

East Sussex HOSC

Health response to the Covid-19 pandemic

February 2021

Introduction

- We continue to work collaboratively across health and social care partners to manage our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our approach has delivered benefits for the population of East Sussex.
- Following above average rapid growth in rates in Hastings and Rother in December, and in Eastbourne in January, rates across all areas have since reduced and all areas are now below the national rate.
- This update builds on the previous report to HOSC and provides a summary overview from an NHS perspective.
- These slides set out:
 - The impact of COVID-19 on our population
 - How we have worked together to manage our response, including maintenance and restoration of critical NHS services
 - Our winter plan including capacity for COVID-19
 - Progress with the COVID-19 vaccination programme
 - The impact of COVID-19 on our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and health workers, and actions that we are taking

Summary of COVID-19 impact in East Sussex

- As at 17 February 2021 there have been **29,500 confirmed cases of COVID-19** in East Sussex.
- **Hastings Borough** and **Rother District** experienced **rapid growth** in cases at the beginning of **December** following similar increases in neighbouring Kent.
- By **mid-December Hastings** had the **10th highest weekly case rate** out of 315 local authority areas in England and **Rother ranked 29th**.
- Other local authority areas in East Sussex experienced increases in line with national rates during this time.
- **Eastbourne Borough** then experienced further rapid growth in cases over the Christmas and New Year period and by the **middle of January** were ranked **8th highest** in England for their weekly rate.
- Rates across all areas have since reduced and **all areas are now below the national rate**.
- For the seven-day period to 12 February 2021; England has 143 cases per 100,000 population, East Sussex county 82, Eastbourne 103, Hastings 120, Lewes 85, Rother 44 and Wealden 68.
- Whilst levels of infections have reduced, they are still around the levels experienced in November which were very concerning at the time.
- As at 5 February 2021, there have been **1,553 deaths for East Sussex residents where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate** (based on death registrations to 13 February 2021).
- 53% of these deaths have occurred in a hospital setting and 40% in a care home setting.
- Age-standardised rates for COVID-19 deaths between March and December show England on 150 deaths per 100,000 population, East Sussex 78, Eastbourne 62, Hastings 64, Lewes 92, Rother 86 and Wealden 81.
- Age-standardised rates for **COVID-19 deaths in December** were above the England rate (234) in Hastings (477) and Rother (390). During this period **Hastings ranked 20th highest** (out of 315 in England) and **Rother 49th**.
- During the second wave there has been a **significant impact on demand for mental health services for children and young people and adults** resulting in an increased number of patients in the acute health care setting waiting for a mental health bed and a number of placements with independent sector providers.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in East Sussex

Summary

- As previously reported to HOSC, we continue to hold **regular OPEX calls**, to manage the local health and social care system operational response, with escalation of risks to weekly Senior Responsible Officer calls, and monthly wider senior leadership calls to support system agreement and coordination of response plans, covering:
 - Continuing to streamline hospital discharge pathways and liaison across physical and mental health to ensure local people are supported throughout their clinical journey.
 - Additional bedded capacity secured for patients medically ready for discharge from hospital.
 - Enhanced access to primary care for homeless people, rough sleepers and asylum seekers.
- **Work to support hospital flow and discharge is ongoing** with NHS, local authority and other partners including extending our nationally recognised discharge to assess process.
- We have undertaken demand and capacity modelling for inpatient beds taking account of impact of COVID-19 for adults and older people which has identified an increased capacity requirement for people with mental health needs. This has resulted in the commissioning of **45 independent sector beds in Sussex** to increase available capacity to support people locally.
- We are currently developing plans for 2021/22 to **enhance the support** for people with mental health needs.
- We have established a **weekly system Mental Health Resilience meeting** to have tactical, system-wide discussions on whole system / cross organisational issues relating to mental health.
- We have developed system wide mental health informal admission and section 12 pathway, together with a mental health **admission delay escalation process**.
- The system continues to **work in partnership** (through various lines of communication including social media) to encourage patients to access healthcare and reassure people that it is safe to do so.

Responding to COVID-19 pandemic in East Sussex - maintaining and restoring critical health services latest restoration slides

Urgent and emergency services

- All services have been maintained with the exception of the Crowborough Minor Injuries Unit which closed temporarily on 24 January 2021 so staff can support local responses to COVID-19.
- There has been substantial adaptation of facilities to accommodate infection prevention and control measures.
- **Urgent care activity**, emergency admissions and A&E attendances are lower than normal levels for this time of the year by 20% and 30% respectively.
- **NHS111-CAS** launched on 1 October 2020. NHS 111 First, including directly bookable appointments to A&E, went live across Sussex on 01 December 2020 (ESHT was a pilot site for this going live in October).
- General and acute **bed occupancy** is currently slightly lower than normal for this time of year.

Restoration and recovery progress continues in line with previous reports to HOSC

- Sussex wide **Service Finder** rolled out providing access to the Directory of Services to ambulance crews allowing them to identify appropriate services for referral.
- **GP oversight role established in NHS111**, supported by video consultation technology, to increase 'consult and complete' outcomes.
- Accelerated programme to **improve ambulance handovers** in place between ESHT and SECAMB.
- Sussex wide **communications and engagement campaign** to promote NHS111 and online as first point of contact.

Stroke and cardiovascular disease services

- As previously reported to HOSC, stroke services have continued throughout the pandemic and cardiac, heart attack, pulmonary capillary wedge pressure, primary percutaneous coronary intervention, urgent arrhythmia and severe heart failure/valve disease services are fully functioning.

Responding to Covid-19 pandemic in East Sussex - maintaining and restoring critical health services

Elective, diagnostic and cancer services

- **Outpatient** follow up capacity continues to make significant use of virtual and non-face-to-face outpatient new and follow up appointments.
- The Sussex system has seen further increases in **independent sector** activity levels.
- **CT and MRI services** have been restored to 90% of pre-COVID-19 levels.
- **Cancer** backlog in 62-day breaches across Sussex is decreasing; extra support in place for GP surgeries to help high-risk late presenters in areas of health inequality.

Restoration and recovery progress continues in line with previous reports to HOSC

- **Patient/public engagement** planned to inform ongoing delivery, in particular digital delivery where appropriate.
- The system is working together as **Sussex Acute Collaborative Network** to restore services, to improve waiting times impacted by COVID-19 and to deliver improvements driven by speciality and pathway level plans.
- Range of work underway to **restore endoscopy service**, including alternative treatment availability where appropriate.
- The system has seen an increase in **cancer** referrals to pre-COVID-19 levels and plans to meet this level of demand throughout the remainder of the year, and we are planning on the basis of restoring cancer treatments to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Responding to COVID-19 pandemic in East Sussex: maintaining and restoring critical health services

Mental Health

- The **Sussex Mental Healthline** telephone service offering listening support, advice, information and signposting to anyone experiencing difficulties with their mental health is now for people of all ages and available 24/7.
- We have put in place a **single point of access / advice for children and young people** which has been commended by the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Three **Mental Health Support teams** have been established in schools in East Sussex.
- We have expanded the **i-Rock** drop-in model to three locations across East Sussex.
- We have targeted funding to **improve access to community-based perinatal mental health treatment**.
- **Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services** have been expanded, with plans for additional recruitment into 2021/22.
- Our **crisis service offer** has been strengthened, as part of our transformation programme and in response to COVID-19.
- We have put in place **significant digital support** specifically for children and young people for example 'Instagram live' provided three times a week.
- Targeted funding to support **suicide prevention** and to enhance **rough sleeping** and **asylum seeker services** continues.
- We have implemented **enhanced crisis alternative services** including Crisis Cafes, Street Triage, Urgent Care Lounges.

Restoration and recovery progress

- Fluctuating referral levels (due to COVID-19) continue to put pressure on urgent and emergency provision and impact on anticipated activity for IAPT. A system wide recovery plan is in place and a plan for a further expansion of the service in 2021/22 has been developed.
- **Physical Health Checks for Severe Mental Illness** was suspended as part of the COVID-19 response in line with national guidance; a recovery plan has been developed which includes an SMI outreach initiative where funds have been allocated to PCNs to contact all patients and signpost and support them to access their COVID-19 vaccinations and physical health checks.
- **Memory Assessment Service** reopened service to new referrals but recovery has been slower than anticipated due to pressures in primary care.

Responding to COVID-19 pandemic in East Sussex: maintaining and restoring critical health services

Primary care - our key achievements and key areas in our work plan are:

- **Sussex wide communications campaign:** aimed at informing the public how services are working and how people can access services safely, and informing the public about the [COVID-19 vaccination programme](#) and what to expect. Online information includes [FAQs](#) about the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **COVID-19 mass vaccination:** progress with delivering the vaccination programme is set out on the following slide.
- **Flu immunisation:** processes are in place and we have delivered flu vaccinations to cover the cohort aged 50 and above, the housebound, homeless people, long stay patients and pregnant women. The target of 75% was achieved, with people aged 65 and above achieving 79.5% overall.
- **Restoration of activity:** restoration of mainstream general practice activities have slowed down whilst the response to the mass vaccination roll out takes place, with the exception of essential services and those that meet the needs of our most vulnerable people at risk of COVID-19. These services include locally commissioned services for our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups, people living in care homes, clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding) patients, people living with learning disabilities, serious mental illness, and people living with long term conditions. The CCG restoration plans are underway to restore activity to pre pandemic levels when appropriate to do so. Additional funding has been made available to support the resilience and wellbeing of general practice staff during these unprecedented times.
- **Learning disabilities:** The CCG are actively recruiting a Health Facilitation team to support general practice to ensure people living with a learning disability receive their annual health checks, improving uptake and to bring the CCG in line with achieving the 67% target set nationally. The CCG have communicated with general practice informing practices of all the various funding streams available to support this cohort, the opportunity to work at PCN level to deliver the health checks, and have offered training and education sessions to support practice staff to undertake the activity.
- A new **Locally Commissioned Service** (LCS) has been developed and will be launched to support people with learning disabilities, autism and Serious mental illness to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations at a vaccination site.

COVID-19 vaccination programme

- **To date, the Sussex system has achieved the national target** to deliver >90% vaccinations for all those over the age of 70 by 15 February 2021.
- We have offered the vaccination to everyone within the **first four priority groups** and remain committed to ensuring all those in these groups are vaccinated if they have not received it to date.
- As at 14 February 2021, **more than 477,463 vaccinations have been delivered across Sussex**, including 464,950 first doses.
- There are a number of ways in which the vaccination is being rolled out across Sussex:
 - **GP led vaccination services:** including community vaccination services, and pharmacy services in some areas.
 - **Large vaccination centres:** each county will have one large vaccination centre which will be able to give the vaccine to large numbers of people as more supplies become available. In East Sussex this is the Welcome Building in Eastbourne.
 - **Roving service:** the vaccine is being taken into care homes and into people's own homes if they cannot attend a vaccination site.
 - **Hospital hubs:** larger hospitals across the country have been offering to health and care staff.
- A summary of activity to date in East Sussex is:
 - **Priority 1:** Residents and staff in a care home for older adults. All older peoples care homes have received first dose vaccinations with the exception of a small remainder of homes who have been deferred due to an outbreak. Vaccinations for these homes have been scheduled.
 - **Priority 2:** People aged 80+ and frontline health and social care workers and aged 80+. The majority of people aged 80 and over in East Sussex have been completed. Front line NHS staff have received first dose vaccination and we are working to ensure that remaining care staff vaccinations are completed.
 - **Priority 3:** People aged 75-79. 92.7% of those aged 75-79 have received the first dose vaccination.
 - **Priority 4:** People aged 70-74 and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals. 90.2% of those aged 70-74 and 87.8% of those who are clinically extremely vulnerable have been vaccinated.

Responding to the impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and workforce

Sussex BAME Disparity Response Programme

- **Sussex BAME Population Needs Review** completed and approved by the Sussex Turning the Tide Transformation and Oversight Board on the 8 February 2021.
- **Deep dive into vaccine equality** carried out which revealed vaccine uptake gaps in some of our BAME groups with specific concerns for our Black (other), Caribbean and Asian (Bangladeshi and Pakistani) groups and those living in the highest deprived areas.
- Immediate **targeted and communication actions to address vaccine inequality** including:
 - **Targeted vaccine clinics** in areas or close to areas of high deprivation/highest Covid-19 cases
 - **Working with interpreting services** to ensure adequate interpreting provision at vaccination centres
 - Working closely through our voluntary and community sector (VCS), Community Champions, BAME staff and community groups and the local authorities to have **conversations with our communities** and address concerns
 - Over 100 **Vaccination Champions** (volunteers) recruited and trained across Sussex, including those from BAME/faith groups and areas of deprivation
 - **Consolidated and enhanced networks** with Sussex BAME/faith groups
 - **Culturally relevant communication** toolkits/posters produced with FAQs targeted at vulnerable communities
 - **Updated online information** with translated resources and information for BAME/faith communities
 - **Vaccine webinar series** underway with community interpreters and bi-lingual advocates
- Evaluating impact via the **Sussex Health Inequalities Steering Group**.
- New **Mass Vaccination Health Inequalities Cell** commenced on 18 February 2021 to monitor progress and provide assurance.

East Sussex system winter plan update

- The **East Sussex Local A&E Delivery Board (LAEDB) Winter Plan** covers the period December 2020 to April 2021 and the system continues to manage the winter period through delivery of the plan.
- This has been a **challenging period for the system** given the significant impact of the early COVID-19 peak within East Sussex which started in early December and continued throughout the period to date, noting that the system has now surpassed the peak and pressure is reducing.
- There has been **excellent partnership working between health and local authority partners** to manage the increased pressure and the system has coped extremely well despite a sustained period of demand and significant workforce challenges across health and local authority services.
- It should be noted that the winter plan has been supplemented by **additional community capacity to support flow** from the acute hospitals and ensure that patients can be discharged from hospital to home or an alternative community setting where appropriate.
- **A total of 38 winter schemes were identified for East Sussex** and 33 of those schemes have been met / completed, with five remaining in progress. The East Sussex Operational Executive (OPEX) supports delivery of the winter schemes, with overall assurance against the plan undertaken by the East Sussex Local A&E Delivery Board.
- Since the middle of February, **overall pressure in the system has started to reduce** in line with reduced COVID-19 demand. The system continues to proactively manage surge and plans are currently being developed to support the system through the Easter period.