

COVID-19 HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREAS:	Public Health
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REPORTING PERIOD:	12 th December 2020 to 15 th January 2021

NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

- **National lockdown regulations and guidance**
The national lockdown regulations and guidance have had an impact on a range of Council function. The public health team have supported implementation and provided specialist advice and work with the media as required.
- **Community Lateral Flow Testing Announcement**
The announcement of Community Lateral Flow Testing reflected work already going on, led by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough public health with support from military colleagues, to finalise a Community Rapid Testing bid to DHSC. This bid was submitted on Monday 11th January and implementation work is progressing.
- **SAGE recommendations on the new Covid-19 variant**
Research evidence and associated recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) on measures to protect against the new variant of Covid-19 was published on December 31st. We have shared this with the County Council and City Council Joint Management Team and with partners, and used it to inform a range of work and advice.
- **Guidance on Covid-19 vaccination**
A range of guidance has been published on the Covid-19 vaccination programme which is led by the NHS. Regularly updated information about the vaccination is provided on the CCG website [COVID-19 national vaccination programme | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group \(cambridgeshireandpeterboroughccg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireandpeterboroughccg.nhs.uk/covid-19-national-vaccination-programme)

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

Epidemiology

The number of Covid-19 cases in Cambridgeshire rose very significantly during December, but have started to stabilise following lock down measures, although still rising in Fenland. Case rates in Peterborough rose more gradually during December but are still continuing to see some increase.

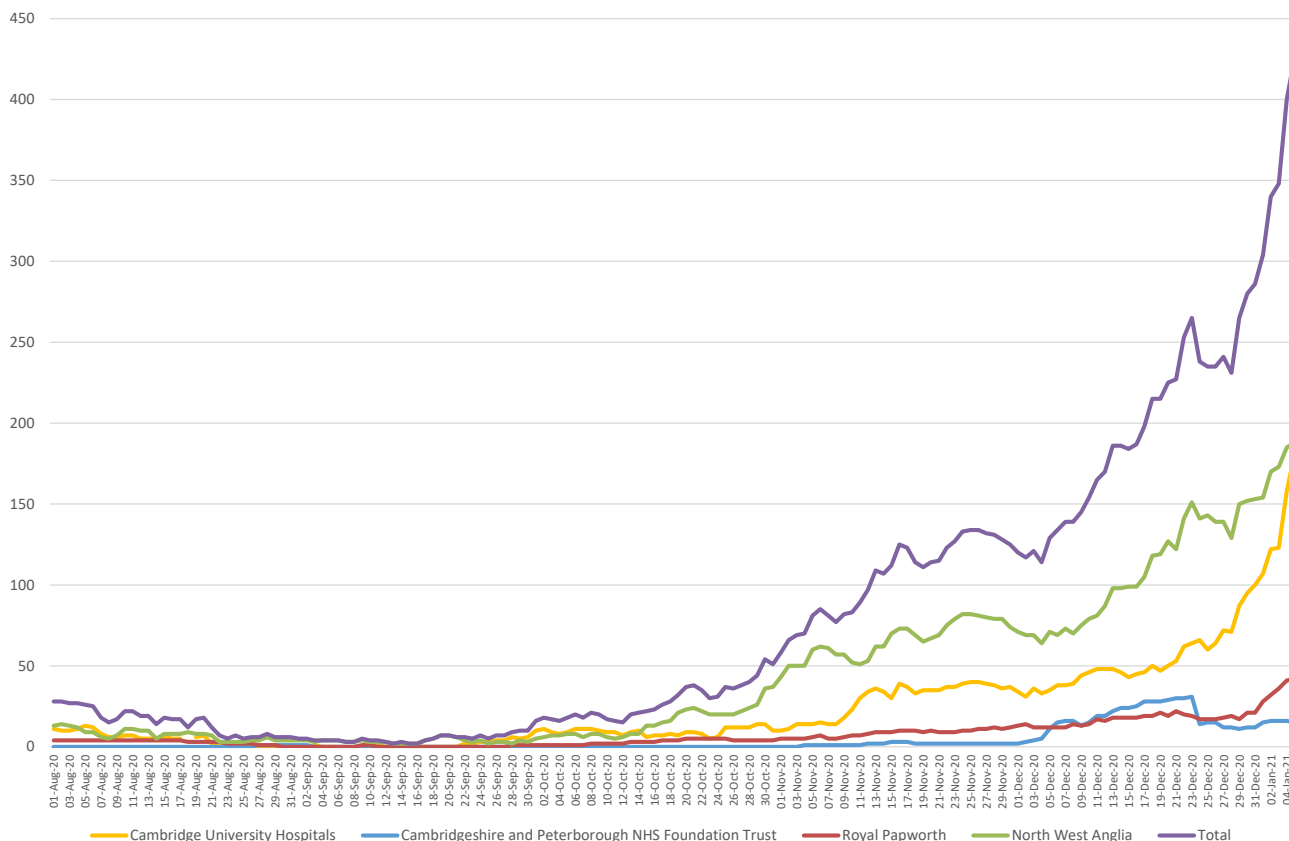
At the time of writing the weekly average rate of new cases in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is as follows:

Covid-19 Epidemiology for week ending 9th January 2021

	Average weekly cases per 100,000 population	Rate of change (comparing week ending 9th Jan with the week ending 2nd Jan)
England	622	+1%
East of England	709	-12%
Cambridgeshire	466	-6%
Cambridge	497	-5%
East Cambs	362	-27%
Fenland	521	+16%
Hunts	516	-3%
South Cambs	407	-13%
Peterborough	543	+12%

The number of patients in hospital with a positive Covid test has increased significantly in recent weeks and is higher than in the first wave of the pandemic.

Number of positive Covid-19 cases per NHS Trust to 5th January 2021



Sadly the number of deaths from Covid-19 has also increased. This increase occurred earlier in Peterborough, associated with higher Covid-19 case rates and hospitalisation during November and December, and deaths have now risen in Cambridgeshire also.

The New Variant

The epidemiology of Covid-19 has been affected in the East of England and nationally by the new variant of coronavirus, which is more infectious than previous variants. The new variant is in circulation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - and requires even more rigorous measures to control the spread.

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 school and early year's settings, care homes, workplaces 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 has increased over December, and both the single point of contact and outbreak management structures continued to operate throughout the festive period. In December there was a marked increase in workload from school outbreaks, while more recently the number of outbreaks in care homes has increased significantly.

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 has increased very significantly, with the increase in the overall number of Covid-19 cases. This has resulted in a lower success rate, and some cases have needed to be returned to national Test and Trace for follow up. Partners are working together both to recruit additional staff and to redeploy internal capacity to ensure that the increase workload can be managed.

Community Rapid testing Programme

A bid for funding for a Community Rapid Testing Programme using lateral flow tests has been submitted to the Department of Health and Social Care. The national roll out of this programme to all local authorities was announced last week-end. Our bid, which is across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, builds on the learning from our current Lateral Flow Testing pilot in Peterborough, which continues to operate. The new bid focusses on a 'train the trainer' model for rapid testing in workplaces, testing of vulnerable population groups or where there are clusters of infection, and the establishment of a fixed rapid testing site in each District/City local authority area. Implementation work is progressing, with the aim of having the programme in place by February 1st.

Review of priorities and capacity

A system wide workshop to review priorities and capacity in the light of the rise in cases and the new variant was held last week, led by the Local Outbreak Control Plan. Overarching public health priorities for the system for the next month were put forward as:

- Supporting the roll out of the vaccination programme
- Supporting the local NHS to meet capacity challenges from rising Covid-19 cases sick enough to be admitted to hospital.
- Keeping local Covid-19 case rates as low as possible

A wide range of views and experience were shared at the event, and agreement reached on the best ways to move forward and prioritise capacity.

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, and public health staff attend in order to share the detailed epidemiology for that District/City Council area, to support rapid response and action planning.

Supporting vulnerable population groups

Public health will be working with the Communities and Safety Directorate, the Covid-19 Communities Reference Group and the CCG, to ensure that vulnerable population groups are provided with appropriate information about Covid vaccinations, and that they attend for vaccination at such point when they are invited, which will be dependent on Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation criteria.

RECOVERY ACTIVITY

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.

In addition public health staff have contributed to the work of other LRF Recovery Sub-Groups - including the Vulnerable People group.

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.

NEW FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

Cambridgeshire County Council is now receiving monthly allocations of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.

WORKFORCE CHANGES

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

- Outbreak Management Team and C19 Single Point of Contact
- Enhanced Local Contact Tracing Service roles
- To deliver the Community Rapid Testing Programme

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 the Director of Public Health has been interviewed on local radio and TV, particularly in relation to the rise in cases, and the changes in local authority tiers announced before Christmas.