

COVID-19 HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREAS:	Public Health
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NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

- **New Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) variants**

Guidance on the new Covid-19 variants was published in December and has been regularly updated since. Public health staff have been incorporating this new information into their advice. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Tactical Co-ordinating Group is developing plans to support local mass testing if required, in the event of the South Africa variant or other novel variant being identified locally.

[New COVID-19 \(SARS-CoV-2\) variants - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- **Letter outlining the role of Local Government in the Covid-19 vaccination programme**

A joint letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Health and Social Care outlines the expectations of local government in supporting the national Covid-19 vaccination programme. These include support for identifying sites and ensuring accessibility, e.g. through community transport; engaging with hard to reach groups and addressing vaccine hesitancy; an ongoing communications strategy to promote vaccine uptake; and ensuring that staff involved in social care are vaccinated. In the longer term local authorities will play a role in mainstreaming the vaccination programme in a sustainable form.

[Letter from Matt Hancock and Robert Jenrick to leaders and chief executives of all local authorities in England regarding the national vaccination plan | Local Government Association](#)

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

Epidemiology

The number of Covid-19 cases in Cambridgeshire have been falling over the past month and in Peterborough there was a period of stabilisation before a more rapid fall in the past week. Case rates are above the national average in Peterborough and in Fenland and below the national average in other areas of Cambridgeshire. In all areas, the Covid-19 case rates remain very high compared with rates last summer and autumn, and it is essential that compliance with lockdown measures is maintained.

At the time of writing the weekly average rate of new cases in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is outlined in the table below

Covid-19 Epidemiology for week ending 6th February 2021

	Average weekly cases per 100,000 population	Rate of change (comparing week ending 6th Feb with the week ending 30th Jan)
England	195	-26%
East of England	186	-30%
Cambridgeshire	171	-16%
Cambridge	116	-30%
East Cambs	133	-23%
Fenland	278	-7%
Hunts	174	-22%
South Cambs	165	-6%
Peterborough	309	-26%

The number of patients in hospital remains high although starting to show some reduction.

Sadly the number of deaths from Covid-19 has also increased and the charts below show deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test. The impact of the second wave in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is clear.

Cambridgeshire

Deaths within 28 days of positive test by date of death

Number of deaths of people who had a positive test result for COVID-19 and died within 28 days of the first positive test. Data from the four nations are not directly comparable as methodologies and inclusion criteria vary. Data for the period ending 5 days before the date when the website was last updated with data for the selected area, highlighted in grey, is incomplete.

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Peterborough

Deaths within 28 days of positive test by date of death

Number of deaths of people who had a positive test result for COVID-19 and died within 28 days of the first positive test. Data from the four nations are not directly comparable as methodologies and inclusion criteria vary. Data for the period ending 5 days before the date when the website was last updated with data for the selected area, highlighted in grey, is incomplete.

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Outbreak management

Public health continues to work closely with other directorates and partner agencies on the day to day management of Covid-19 outbreaks in care homes, workplaces, schools and early years settings, and among vulnerable population groups. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough single point of contact for Covid-19 outbreak management operates from 8am to 8pm on a daily basis, including week-ends. The workload remains high as a result of the high prevalence of Covid-19 in the community, with significant numbers of cases in care homes, and in those workplace settings which remain open - although there is some recent reduction.

Local enhanced contact tracing

The workload of the local enhanced contact tracing service, which is a partnership across Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, and the five District/City Councils, also remains high due to the high rates of Covid-19 in the community, although it has reduced since the start of lockdown. Additional staff are being recruited to ensure sustainability of the service and to develop a model for the future with a stronger focus on tracing the source of community outbreaks, as well as identifying and advising cases and contacts.

Community Rapid testing Programme

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough bid to the Department of Health and Social Care for a Community Rapid Testing Programme using lateral flow tests has been approved. Test sites have now been implemented in Peterborough and all five District/City Council areas in Cambridgeshire.

The purpose of the programme is to test people without symptoms, because one in three people who are infectious with Covid-19 may show no signs of the illness. The testing is for people without symptoms aged 18+ who leave home regularly for work, volunteering or training. People are encouraged to go for testing twice a week, and must self-isolate if they test positive. Most infectious cases will be identified by a rapid test, but some infectious cases will test negative and be missed - so people with a negative test must still observe the lockdown rules, social distancing and other safety measures. Regular testing of people who go

out of their homes regularly to workplaces or other settings, will help to drive down Covid transmission rates.

Support for vaccinations

Joint work with the Clinical Commissioning Group to support the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination programme is developing further, and the Director of Public Health has recently joined the Strategic Vaccinations Group, which is led by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG. The Council is supporting local residents' access to vaccination through community transport options, encouraging care home and other front line social care workers to be vaccinated, developing local communications resources to promote the vaccination programme, and will be increasingly involved in promoting equity of access to vaccinations and addressing vaccine hesitancy across a wide range of population groups.

Local Action Plans

All District and City Councils in Cambridgeshire are continuing to deliver their Local Action Plans for Covid-19. Each District/City Council has a weekly 'Gold' meeting. Public health staff attend in order to share the detailed epidemiology for that District/City Council area. Local action plans include preventive activities, rapid response, and support for people who are self-isolating or otherwise vulnerable - and are delivered by people with a lot of knowledge of the local area and communities.

Supporting vulnerable population groups

The county-wide Community Reference Group brings together a range of voluntary and community sector organisations and some statutory services to ensure that Covid-19 advice, response and support reaches a wide range of vulnerable communities. Public health staff and services are fully engaged in this work.

RECOVERY ACTIVITY

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Local Resilience Forum Recovery Group - Public Health and Prevention Sub-Group

Public health work on recovery has been focussed on a multi-agency approach through the Local Resilience Forum Public Health and Prevention Sub-Group. The five core themes on which this work has focussed are:

- Health inequalities
- Screening, vaccinations, and immunisations
- Health behaviours
- Mental Health
- Housing and health

The work under each theme has been driven forward by small working groups and has now reported.

Looking forward - a key priority is to create sustainable models for the outbreak management, contact tracing and community rapid testing services which have been put in place very quickly in response to national and local requirements to reduce the spread of Covid-19 - which now need to be sustainable in the medium term in order to help control the virus alongside the national vaccination programme.

The other key priority is to support and mainstream the Covid-19 vaccination programme at the local level, with a clear model which will enable all communities to have confidence in and access the vaccine at the appropriate time.

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

The Health Protection Board Finance Sub-Group has continued to allocate the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to appropriate outbreak prevention and control measures in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Sub-Group meets at least monthly to ensure that funding keeps pace with the changing needs and requirements of the Covid-19 outbreak management response. At the most recent meeting of the sub-group, COMF funding was allocated to support ongoing and/or additional capacity in:

- Local enhanced contact tracing service
- Care home outbreak management cell
- Education outbreak management cell
- Surveillance cell

- Workplace cell
- Work with vulnerable communities
- Peterborough Rapid Response
- Cambridge City Rapid Response
- East Cambridgeshire Rapid Response

A separate grant is received from DHSC to deliver the Community Rapid Testing Programme and appropriate decisions have been made to allocate these resources in order to implement the programme at pace.

NEW FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council are now receiving monthly allocations of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund from central government and these have been confirmed until the end of March. Further allocations are under review. It has also been confirmed that Contain Outbreak Management Funds can be carried over into 2021/22. This is positive news as it means that funding can be allocated at this point to more sustainable longer term programmes.

WORKFORCE CHANGES

A range of staff have or will be recruited by the Public Health Directorate on short term contracts/agency basis for:

- Outbreak Management Team and C19 Single Point of Contact
- Enhanced Local Contact Tracing Service roles
- To deliver the Community Rapid Testing Programme
- Public health support for vaccination uptake

COMMUNICATIONS

Public health staff work closely with the Communications Directorate to provide public health advice and sign off for a wide range of communication materials - including media releases, leaflets, and social media messaging. Over the past month, key areas of media interest have been the epidemiology of Covid-19 in Peterborough, and the new Rapid Community Testing programme - which has been well publicised through a range of campaign materials.