

# Cheshire West & Chester Council

## Health Protection - It's in All Our Hands



Public Health Annual Report 2021

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# Foreword

Welcome to my Director of Public Health Annual Report for Cheshire West and Chester 2021 which this year has the theme of 'Health Protection - It's in All Our Hands'.

Health Protection is a vital strand of Public Health alongside Health Improvement and Healthcare Public Health, which brings together a wide range of specialists to work together to prevent and mitigate the impact of infectious diseases, environmental, chemical, and radiological hazards on the health of the population.

Cheshire West and Chester has a long history of leading efforts to protect the public's health. For example, Dr John Haygarth was a physician who spent 30 years at Chester infirmary from 1766 and went on to become famous for initiating new ways of reducing the spread and mortality from smallpox, including promoting inoculation, isolating those infected with the disease and public education campaigns - all of these remain vital health protection measures to this day and are reflected in this report.

The local response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that efforts to protect public health really do need to involve all of us and my last Public Health Annual Report focused on how residents and communities have played a vital role, alongside health, care, and other professionals to respond to the pandemic. This year's report provides an update on the ongoing COVID-19 response in the borough and celebrates the range of collaborative Health Protection work we undertake within Cheshire West and Chester.



Ian Ashworth, Director of Public Health



# COVID Timeline 2021

## January 2021

**6th:** England enters third national lockdown. People are permitted to leave home only for essential reasons, which include work, daily exercise, essential shopping and medical treatment. Schools are closed, though vulnerable children and those of key workers may still attend.

**13th:** COVID-19 vaccinations roll out across the borough.

**18th:** Testing pilot expands for people without symptoms of COVID-19 in Cheshire West and Chester.

**28th:** Council offers opportunity to pay tribute as country records over 100,000 Covid-related deaths.

**29th:** Vaccine roll-out in west Cheshire care homes now complete.

**31st:** The first anniversary of the first notified case of COVID-19 in Britain. The Council lowered its Council flag as a sign of respect on this sad anniversary. Chester Cathedral also lit candles on Sunday during morning prayers.

## February

**15th:** Hotel quarantine for travellers arriving in England from 33 high-risk countries begins.

**16th:** The COVID-19 mass vaccination site opened at Chester Racecourse. This was the first NHS large-scale COVID-19 mass vaccination centre in the borough.

**22nd:** Four step plan for ending coronavirus restrictions in England by 21 June is announced.

**22nd:** A mass testing programme is announced for all secondary schools in England, with home testing carried out twice a week. Schools back 8 March in England with Covid tests taken at home.

**24th:** COVID-19 vaccine doses given in Cheshire West and Chester passes 100,000.

## March

**5th:** No-symptoms testing programme expands to tackle COVID-19. More residents in Cheshire West and Chester are offered COVID-19 rapid tests as part of the national roadmap to ease restrictions.

**8th:** Step 1 of easing lockdown restrictions commences:

- Schools in England reopened for primary and secondary students.
- Recreation in outdoor public spaces is allowed between two people.
- 'Stay at home' order remains in place.

**8th:** Care home residents across Cheshire to be allowed one visitor as part of cautious easing of lockdown.

## April

**1st:** More than 21,000 vulnerable people across Cheshire no longer have to shield from coronavirus. Lockdown restrictions in place since 5th January lifted.

**6th:** The new Chester Cathedral facility will be home to Cheshire West and Chester Council's third asymptomatic testing centre in the borough.

**7th:** Care homes in Cheshire West and Chester free from Covid outbreaks.

**12th:** Rapid COVID-19 testing available for all Cheshire West and Chester residents.

**13th:** Rollout of the Moderna COVID vaccine begins in England.

**21st:** New NHS Test and Trace COVID-19 pilot programme starts in Cheshire West and Chester.

**27th:** Adults aged 42 and over are invited to book their first COVID vaccine.

**28th:** Let's Turn This Around COVID-19 Fund handed out in full. More than £82,000 in funding made available.



# COVID Timeline 2021

May

**4th:** Two new Community Collect COVID-19 test kit collection points opened on 4 May in Chester and Ellesmere Port.

**4th:** Care home residents are permitted to leave their residence for low-risk trips such as walks or garden visits without the need to self-isolate for 14 days afterwards.

**13th:** Roughly a million people in England aged 38 and 39 become eligible for their first COVID vaccine.

**14th:** Two thirds of adults in Cheshire West and Chester have now had a COVID-19 vaccination and more than a third have had two doses.

June

**1st:** The UK records 0 deaths from Covid-19 over a 24-hour period for the first time since March 2020.

**7th:** A roving vaccination clinic commenced operations in the borough, with the first clinic held at Northwich Memorial Court.

**10th:** NHS Test and Trace commenced testing and genomic sequencing known as 'Surge Testing' in Northwich and Winsford, in response to the increase in positive cases of the Delta (B1.617.2) COVID-19 variant in the areas.

July

**2nd:** Cheshire West and Chester Council's Mobile COVID-19 Testing Units move to Lache and Hoole from 5 July.

**8th:** Council's floral tribute to NHS and key workers.

**8th:** The UK government confirms that fully vaccinated UK residents arriving into England from amber list countries will no longer be required to quarantine after 19 July, but will still be required to pay for COVID tests.

August

**2nd:** Cheshire West and Chester reaches a vaccine milestone. A landmark 250,000 residents in Cheshire West and Chester have now received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with more than 204,000 receiving their second. This equates to 85% of eligible residents receiving one dose and 69% receiving two.

**27th:** The testing centre at Chester Cathedral closed in August as part of a national move for local authorities to take testing to communities that need it most, whether that is because of high rates or because people are more likely to be disadvantaged by COVID-19.



# COVID Timeline 2021

## September

**3rd:** People with long COVID in Cheshire West and Chester asked to share their views to help shape services.

**14th:** Prime Minister unveils England's winter plan for COVID-19 - 'Plan B' to be used if the NHS is coming under "unsustainable pressure", and includes measures such as face masks.

## October

**6th:** Cheshire West businesses will benefit from an extra £1.9 million of government funding through a new programme of grant assistance to eligible businesses.

**14th:** His Royal Highness Prince Edward, The Earl of Wessex visited Chester to thank local shops and charities who worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

**22nd:** New COVID-19 testing plan introduced for pupils in Cheshire West and Chester as infection rates rise. Daily testing is introduced for secondary school pupils in Cheshire West and Chester when someone in their household tests positive for COVID-19.

## November

**22nd:** People aged over 40 in England become eligible to book their COVID booster vaccination.

**30th:** Government announces that by the end of January 2022, all adults in England over the age of 18 would be eligible to receive a vaccine booster.

## December

**8th:** Prime Minister announces a move to 'Plan B' measures in England following the spread of the Omicron variant.

**10th:** Face masks compulsory in most public indoor venues under 'Plan B'.

**15th:** NHS Covid Pass becomes mandatory in specific settings, such as nightclubs under 'Plan B'.

**17th:** Council celebrates COVID-19 testing milestone. More than 50,000 COVID-19 tests have been carried out by Cheshire West and Chester Council since it launched its no-symptoms testing service 12 months ago.



# Cheshire West and Chester Outbreak Management Hub

The Cheshire West and Chester outbreak management response continued to follow the good practice developed during the early part of the pandemic in 2020, including full engagement with regional partners, the Council's leadership team, and relevant national government departments throughout 2021. The local Hub team continued to demonstrate commitment and continued to work extended hours and at weekends in response to local outbreaks.

The year started with a period of lockdown. Essential businesses and nurseries continued to function as close to normally as the pandemic allowed, and schools were open for children of key workers. This kept a high demand on our local outbreak management resource, supporting schools and business settings.

Between January and March 2021, the Hub team were busy dealing with outbreaks primarily in educational settings, alongside business outbreaks and clusters of cases that were investigated as far as possible to eliminate the possibility of in-setting

transmission. The average number of incidents managed by the Hub during this period was 80 per month.

This coincided with an intensive period of vaccination roll out (first and second doses), which put in place the building blocks for the later relaxation of restrictive measures.

Increased mixing in the population from April 2021 as measures were relaxed and schools returned, led to a significant increase in demand on outbreak management services (providing outbreak support and advice) across all sectors. During this period there were consistent requests for support from both educational and business settings and this continued until the end of the summer term, peaking in June with over 100 education and business incidents in that month.

At the start of the new academic year in September 2021 new outbreak management guidance was in place. Individual contact tracing, which had existed up to the end of the summer term 2021, was no longer expected of schools, and was instead

carried out by NHS Test and Trace. In the context of the Government's priority to ensure that as many children as possible remained in school, thresholds for seeking further public health advice about possible additional measures were introduced, based on the number or percentage of cases of pupils or staff who were likely to have mixed closely and/or the hospitalisation of a single case. The local Hub team provided schools with operational guidance and a structured framework for the staged implementation of protective measures, along with regular briefings, and written updates which were well received by headteachers.

Collated data indicated that 98% of schools reporting outbreaks between September 2021 and 31 December 2021 met the threshold for reporting purposes, demonstrating that school headteachers were quick to grasp the changed arrangements. While case numbers and school absences remained high, the number of schools that were required to close an entire class was minimal.



As had been the case earlier in the year, support for schools represented the most significant demand on the local Hub team from September 2021 to the end of the year, with serious outbreaks in business settings appearing to reduce.

Overall, the Hub responded to an average of 185 incidents or advice requests each month during the course of the year, with monthly totals ranging from 70 to 450.



# Support for businesses

Our support for business continued throughout 2021 and this was targeted to support high-risk business settings in the form of:

- **COVID-19 advice webinars**, delivered live to the hospitality, close contact and beauty services and fitness sectors (gyms), and subsequently published on the Council website. The webinars were widely publicised through all business networks and were well received with over 600 views within the month following the seminar.
- **Targeted intervention projects**, including an innovative Driving COVID Safety initiative to incentivise licensed drivers of taxi and private hire vehicles to meet high standards of hygiene and install screens in their vehicles to keep themselves and their customers safe.
- **Continued work in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive** to follow up with businesses that had not engaged or for which a triage call indicated probable non-compliance.





# Communication during the COVID-19 pandemic

Effective communication has been central to the Council's continuing response to the pandemic during 2021, ensuring that residents, businesses, staff and councillors knew what was happening, why, what action they needed to take and crucially, how they could access support through the Council and its partners.

During 2021, the challenges during an unprecedented and fast-paced emergency response have continued to be considerable. Flexibility and adaptability have been key, particularly as the situation has continued long past what could have been traditionally seen as a crisis period to encompass a second year which featured the 'stay at home' rules in the early part of the year, a gradual return to business as usual, the vaccine, no-symptoms testing roll-outs and the response to two Variants of Concern - Delta and Omicron.

Throughout the year we worked to ensure that our residents and visitors to the borough were kept up-to-date with national guidance, understood how this impacted locally and knew where they could access support through the Council and partners' reshaped delivery offers.

We did this by helping residents and visitors understand and follow safety guidelines in place to help protect them and the whole community, provided reassurance about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine in helping to protect against the virus, and provided support to the most vulnerable and those affected by the economic impact of the crisis.

We encouraged residents to take regular asymptomatic (no-symptoms) tests, self-report symptoms, self-isolate, observe lockdowns and take up the offer of the COVID-19 vaccine where eligible.

The response to the Delta variant outbreak in Northwich, Winsford and Chester in June, included surge testing and promoting the vaccine, ensuring residents were aware of the situation and what they needed to do and trusted that the Council was putting measures in place to protect the community. Residents were encouraged to take part in PCR testing to help in identifying the spread of the virus and encouraged to have their vaccine if they were eligible.

As restrictions eased across England in the summer, the Cheshire West and Chester cross-sector and cross-party COVID-19 Outbreak Board continued to take a cautious approach. Communications centred on a new key message, changing from 'Let's turn this around' to 'Choose to look after each other' to reflect the local approach and the national change from regulation to guidance. This softer approach was built upon local insight which told us that one of the few things that residents saw as a positive to from the pandemic was community spirit and looking after more vulnerable members of the community.

In addition, we supported NHS partners in communicating the COVID-19 vaccine and booster programme, helping to raise awareness of eligibility and how to access the vaccine, building confidence in the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine and encouraging uptake in key audiences, using case studies where appropriate to highlight the benefits of the vaccine.

During the year, we:

- **Issued more than 70 media releases that generated more than 170 articles**
- **Issued over a 100 briefing documents for Elected Members**
- **Published almost 1,000 posts across Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram (2.7 million impressions across all channels)**
- **Delivered a leaflet with information on how to access support related to COVID-19, as well as information on testing and vaccination, to 151,000 households to ensure those who were digitally excluded are kept informed**

## Case Study

### Response to the Delta variant in Northwich, Winsford and Chester in May / June

The Delta variant was first identified in an outbreak that could be traced back to a pub in Northwich town centre on Saturday, 22 May. Residents in Northwich and Winsford were advised to book a PCR test whether they had symptoms or not, with extra Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) deployed to support testing in both areas.

In mid-June, a Delta outbreak was also identified in two postcode areas of Chester - CH1 3 and CH1 4. Further MTUs were deployed, a pop-up testing site opened in the area and the no-symptoms (asymptomatic) testing centre at Chester Cathedral converted to PCR testing.

The Council's approach was to use key online and offline hyperlocal channels to target as many residents as possible in the affected areas. These included media releases, newspaper and radio advertising, organic and paid-for social media, ad vans, school channels, e-newsletters, influencer networks, leaflet drops and face-to-face street teams.

During the testing period in Winsford and Northwich, testing rates in Cheshire West and Chester became the highest in the north west, rising from 308 per 100,000 on 1 June to 1,044 per 100,000 by 14 June. More than 452 positive cases were identified in the two areas.

Testing in the CH1 3 and CH1 4 areas of Chester saw testing rates in the borough rise from 575.1 per 100,000 on 19 June, peaking at 673.9 per 100,000 on 25 June and 606.3 per 100,000 by 2 July, with around 80 positive cases identified.



# Case Study

## Parklets

In the summer of 2021 two new 'parklets' were created and installed in Chester and Neston following discussions with the local business community. Funded through the government's Containment Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), these open-air areas have seating and tables and are designed as the perfect places to stop, sit, take a breather, meet friends, watch the world go by and enjoy food and drink. They bring biodiversity to our shopping centres by including planters full of flowering plants and have helped to give the high street a boost.





## Case Study

### Support for Local Businesses

Businesses were enormously impacted by lockdowns and restrictions during the pandemic. The mental health of business owners and employees was a major concern. Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) needed specialist support through this very challenging time. Some businesses were closed due to Covid restrictions and other businesses were moving to hybrid working, managing remote employees and supporting those experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety. Funding was allocated to a local wellbeing company to deliver high quality mental health support to the business community. This vital service was extended throughout 2021 as the restrictions continued for businesses.

The sessions encouraged business leaders to be more aware of their own and their colleague's mental health condition and put organisational health and wellbeing plans in place.

Being aware of mental health triggers was extremely important to the businesses and to understand, if required, how to refer and direct individuals onto appropriate specialist mental health support.

Businesses attended online webinar sessions and 21 sessions were carried out in 2021. The programme was adapted, and a new webinar was included - Looking after your physical health delivered by a Wellness Coach which included a free wellness evaluation. These sessions will continue into 2022 as Covid-19 still impacts on the business with reduced staffing levels (due to self-isolation and illness) along with residents cancelling bookings, especially those in the hospitality and leisure sectors. This effective support has empowered business leaders to scaffold and rebuild their business.





# Asymptomatic Testing

The Council's Asymptomatic Testing Programme started in November 2020 with the creation of a cross-council Testing Team. The first fixed-site Asymptomatic Testing Site opened at Stanney Lane in Ellesmere Port in December 2020.

In January 2021 the 2nd fixed site was opened at Winsford Lifestyle Centre, with a 3rd site opened at Chester Cathedral in April. The Winsford site was moved to The Dingle Centre in May 2021. In August the Chester Cathedral site was closed due to falling demand for tests.

In March 2021, the Community Collect offer (the provision of home-test LFD tests) began from our fixed sites and several libraries across the borough.

The Team responded flexibly to the changing direction of the government's Testing programme from a targeted programme in January 2021, to those unable to work from home, to access for all. From July 2021, the Council's Testing programme focused on targeting underserved groups and communities disadvantaged by the impacts of Covid.

The Team worked with Council partner organisations to supply home testing kits to various sites and venues including:

- **local food banks**
- **mosques**
- **individual and families likely to have been most affected by COVID**
- **businesses via our Community Connectors**
- **attendees at classes at the with Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC) Unity Centre**
- **ships crews passing up the Manchester Ship Canal**
- **homeless people including those in temporary accommodation**
- **Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities**
- **people attending Substance Misuse services**
- **libraries**

In June 2021, the team acquired 2 ex-community transport buses and refitted them so that on-site testing and take-home tests could be offered. To provide a more

flexible testing service and to reach groups and communities disadvantaged by the impacts of COVID, a 'pop-up' Testing Bus schedule was developed. The service visits areas that are known to have high case rates, or areas that have been particularly affected by COVID's impacts. The schedule ran from November 2021 to March 2022 on a 6-week cycle, together with a major communications campaign, which used very localised approaches as well as radio and local Facebook groups.

Also in June, the Council entered Operation Eagle +, a campaign to provide 'surge testing' to combat outbreaks of the Delta variant in the Northwich and Winsford area. As part of this, staff were trained to do another type of COVID test (PCR test) and 2 Mobile Testing Units, together with the Chester Cathedral fixed site, were set up to offer both PCR and LFD tests.



## Key Statistics for Cheshire West and Chester (Jan-Dec 2021)

**Number of Tests undertaken at fixed ATS Sites in 2021:**

**45,309**

**Number of Tests undertaken at Mobile Testing Sites in 2021:**

**3,357**

**Number of Community Collect LFD Kits provided in 2021:**

**126,137 boxes of 7 tests**

# Case Study

## Asymptomatic Testing

To promote our agile testing offer for targeted cohorts, we supported 2 local events with a Mobile Testing Bus: at the Diwali celebrations in Chester on Saturday 23rd October and at Chester Pride on Saturday 18th September. The bus was used to provide information on testing, and provide onsite testing and distribute self-test kits.





# Covid Vaccination

The COVID vaccination programme is led and coordinated by the local NHS. Cheshire West and Chester Council supports operational delivery of the programme, helping individuals and communities who have been most affected by the pandemic to get vaccinated.

In 2021, the Council's key role included identifying and providing logistical support to mobilise the Mass Vaccination site at Chester Racecourse and its subsequent relocation to Ellesmere Port Civic Hall, and rerouting the Shopper Hopper bus to the Racecourse. We were able to source appropriate locations for the roving pop-up vaccination clinic delivered by Cheshire Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP) to target 'cold-spot' areas across the borough offering walk-in clinics. Working with CWP, former Huntington Primary School site was identified as a suitable, convenient and accessible location for walk-in and bookable appointments.

Working with our adult social care teams we were able to ensure residents of care homes, social care staff, carers and other



eligible health and social care providers were offered vaccinations, as well as working with health partners to provide one-to-one support and advice for vaccine hesitant care home staff.

Integrated working between health partners and Council teams provided easy access to a vaccination for under-represented groups, e.g. homeless, asylum seekers, refugees, minority groups, etc. Logistical support was

provided to the School Aged Immunisation Service in the delivery of the 12-15 year old vaccination programme.

The team closely monitored uptake rates and worked with health partners to ensure that an alternative vaccination offer was available if primary care in the area was not vaccinating, for example from Pharmacies, making it as easy as possible for residents to receive their vaccination.

## Case Study

The Roving Vaccination Clinic provided the following vaccinations at the various locations in 2021:

**First dose:**

3,074

**Second dose:**

4,835

**Booster:**

8,312

Communications were key and the team developed a vaccination page on the Council website signposting to up-to-date information of all available vaccination clinics in the borough, as well as designing and publishing a range a communication approaches and materials to address vaccine hesitancy and encourage vaccine take-up, particularly across individuals and groups of people who may not access health services regularly.

## Equality and Diversity

The Council's Equality and Diversity Team continued to place great importance on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups, building on the innovative work undertaken in 2020. Working with partners across the Cheshire Subregion, increasing vaccine confidence was key, particularly given the low uptake amongst many ethnic minority groups and others including people with learning disabilities. Videos from trusted community leaders moved from raising awareness of COVID and testing, to focus on the importance of vaccination.

The Communication Team continued to work with us on messaging which was delivered through a wide range of channels. A 'Community Connectors' project was set up with Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC). Members of many of our diverse communities were recruited, trained and supported to reach out to local people and spread accurate information about the vaccine, give out testing kits and discuss issues relating to their health and wellbeing and specific



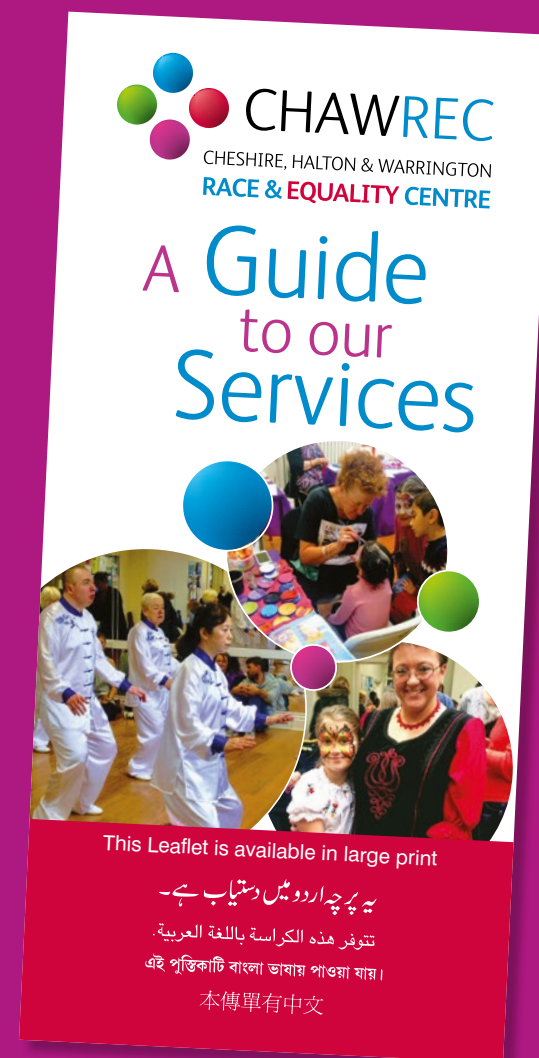
challenges. Translated materials were used for residents whose first language is not English.

As vaccination and testing centres were set up, our Senior Access Officer and specialist partners from organisations such as Deafness Support Network and DIAL West Cheshire worked in partnership to ensure they were accessible. Dedicated work from CHAWREC's Arabic speakers was successful



in encouraging refugees and asylum seekers to be tested and have the vaccine.

Starting in September 2021, a new post of Community Health Champion was established within the Equality and Diversity Team. Along with work on vaccine confidence, the role looks at tackling wider health inequalities in our under-represented communities.





## Case Study

### Community Health Champion

Everyone's experience of COVID-19 is different, however, for many ethnic minority communities, the uncertainty caused by the virus, together with restrictions exacerbated already existing challenges. Throughout 2021, the Community Health Champion worked tirelessly with groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19, helping tackle issues and develop resilient, well-informed communities. The Community Health Champion worked with community leaders and individuals to publicise key messages about the importance of asymptomatic testing and vaccination. Meetings with local Black and Minority Ethnic residents, faith communities and disability groups allowed up to date information to be shared and allowed space for community concerns to be raised. This led to reshaped services that reduced many of the barriers to accessing testing and vaccinations.

In addition, the Champion led the work to better understand and mitigate health inequalities faced by underrepresented community groups in Cheshire West and Chester. The inequalities were frequently made worse because of COVID-19.

# Screening and Immunisation - Cancer Screening

Early diagnosis of cancer improves quality of life and health outcomes by providing care at the earliest possible stage. Cancer screening plays a vital role in detecting disease early so that more effective treatment can be given.

Diagnosing people earlier and faster is one of the most effective ways to improve cancer survival - It means that patients can get more treatments and start sooner, making it more likely that cancer can be cured.

In Cheshire West we work to improve cancer outcomes by:

- working collaboratively with Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance to secure funding to develop innovative ways to promote and improve accessibility to screening, early detection and diagnosis of cancer;
- providing representation on a range of regional screening boards;
- leading local multi-agency action planning groups; and
- supporting local targeted communication campaigns

We know that the risk of cancer depends on a range of factors including lifestyle, genetic pre-disposition and environment, and therefore include prevention-based principles across all areas of Public Health.

We work closely with Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance, Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Collaborative and key partners to work on cancer prevention at scale.

Supporting the aims of the NHS Long Term Plan, £1.35 million has been allocated by Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance through its Cancer Transformation Fund, to design and develop a range of cancer screening projects. Regional projects developed have included:

- Implementing Making Every Contact Count (MECC) in cancer pathways which seeks to change lifestyle behaviours through teachable moments
- Developing an approach to improving smoking cessation support in secondary care

- Identifying opportunities to increase screening coverage and uptake

Routine cancer screening was affected during 2020/21 by Covid-19. There were delays to some invitations and follow-up appointments to protect people from COVID-19. In addition, NHS staff usually involved in screening programmes were diverted to support critical services. Screening programmes have since resumed, but some people are waiting for screening tests and appointments.

During the year, progress has been made across Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance to develop a range of innovative projects to help improve patient experiences and streamline cancer pathways. This has included:

- Recruiting a team of screening co-ordinators to support breast and bowel screening centres and GP practices in encouraging people to participate in screening, contacting identified non-responders, providing reassurance

and information about screening appointments. The roles also have a focus on health inequalities and will involve producing information that will support local screening services;

- A text messaging project to improve the level of cervical screening has been commissioned through Champs Public Health Collaborative, due to begin in 2021/22; and
- A Screening Community Engagement Project "Action on Cancer" which involved the development of an online educational toolkit to assist community health care workers and organisations in promoting screening.



## Case Study

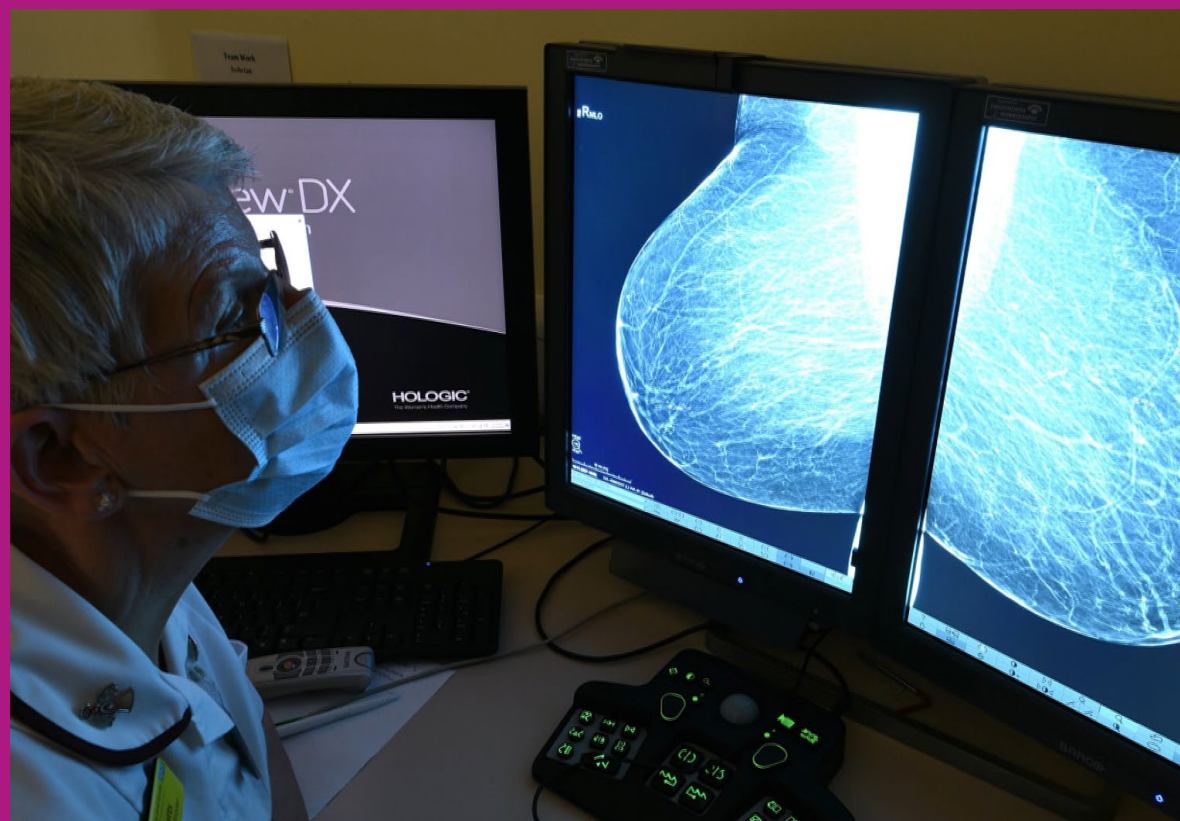
### Action on Cancer

Cheshire & Merseyside Cancer Alliance have launched a new toolkit to support community groups and organisations give the public the right information about cancer. The 'Action on Cancer' resource has been produced from successful awareness-raising initiatives, to give groups advice, tips, information, help and support.

The toolkit will help community organisers to:

- **Promote, encourage and empower people to have healthier lifestyles**
- **Increase early diagnosis of cancers through screening programmes**
- **Empower patients to recognise possible early signs and symptoms of cancer and take timely action**

**Cheshire &  
Merseyside**  
Cancer Alliance



## Case Study

### Royal Society for Public Health - Immunisation Toolkit

The Royal Society for Public Health has worked closely with Cheshire West and Chester's public health team to develop a national toolkit of resources for public health leaders to improve vaccination coverage rates in their local areas. It includes resources on accessing data, providing constructive challenge to commissioners and providers, developing communications to encourage uptake, and community engagement to improve vaccine confidence. The aim behind the toolkit is to reduce inequalities in uptake and increase overall coverage rates by equipping local public health leaders to better understand how access and attitudes to vaccinations can be improved, and by encouraging collaboration between different parts of local health, social care and public health systems.

Cheshire West and Chester modelled this collaborative approach in a stakeholder workshop we held to help shape the content of the toolkit and develop a local action plan for increasing coverage rates. We brought together representatives from a cross-section of organisations across the area, from the CCG to Healthwatch Cheshire, managers of GP Practices and of substance misuse services, and various departments within the council itself. In Cheshire, it is clear that a wide range of individuals and organisations are keen to play a part in increasing access to and encouraging uptake of vaccinations beyond Covid-19. We hope this toolkit enables other areas to follow this example, and that the local action plan helps to keep that momentum going.





## Case Study

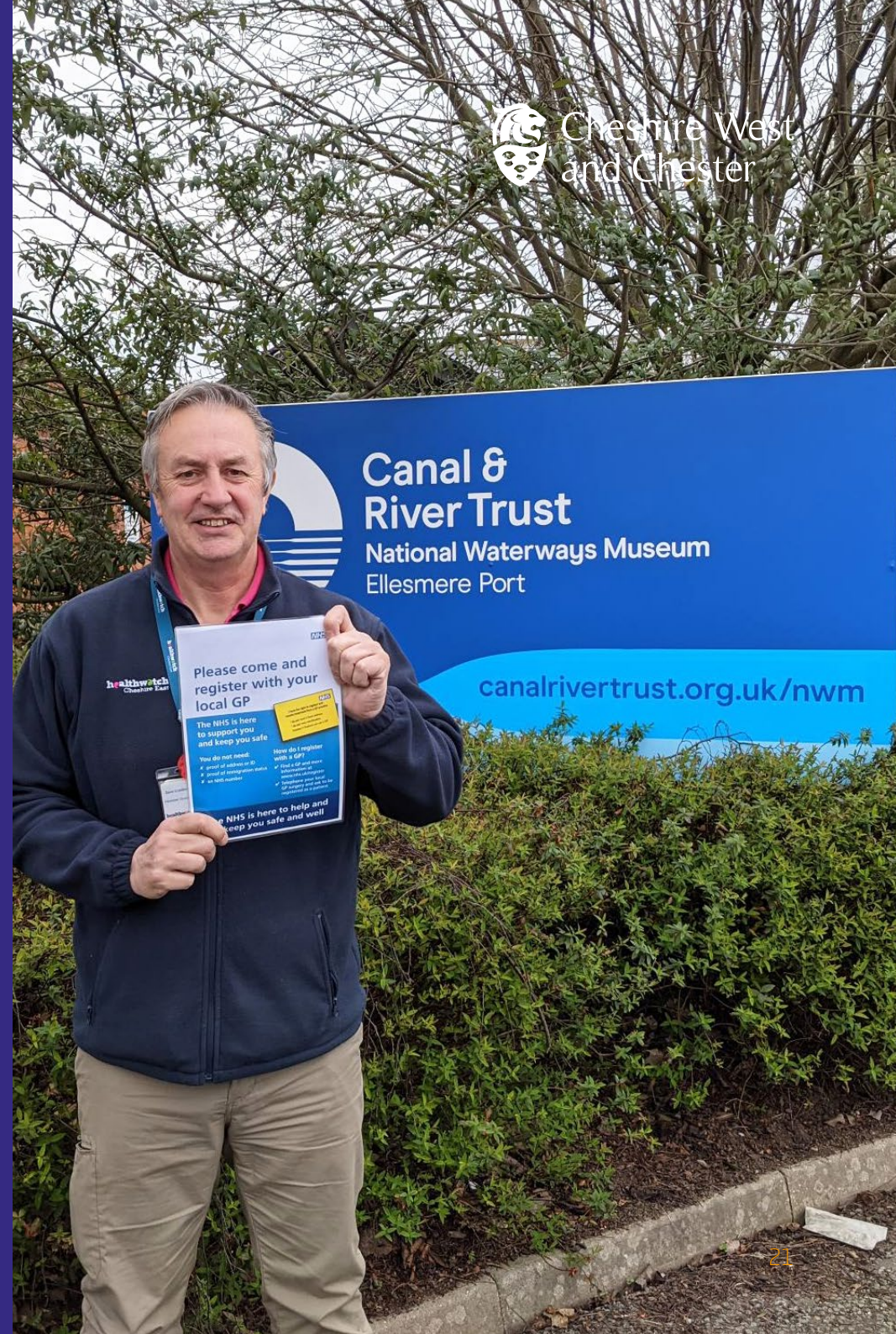
### Healthwatch Cheshire's work with the Boating community credited by Royal Society for Public Health

In March 2021, Healthwatch Cheshire worked in partnership with the Waterways Chaplaincy to raise awareness of GP Access Cards and to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine with the Boating Community across Cheshire.

We visited 45 marinas, designated moorings, canals, towns and villages on foot across Cheshire and Warrington and Halton, talking to 89 members of the boating community and marina staff to offer support, advice and guidance on a variety of subjects. This included talking to Boaters about how they could register with a GP Practice, how this would help people to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and about the vaccination programme taking place throughout Cheshire.

Healthwatch Cheshire's work with the Boating community across Cheshire was featured as an example of good practice nationally in the Royal Society for Public Health's Assuring and Improving Immunisation Services toolkit.

**healthwatch**  
Cheshire West





# Communicable Diseases and Infection Control

Robust infection prevention and control (IPC) practice is essential to ensure that the resident population of Cheshire West and Cheshire receives safe and effective care. In addition to responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, infection control involves working to prevent infectious diseases including healthcare acquired infections, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis (TB) and responding to outbreaks of infectious disease in community settings such as care homes, residential settings and schools. Infection prevention and control is supported by a wide range of services including primary and secondary healthcare, specialist sexual health services and specialist community infection control services.





# Community Infection Prevention & Control Service

The Cheshire and Wirral Partnership (CWP) NHS Foundation Trust integrated Infection Prevention and Control and Tuberculosis (IPC) team is commissioned by the Council and provides a highly visible and proactive IPC service. It is responsive to the needs of care providers it supports and the resident population of Cheshire West and Chester and aims to prevent any avoidable infection and keep our resident population safe.

The team works closely to support providers of care including hospitals, GP surgeries, care homes and other residential settings; as well as schools, colleges and nurseries to help them prevent infections and to respond to outbreaks when they occur. The team does this by providing high quality training and awareness raising as well as providing infection control and advice in response to individual cases and outbreaks of infection.





## Cheshire West and Chester Integrated Sexual Health Service



Cheshire West and Chester Integrated Sexual Health Service is commissioned by the Council to provide free and confidential sexual health services to the people in the Cheshire West and Chester area. The service is based in The Fountains Health Centre in the centre of Chester and operates spoke services in Ellesmere Port, Blacon, Northwich and Winsford. Services include free information and advice on all types of contraception and STI testing and treatment. All services are confidential, non-judgemental and for people of all ages, genders, and orientations.

Sexual health services have been rated as 'Outstanding' when it comes to being 'Responsive to People's Needs' for patients across Cheshire West and Chester by the Care Quality Commission.



# Case Study

## Sharing the love at Chester Pride

Cheshire West and Chester Integrated Sexual Health Service is a long-term supporter and sponsor of Chester Pride - one of the UK's largest free to attend LGBT+ Pride events. In August 2021, we also supported Chester Pride Digital and took part in Pride TV, a livestream Q&A hosted by Lady Wanda Why.

The Q&A featured Justine Purnell, Specialist Practitioner and Dr Hardeep Kang, who both work in the Integrated Sexual Health Service covering Chester West and Chester. They answered questions from the public and shared their expertise on several topics from testing for sexual transmitted diseases to sex and sexual health.

The Sexual Health team also used the event to promote The Box Project, which is a charitable project which was run in partnership with Chester Pride. The boxes have free condoms, sanitary products and help and advice on a wide range of issues. Launched last year, the boxes can be found at bars, pubs, clubs, and other public areas in the city. They encourage people to take the relevant pack for moments when caught short, in immediate need or due to lack of funds.



Cheshire West  
and Chester





## Case Study

### Body Positive

Body Positive has been providing sexual health services throughout Cheshire since 1998. The organisation began as a small charity supporting local residents who were living with or affected by HIV. Over the following years, Body Positive developed its services in response to local community need and now provides comprehensive services focusing on sexual health advice, education and STI prevention through the SexSmart project.

SexSmart is a project which prides itself on being open, honest and inclusive. SexSmart believes that all members of our community have the right to access high quality, comprehensive support and education regarding sexual health and relationships. In providing these services they are able to support members of our local community to develop an understanding of what healthy, happy and safe sex looks like for them and provide the knowledge and resources to support that. Attending a sexual health clinic can be a daunting experience so SexSmart provides friendly accessible community based services to provide sexual health testing, free condoms, advice and support.





# Emergency Planning

The overarching aim of the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team is to ensure that both Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Cheshire East Council, have the capability to respond effectively and efficiently to any major emergency in support of their communities, and the multi-agency response. This involves a range of preparedness and response activities.

From a preparedness perspective the team ensures that both Councils have trained managers and staff ready to respond, appropriate response plans in place to deal with a wide range of risks including flooding and severe weather. The team also works with our partners in the Cheshire Resilience Forum to ensure an effective, multi-agency response to any Major Incidents.

In addition, the team works with Town and Parish Councils and community groups to develop Community Emergency Plans so that they have increased resilience during severe weather or flooding incidents, and is responsible for meeting the Councils'

statutory obligations relating to 18 hazardous installations and over 600kms of pipeline across Cheshire, ensuring that the off-site plans for those sites are regularly reviewed and tested.

From a response perspective the team operates a 24/7 Duty Officer system on behalf of the Council, providing an immediate response to Major Incidents throughout the year. On average the Service responds to over 20+ incidents per year, all of varying magnitude and duration, some lasting days, other months. In the last twelve months the team has also responded to a range of other incidents including major flooding, avian influenza outbreaks and the power outages caused by Storm Arwen, as well as helping to implement enhanced security arrangements in Chester during the lead into Christmas 2021. The team has also been involved in the ongoing response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 Pandemic.



# Update on Recommendations from 2020 Public Health Annual Report

## **1. Our future local health protection response: We will continue to deliver an enhanced Infection Prevention and Control Service as part of a sustainable and resilient Health Protection Plan for the borough.**

The Covid-19 Outbreak Board, which serves to oversee the delivery of the Cheshire West and Cheshire Outbreak Management Plan met throughout 2021 and provided a forum for partner organisations, elected members and residents the opportunity shape the local response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout 2021, our Health Protection Board ensured partner organisations were able to contribute to and scrutinise our health protection plans for the borough. The Health Protection Board will lead on developing a Health Protection Strategy for the borough in 2022/23.

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust has been commissioned by the Council to continue to provide community infection prevention and control service until April 2024 with increased resources.

## **2. Support for our residents who continue to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19: We will continue to develop and deliver support for those who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. We will continue to work with under-represented groups to ensure their voices are heard and their stories are told. We will continue to strengthen close working relationships with the Poverty Truth Advisory Board.**

Through a project developed in partnership with Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre, members of local Black and Minority Ethnic Communities were trained as 'Community Connectors'. Members of many of our diverse communities were recruited, trained and supported to reach out to local people and spread accurate information about the vaccine, give out testing kits, translated materials, and discuss issues relating to their health and wellbeing and specific challenges. These challenges were relayed to relevant agencies for support.

A number of videos, posters, case studies and social media messages were created and disseminated throughout the year. These drew on trusted voices across from the community and helped support residents who may be reluctant to engage. Videos also included young members of the Chinese community to encourage their peers to get vaccinated.

## **3. COVID-19 Vaccination Programme: We will continue to enable our residents to benefit from COVID-19 vaccinations by ensuring opportunities to be vaccinated can be accessed as easily as possible We will continue to provide communications and support to increase vaccine uptake. We will continue to work with our residents to allay concerns and vaccine hesitancy.**

In 2021, the Council assigned a Covid Vaccinations team to work closely with our health colleagues to develop the vaccination roll out across the borough. This included: identifying and providing logistical support to mobilise the Mass Vaccination site at Chester Racecourse and its subsequent relocation to Ellesmere Port Civic Hall, and rerouting the Shopper Hopper bus to the Racecourse.

The vaccination team worked with Social Care colleagues to ensure residents of care homes, social care staff, carers and other eligible health and social care providers were offered vaccinations and working with health partners to provide one-to-one support and advice for vaccine hesitant care home staff.

Working with health partners and Council teams to provide easy access to a vaccination for under-represented groups, including homeless, asylum seekers, refugees, minority groups, designing and publishing a range of communications assets to address vaccine hesitancy and encourage vaccination take-up, particularly for these underserved groups.



#### 4. Enhanced Data and Intelligence Systems: We will continue to maximise data and intelligence available to us as part of a Population Health Programme.

As the pandemic has developed, so has our response, and it has been vital to have clear statistics to help our Public Health Team, the Council and wider partners make decisions. Key information such as case numbers, outbreaks, testing rates, hospitalisations and vaccination uptake have helped us to quickly adapt in a fast-changing environment.

The data tells us where infections are highest, what age groups are most affected and whether any particular settings are affected, such as businesses or schools. This helps us to target support and advice. Identifying areas of high infection also enabled us to increase the availability of testing in affected areas, and this, coupled with vaccinations data, helped to direct the mobile vaccination programme to where it is most needed.

We have shared data with the public, to keep you informed of what's happening in their local area. This includes a data dashboard on our website, that is updated every weekday, and information in our Outbreak Management meetings, which are webcast. Our data dashboard has been available since May 2020 and provides an interactive report that enables the public to view rates for their local area over different time periods.

#### 5. Understanding of the Long Term Impact of COVID-19: We will continue to develop our knowledge and understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on physical and mental health.

Long Covid has had, and continues to have, a major impact on the daily lives of sufferers. With research and information still emerging about this new condition Cheshire West and Chester is trying to address its impact on our residents, and to provide the right support.

With a person-centred approach, focusing on lived experiences, we have engaged with our residents and businesses in the form of surveys and focus groups to understand what support is needed, and user experience of the emerging support available. We are providing up to date information via our Live Well website to support self-management.

Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) Respiratory Clinical Network were tasked (Nov 2020) with developing a post COVID-19 assessment service (PCAS) - accepting GP referrals across Cheshire and Merseyside. Cheshire West has secured funding to commission a boroughwide referral pathway for those who are formally diagnosed with Long Covid.

### Recommendations from the 2021 Public Health Annual Report:

1. **Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic:** The council and its partners should ensure that its response to the COVID-19 pandemic is reviewed and that best practice and opportunities for development are built into plans for responding to future pandemics
2. The Council should build on experience gained from its Outbreak Management Hub and develop an integrated Public Protection Service to provide a coordinated response to ongoing infection control and other health protection incidents
3. The council and partners in health and social care should work to maintain a strong and resilient specialist Infection Prevention and Control service that can meet demand.
4. **Focusing on routine immunisation and screening:** The council should work with NHS and other partners to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on uptake of routine immunisation and screening and work to maximize uptake of these programmes and reduce unwarranted variation.
5. **Covid and flu vaccination:** The council should continue to work with its partners to increase confidence in flu and covid vaccines and ensure fair access to these vaccines for all, in particular the most vulnerable.



Our short film is available to watch on YouTube