

Here's Craig Blundred, Hartlepool's Director of Public Health, to introduce his report.



Schools

During 2020, schools were required overnight to become experts in Covid-19 response - cleaning, contact tracing and managing pupil, parent and staff anxieties at a time when national guidance and recommendations changed frequently as more knowledge was acquired about Covid infection and its variants.

As a response to the pandemic, a new service was developed by Hartlepool's Public Health team to support schools during the academic year starting September 2020.

There was a designated email address to which to send enquiries and a staffed support service 8am – 8pm 7 days a week.

The support and advice provided included management of Covid cases, outbreak control meetings, guidance on national updates and help with implementing guidance and bespoke communication and school community support

to reinforce understanding of Covid restrictions.

There were challenges to overcome when trying to localise national guidance for schools, for example in the use of buildings and social distancing requirements.

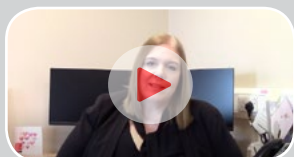
Being able to utilise local communications support enabled rapid targeting of specific age groups/communities with key Covid messages in a variety of ways.

Working together, schools and Public Health were able to identify and address areas of concern and rising case numbers were quickly identified and outbreak control meetings initiated rapidly.

The experience strengthened the links between schools and Public Health in Hartlepool and those strong links continue to this day.



Sue Leather of Hartlepool Borough Council's Public Health Team explains more about the support given to schools during the pandemic.



Sue Sharpe, Executive Head of Lynnfield Primary School, talks about how her school faced the pandemic.



Lynnfield Primary School pupils Jessica, Joyce, Willow, Lacey and Oli talk to their teacher Luke Woodhouse about their experiences.

Community Support Hub

The Community Support Hub was set up in March 2020 to help people who were vulnerable, shielding or isolating and latterly identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV).

The staff supported people over the telephone, providing a listening ear and practical support such as food parcels, prescription deliveries and much more.

The team quickly expanded its digital offer to provide activities aimed at helping people stay connected, helping people play Zoom Bingo, take part in crafting sessions, quizzes and virtual reading groups and just keep in touch with their friends and family.

By the end of the first lockdown it had received 11,131 calls and made 26,160 calls to the people of Hartlepool to ensure they were supported throughout the pandemic, many of whom it still remains in contact with. It works closely with the voluntary and community sector to ensure the best possible outcomes for people.

It supported 4,735 people on the Government's Shielded People's List, over 900 of whom did not have access to essential supplies, and support

was provided to 2,325 shielded and non-shielded people who were identified as isolated and potentially vulnerable.

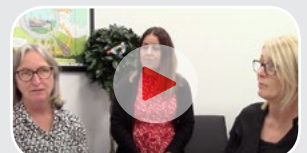
In October 2020, 4,883 people were identified as CEV with this number increasing to 7,488 by March 2021. All of these people were contacted by the Support Hub and support provided where needed.

65% of people requiring support were aged over 60, 50% were lonely, isolated and living alone and 35% had a long-term condition.

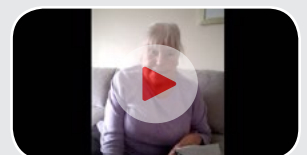
Among the extensive range of support provided, 2,269 food parcels were delivered, 2,325 prescriptions were collected and delivered, 2,948 hot meals were delivered – provided by Mecca Bingo and Just Heat– and people were also signposted to other services such as the Social Prescribers, MIND (now Let's Connect), Poolie Time Exchange, Hartlepool Carers and the befriending service.

Among many other items delivered were local history and VE Day anniversary packs to care homes, hearing aid batteries, books and audio books and even Easter eggs and birthday cards.

Here are Leigh Keeble, the Council's Head of Community Hubs and Wellbeing, Priscilla Deane, Assistant Community Hub Coordinator, and Community Hub Wellbeing Manager Lorraine Harrison to tell you more.



The Support Hub made a massive difference to people's lives during the pandemic – here local residents Joan, Barry and June explain just how much they appreciated the Hub's Zoom activity sessions.



Covid Community Champions

The Covid Champion Network is made up of volunteers – a mix of individuals and organisations who help residents stay up-to-date on the latest guidance so they can protect themselves and others against the virus.

The Covid Champion Coordinators monitor trends and intelligence to be able to respond to the need of engagement and build this into planning and delivery, signposting people to services and relevant organisations.

Covid Champions share accurate messages from Hartlepool's Public Health Team on social media and through other channels, gathering feedback from the local community and acting as positive role models in the battle against Covid.



Community Champion Coordinators Hannah Goodman and Julie French explain.

Test and Trace

The Council's Public Protection Team has been carrying out work to assist the Director of Public Health in identifying outbreaks of Covid-19 and preventing its spread in workplaces and the community.

Using the information the team has obtained has enabled it to target its interventions and resources enabling it to provide timely advice and support to help keep residents and others safe.

This has involved using an intelligence-based approach to follow up cases and identify where additional support may be required to stop outbreaks and onward transmission of Covid. This has also allowed the team to develop a

comprehensive picture of how Covid has spread through the community during the pandemic.

Here are Sylvia Pinkney, Rachael Readman and Jane Kett from the Public Protection Team to tell you more.



Testing

In December 2020 Hartlepool Borough Council began to plan for mass testing to find the one in three people with Covid who were asymptomatic - i.e. had no obvious symptoms. This was important, as these people could unknowingly pass on the Covid virus.

Known originally as the 'moonshot' programme, this was felt by some to be the innovation that could contribute towards life returning to something like normal.

The huge city-wide community testing pilot in Liverpool provided some insight into success. Here, the favoured test, a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test, was rolled out and in January 2021 we

opened our first LFD testing centre at Mill House Leisure Centre.

With the increase in vaccinations and a return to some sense of normality, we moved our testing centre to Middleton Grange Shopping Centre where we offered both assisted testing and a new initiative called Community Collect where residents could come and collect up to two boxes of kits at any given time with seven tests in each box.

In addition we established 11 new 'outreach' sites throughout the town to ensure that as many people as possible had access to LFD testing.



Tony O'Ceallaigh, the Council's Project Manager and Clinical Lead (Covid-19 Community Testing), talks more about testing.



Joanne Andrews, Covid Response Officer, shares her experiences of working at the testing centre in Middleton Grange Shopping Centre.



Local residents visiting the testing centre tell us how the pandemic has affected their lives and why testing is important to them.

Vaccination

Following extensive trials, the first safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine was approved in the UK in December 2020. The vaccination programme was rolled out to priority groups 1-9 which were identified by the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

Covid vaccinations have been delivered in a variety of settings to help increase access and encourage those eligible to take up that vaccine. Settings have included GP practices, vaccination centres, pharmacies and walk-in clinics at accessible community locations such as Middleton Grange Shopping Centre and Mill House Leisure Centre.

There has been an ongoing programme of engagement and promotion to encourage Hartlepool's residents to take up the vaccine which has included targeting priority areas where uptake is lower and promotion through a range of social media platforms and short films.

Phases 1 and 2 of the vaccination programme

Here's local GP Dr Carl David Parker, who has been strongly associated with the Covid vaccination programme in Hartlepool Health Network, to tell you more.

We spoke to local people attending one of the many walk-in vaccination clinics to find out what vaccination means to them.

focused on delivering the vaccine to the priority groups which included all those eligible aged 18 and above in addition to those in other more vulnerable groups.

Phase 3 of the Covid vaccination programme, which is primarily focused on the delivery of a booster vaccine, began in September 2021, with the aim of maximising protection to those who are most vulnerable to serious Covid-19 ahead of the winter months. Flu vaccines are also delivered in the autumn months.

The booster vaccination is targeted at those in priority groups 1 to 9, alongside those most vulnerable to serious Covid which includes all adults over 50 and frontline health and social care staff.

Phase 3 of the programme also includes the offer of a first dose of the Covid vaccine to 12-15 year olds, and the continuation of an evergreen offer to those who are eligible but are yet to take up a first or second dose of the vaccine.



Health Protection Board

In responding to the Covid pandemic, local government has a key role to play in the identification and management of infection and in doing so is required to have in place measures to identify and contain outbreaks and protect the public's health.

As part of an extensive package of arrangements to fulfil this responsibility, the Health Protection Board was established in June 2020.

The Board has brought together partners from the NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation Trust and North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and has been successful in:

- Leading the planning of the local outbreak response
- Coordinating the development of the Local Outbreak Management Plan to respond to the key themes identified by the national team
- Receiving information from outbreak control teams
- Developing a single point of contact and monitoring and reviewing operation

- Providing advice and support on media and other queries
- Overseeing the development of the settings-based outbreak plans as required and ensuring the development and review of the overarching Outbreak Management Plan
- Ensuring the development of monitoring systems to provide effective monitoring of implementation and to receive regular reports on outbreak management from outbreak control teams
- Monitoring data and overseeing the use of resources and demand, and
- Overseeing support to vulnerable groups impacted by the consequences of outbreaks through the existing council services e.g. through the Community Support Hub.

The Board will continue to meet going forward and, as part of its activities, will coordinate the ongoing development of the Local Outbreak Management Plan and provision of settings-based outbreak plans as required to respond to the changing requirements of the pandemic.



Here's Shaun Mayo from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation

Hartlepool Covid Data

For key figures on Covid in Hartlepool [click here](#).



In conclusion



To conclude, here's Craig Blundred, Hartlepool's Director of Public Health, again.