

# Oxfordshire

## NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing

5 February 2021

Oxfordshire health and local authority partners are working together to respond to the pandemic and help the county restart, recover and renew after COVID-19.

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# Outbreak Management

After four weeks of lockdown, we are now starting to see a drop in the number of COVID-19 cases in Oxfordshire. However, rates are coming down at a much slower rate than they went up and they remain at a very high level. Case numbers are being driven by the highly infectious new UK variant, which accounts for 90% of new cases in Oxfordshire, compared with 2% in November.

For the week ending 29 January, there were 1,311 new confirmed cases in Oxfordshire, compared with 2,045 the previous week. This equates to a weekly rate of 189.5 per 100,000 people in Oxfordshire, which is more than double the rate of 83.7 per 100,000 recorded for the week ending 4 December. The pressure on our health and social care systems remains intense.

The latest COVID-19 figures can be viewed on the county council's [interactive dashboard](#), which is updated on a daily basis.

## #StopTheSpread

Our communications activity continues to focus on raising awareness about the high case rates in Oxfordshire, particularly in Cherwell and Oxford, where targeted activity has been taking place including geo-targeted social media, outdoor advertising at supermarkets, and mobile advertising using a digital A-board van.

The benefit and behaviours associated with the national lockdown message are also being reinforced through a county-wide social media campaign aimed at those who are stretching the lockdown rules. Called 'What's the harm?', it's designed to make people stop and think about the impact of their actions.



## Symptom-free testing

COVID-19 testing for people without symptoms will begin for select key workers in Oxfordshire from 8 February.

The new service, which will be managed by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with the district and city councils, will use rapid lateral flow tests to identify those who have COVID-19 but display no symptoms. Identifying infectious individuals early, isolating them, and tracing their contacts can reduce transmission of the virus significantly. The local programme will work alongside lateral flow testing that has been put in place nationally in settings such as care homes, hospitals, schools and some workplaces.



The programme will start by focusing on key workers not currently included in the national

initiative – the police, fire service, followed by health, social care and early years workers. It will then gradually expand to other key workers.

The plan is that these key workers should get tested on a weekly basis. To do this, three symptom-free testing centres have been set up in the county in the following venues:

- Spiceball Leisure Centre in Banbury
- The Beacon in Wantage
- King's Centre in Oxford.

Those eligible will be prioritised by their organisations and contacted with information on how to book their appointments. The tests will take just 15 minutes using lateral flow devices and will be processed on-site, with results conveyed within an hour by text message or email. A positive result will trigger the legal duty to self-isolate and to follow the national guidance. A self-isolation information pack has been prepared to help provide individuals with advice and sources of support.

# Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

## Great progress in Oxfordshire COVID vaccination programme

Clinicians, NHS staff, patient participation group members and community volunteers from across Oxfordshire have made huge progress in ensuring our most at-risk staff and patient groups will have a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine by the middle of this month.

Since 8 December, two hospital hubs, 21 GP-led local vaccination sites, and the Oxfordshire vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium have been rolled out to vaccinate the top four [priority groups](#), as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

GP practices have been able to vaccinate all older residents in the county's care homes and are currently reaching out to housebound patients. NHS services in Oxfordshire are confident they will meet the Government's target of giving a first vaccination dose to everyone in the current priority groups by 15 February.

In Oxfordshire more than 90% of those aged over 80 have received their first vaccination dose and 50% of those aged 70 to 79. Excellent progress is being made for frontline health and social care staff, and all older adult care home residents and staff have been offered the vaccine. This equates to 105,000 people living or working in Oxfordshire (this data was approved for publication 4 Feb 2021). Enthusiasm from the public has been huge and the vaccination centres are finding patients are keen to benefit from the vaccination when called.

Dr Kiren Collison, clinical chair at Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, which supports the GP-led vaccination services in the county, said: "The hard work and huge effort from everyone involved - from clinicians to community volunteers - has ensured that we are on track to get everyone in our most at-risk groups vaccinated with a first dose in the next couple of weeks.

"This is a great achievement which is helping to reduce the spread of the virus and reduce the numbers of people seriously ill in our hospitals. But the wider public has an important part to play to help us, so we are asking:

- please continue to follow all the guidance to control the virus and save lives – that means staying at home as much as possible and following the 'hands, face, space' guidance when you are out;
- please don't contact the NHS to seek a vaccine, we will contact you;
- and when we do contact you, please attend your booked appointments, and try to arrive exactly when you're asked to, so that we can keep queues to a minimum."

## Oxford Health opens mass vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium, Oxford

All eyes were on Oxford Health's new mass vaccination centre as priority front line patient-facing staff and then members of the public aged 75 and over received their first jabs of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

The facility started delivering its first vaccinations on 25 January and TV, [radio and print media visited on day two](#) to speak to Prof Andrew Pollard, Oxford Health CEO Dr Nick Broughton and some of the people who had appointments that morning.



*Prof Andrew Pollard gives Dr Nick Broughton his first dose of the Oxford/ AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine*

Prof Pollard, the man behind the Oxford University team which developed the Oxford vaccine, administered the first jabs to Dr Broughton and others and helped push the message that everyone should take the opportunity to be vaccinated when offered.

The milestones were covered by [ITV Meridian](#), [BBC South Today](#), [BBC Radio Oxford](#), Jack FM and the [Oxford Mail](#). The story also did very well on social media helping to promote the NHS vaccination programme.

On 1 February [the first members of the public arrived for their jabs](#) and many commented on the efficiency of the operation and the helpful and friendly nature of everyone running the centre. It was also clear that the message about continuing to observe social distancing, hand washing and all other lockdown and infection prevention rules had got through to this age group.

Oxford Health's COVID Operations Director, Tehmeena Ajmal, explained: "It was amazing to be here at the start of the day to see the first members of the public coming along and to watch how all the hard work done by my colleagues has resulted in such a smooth operation.

"Seeing people who had received their vaccination afterwards looking so pleased was really rewarding. I know that many of them have been waiting for this moment and are now looking forward to getting their second jab."



*Shirley Rust, 75 from Benson, proudly holding her post-vaccination leaflet at the Kassam Stadium*

## **Oxford Health opens hospital hub for staff COVID-19 jabs**

COVID-19 vaccinations for all patient-facing staff have begun at Oxford Health's first hospital hub – the Clinical Research Facility (CRF) at the Warneford site in Oxford.

The hub opened on Tuesday 26 January and is another exciting step forward in the vaccination programme at Oxford Health. It enables the Trust to ramp up provision and complement existing vaccinations being offered at the Kassam vaccination centre as well as other trusts and via primary care networks (PCNs).

The CRF hub is being led by Fiona Singleton, Immunisation Operational Team Manager for the school nursing service which was responsible for vaccinating 68,000 children in Oxfordshire against the flu last autumn.

She said: "I am so pleased to be involved in the national vaccination programme and to work with an incredible team to set up our own hospital hub."

## **Francesca joins OneTeamOneOUH to support BAME staff**



*Francesca Ridley (centre) with OUH BAME Staff Network members Reema D'Souza, Ariel Lanada and Lindley Nevers, and Chief Nursing Officer, Sam Foster*

A brand new role has been created to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff working at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) – thanks to the support of NHS Charities Together.

Francesca Ridley has joined our OneTeamOneOUH as the Trust's new Wellbeing Lead for BAME staff following a successful grant application by Oxford Hospitals Charity.

Her new role has been welcomed by the OUH BAME Staff Network whose Chair, Ariel Lanada, who is a nurse and a Divisional Lead for Practice Development and Education, said: "We are extremely delighted to welcome Francesca to the OUH family. Looking after the mental health and wellbeing of not only our BAME colleagues but everybody who works at OUH has never been more important, especially at the height of this pandemic." Douglas Graham, Chief Executive Officer of Oxford Hospitals Charity, added: "We are delighted that NHS Charities Together has taken such a proactive lead in focusing on the communities which have been so disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

"The grant they are providing to Oxford Hospitals Charity is helping to fund a new role within OUH to find practical and innovative ways of supporting the physical and mental health of BAME staff. We hope this will create positive and lasting change during these extremely challenging times and long into the future." You can find out more by reading the [news story on the OUH website](#).

### **Local MP praises engagement with BAME communities to encourage COVID vaccination**

You may have spotted Imam Monawar Hussain, the Muslim Chaplain at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH), [talking about the importance of people getting the COVID-19 vaccine](#).

He has also worked with community colleagues to record messages in different languages, including [Arabic with Dr Kamel Ait Tahar](#). There are also versions in [Hindi](#), [Farsi](#), [Urdu](#), [Slovakian](#), [Tamil](#), [Punjabi](#), and [Bengali](#).

Faith leaders in Oxford have also recorded [this message](#).

Meanwhile, Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini (OUH Consultant Anaesthetist and Oxford City Council's

migrant champion) co-hosted a virtual focus group discussion on 20 January to give all OUH staff an opportunity for them to speak freely about their concerns about COVID vaccination.

Research shows that hesitancy about vaccination in general, and about the new COVID vaccines in particular, is a particular issue among some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

Anneliese Dodds MP has praised this vital work to engage with BAME communities. Writing in the *Oxford Mail*, she said: "Many in Oxford have been doing fantastic work in their own communities. For example, the Imam Monawar Hussain and Northfield Brook city councillor Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini have worked with the local NHS Trust to put together a video for the Farsi speaking community, and the Imam has worked hard to put together other videos in a range of languages for communities across Oxford."

### **OUH joins forces with Age UK Oxfordshire to keep older people well this winter**

Age UK Oxfordshire is working closely with Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) and other Oxfordshire health and care system partners this winter as part of our ['Home First'](#) approach, which prioritises treating people at home where possible and reducing hospital stays. Age UK Oxfordshire staff are based at both the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and the Horton General Hospital in Banbury seven days a week.

Ruth Swift, Head of Community Development at Age UK Oxfordshire, said: "We're really pleased to be part of the Trust team. By being on site at the hospitals, we're able to act quickly to support patients and their families on their discharge.

"We can help with all aspects of care – from being there during their hospital treatment, to planning for what's needed to help them get home safely and live independently. Our main aim is for people to feel confident and comfortable in their own home, which is often the best place for them to be."

Sam Foster, OUH Chief Nursing Officer at the Trust, added: "We're delighted to be working with Age UK

Oxfordshire again. After being in hospital, our patients can often feel nervous about returning to more independent living. With Age UK Oxfordshire working with our patients from the very beginning of their hospital stay, they can tailor their approach to suit people's individual needs." [More information is available on the OUH website.](#)

### **Oxford at heart of COVID vaccine research**

Oxford continues to play a key role in groundbreaking research into COVID vaccines. On Tuesday (2 February), researchers at the University of Oxford published [an analysis of further data](#) from the ongoing trials of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine.

Professor Andrew Pollard, Chief Investigator of the Oxford Vaccine Trial, and co-author of the paper, said: "These new data provide an important verification of the interim data that was used by more than 25 regulators including the MHRA and EMA to grant the vaccine emergency use authorisation.

"It also supports the policy recommendation made by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) for a 12-week prime-boost interval, as they look for the optimal approach to roll out, and reassures us that people are protected from 22 days after a single dose of the vaccine.'

On Thursday (4 February) the world's first COVID-19 vaccine study researching alternating doses and intervals of approved vaccines began in Oxford.

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)-supported study, which will be run at the University of Oxford's Centre for Clinical Vaccinology and Tropical Medicine at the Churchill Hospital, will determine the effects of using a different vaccine for the second dose to the first dose, in addition to two different intervals between doses.

The study is being undertaken by the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium (NISEC) and the Oxford Vaccine Group, and is backed by £7 million of Government funding from the Vaccines Taskforce.

More than 800 volunteers, including 100 in Oxford, are expected to take part in the study across eight sites across England including in London, Birmingham and Liverpool. They will be recruited this month via the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry, with initial results expected this summer.

Matthew Snape, Associate Professor in Paediatrics and Vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said: "This is a tremendously exciting study that will provide information vital to the rollout of vaccines in the UK and globally."

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Senior Responsible Officer for the study, added: "Given the inevitable challenges of immunising large numbers of the population against COVID-19 and potential global supply constraints, there are definitely advantages to having data that could support a more flexible immunisation programme, if ever needed and approved by the medicines regulator."

### **'I can't thank them enough' – cancer patient thanks OUH staff for outstanding care**

Steve Schmalenbach, a leukaemia patient who has been cared for at Oxford University Hospitals, filmed a video to thank Trust staff after his care involved a combination of more than 40 treatments.

Steve, who has received treatment at both the Brodey Cancer Centre at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury and the Churchill Hospital in Oxford, has had 11 biopsies, 19 blood transfusions, 2 plasma transfusions and a bone marrow transplant. He told his story because he wanted to reassure people that help and support is out there, despite the current demands on the NHS, including cancer treatment which has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Steve and Chris Cunningham, Divisional Director for Surgery, Women's and Oncology at OUH, were both interviewed by ITV Meridian – [you can read more about Steve's incredible story and watch clips from his video on the ITV Meridian website.](#)

## Think NHS 111

As hospitals across the county remain under pressure, there has been another push to encourage residents to contact NHS 111 first via [111 online](#) or telephone if they are thinking of attending an Emergency Department.

Launched in Oxfordshire in November 2020, the programme plays an important part in managing patient flow in healthcare settings and reducing overcrowding. NHS 111 is a national system that people can contact if they need clinical advice.

People who need clinical advice but who are not in a **life-threatening emergency** are encouraged to contact NHS 111 first **before** attending their local Emergency Department (A&E). They will then be

assessed and, if appropriate, booked into either the John Radcliffe or Horton General Hospital Emergency Department for treatment.



## Community resilience

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### Winter Support Grant

Financial help is still available for people struggling to feed their families or heat their homes this winter as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oxfordshire County Council, in partnership with the county's district councils and Citizens Advice services, is offering support to vulnerable residents through a Winter Support Grant. Oxfordshire was awarded £400,000 by the government in December to fund the cost of food, electricity, heating and other essential items, and the financial help is available for households to claim by 31 March.

Households with children can claim up to £350, while those without children can receive up to £175. The support teams provide the funding through supermarket vouchers, cover costs for pre-payment meters, or make sure that a heating or water bill is paid. If a resident has received a food voucher from a previous scheme, they may also be eligible to have one from the Winter Support Grant. Details of how to apply are available on the [county council website](#) and district council websites.

### Home library service delivers over 8,000 books

Residents across Oxfordshire have continued to benefit from the county's home library service during the pandemic, with 8,364 books delivered from April to December 2020.

The county council's home library service is offered free to users in partnership with Age UK to almost 800 residents of all ages.



These residents are unable to visit libraries through frailty, infirmity or a disability and have no other means of getting access to loaned material. It is also available to full-time carers and those who might need the service in the short-term following illness or hospitalisation.

The service depends on a team of around 180 volunteers, who supply the users with loan items on visits every three weeks. The service matches its

volunteers carefully to specific residents to allow the same volunteer to visit each time.

## Economy

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### UK Post-EU Transition

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) continues to offer businesses a tailored support service from experienced business advisers. Its Post-EU Transition Service can help find answers to specific questions, as well as reviewing the impact the recent changes may have on companies, helping them develop an action plan too.

The business advisers can provide businesses with one-to-one guidance and advice on challenges and opportunities in the following areas:

- Importing and exporting
- Regulations and standards
- Workforce and people
- Business and legal requirements
- Energy and climate
- Public procurement, IP and UK EU Funding

OxLEP held the first of a series of business support webinars on 2 February and a recording is available to view at [www.oxfordshirelep.com/uk-transition](http://www.oxfordshirelep.com/uk-transition).

## Place, Transport, Infrastructure

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### Science Vale Cycling Network routes open to the public



Oxfordshire County Council has finished work on five cycling routes, which make up the first phase of the Science Vale Cycling Network project – more

### Business support programmes

OxLEP runs a range of business support programmes, including:

- The **eScalate programme**, which supports growing businesses that have scale-up potential. It also supports SMEs that are social enterprise, social entrepreneurs, enterprising charities and other businesses committed to enabling positive social and environmental impact. [Find out more about eScalate.](#)
- **Innovation Support for Business (ISfB)** - a programme designed to drive and commercialise the innovative business ideas of Oxfordshire's SMEs and entrepreneurs. [Find out more about ISfB.](#)
- **Skills for Business**, which provides practical support for small to medium-sized businesses to identify and evaluate their skills and learning needs, including upskilling current staff. [Find out more on Skills for Business.](#)

than 10km of improved cycle and pedestrian paths that are now open to the public.

The £5.8 million cycling and footpath network in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, links three large employment centres with nearby towns. The routes link the science and research centres at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre with Abingdon, Wantage and Didcot, including Didcot Parkway railway station. To see the network in full, visit the [map](#) of the routes. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic and the nature of the off-road routes, the work was completed three months before the funding deadline. Route 1 earned a Green Apple Environment Award for minimising carbon emissions and reducing environmental impact during construction.



## Dr Bike pedals on

Cherwell District Council's bicycle maintenance scheme, offering free repairs to encourage more people onto two wheels, has resumed following an award of funding from Cycling UK. Two Dr Bike sessions took place during January, with 21 bikes being fixed for local residents and key workers including NHS staff. Four more sessions are planned for February and March – two in Kidlington and two for Banbury.

## Transforming the Covered Market

Oxford City Council has begun a project that could see the Covered Market transformed for future generations of shoppers. During 2021 the council will develop a masterplan which will explore how:

- The market could be made more visible and attractive from the street, for example by improving entrances.
- People could be encouraged to spend more time in the market, for example by introducing seating and enabling events.

- Public facilities and market operations could be improved, for example by devising lower energy ways to heat, cool and light the market.



The regeneration will respect the unique character and history of the Grade II-listed market, which dates from 1774. The council will work with the market traders, Oxford residents and other stakeholders to draft the masterplan.

## Children, Education, Families

### Using young people's ideas to help tackle hate crime

West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership has launched a competition for young people designed to highlight issues around hate crime. The aim is to create a piece of creative work – from a song or short story to a video or live performance – to inspire and educate, with participants learning about the issues facing people who suffer hate crime and discrimination.

Participants must be aged between 11 and 16, and the themes focus on discrimination, experiencing and reporting hate crime, and accessing support. The competition will run until 21 February, and the winner will receive a £75 voucher for an organisation of their choice.

The West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership (WOCSP) brings together local organisations including Thames Valley Police, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and voluntary and community sector groups, with the aim of preventing and reducing crime, disorder and fear of crime.



## And finally...

We hope this update is useful. Please email [occg.media-team@nhs.net](mailto:occg.media-team@nhs.net) with any queries and we will endeavour to get back to you as soon as we can.