



COVID-19 Briefing



COVID-19 ICS update - 25 March 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



One year on

It's been very moving to hear the stories shared throughout this week as we marked the anniversary of our first Covid lockdown on Tuesday (23 March).

These stories will have invoked all sorts of emotions for us all I am sure – from great sadness to pride and hope; alongside of course our own personal and professional reflections of the year that has passed.

It's been a tough one and I don't think any of us could have imagined what was ahead

of us this time last year. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and admiration to everyone across health and care for their dedication and commitment, and my sincere condolences to those who have lost loved-ones.

We have been through a lot together but we can take strength from the fact we have achieved so much by pulling together. It is this strength that will see us through the months ahead as we move to recovery and support the teams around us.

I hope you managed to see the BBC coverage, who marked the day with live broadcasts from Newcastle throughout the day culminating in 'BBC lockdown Live' - presented by Naga Munchetty and Nick Robinson - from the large vaccination centre at the Life Science Centre.

My thanks go to NHS staff, patients and everyone who contributed to all the media coverage and shared their stories – across the Today Programme, Five Live, BBC Look North, 'Lockdown Live', Tyne Tees and much more. It was a great opportunity for our region to reflect on the past year's astounding response to the pandemic, to say thank you and look to the future too.

COVID 19 vaccination programme

Our region is continuing to lead the way with our vaccination programme now having protected 51 per cent of the adult population in the North East and North Cumbria. Figures [released today](#) show we have delivered more than 1.4million vaccines. This remains the highest cumulative number of vaccines delivered in the country, a phenomenal achievement. We are also on target to vaccinate with first doses cohorts 1-9 by 15 April. Thank you to everyone involved – a huge amount of work has gone into delivering this life saving vaccination programme.

A further boost on the vaccine front this week came in the form of the region's sixth [large vaccination centre](#) opening at Penrith Auction Mart in Cumbria. The centre began vaccinating people as of today, adding more capacity to help our region vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

This follows hot on the heels of the Riverside Stadium vaccination centre opening in Middlesbrough last week. You can watch a report from ITV Tyne Tees on the opening of the vaccination hub [here](#), which has capacity to vaccinate up to 1,000 people per day. Our colleagues at NHS Tees Valley CCG have also put together this informative walkthrough [video](#), showing a patients journey through the vaccination centre.

NHS Operational Planning Guidance

NHS England today has today set out a recovery plan for patient care and staff wellbeing following the intense winter wave of COVID-19. You can read about this in more detail [here](#).

Every Integrated Care System is being asked to draw up a plan to ensure all hospitals maximise their capacity to do as many non-urgent operations as possible.

And trusts will also be expected to reduce the number of patients waiting for longer than 62 days for cancer procedures to pre-pandemic levels over the coming months.

As a region we are continuing to work together to develop and take forward our plans for recovery across all aspects of care. We have a number of workstreams now working on this which is being led by our provider collaborative.

It is crucial that as we move forward we look at our plans through an 'inequalities' lense to ensure equal access to care and treatment across our communities.

We will be looking at the guidance in more detail over the coming days and will share more about our plans in due course.

New regional Lighthouse lab for Covid testing

A new, high capacity COVID-19 Lighthouse laboratory has now opened at Baltic Park in Gateshead, as part of the NHS Test and Trace programme. The purpose-built lab will initially serve the North East, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Humberside, with potential to receive swabs from further afield. The Lighthouse laboratory is part of the [integrated COVID hub for the north east](#), which places the region at the forefront of managing the virus. Managed by The Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the lab houses state-of-the-art equipment, has created hundreds of public sector jobs and provides an important addition to the regional infrastructure for testing. You can read more on this [here](#).

Find your place for research

Hot on the heels of last week's HSJ award win, our regional Find Your Place campaign has launched new content showcasing the research opportunities available to medical trainees. We have world-class centers for research in our region and it's great to see us promoting this far and wide. You can view on the Find Your Place website [here](#) and this content, which includes stories from trainees, will be shared across social media. You can follow the campaign [here](#).

Online diary launched to monitor wellbeing

As part of our plans to support our teams, our regional staff wellbeing hub has co-produced a new online diary with Northumbria University to help health and care staff across the region monitor changes in their wellbeing. The diary has been produced to support health and care staff to cope with the pressures we have all felt working during the pandemic, and can signpost access to help if it is needed. Please share information about this and [the hub](#) across your teams. You can read more [here](#).

#DoYourBit

Some restrictions are expected to ease on 29 March allowing people to meet with up to six people outdoors and Easter can be a busy time for health and care services. So we will be reminding people to stay safe whilst enjoying time outdoors with friends and family and to stick to the rules. We will share more about that next week.

Pre-election guidance for NHS organisations

Just a reminder that elections are scheduled to take place in England on Thursday 6 May 2021, including those postponed in May 2020. The pre-election period guidance for NHS organisations has now been published and is online [here](#).

A huge amount to be proud of in my message this week (as always) – it's a privilege to be able to share it with you.

I hope you get some time to relax at the weekend.

Best wishes,

Alan

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.

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](#).

COVID-19 information in alternative languages and accessible formats: Helpful information from the British Islamic Medical Association in 10 languages addressing concerns around the COVID vaccine. You can also read more information in alternative languages and accessible formats [here](#).

Please share with friends and colleagues who may find this information useful.

