Oxfordshire
NHS & Local Authorities
Stakeholder Briefing

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

In the seven days up to Friday 16 October, there has been a total of 580 confirmed cases in Oxfordshire, which is equivalent to a weekly rate of 83.9 per 100,000 residents. While the data on new cases has not sharply increased over the past week, what we are now starting to see is wider community transmission across all age groups. The evidence shows that the virus is no longer confined to younger people in urban areas, but is spreading to older and more vulnerable age groups. Hospital admissions have begun to increase as a result. This spread is very concerning and is showing across all districts.

In advance of half term next week, and the inevitable increase in households mixing, Director of Public Health Ansaf Azhar and the Leaders of all six Oxfordshire local authorities requested that the county move from the 'medium' COVID-19 alert level that we are currently in to a 'high' alert level. This move, which would mean that residents could not socialise with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, was designed as a prevention measure to try to minimise transmission and slow our trajectory of spread. We have now received confirmation that Oxfordshire will remain in 'medium' for this week, but the situation will be reviewed again next week.

With half term and events such as Halloween, Bonfire Night and Diwali coming up, we are urging residents to act responsibly to help keep their families and communities safe. We know that the majority of transmissions occur when different households mix, so we are encouraging people to limit their social interactions wherever possible. Further information is at **https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-close-to-high-covid-19-alert-level**.

COVID-19 Secure team

To help ensure Government safety rules are being applied, a new COVID-19 Secure team is now operating across Oxfordshire.

Funded by Oxfordshire County Council's NHS Test and Trace grant, and delivered jointly across all Oxfordshire councils, the team's aim is to work with and support businesses to help them comply with the rules and guidance that applies to them and to ensure good infection control measures are in places which the public access. More information is in this **news story**.

Launch of local COVID-19 contact tracing system

A new COVID-19 contact tracing system for Oxfordshire launched last week, designed to provide another layer of support to help control the virus. Collectively, Oxfordshire's six councils will work to contact people who the NHS test and trace national system is unable to reach. People contacted will be advised to isolate, talked through how to access local support when isolating and asked about details of their close contacts so these can be followed up by the national team. The service will run seven days a week, with calls coming from the council using a local (01865) phone number. Text messages will also be sent to people with mobile phones telling them to expect a call. It is important to recognise that high case numbers in Oxfordshire impact the workload of the tracing team; as such resourcing will be reviewed across Councils on a regular basis.

Communications campaign

Communications is a key aspect of our local response to COVID-19, and our partnership approach involves colleagues from across health, local authorities, Thames Valley Police and the universities.

With the rise in COVID-19 levels across the county, we have significantly increased our activity and are adjusting our approach with every new set of information. This includes trialling new social media channels such as Tiktok and Snapchat to reach youth audiences, and carefully selecting outdoor advertising sites where they will have the most impact. We are also partnering with local influencers such as Oxford United football club to encourage the use of face coverings by the 18-24 age group. You can watch one of our videos featuring Oxford United coaches **here**.

An extension of this campaign is also targeting children (aged 12-17) to encourage the use of face coverings on school transport.

Currently our #StopTheSpread campaign is focusing on:
- Uptake of the NHS COVID-19 app
- The key symptoms of COVID-19 and when to get tested
- Encouraging the use of face coverings among young people
- Behaviour change in light of rising cases across Oxfordshire – both general messaging and targeted messaging aimed at 18 to 24-year-olds

We are also working closely with **local businesses**. A communications toolkit and social media toolkit has been shared with businesses, containing messaging, graphics, and newsletter copy; and a range of assets – including graphics and posters – can be downloaded from OxLEP's website: **www.oxfordshirelep.com/local-authority-support**.

Oxfordshire's Director of Public Health, Ansaf Azhar, has written to businesses across the county asking for their continued support in helping suppress the spread of coronavirus and drawing their attention to new Government guidance and legislation around control measures.

Working with residents of HMOs
Oxford City Council has written to tenants of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) with advice on

suppressing the spread of coronavirus. HMOs are homes rented out to three or more people who are not from the same family and who share facilities, and they present particular difficulties in preventing the spread of coronavirus.

The council has written to tenants in 3,268 shared houses to **provide advice** to help keep them safe and comply with the law. For example, the rules mean that if an HMO has six or more residents, then no visitors are allowed unless there are fewer than six people actually in the property. If someone living in an HMO has symptoms of the virus then all residents must self-isolate for 14 days or until the symptomatic person tests negative.

Encouraging COVID-19-secure events
Advice has been issued by Oxfordshire's local authorities to help upcoming events take place in a safe and COVID-19-secure way. A COVID-19 checklist has been sent to town and parish councils to help event organisers identify any elements of an event that may need to be adapted or any issues that need to be addressed.

Oxford City Council is urging residents to **do Halloween differently this year** and plan low-risk activities to protect their friends and neighbours; while Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service has provided **guidance and tips** for residents holding their own fireworks displays.

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

COVID-19 intensive care survival rates highlighted
The *Oxford Mail* recently ran a front page story about COVID-19 ICU survival rates at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) which reported that the Trust's death rate of 23% is significantly lower than at other NHS trusts – this means that 77% of COVID-19 patients admitted to an intensive care unit at OUH survived.

Professor Meghana Pandit, Chief Medical Officer at OUH, says: "Many lives have been saved due to the resilience, determination, and expertise of OUH staff. I am so very proud of this group of amazingly strong, caring people who have looked after our patients during an exceptionally difficult time."

The full story can be read on the Oxford Mail website.

Protective screens made 'in-house' by OUH team to keep patients, visitors and staff safe
Normally the OUH Orthotics team of 15 staff based at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (NOC) in Oxford manufacture custom-made orthotic devices for patients with varying health conditions, including Stroke, Cerebral Palsy and Motor Neurone Disease.

But during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic they adapted and expanded their skills to make more than 100 protective screens to help keep patients, visitors, and staff safe. Designed from scratch, the screens are cut and manufactured in the Orthotics workshop before being assembled and fixed or delivered to where they are needed.

A video of a screen being made can be watched on our YouTube channel.

OUH partnership with Apple empowers our patients
The OUH is now able to offer patients a simple and secure way to access medical data through their smartphone. OUH patients can now choose to access Health Records on iPhone, which brings together hospitals, clinics and the existing Apple Health app to make it easy for patients to see their available medical data from multiple providers whenever they choose.

OUH patients who have been registered with the Trust's "Health for Me" patient portal will be able to access Health Records on iPhone. Currently registration on the patient portal is being rolled out by clinical speciality, starting with Diabetes and Renal, before being rolled out Trust-wide.

David Walliker, Chief Digital and Partnerships Officer at OUH, says: "Health Records on iPhone puts our patients at the centre of their care. As a Digital Health Exemplar organisation in the NHS, we are committed to the potential for technology to empower patients to take control of their healthcare."

World Mental Health Day 10 October 2020 – This year's World Mental Health Day was arguably the most important so far and Oxford Health ensured that staff had access to a wealth of information, signposts and advice through a specially created section on the intranet.
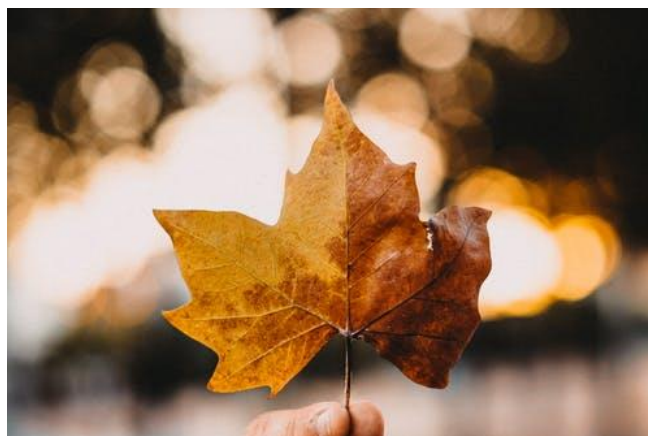
Oxford Health's Professor Keith Hawton has been awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020 for services to Suicide Prevention. Prof. Hawton is a Consultant Psychiatrist at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Professor of

Psychiatry at the University of Oxford. Among a lifetime of achievements Profession Hawton's work led to changes to the types and volumes of painkillers available to buy over-the-counter. Read more **here**.

On World Mental Health Day Oxford Health promoted the **Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership (OMHP)** and its complete recovery package which aims to support people at all stages of their journey – including housing support when they need it. Read more **here**. An **appeal was also issued** to urge women to seek mental health support during coronavirus as a report revealed that they are more likely to be struggling in the pandemic. The South Oxfordshire CAMHS team, who work with children and young people, created a special video which can be found **here**.

Black History Month – a time to celebrate and change
Black History Month gets underway in a year that has in part been shaped by the Black Lives Matter movement and how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

Oxford Health is actively engaged again this year with 30 action packed days of events, training, case studies, personal staff stories and talks to support inclusivity.

Lesley Dewhurst, chair of Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, which includes Oxford Health, shares the partnership's commitment to race equality in **a video posted at the start of the month**.

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff Network at OUH has been created to promote a culture of inclusion and diversity at OUH – their new **Twitter** feed was launched on 1 October to mark the start of Black History Month.

The Trust has also been marking Black History Month with some **specially-recorded videos from three members of our staff, Ariel Lanada, Lindley Nevers and Reema D'Souza, which you can view on Twitter**.

The Museum of Oxford has been celebrating Black History Month with a series of online events. These include a series of interviews with celebrated **Oxford grime artist Leonidas**, who talks about his upbringing in Blackbird Leys, his work with Oxford City Council's Youth Ambition team and reflections on what Black History Month means to him; and an online version of the *Windrush Years – Next Generations* exhibition, which was developed in partnership with the **Afrikan and Caribbean Kultural Heritage Initiative (ACKHI)** and the Ber-Bedo Kelo Lonyo United Women's Organisation (BKLUWO) group. See the **Museum of Oxford's website** for further information.

Helping patients to keep in touch with friends and family
In March, the OUH took immediate action to limit visiting to all our hospitals to keep its hospitals to keep patients and staff safe during the pandemic. No visitors were allowed except birth partners, one parent for children, one loved one for patients at the end of their life, and if someone was required to make decisions for patients with learning disabilities, for example.

In June, **OUH made the decision to relax visiting restrictions and introduced the 'Rule of One'** – one visitor, per inpatient, for one hour, once a day. This is kept under constant review and **there are some limited exceptions, for example in Maternity – full details are on our website.**

Patient and staff safety is absolutely paramount and means that some visiting restrictions are still in place – including in outpatient departments, Emergency Departments, and Emergency Assessment Units, where patients should attend on their own unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The OUH has never lost sight of the value of visitors to our patients. The Trust appreciates that limiting visiting can be difficult and lonely for patients which is why the Trust has worked hard to bridge that gap and offer alternatives, whether that be through technology or a good old-fashioned letter:

- Friends and family can still call OUH wards which have mobile phones which can be taken to the bedside
- There are also have some tablet devices which are securely preloaded so patients can video call friends and family
- The Trusts 'Keep in touch' service means friends and family can send messages and photos to their loved ones by emailing **keepintouch@ouh.nhs.uk** – staff print them out and deliver them to patients on the wards

Oxford Health is now operating a visiting system which allows one visitor for one hour for each patient with all in-person sessions having to be pre-booked. Strict COVID-19 controls are in place.

There are other new ways in which Oxford Health is helping to keep people connected.

We are now able to provide patients with an iPad so they can make or receive video calls and patients can keep in contact with friends, family and carers via letters delivered to bedsides and even read out. Find out more **here**.

And, of course, all Oxford Health wards have a patient phone which friends and family of patients can call. More information on visiting, including booking arrangements, can be found **here.**

OUH Annual Public Meeting video – our COVID-19 patient and staff stories
The OUH Annual Public Meeting was held online on 28 September. More than 200 people 'virtually' attended the meeting live and a further 600 people have watched the **recording** of the meeting on the OUH YouTube channel.

The meeting included a **moving video summary of the last year at the Trust** which includes patient and staff stories about the #OneTeamOneOUH response to COVID-19.

Good news for parents
The Health Visitor service at Oxford Health is back up to full strength after half of the workforce was redeployed earlier in the year to help respond to the impact of COVID-19. The service, which has more than 30 teams operating across Oxfordshire, employs health visitors who are all registered nurses or midwives and their wider skill mix team.

They work with parents of new babies and children, offering support and evidence-based advice from before the birth to when the child starts school at five years. The team helps with specific issues that affect parents and/or their children's health, from breastfeeding through to development concerns. Angela Smith, Professional and Clinical Lead Health Visiting Service, was interviewed recently on Radio Oxford to update listeners.

Flu jabs for schools
Oxford Health's school nurses are on a mission: to vaccinate more than 68,000 children in Oxfordshire against the flu in just 10 weeks. A team of 35 immunisers will be visiting 358 schools ensuring that as many children from reception classes through to Year 7 are protected from the virus – and importantly don't become super-spreaders.

The school nursing team will also be reaching out to parents of home schooled youngsters, numbers of whom have rocketed since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. And, aside from primary and secondary schools, the team will be protecting the health of youngsters in special schools. Find out more **here**.

In addition to vaccinations for school children, Oxford Health has also begun a programme that will see all staff – starting with those providing frontline services – being offered immunisation.

Stroke team tells their innovative tale on YouTube
Oxford Health's Oxfordshire Stroke Rehabilitation Unit (OSRU), based at Abingdon Community Hospital, has launched a video and telephone based follow-on service to support discharged patients coping with life back at home during the pandemic. The new service has helped more than 80 patients so far. You can see their work in action at **https://bit.ly/3jjNXLB** The OSRU story has been put forward as one of Oxford Health's contenders in the 2020 Parliamentary Awards.

Help Us Help You
The national NHS campaign, Help Us Help You is running nationally over winter to encourage people to access healthcare services with the main focus on cancer. The first phase will focus on general cancer symptoms and is running from now until November; it will then change to abdominal cancer symptoms until January with then a focus in the new year on lung cancer.

The Oxfordshire system will be supporting this campaign through social media and the media,

highlighting local case studies and providing reassurance to people that it is safe to access healthcare services in the county.

Winter
Oxfordshire's winter plan was launched on Monday 5 October in a system-wide panel interview on BBC Radio Oxford, accompanied by a press release and social media. **BBC Sounds from 3hr 7m onwards**.

NHS teams also took part in a virtual stand at Oxford Brookes and Oxford University Freshers' Fairs. The NHS stand at Oxford Brookes was the 7th most popular page in first four hours.

The public flu campaign launched on social media to target vulnerable groups, including those with long term conditions and there has been a press release published about school flu vaccinations and to offer reassurance to parents of 2 and 3 year olds. The school immunisation team leader was on BBC Radio Oxford (1/10). Listen **here** at the 2:02:12 point.

The staff flu campaign has been launched across the system with media coverage in the local papers. The supply of the flu vaccine has caused some availability issues with pharmacies but Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are working to ensure that frontline staff (especially care home and social care staff) are aware they can get their vaccine from GPs.

OCCG are currently working with community leaders to produce videos in different languages to encourage communities to get their flu vaccine and also offer reassurance to those who might feel concerned about visiting a GP practice or pharmacy.

Mental health highlighted as part of Oxfordshire System Winter plan

Pete McGrane, Clinical Director at Oxford Health, joined partners from the Oxfordshire system on BBC Radio Oxfordshire to tell listeners how local NHS organisations will deliver responsive and joined-up services throughout the season. He said: "There is a direct link between our physical and mental health. We know that this year has had a significant impact on people's physical and mental wellbeing, and people may continue to feel the impact of this as we move into winter."

Oxford Health's 24-7 support line is available to anyone needing advice or support. Adults should call: 0800 783 0119 or 01865 904 997. Children and young people can contact: 0800 783 0121 or 01865 904 998

GP practices

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, GP practices across England have significantly changed the way they assess and care for patients.

From the outset, and almost overnight, practices introduced total telephone triage, expanded their use of telephone, video and online consultations and adopted strict infection control measures to ensure the safety of those patients who needed to be seen face-to-face and practice staff.

Demand for GP appointments reduced during the lockdown period, but since restrictions were lifted numbers are back to pre-COVID-19 levels. Many GP practices are continuing to offer more digital appointments, and seeing patients face-to-face when it is clinically appropriate.

These new ways of working have been welcomed on both sides of the reception desk. However, there is anecdotal evidence that patients are still concerned by the perceived risks of attending a GP appointment at their practice, the difficulties of contacting their practices by phone and worries about a lack of access to the appropriate technology.

The clinical commissioning groups across Buckinghamshire, Berkshire West and Oxfordshire are working together on a communications campaign to address these concerns, and clarify what patients can expect from primary care, in the short term and into the future.

We are working with our local Healthwatch partners to understand people's current experiences so we can target communications to the groups who need them most, particularly among BAME communities, digitally excluded patients in deprived areas and older people.

Wallingford First Aid Unit

NHS England issued guidance in 2019 to address the variation in community-based urgent care services which currently go under different names, including: walk-in centres, minor injury units, urgent care centres etc.

In future, all urgent care services will be designated as:

- Emergency Departments in acute hospitals

or

- Urgent Treatment Centres with a standard specification describing the service provided.
- All other same day access urgent care services are expected to be integrated into primary care as an alternative community service.

In some parts of England, this has resulted in services closing.

OCCG is currently planning how to ensure the current community-based minor injury units (MIUs) and first aid units (FAUs) can continue to provide valued services to local populations, while being consistent with the national guidance.

The Wallingford First Aid Unit is based in Wallingford Community Hospital and has been run by Oxford Health. It has been closed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when staff were redeployed to other parts of the health service. Pre-COVID-19, the FAU saw around 140 attendances a month and serves both the local population (approx 7,995) and out of area visitors. Pre-COVID-19, the unit's opening times corresponded to that of the Wallingford Medical Practice, which is located in an adjacent building and is open from 8am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday.

OCCG is now in the final stages of incorporating the FAU activity into the Wallingford GP premises, with practice staff providing the service from Monday 2 November 2020. Patients will continue to access the service via an appointment through NHS 111 or through the GP practice, but are not required to be registered at the practice (although around 50% of those attending the FAU are). Out of area visitors will be able to continue use the service .Some walk-in visits will be possible but under strict COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Giving patients a booked appointment time will bring benefits for patients and the service. For example, the staff will be able to access more information about their patients to support their care and a wider range of medical support will also be available to them.

Although the proposed move of the service is not expected to cause any negative impact on patients, OCCG and the Wallingford Medical Practice are currently engaging with the community and key stakeholders to explain the plans and understand any concerns they may have.

Economy

Oxford to Cambridge Arc: a global asset and national investment priority
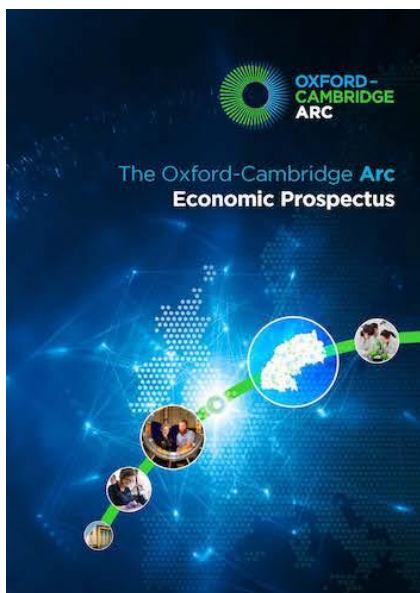
The Oxford to Cambridge Arc, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer described as a "key economic priority", has unveiled its bold vision in a prospectus submitted to Government. The Arc's ambition is to unlock the potential of its assets to create a world-leading innovation and "green" economy, where sustainable growth supports a thriving environment and improved natural world that brings benefits for us all.

The prospectus asks for commitment from Government to long-term investment in the area, enabling the Arc to fulfil its potential to deliver transformational economic growth that will benefit the whole of the UK, whilst improving the diversity and health of the environment and natural world around us. That investment will be crucial to tackle connectivity and congestion constraints, in a sustainable way, and to provide the skills that industry requires to enable the Arc to pursue its role as a leading global innovation region. Further information is available **here**.

Place, Transport, Infrastructure

Addressing the climate emergency
This month Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council launched their climate action frameworks, which set out how the organisations will become carbon neutral by 2030 and support the county as a whole to become zero-carbon by 2050.

The action plans describe how the councils will continue to demonstrate leadership in this field, building on initiatives like Local Energy Oxford, which is testing the energy networks of the future, or Community Action Groups, the largest network of community-led sustainability groups in the UK. The plans also identify opportunities for the councils to embrace low-carbon innovations, in areas from fleets and highways to buildings and services.

For example, Oxfordshire County Council is investing £38m over a four-year period to retrofit the county's street lighting with highly efficient, environmentally friendly LED lights. Currently, the county's street lights account for around 7,596 tonnes of CO_2 every year – representing nearly 35% of the council's total emissions. The move will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being produced by 70% and could lead to savings of more than £75m over the next 20 years.

Children, Education, Families

Virtual School launches new opportunities for county's children in care
Children in care in the county are being given new opportunities for cultural and academic development, made possible by virtual classroom learning. Oxfordshire Virtual School, run by the county council, has teamed up with Oxford University to develop a partnership of engagement and outreach for children in care. Initiatives include 'university sampling', where one day each term Magdalen College invites 9 to 12 years olds to connect with experts about their research and learning. The Virtual School will also provide training for teachers. Trauma awareness tutorials will enhance their knowledge, and show we value their work and commitment to support children in care. More information is in this **news story**.

Community Resilience

Support for those self-isolating

With government guidance on self-isolating now a legal requirement, Oxfordshire's local authorities are reminding residents that support is there for them if they need it. As of 28 September, anyone testing positive for coronavirus is required by law to self-isolate for 14 days to protect others from catching the virus. Practical help is available to support residents through this two-week period, from collecting shopping and prescriptions to claiming financial support for those most in need.

- Volunteers are ready to help with shopping and prescriptions so that people don't need to leave home.
- There are voluntary organisations across the county that offer food parcels for those in hardship to supplement their weekly groceries

- For those on the lowest incomes, the government is providing a £500 grant, which is being administered by the district councils

Further information is available on the councils' websites.

New home for Chippy Larder

A community organisation which helps prevent food from going to waste has found a new home, thanks to West Oxfordshire District Council. The council granted a temporary licence for the Chippy Larder to set up in Chipping Norton Guildhall.

The Larder works with Didcot-based SOFEA, which sources hundreds of tonnes of food from supermarkets and local farms that is no longer on sale and redistributes it to community organisations. It is then re-sold to prevent waste as well as helping those in need.

The Larder was originally set up in Chipping Norton Leisure Centre in March and was distributing free food during lockdown with 644 local households benefiting. Now items are typically charged at 35p each, with large quantities of bread and vegetables available as well as household items and toiletries. Local farms also make donations of surplus stock.

Organisational Recovery

New office base for South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils
South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils have announced that Didcot will be the home of their new offices in a move that will help to secure a more sustainable future for the councils, both economically and environmentally. It is too early to give a firm date for opening the new offices, but the district councils are working towards moving into a new building that is proposed for the Didcot Gateway site, opposite Didcot Parkway Station, during Spring 2023.

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.