

Exit and Recovery: learning from the pandemic and long term challenges

Explaining the role of the Herts Health Protection Board involving NHS, Social Care, Police, Councils, businesses and voluntary and community sectors Jim talked about their Outbreak Plan, and specifically:

- the excellent work in responding to the impact of the pandemic - including over 2 million visits by volunteers to people's homes
- helping people to recover by caring for our local communities and
- the opportunity we have to rethink and shape future delivery of services in the most efficient way embracing online solutions where appropriate.

Talking about vaccination rates in Hertfordshire, Jim updated that as of 13th July, over 800,000 people in Hertfordshire have had their first dose and 600,000 a second dose. He stated that in Hertfordshire, vaccination take up exceeds 85% and encouragingly 60% of 20 - 25 year olds ** have had their first dose.

However, he warned that whilst these figures exceed the national average:

- there are still nearly 200,000 people not vaccinated, and that although the first dose provides some protection, risks remain.
- inequalities still exist and we all have a role to play in encouraging further take up particularly for disadvantaged communities.
- Long Covid and the wide range of health issues that can and still do persist with the condition, currently affects more than 40,000 people in Hertfordshire. The condition is growing and of course the demand for treatment
- vaccinations are crucial in helping to reduce hospitalisation and fatalities, but are not a "silver bullet" and need to be used in conjunction with other preventative measures to effectively manage the outbreak.

Referring to the Government announcement this week about moving to relaxation of the rules on the 19th July, Jim advised that we respond with caution and continue to apply our core values - caring for each other, whilst being particularly mindful of people who are vulnerable. Suggesting that we should continue to follow good practice and sensible measures by taking the vaccine whilst also:

- Using face coverings
- Ventilating indoor spaces
- Sanitising hands and surfaces
- Meeting outdoors where possible
- Being aware of social interaction
- Using the NHS test and trace
- Encouraging take up of the combined Flu and Covid vaccination programme across the County, when available, in an attempt to keep the older population and vulnerable members of our communities safe from winter illness and out of hospital.

Healthwatch Hertfordshire will continue to hear the patient voice and make sure it gets heard, hold services to account and continue our important research programme to make care better in our community.

** All data valid on 13th July 2021

Professor Jim McManus, Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health

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