



COVID-19 Briefing



COVID-19 ICS update - 19 February 2021

This bulletin provides important information for people working in health and care across the North East and North Cumbria regarding guidance and actions being co-ordinated across our region to care for patients, staff and our communities in the light of COVID-19. We will do our best to keep you updated with the latest information and key decisions from the Health Co-ordinating Group. This group is led by Alan Foster, executive lead for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System. If you have any questions or would like us to send vital information to partners through this bulletin, please contact us [here](#).

Message from Alan Foster



The latest picture from across the region

The picture is slowly improving across the region and we are continuing to see a reduction in the number of patients with COVID-19 being admitted to our hospitals. Currently, there's around 800 COVID-19 patients in our hospitals across the region compared to around 1,100 last week which is a welcome improvement.

We are also seeing a continued decline in the number of community cases too, which is reassuring. That said, we are very aware that our staff are still working under considerable pressures, with only a small reduction in the number of people requiring

critical care. With that in mind, I would like to remind everyone that support is available for our health and care teams across the region from our staff wellbeing hub. Please remember to share details of the hub with your teams, you can find out more [here](#).

COVID-19 vaccination programme

Our vaccination programme continues to move at pace, with over 750,000 vaccinations being carried out across our region. The latest figures up to 14th February have been released today and can be found [here](#). Given the pressures already described it is a tribute to our teams that we have achieved so much, so quickly. I would like to thank you all for your continued hard work.

And there's more good vaccine news for our region this week, with news that Durham's Arnison Centre will open as the regions third large vaccination centre on Monday. You can read more on this [here](#).

The additional capacity a third large vaccination centre brings will be crucial to help our teams vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible, particularly as the vaccination programme continues to expand.

Since Monday, people in cohorts 5 and 6 are being invited by the NHS to have their vaccine:

- Cohort 5 - all those 65 years of age and over
- Cohort 6 - all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality

Local GP vaccination services are focusing initially on the clinically vulnerable from cohort 6 because of the relationship between general practice and those with long term conditions, and continuity of care.

People in cohort 6 may also receive a letter from the national booking service inviting them to book an appointment.

Additional cohort of patients identified at increased risk from COVID-19

This week also saw a large expansion of the number of people being asked to shield in England. It comes after a [new model](#) was developed, which combines a number of characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity, body mass index (BMI) and clinical conditions to estimate the risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19.

Patients will be informed by letter sent centrally by the NHS and DHSC over the next few days. A [letter](#) has been sent to GPs which sets out the implication that this has for these patients, including how they should be prioritised for vaccination and noting that they will be added to the Shielded Patient List as a precaution.

Welcoming the Prime Minister to the region

Last weekend, we welcomed UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to the region. It was an opportunity for him to see first-hand what the region's collaboration and innovation has achieved in our fight against the virus.

The visit saw the Prime Minister get a tour of Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies' facilities in Teesside, where the manufacture of the active ingredient for the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine will take place, as well as QuantuMDx in Newcastle, where a rapid PCR diagnostic device for COVID testing at the point of care has been developed.

He also visited Northumbria Healthcare's manufacturing hub, which has created 60 jobs at the hub and indirectly employed an additional 500 people. The hub has produced over 2 million surgical gowns and other protective equipment, which has protected front-line staff across the country since it opened last May.

You can watch a short video from the Prime Minister on his visit to the region on his Twitter page [here](#).

Reminder to follow the rules

Last week saw an increase in people attending hospital with injuries from slips, falls and sledging which placed extra strain on our ambulance services and emergency departments. We issued this [media release](#) in response, reminding people of the importance of sticking to the current guidance and remaining extra vigilant during the adverse weather conditions.

This sentiment was echoed by the seven local authority leaders in the north east, who emphasised the need to carry on driving down infection rates and reducing pressure on the NHS in a [statement](#) published earlier this week.

Stay safe and thank you for all that you are doing.

Best wishes,

Alan

Alan Foster is the executive lead for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System

Other news and updates

The R number in the UK: The latest reproduction number (R) and growth rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK can be found here on [GOV.UK](#).

Public Health England dashboard: The Public Health England (PHE) dashboard can be found [here](#). Daily reporting includes deaths that have occurred in all settings where

there has been a positive COVID-19 test, including hospitals, care homes and the wider community. The report also includes case rates per 100,000 resident population at lower-tier local authority level.

REACT-1 study of coronavirus transmission: February 2021: Results of real-time assessment of community transmission of COVID-19 during February 2021 can be read [here](#).

National flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports: A link to the weekly national flu and COVID-19 report, monitoring COVID-19 activity, seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses can be found [here](#).

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