

2nd December 2020 Axminster Division Report

A slightly more detailed report this time, but I hope you will all find the information useful.

Care home COVID-19 Testing

As is well documented older people are generally more vulnerable to contracting COVID and the challenge is to give them maximum protection, keep them out of an acute hospital setting and through no fault of their own using up resources.

However, the Department of Health and Social care are about to launch a huge expansion of testing in care homes, with their pledge being that by the 18th December all care homes will have received sufficient test kits to enable ...

All staff to be tested twice a week

All residents to be tested weekly

Up to 2 visits by 2 visitors every week (i.e. testing for up to 4 visits a week for every resident)

Most of the test kits will be the new '**Lateral Flow Devices**' which give results in less than 30 minutes. This is really good news for the many care homes in East Devon and beyond.

This is a small-scale pilot involving eight care homes in Devon and DCC are one of three Local Authorities (also Hampshire and Cornwall) who were selected, based on low prevalence rates.

The aim of the pilot is to examine the role of how testing of visitors, alongside other existing infection prevention/control measures, maximises safety. It will run for four weeks from 16 November to 13 December 2020. Homes received training through online webinars on 12/13th November before commencing the pilot on 16th November.

The testing will use a combination of new rapid-results tests as well as the tests already in use:

Weekly swab testing of regular visitors, using existing PCR swab testing technology

new Lateral Flow Devices (LFD) tests which are taken before visitors enter the home with results available within 15 to 30 minutes.

As LFDs are new technology, any positive tests will be confirmed with a PCR test.

Feedback from the homes is collected through weekly online sessions, facilitated by the DHSC has been mainly positive, reporting that the process is simple to follow and meaningful contact whilst wearing full PPE is appreciated. Relatives and residents have been very emotional with the pilot bringing hope and a glimpse of the new normal.

30 visitors had been tested as of 20th November. One visitor tested positive and went home to

isolate whilst awaiting the result of the PCR result. One visitor refused testing because they didn't feel comfortable

Mass vaccination programme

The national COVID-19 mass vaccination programme is to commence in December 2020. The focus of initial vaccination will be in staff and residents in care homes and those over 80 years of age.

A significant amount of work is taking place locally across the Devon wide system to co-ordinate activity and ensure coverage across the county, and that there is an awareness how and when people can access the vaccine at their GP or regional centre (Exeter).

The Exeter Nightingale has now received its first COVID-19 patients

Since the beginning of July, the Nightingale Hospital Exeter has been providing local people with fast and safe access to a range of important diagnostic tests. These additional services will now stop at the Nightingale facility to allow the hospital to care for COVID-19 patients. Diagnostic tests will continue to be available to those who need them through existing diagnostic services across the region.

The 116-bed hospital is designed to provide care for patients with COVID-19 and can support both ventilated and non-ventilated care. Patients with COVID-19 who need the additional services available within an acute hospital will be cared for there.

Waste and recycling

All DCC our recycling Centres are open, but from recent personal experience in recent weeks very quiet.

Winter opening hours are in operation for most sites this is 9-4.30 Monday to Friday and 10-4.30pm Saturday and Sunday. They will be closed on Christmas day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Highways

I am pleased to report that volumes of work across the Highways teams remains really high, and the recent wet weather has seen a significant number of problems on the network, but this has not held up the winter maintenance programme which officially started on the 15th of October, with the salt barns fully stocked, and all vehicles ready.

Additional COVID related contingency plans are also in place should they be required. In many ways we are quite fortunate to have as many depots as we have including one in Honiton that serves the eastern end of East Devon. You may have seen recently that the new Network Operations Control Centre that has been set up now in Great Moor House to make sure our roads stay functioning throughout the year.

With the recent lockdown, traffic flows on the A road network have again fallen, during the last couple of weeks week by about 30% and at weekends by about 40%, compared to the equivalent week in 2019. With schools remaining open the morning peak flows are virtually unchanged, the main changes are during the daytime and evening periods.

The DCC Highways Asset Team are extremely busy delivering our highest ever capital programme. This larger budget is allowing us to look beyond the normal priorities of our main A roads and address some of the deterioration on our important lower category roads. These improvements and renewals across the network are beginning to be noticed by the travelling public as this work continues.

As ever, at this time of year, the DCC gully cleaning policy is under scrutiny as we experience a combination of leaf fall and an extended period of wet weather. The team have carried out a detailed review of our approach to drainage cleaning which has resulted in a number of improvements.

The second Doing What Matters project focused on the rebuild of the safety defect process and is now beginning to look at new software development with a view to rolling out a trial 'beta' system in the New Year. The primary aim of the project is to improve the number of defects repaired at the first visit. In order to achieve this, we are investing in the amount of advance information recorded by our Safety Inspectors