (£26.5m) went to adult care and health.

The Economic impacts are yet to become clear but some sectors will be badly hit. Some 45% are furloughed or have self-employed support.

A health recovery board has been formed to oversee how the County emerges and this board includes representatives from the local economy.

The rapid Covid Action fund has now paused having granted some £350,000 to 400 community groups. Plans are now being put in place to resurrect the "Making the connection" and "Doing what matters" funds to focus on local recovery. More details to follow.

Ray Bloxham
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