

Oxfordshire

NHS & Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing

5 March 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.

Table of contents

Children, Education, Families	2
Outbreak Management	3
Health, Wellbeing and Social Care	3
Community resilience	9
Economy	9
Place, Transport, Infrastructure.....	10
And finally.....	11

Welcoming all pupils back to school

Oxfordshire schools will be reopening to all pupils from Monday 8 March.

Primary children must return to school on 8 March (unless parents have received a letter stating that their child is Clinically Extremely Vulnerable), while secondary and further education students will commence a staggered return from 8 March to enable rapid testing to be carried out.

Schools are following national guidance on COVID safety and have a suite of measures in place. Face masks will be required in all areas of secondary schools from 8 March; they must also be worn on school transport and public transport. Social distancing must be observed at school gates at drop-off and collection times.



A letter has been sent from the county council's Corporate Director for Children's Services, Kevin Gordon to all parents to advise them of the measures in place and to ask for their support in encouraging children to adhere to them.

Oxford Health's school nurses are there to make return to school easier for secondary pupils

There is a reassuring message for young people returning to schools this month from Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust's school nurses.

Schools will start a phased return from 8 March but school nurses have been working in a range of new and old ways throughout the lockdowns. The trust's team of caring nurses have been there for pupils whether in the school or on the end of a phone or web call for any young person that has been feeling stressed or worried.

Tikki Harrold, school health nurse said: "This has been a very strange school year and the school nurses have really been focussing on being available for pupils, especially when they are feeling the stress and strain of lockdown.

"We always say to young people that there's nothing so bad that they can't talk to us about it – and that's as true now as it has ever been."



See [here](#) for more information on the role of the school health nurse and how to contact them.

Secondary school places

Parents and children across Oxfordshire have been offered their first choice of secondary school for 2021/22 in the vast majority of cases.

90 per cent (6,371) of applications have been awarded their first choice, while 97 per cent (6,909) have been offered one of the four choices they listed on their application.



This first choice figure represents a slight improvement on last year's figures and is comfortably ahead of national averages in all recent previous years. The national average for this year will not be published until later in 2021.

Outbreak Management

The number of new COVID-19 cases in Oxfordshire is continuing to decline, with a reduction of 24 per cent for the week ending 26 February. The weekly rate currently stands at 58.8 per 100,000 people and is now at a comparable level with early October 2020. The rate shows an even sharper decline in the over 60s, with a reduction of 47 per cent over the past 7 days; it currently stands at 27.2 per 100,000.

The aim is to get cases as low as possible so that we can gradually emerge from lockdown with the confidence that COVID-19 will not restrict our lives in the same way. The latest COVID-19 figures can be viewed on the county council's **interactive dashboard**, which is updated on a daily basis.



Symptom-free testing for public-facing workers
Oxfordshire's symptom-free testing programme has expanded to include public-facing workers across the county who need to leave home to work or volunteer.

The county council programme, which is being run in partnership with the city and district councils, initially focused on those not already included in the national testing scheme, starting with the police and fire service. This was soon expanded to include early years staff and childminders, and council staff in a range of public-facing roles.

Now the programme has expanded further, with people who need to leave home to work or volunteer and who cannot access workplace testing through their employer invited to get tested on a weekly basis. This includes people who work for small businesses and the self-employed – for example taxi drivers, independent retailers, and tradespeople such as plumbers and electricians.

People can **book a test** online and go to one of three locations: Spiceball Leisure Centre in Banbury; The Beacon in Wantage; and the King's Centre in Oxford.

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

Vaccination data

NHS England publish **vaccination data** which now includes local authority level (district and single tier authorities), Parliamentary constituency, and middle layer super output area. The data reveals the number of people vaccinated with at least one dose, broken down by age.

Great progress in the vaccine programme

Thanks to the hundreds of NHS workers and volunteers involved across the county, almost 220,000 people in Oxfordshire have now received a COVID-19 vaccination, with numbers rising every day.



This has been a huge logistical challenge being delivered at the same time as managing the increased pressures on health and care services caused by the pandemic.

Currently people being invited for vaccination are those aged 60 and over and patients of all ages who are particularly at risk of death or serious illness from COVID-19 due to a health condition or living with a learning disability.

Included in the Oxfordshire figures are nearly 7,000 people who have received their second vaccine dose and more will be coming forward as we head towards Easter.

Early signs suggest the success of the vaccination programme is contributing to the welcome fall in the number of people in hospital with coronavirus.

It is very important to a vaccine's effectiveness that we follow all the recommended guidelines for its administration and use. In the case of the COVID-19 vaccines, the first jab begins the immunological response and the second jab builds on this response significantly and offers longer lasting protection.

Those being called in for their second dose are being urged to go ahead and have it. Getting only one of two doses potentially weakens resistance to COVID-19. People are being told that it is important not to waste their second dose – 'it has your name on it and can't be used on anyone else at the moment.'

In the meantime we can all help to allow the roll out to continue at pace whilst protecting our GP practices so they can continue to look after patients who are unwell. Please help to share these important messages:

- unless you are in the groups being invited now, please don't contact the NHS to seek a vaccine, we will contact you when it is the right time;
- when we do contact you, please attend your booked appointments at exactly the time you're asked to;
- whether you have had your vaccine or not, please continue to follow all the guidance in place to control the virus and save lives.

Reaching out to people in priority groups who have yet to have their COVID vaccine

People in the priority groups for the COVID-19 vaccine, who have yet to respond to their invitation for a first dose, are the focus of a new scheme run by Oxfordshire councils, GPs and the NHS.

The service, which will be launched next week, is designed to help support people who want to have the jab but have not yet taken up their invitation. There are a range of reasons why people may have not arranged a vaccination – from difficulties in booking an appointment or arranging transport, to hesitancy or misunderstandings about the vaccine.

Outreach workers from the community hub teams of the city and district councils across the county will be visiting residents who have not had a vaccination and offering them support to get an appointment if they want one. The outreach workers are from experienced teams which have been visiting residents who are shielding or self-isolating throughout the pandemic. They will be dressed in clearly identifiable clothing, carry an ID, and follow all social distancing guidelines. Residents will be visited by teams from their local council.

Vaccination programme rollout: prioritisation

The next stage of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout across Oxfordshire has been outlined by the Government, in line with the rest of the UK. Once all the top [nine priority groups](#) have been offered at least one jab, it will continue to be offered to people according to age group, rather than profession or job role.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) says the next people to be offered the jab, from around mid-April, will be, in descending order:

- All those aged 40-49 years
- All those aged 30-39 years
- All those aged 18-29 years

The JCVI has said the evidence suggests an age-based approach is the most effective way of reducing deaths and hospital admissions. The committee decided against giving priority to people in particular jobs, such as teachers or police

officers, because they said this would be more complex to deliver and might slow down the vaccine programme, leaving some more vulnerable people at higher risk unvaccinated for longer.

It also urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from COVID-19 to take up the offer of vaccination promptly:

- Men
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- People with a BMI over 30
- Those living in deprived neighbourhoods

It is expected that everyone aged 18 and over will have been offered their first dose of the vaccination by mid-July.

Calling all over 60s and registered carers to book their first COVID jab

People aged 60 and over plus those who claim Carer's Allowance can now book their COVID vaccinations direct with the NHS via the [national booking service](#).



As the vaccination roll out makes excellent progress with more than 20 million now vaccinated across the country, new groups have been added to previous priority groups.

You can now book a vaccine if:

- you are aged 60 or over
- you have previously received a letter saying you are at [high risk from coronavirus](#) (these people are clinically extremely vulnerable and GP practices are also contacting patients in this group to offer a vaccination at a local GP led vaccination site)
- you are an eligible frontline health worker
- you are an eligible frontline social care worker
- you get Carer's Allowance – [Find out more about Carer's Allowance on GOV.UK](#)

The easiest way to arrange a vaccination is through the national booking service which can be accessed [here](#). Anyone unable to book online can call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week.

For more information visit [this page](#).

New data show vaccines reduce severe COVID-19 in older adults

Public Health England (PHE) research shows that both the Oxford-AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines are highly effective in reducing COVID-19 infections among older people aged 70 years and over. Since January, protection against symptomatic COVID, four weeks after the first dose, ranged between 60 and 73% for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine – it was between 57 and 61% for one dose of Pfizer.

In the over 80s, data suggest that a single dose of either vaccine is more than 80% effective at preventing hospitalisation, around 3 to 4 weeks after the jab.

Dr Mary Ramsay, PHE Head of Immunisation, said: "This adds to growing evidence showing that the vaccines are working to reduce infections and save lives. This is encouraging and we are increasingly confident that vaccines are making a real difference.

"It is important to remember that protection is not complete and we don't yet know how much these vaccines will reduce the risk of you passing COVID-19 on to others. Even if you have been vaccinated, it is really important that you continue to act like you have the virus, practise good hand hygiene and stay at home."

The new data come from a [pre-print of a real-world study](#).

Common asthma treatment helps prevent COVID-19 hospitalisations

Early treatment with a common asthma treatment appears to significantly reduce the need for urgent care and hospitalisation in people with COVID-19, according to University of Oxford researchers.

The STOIC study, led by Professor Mona Bafadhel of the University's Nuffield Department of Medicine, found that inhaled budesonide given to patients with COVID-19 within seven days of the onset of symptoms also reduced recovery time.

[The findings](#) suggest that inhaled budesonide reduced the relative risk of people requiring urgent care or hospitalisation by 90% in the 28-day study period.

Budesonide is used in the long-term management of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Professor Bafadhel, who is also a Respiratory Consultant at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH), said:

"There have been important breakthroughs in hospitalised COVID-19 patients, but equally important is treating early disease to prevent clinical deterioration and the need for urgent care and hospitalisation.

"The vaccine programmes are really exciting, but we know that these will take some time to reach everyone across the world. I am heartened that a relatively safe, widely available and well studied medicine such as an inhaled steroid could have an impact on the pressures we are experiencing during the pandemic."

Professor Bafadhel is hosting a free online talk about the STOIC Study, organised by the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre (BRC), at 2pm on Tuesday 16 March. [Sign up to attend the talk and post a question in advance.](#)

Raymond Blanc thanks John Radcliffe Hospital staff for life-saving treatment

Celebrity chef Raymond Blanc OBE has written a deeply personal and moving piece for *The Times* praising the care he received for COVID-19 at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

In the article, he names individual members of staff who made a particular difference and praises the whole team for how they looked after him.

He said: "Of course I was scared — especially when I saw the scan of my lungs — and I realised I was seriously ill. But I also knew that I was in the best hands. Professor Pavord, who looks after my lungs (I have asthma), is Professor of Respiratory Medicine at the University of Oxford. Although he didn't look after me directly, the hospital has one of the most advanced coronavirus units in the country.

"I am completely humbled by what everyone did and how kind they were while still being totally professional. I was in awe at their care, their competence and the way they passed on knowledge to each other. However busy they were, they always made time for the patients.

"I can't wait to work with my team again and to welcome our guests once lockdown is over. I want to organise a huge thank-you party at Le Manoir and Brasserie Blanc for everyone who helped me at the hospital."

Improvements to Emergency Departments in Oxford and Banbury

[Works to improve the Emergency Departments](#) at both the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and the Horton General Hospital in Banbury have been completed.

Work has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure these new facilities are available for patients.

The newly refurbished Majors area at the John Radcliffe Hospital, where patients who are seriously ill but not in a life-threatening condition are treated, includes five upgraded assessment bays and a new assessment room.

The Majors area at the Horton General Hospital has been expanded with separate areas for adults and children. Four additional patient cubicles have also been added, including a dedicated infection control bay.

Pedal power drives improved service and greener deliveries

A cycle courier service delivering medication to Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) hospital sites in

Oxford has halved delivery times of patient-specific products, such as chemotherapy and antibiotics, to the John Radcliffe and Churchill hospitals.

Around 25,000 products have been delivered since the first delivery was made at the start of August 2020, improving not only patient care but also environmental sustainability.

OUH joined forces with Baxter Healthcare, who produce cancer treatments and parenteral nutrition, to provide a more efficient way of getting key medical products from their compounding facility in Cowley to hospital sites and patients.



Local Oxford-based company [Pedal and Post](#) make the deliveries to wards, day treatment areas, and pharmacies at the JR and Churchill using cycle couriers. Goods will be delivered to the Horton General Hospital in Banbury in the future by using e-motorbikes.

Bhulesh Vadher, Chief Pharmacist at OUH, said: "The transport of chemotherapy from Baxter to our hospital sites in Oxford is no longer dependent on factors outside of the company's control, such as peak hour traffic, flow of traffic onto the hospital site and roadworks.

"That unpredictability was putting pressure on our staff to deliver chemotherapy treatments in a timely manner. The new bike courier service has taken away all that unnecessary extra pressure and has considerably reduced the delivery time. Using bikes instead of cars or vans is also better for the environment and the Oxfordshire community."

[More information is available on the OUH website.](#)

OUH patients can now view their appointment letters online

Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) has partnered with [DrDoctor](#) to give all patients the option to view their hospital appointment letters online – the new 'digital letters' scheme was launched and went live on Wednesday 3 March.

Digital letters are not only more convenient and timely for patients but also more environmentally friendly as they will reduce the number of letters being printed and posted out to patients.



David Walliker, Chief Digital and Partnerships Officer at OUH, said: "We are very excited to see this new system rolled out across our whole Trust. Aside from the convenience for our patients of being able to access their letters in digital form, there will be a significant environmental benefit, which contributes greatly to our aim to become a sustainable organisation for the future."

[More information is available on the OUH website.](#)

Remembering Dame Fiona Caldicott

Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery, the current Chair of Oxford University Hospitals (OUH), paid tribute to Dame Fiona Caldicott, his predecessor as Trust Chairman from 2009 to 2019, after she passed away on Monday 15 February.

In his message to all staff at OUH, Sir Jonathan said: "Dame Fiona's achievements and accomplishments were many and varied – for example, she was the first ever female President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the College in November 2018.

"She was previously Principal of Somerville College at the University of Oxford and Chairman of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, and she

continued to influence national health policy after stepping down from her role at OUH as the National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care.

“Dame Fiona brought a wealth of experience and expertise to her role as Chairman of our Trust. Her judgement, passion for the NHS, and commitment to our aim of providing compassionate and excellent care for patients all guided her leadership of the Board.



“At this very sad time our thoughts are with Dame Fiona's family, friends and the many former colleagues here at OUH and throughout the NHS by whom she will be greatly missed.”

Oxford Health supports Eating Disorder Awareness Week

March 1 – 7 is national Eating Disorder Awareness Week and Oxford Health has been showcasing the work it does to help affected people.



Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting people of all ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds. People with eating disorders use disordered eating behaviour as a way to cope with difficult situations or feelings.

This can include limiting the amount of food eaten, eating very large quantities of food at once, getting rid of food eaten through unhealthy means (e.g. making themselves sick, misusing laxatives, fasting, or excessive exercise), or a combination of these behaviours.

The pandemic has had a major impact on the number of people affected by eating disorders with Oxford Health seeing an increase in young people seeking treatment. Last year 474 children and young people aged under 19 started treatment for routine cases of eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorders. That was up from 346 in 2019 and the highest number since comparable records began in 2017, when 348 patients were seen.

Vikki Laakkonen, Oxford Health's Deputy Medical Director and a Medical Lead for the [CAMHS](#) Eating Disorder Service, has spoken this week to BBC radio and TV about eating disorders. Listen [here](#) from 2:54:35

Take a look at Oxford Health's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages to learn more about eating disorders and how to spot them.

National pilot raises awareness of less well-known eating disorder

A trailblazing national initiative which could help young people with an eating disorder is being developed with help from Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

The Trust works hard all year round to support people experiencing an eating disorder and also to develop new ways to help. And now its contribution to national efforts to support people with a condition known as ARFID are starting to make a difference.

Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) is a condition where someone does not eat enough food or avoids certain types of food, like food with certain colours. There are a number of health risks associated with ARFID including weight loss, nutritional deficiencies and faltering growth.



Following the completion of the pilot Oxford Health staff across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire are continuing to develop local ARFID pathways with NHS commissioners and clinical partners, including paediatricians, dieticians, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, to ensure that young people with the condition will have access to treatment. Read more [here](#).

Every mind matters

With local places of worship, recreation and community centres remaining closed, many people have lost an important source of one-to-one contact and are experiencing mental health issues as a direct result of the pandemic.

Community resilience

Rough sleeping in Oxfordshire halves during the pandemic

The number of people estimated to be sleeping rough in Oxfordshire has nearly halved in a year, thanks to extraordinary efforts by councils and their partners to house vulnerable homeless people.

In November, Oxfordshire's five city and district councils undertook the annual estimates that contribute to English rough sleeping statistics. The

Leaders at Banbury Madni Mosque have joined forces with Oxfordshire County Council to back the Public Health England's Every Mind Matters campaign, and they are encouraging their members to stay connected online, keep to a routine, and support each other during these difficult times. Read the online [news story](#) for more information.

Long COVID opera course finds a radio audience

A clinic that is run by Oxford Health and Oxford University Hospitals to help Long COVID sufferers in Oxfordshire has been featured on BBC Radio Oxford. The clinic has started referring patients to a course run by the English National Opera that is designed to help them recover from its debilitating effects. Hear more about the course from a patient and representatives from OH and OUH [here](#) (listen from 2.12.30).

councils estimated that there were 45 people experiencing rough sleeping across the county – a 46 per cent decrease from the 2019 estimate of 83 people.

While the estimates are a snapshot taken on one night, the councils believe that this reduction illustrates their success in meeting a government directive to get 'everyone in' at the outbreak of the pandemic.

Economy

Restart Grants for businesses

In the Budget on Wednesday, the Chancellor announced that pubs, restaurants, shops and other businesses hit hardest by the COVID pandemic will be able to access a £5 billion grant scheme to help them reopen as lockdown is eased.

Restart Grants, worth up to £6,000 per premises, will help non-essential retailers reopen and trade safely. Hospitality, hotels, gyms, as well as personal care and leisure firms, will also be eligible for up to

£18,000 per premises as they are due to open later under the plans for easing lockdown.



Local authorities will be given responsibility for distributing the grants, together with an additional £425 million of discretionary grant funding to distribute to businesses.

Revitalising vacant shops

On behalf of all Oxfordshire Districts, the City Council has taken a lead and has teamed up with social enterprise Makespace to launch a £1.9m revitalisation of vacant shops across Oxfordshire and help the city recover from COVID-19 during 2021.

The project – called ‘Meanwhile in Oxfordshire...’ – will see vacant retail units in high streets across the county transformed into independent shops, cultural venues, creative studios and co-working spaces. The aim is to provide affordable premises to accommodate more than 100 organisations, which will create or secure at least 300 jobs across the county.

The city council worked with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) to make it happen, with OxLEP securing £1.9m from the government’s Getting Building Fund.

Business Investment Fund

OxLEP has launched a new capital investment fund this week, created to support Oxfordshire’s

innovative business community to move into an effective renewal phase following the COVID-19 pandemic and potential effects of Brexit.

The £2.1m capital fund aims to support scalable businesses from across the county through a variety of matched grants, ranging from £25,000 through to £100,000 per business.

Through funding, eligible Oxfordshire businesses will deliver outcomes for the county’s economy through several key areas including acceleration of investment plans, rebuilding operations and developing market opportunities, harnessing opportunities for technology adoption and innovation, as well as supporting a transition to net-zero.

Funding for this scheme was secured via the government’s Getting Building Fund, which aims to accelerate economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expressions of interest for the fund must be received by 5pm on Friday 19 March. Further details are at <http://www.oxlepbusiness.co.uk/business-support/business-investment-fund>

Place, Transport, Infrastructure

New cycling and walking plan to start for Banbury

Officers at Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council are starting work on a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Banbury. The work will be jointly funded and managed by both councils.

The goal of the LCWIP will be to identify infrastructure improvements needed to enable people to cycle and walk more within the town and from local villages. It also aims to help win funding for better cycling and walking infrastructure.

Work is currently being implemented on LCWIPs for Bicester and Witney – the experience of this work will inform plans for Banbury. Wider community engagement will follow in the late spring and summer.

Low traffic neighbourhoods in Cowley area

Residents in Oxford’s Temple Cowley, Church Cowley and Florence Park areas will soon see the implementation of a series of experimental measures to reduce traffic and make walking and cycling safer.



A low traffic neighbourhood is an area where motor traffic is prevented from taking short cuts through a residential area by traffic blocks. This creates quieter streets where residents can feel safer and

more comfortable when making local journeys by bus, bike or on foot.

New rail bridge to support active travel in Bicester

In a project led by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with Cherwell District Council, residents of Bicester will soon benefit from a new bridge being installed this Easter.



The work is part of the first phase of the A4095 road realignment project, which will see two structures built to enable access both over (a new bridge) and under the railway (pedestrian underpass), connecting two sides of a new area of housing in north-west Bicester.

Webinar: Leading the Energy Revolution

The Oxford to Cambridge Arc is hosting a webinar on the energy revolution on Tuesday 23 March at 10am.

The online event will showcase energy innovations from across the Arc as well as highlighting challenges and opportunities that the energy revolution presents to the area. The aim of the webinar is to share knowledge about innovations and approaches that can be scaled-up across the Arc to support ambitious levels of growth without costing the earth.

Panellists will include Emma Southwell-Sander from EnergyTec Cluster, Harwell; Professor Phil Hart, Director Energy and Power at Cranfield University; and Dr Andy Gilchrist from The Energy Systems Accelerator (TESA) at Oxford University.

Registration is via [Eventbrite](#):



And finally...

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