

COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan

Working with Town & Parish Councils

Introduction

Alongside all upper tier authorities, Devon County Council has a COVID-19 [Local Outbreak Management Plan](#).

This has been co-produced with partners including Devon County Council, your local District Council, Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) and Devon Communities Together (DCT) and is a blueprint for managing coronavirus situations in Devon to protect residents, communities and businesses and support the most vulnerable.

It sets out measures to prevent an outbreak as well as action to respond to cases in various settings and contain the community spread of coronavirus.

Town and Parish Councils have a key role to play. This can be from simply sharing information to reassure residents and help them to do the right things to prevent community spread, through to encouraging local adherence to public health advice and guidance or even helping to organise an effective community response to protect and support the most vulnerable in the event of an outbreak.

How our early warning system works

Public Health Devon are looking at all the data from the national NHS Test and Trace system alongside local intelligence and information direct from Public Health England (PHE) on a daily basis.

This means we will get an early warning of any emerging situations in Devon.

This latest data is also published daily at www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/coronavirus-data/

What is an outbreak?

There are many scenarios to consider from a single isolated case in a single place or setting (such as a school, university or factory) to high and rising numbers of cases within a wider community area.

An outbreak is generally defined as two or more cases connected in time to a specific place such as a care home, school, factory or workplace.

What happens if there is an outbreak?

Information about all cases and potential situations in Devon is quickly risk-assessed and passed to the Devon COVID-19 Tactical Management Group (TMG) for review alongside any other local intelligence we may have.

Any potentially serious situations are referred to the multi-agency Devon and Torbay Health Protection Board who are responsible for co-ordinating local resources to ensure a swift response. The Health Protection Board is chaired by the Devon Director of Public Health.

If an emerging situation involving multiple cases is identified anywhere in Devon, then actions will be agreed between the Local Health Protection Team (PHE) and Devon TMG. The precise action taken will depend upon the scale and complexity of the situation and the setting. It is likely that if an outbreak is detected, an Outbreak Control Team is set up to identify and agree early intervention measures to stop the spread before it escalates further into the community. A Town or Parish Council may be asked to join an Outbreak Control Team or a subsequent 'Cell' which would be set up to respond to a particular challenge that the Outbreak Control Team may feel is outside its capacity

The Devon Outbreak Management Plan sets out a toolkit of infection control measures including advising on hygiene practices, implementing public health measures, providing focused testing right through to localised restrictions and lockdown measures (in conjunction with Public Health England).

Information and Communication

We recognise that good and timely communication is key to helping individuals and communities to do the right thing, and to ensure that an effective community response can be mobilised rapidly when needed.

We are committed to making sure we are as transparent as possible and to making sure everyone has all the information they need at the right time.

The Devon County Council coronavirus web pages www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon are a key resource. These pages are a single point for live public health data about Devon along with all the latest advice and guidance for members of the public and local businesses.

- This website will also be used to provide emergency information about any specific local outbreak, urgent changes in guidance and advice or details about any potential local restrictions. In High Risk scenarios, the Tactical Management Group will notify relevant contacts at District Councils. If this scenario demonstrates that there is evidence of community spread in a Town or Parish area, this Council will be notified if additional support or action is required. Where necessary, contact will be made with the Clerk, if this is not possible please ensure that emergency contact details on your

town or parish website are up to date and indicate an emergency planning lead if you have one.

A regular update is provided via the [Connect Me Coronavirus bulletin](#) which contains all the latest news and advice about our Covid-19 response. If you do not currently receive this bulletin, [sign up here](#).

Oversight of the Devon's plans and responsibility for ensuring effective public [engagement](#) and communication lies with the Team Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board. This Board is made up of a wide range of community representatives and public agencies including DALC and DCT and is chaired by Councillor John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council.

Board meetings are open to the public and details of all meetings are [online](#).

What is the role of your District Council?

The Council has helpful information on our website at <https://southhams.gov.uk/6714> .

We also have a dedicated helpline number which is 01803 861297.

We want to support our Communities with help if they are facing financial hardship or need advice on the track and trace payments and we can support our most vulnerable with priority food delivery slots. We are also continuing to deliver our core services and are ready to assist with homelessness and rough sleepers and housing benefit queries.

Our Elected Members worked in Community cluster groups, which many Towns & Parishes were also involved in. These groups will recommence more regular meetings when and if required as part of our Community response.

What is the role of your Council?

All Councils have a responsibility to co-operate and the role your Council could play in the event of any local outbreak will vary depending on a range of factors. During the initial COVID-19 lockdown, we saw Town and Parish Council leading on a range of responses locally, while others - often for reasons of capacity or due to the wider response - reasonably took little action.

As a Council you may want to consider the following:

What can we do now?

- Have a look at the [Local Outbreak Management Plan](#) to understand how government, local authorities and partners will consider information and make decisions around local outbreaks
- Subscribe to the [Connect Me Coronavirus bulletin](#) and share it with others on your local Facebook group or via email

- Follow the latest guidance and information regarding the spread of infections and the implementation of restrictions locally www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon
- Demonstrate local leadership by following government guidance and encouraging others to follow it too
- Supporting and sharing messages to help local people follow current Government advice e.g. Hands, Face, Space and the Rule of Six. If you have social media channels, you could share messages from Devon County Council, the NHS or Public Health England.
- Where appropriate, ensure Council buildings and facilities follow [Government guidance](#)
- Provide signs and support to protect shoppers and visitors using local streets and facilities

Further Preparation to consider?

Having a clear and up-to-date emergency plan in place in advance is probably the most useful preparation, though you may also want to consider:

- Local vulnerable people and communities who may be particularly impacted during an outbreak. Do you have a local plan or arrangements that would support individuals in need?
- Local groups and organisations who are able to support your community in the event of an outbreak. Do your Council and local residents know about these organisations and how to access them? Are the existing arrangements sustainable?
- Lockdowns and restrictions on other areas and how these are impacting local communities
- Is your Council developing its own arrangements and co-ordination? Have you discussed these arrangements with local partners? Are these published on a community site such as [Pinpoint](#)? Will you need to source additional funding or volunteers?

What can your Council do to prepare?

As already mentioned, the Devon County Council coronavirus web pages www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon are a key resource and regularly updated. These pages are a single point of information for public health data about Devon along with all the latest advice and guidance for members of the public and local businesses.

DALC will continue to provide advice on the application of government guidance and regulations which impact local council activities and operations, via newsletters and on demand. Phone lines are open Mon – Thu, 9am – 2pm, or email enquiries@devonalc.org.uk. A wealth of information can also be found on their website www.devonalc.org.uk or the NALC website www.nalc.gov.uk

In the event of an outbreak or lockdown where can your Council get support and advice?

The District Council helpline will be the key point of contact for local residents needing urgent support.

You can [view a full list of the community support groups](#) that we are aware of on the Pinpoint pages. To add a local group that is missing, please [create a listing on Pinpoint](#).

We would also advise getting in touch with your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) who can support you and are coordinating activity. If you are in Exeter, visit the [Exeter Community Wellbeing website](#) and for the rest of Devon find contact details on the [Devon Voluntary Action \(DeVA\) website](#).

DALC will alert parish and towns councils to any new guidance or measures that require an immediate change in a council's operations or activities. This information will arrive via a newsletter.

There is a COVID-19 recovery and local outbreak helpline for town and parish councils and community buildings on 0808 1963390. You can call to get the latest national and ACRE COVID-19 guidance and for specific support around applying these regulations locally.

The [Devon Communities COVID-19 website](#) contains resources, information, guidance, and case studies.

Focus groups and sessions to support your understanding and planning around this document will be arranged. These will be advertised in the DCT COVID-19 bulletins – to sign up to these bulletins email info@devoncommunities.org.uk with 'Covid19 bulletin sign up' and your name.

Devon County Council launched the COVID-19 Prompt Action Fund to provide flexible resources to organisations working with communities who are disproportionately impacted by coronavirus, and the social and economic consequences of this outbreak. While the fund is currently paused, this is under constant review and in the event of outbreaks this will be re-introduced.

There are two separate grants available through the Fund; one of less than £500 and one of between £500 and £5,000. The large grants are paid in two stages, 90% on successful application and electronic receipt of a signed grant agreement and 10% on completion of a project evaluation.

There are likely to be additional funding opportunities made available and these will be published in due course.

