

**SUNDERLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**17 March 2023**

**COVID-19 AND FLU IN SUNDERLAND – UPDATE**

**Report of the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities**

**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update on the Covid-19 and flu situation in Sunderland.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 This is a summary of the outturn positions for the autumn/winter Covid-19 and flu campaigns and current Covid-19 prevalence data. This includes a summary of the current position regarding estimated prevalence and actions being taken to combat the pandemic locally.

**3.0 Current Position**

- 3.1 The current guidance on Covid-19 is focused on living safely with respiratory infections, including Covid-19. The government has removed all domestic restrictions in England. Care home testing guidance states that asymptomatic testing is not routinely encouraged for staff and residents at this particular time. Some staff without Covid-19 symptoms may be asked to undertake testing as part of rapid response testing for care homes or as part of outbreak testing in care homes. Guidance for those working in the NHS and NHS commissioned services is that routine asymptomatic testing for patient-facing healthcare staff should only continue where local healthcare organisations have sought appropriate advice to undertake this testing as part of broader infection prevention and control measures, for example to asymptotically test staff who may be in close contact with patients who are at higher risk of serious illness from Covid-19. Appropriate advice should be sought from Medical Directors, Nursing Directors or Infection Prevention and Control teams.
- 3.2 It was agreed by the Board in July 2022 that a brief 'for information' report with key data would be brought to future meetings. If there are significant changes then a more in-depth paper will be brought to the Board in future.
- 3.3 The autumn Covid-19 booster campaign ended on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Planning is due to commence shortly for the spring booster. This is expected to be available in care homes from 3<sup>rd</sup> April and wider from 17<sup>th</sup> April. Systems, including NHS colleagues, are being asked to plan to vaccinate the groups who were eligible last spring. This will include adults aged 75 years and over, residents in a care home for older adults, and individuals aged 5 years and over who are immunosuppressed as defined in the Green Book. NHS colleagues are awaiting publication of planning documents for the spring

booster programme and work is continuing with community hubs to gather further insights regarding uptake of the vaccination offer, which will help to inform delivery of the spring booster programme. Public health advice on the council website is kept under review.

- 3.4 At the time of writing (3<sup>rd</sup> March), the latest available ONS weekly estimated prevalence of Covid-19 is for the week ending 21<sup>st</sup> February. The prevalence has risen to 1 in 30 in the North East and the national figure is 1 in 45.
- 3.5 Confirmed specimens show that the Omicron sub-lineages (predominantly CH1.1) are the most common variants (at 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023).
- 3.6 The autumn/winter Covid-19 vaccination outturn position for key Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) groups is shown below:

JCVI Group	Sunderland (% uptake)	North East and North Cumbria (% uptake)
Care home residents	76	86.1
Frontline Healthcare workers	43.9	50.1
Social care workers	39.1	43.2
Aged 80 +	82.6	87.6
Aged 75-79	83.2	87.5
Aged 70-74	82.1	85.8
Aged 65-69	76.3	80.5
Adults at risk	41.8	45.5
Children at risk (12-15)	20.5	17
12-17 household contacts of immunosuppressed	6.4	6.1
Children at risk (5-11)	34.7	29.5
Aged 60-64	59.1	66.5
Aged 55-59	47.7	54.6
Aged 50-54	38.1	43.9

- 3.7 Modelling data from UCL suggests the next Covid-19 peak is anticipated in late March 2023. Population immunity should remain at 95%, which means Covid-19 may continue to be endemic, however with seasonal fluctuations.
- 3.8 The outturn position from Primary Care Network flu reporting data as at 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023 shows how uptake of the flu campaign in Sunderland compared to the North East and North Cumbria (NENC). Data available for key cohort groups shows that:
- In Sunderland 79.9% of those aged 65 and over have received a flu vaccination this autumn/winter compared to 81.6% for NENC.
  - Sunderland has the joint lowest uptake of flu vaccination amongst health and social care workers in the region at 46.9% compared to 51.5% for NENC.
  - 81.9% of care home residents in Sunderland received a flu vaccination, which was the same as the average figure for NENC.

- 3.9 At the Health Protection Board meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January it was agreed that a 'task and finish group' would be convened to focus on vaccine uptake in healthcare workers and support planning for the next winter vaccination programme.
- 3.10 The North East and North Cumbria ICB has provided funding to support improvement in healthcare inequalities in vaccination programmes, including an allocation of funding for Local Authorities, which equates to £32,193 in Sunderland. Part of this funding will be used to undertake behavioural insights with health and social care workers, for the purpose of increasing vaccine uptake in the next winter vaccination programme.

#### **4.0 Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to receive the update on the Covid-19 and flu situation in Sunderland.

