

February 2022 Update

Latest Storm

A huge number of staff have been involved in the effort to keep Devon's roads clear, deal with localised flooding, tackle debris from damaged properties and protect and look out for our most vulnerable residents.

Teams from across the organisation, including Adult Care and Health, Children's Services, Public Health, Communities, our Customer Service Centre, Transport, Highways, Communications, Finance, Economy and our Emergency Planning Team, have all been working together to coordinate our response to keep people safe and informed. In addition to our frontline staff who continue to work round the clock to respond to hundreds of separate reports of damage caused by the wind across Devon.

We are incredibly grateful for the support from our partners across the county who have all been doing their bit, including Devon and Cornwall Police, our district council colleagues, town and parish councils, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, and our local communities who have stepped up to support and look out for their friends and neighbours.

Storm Eunice has brought with it some of the strongest winds and associated damage that we have faced for years, with the additional challenge of continued stormy weather brought by Storm Franklin.

If you have any local issues that you need me to investigate or be aware of, then please do email or contact me at anytime.

Children's Services update:

Our Social Care teams received a visit from Ofsted on 2nd and 3rd February. The senior team Melissa, Janet, Lisa and all their staff have been working hard to prepare. The focus was on the 'front door'. This means that the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, our Initial Response Teams and Early Help will be under scrutiny. These are the key teams where children that are referred into the service are assessed. These teams work alongside partners such as police, health and schools, taking action to prioritise the needs of children and families so that they receive the right service from the right team, at the right time. As part of the inspection we are also keen to demonstrate that we have put improvements in place from their previous visits. We know that we still have a very long way to go, but we are confident that Melissa and the team have the foundations in place to deliver steady and sustainable improvements for children and families in our divisions.

The Devon Youth Parliament elections closed on 23 January. The successful candidates will serve in office from March 2022 to February 2024. We are very keen

that, once elected, we encourage our Young Parliamentarians to get involved in council matters that concern young people right across Devon. Our cabinet member for children's services will be actively engaging them as soon as they are in office.

Children's Services is often associated with the most challenging work we do with families. But there are always positives to be found. We have had some excellent examples recently of where our officers are making a real difference to children, young people and families. Our Personal Advisors work with care experienced young people, empowering them to develop their independence and make informed choices that enable them to lead successful lives. In December, Tony Walsey who is a Personal Advisor working with care leavers in the North Locality, was voted Personal Adviser (PA) of the Year at the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) Awards. To be recognised on a National level is a great accolade and show cases the great work that is going on across Devon.

The Public Health Team recently had their regular UNICEF Baby Friendly Reassessment visit. The assessors interviewed 21 staff, 6 managers and spoke to 57 mothers and reviewed all aspects of practice. I am delighted to say that the service passed and have kept their Stage 3 accreditation. The BFI Assessors have specifically praised this achievement considering the challenges that have been experienced across the service, bearing in mind the impacts of the pandemic and the associated changes in practice that have needed to be made.

I want to tell you more about our burgeoning concept of '**Child Friendly Devon**'. When I say 'Child friendly' I mean that, as a Council, we consider the impact on children and young people in everything that we do and use our whole Council and Team Devon approach to support all children achieving their full potential. I am apart of the Children's Scrutiny Committee which will be conducting a spotlight review in the coming months.

ASC COVID funding for January

Devon will receive close to £900,000 from the national [Adult Social Care Omicron Support Fund](#) this January. This is a new grant that is separate and in addition to the existing Infection Control and Testing Fund and the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund. We have discretion to use the funding as needed locally, to support the adult social care sector in the response to COVID during January 2022, this could include passing the funding onto providers. The purpose of this fund is to:

- Support the adult social care sector with measures already covered by the infection prevention and control (IPC) allocation of the Infection Control and Testing Fund (round 3) to reduce the rate of COVID-19 transmission within and between care settings.
- Increase ventilation in care homes.
- Enhance local authorities' current direct payment offer particularly when the only way a person's care needs can be met is by a friend or family member.
- Enhance support for carers.

- Pay for temporary staffing to cover increased staff absence caused by COVID-19 and maintain staffing levels and workforce capacity.

Vaccination programme

Devon is ranked 7th and 8th nationally for booster uptake in care home staff and domiciliary care staff respectively, the level of uptake however remains significantly below wider population. Work continues locally to increase that including, priority access to vaccinations for Health and Care staff, GPs continuing to go in to care homes to vaccinate staff and residents, and a nursing team is focussed on supporting those with vaccine hesitancy.

With staff working in the regulated domiciliary care sector, including supported living where regulated care is offered, needing to be fully vaccinated by the end of March, this work remains vitally important given that some 400 people in the domiciliary care sector and 100 in Supported Living have not been fully vaccinated. We continue to actively contact all providers and offering all the support we can.

Please continue to talk to your communities about vaccinations and highlight the 'walk-in' sites that can be found across the County [Search - Find a walk-in coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination site \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/search/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/)

Workforce wellbeing and training

Our Employee Assistance Programme is now available to all staff in adult social care across the Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD) providing access to a 24/7 helpline, staffed by professional counsellors. Staff can access professional support services offering emotional, psychological and practical help, ranging from referrals for face to face counselling to information and advice teams who will support staff with a wide range of personal and work-related issues.

We have also made available a comprehensive e-learning package to adult social care staff across the ICSD to allow flexibility for staff training. Over 100 fully funded social care courses are available including Care Certificate induction training, mandatory training, infection control and management training.

Local Care Partnerships continue to develop

In December the Eastern Local Care Partnership held a virtual conference called 'A good place'. It was the first conference it has held and provided the opportunity to engage a wider audience, seek broader contribution to develop and evolve the partnership. A report from the conference has been put on the Eastern LCP pages of the website of the Integrated Care System for Devon . There you can also find links to the presentation and other interesting resources.

The report on the conference can be found on the Integrated Care System for Devon website: [What it means for local people - Integrated Care System for Devon \(icsdevon.co.uk\)](https://www.icsdevon.co.uk) and includes links to all the main presentations as well as links to all the contributors and other interesting online resources.

The Conference helped to showcase the amazing work done by the voluntary sector right across the locality and it is recognised that this vital work is helping to support people in their own communities in a number of ways. To help support this work a task and finish group will be established made up of representatives from voluntary and statutory organisations to consider ways in which the statutory sector partners could better support the voluntary sector and add value to what already exists.

Afghan Refugees update

The Home Office initially block booked hotels in Exmouth and Exeter for a minimum of three months and this is reviewed by the Home Office on a regular basis. 'Bridging' hotels are temporary accommodation while the Home Office continues the ongoing work to resettle families as quickly as possible. Several families have been offered long term housing elsewhere in the UK. The latest update from the Home Office on the programme Operation Warm Welcome can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/news/operation-warm-welcome-progress-update .

To date, all families are registered with a local GP, children and young people are enrolled and attending nursery, primary, secondary and post-16 provision with feedback suggesting transitions have gone extremely well. Adults are engaged with local English language classes to help them learn or practice their English.

Local authorities can claim back £28 per person per day following their arrival into a Bridging hotel – all in all given staff time, money for translations, interpreters, support from charities etc. these grants barely cover actual costs. There is in addition £12k per month for all schooling carried out (passported to the various schools) – we've just submitted our first claim to the Home Office, it will be interesting to see how quickly that is reimbursed!

SitRep: 67 people in Exeter Bridging Hotel, although that should drop to 62 at the weekend as we have two families moving into more permanent accommodation in Exeter.

54 people in Exmouth Bridging Hotel – two families have been resettled elsewhere in the UK.

Other Refugees

72 other refugees (including four children) presently accommodated in a Tiverton Hotel – again, this was block-booked by the Home Office without providing sufficient notice to DCC or anyone else.

Environment update

Environment Act Update from Defra – The helpful update below was provided to the ADEPT Natural Capital & Heritage Group shortly before Christmas by our Environment Act contact at Defra

- The Nature Part of the Environment Act does not come into force immediately. It requires secondary legislation (regulations) to be made before Parliament to set a commencement date. It is quite possible that some bits of the Nature Part of the Act will come into force before others.
- In respect of the Nature Part of the Act, there will not be any requirements/actions sprung on local government over the next few months. First Defra need to commence the provisions; and then for Biodiversity Duty (NERC), BNG, LNRSs further regulations are anticipated to set out more clearly what the Act requires.
- Defra is putting together an Environment Act Q&A for dissemination to local authorities. This will be distributed soon. Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Defra are currently working with local authorities in terms of identifying potential Responsible Authorities. Agreeing who the Responsible Authorities are is linked closely to the area that each Strategy will cover, so this needs coordination to ensure there are no gaps or overlap. Defra are also looking at what funding will be made available to support the development of these Strategies; this is obviously going to be an especially important thing for Responsible Authorities in particular.
- There is no fixed timeline for the delivery of the LNRS regulations and statutory guidance. Defra are working as fast as they can, so that Responsible Authorities, planning authorities and others can understand as soon as possible how LNRSs will work in practice. Strengthened Biodiversity Duty
- The timing of the first Biodiversity Duty Report is linked to when that relevant section (section 103) comes into force. Section 103 includes a power to lay regulations that will specify what must be included in the report and the other public authorities (beyond local authorities) that the reporting requirement will apply to; so, more detail will be forthcoming.

- Consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain – Mandatory biodiversity net gain, as set out in the Environment Act, applies by amending the Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA); it is expected to become law in 2023. There will be a two-year implementation phase for BNG – For agreement on submission of an Officer Technical Response via the Online Questionnaire and it will not be mandatory for LPAs to deliver BNG through development before this point. Working date for mandatory requirement to come into force is November 2023 but Defra have not publicly committed to that date. Anticipated timeline: o Winter 2021/22 – following Environment Bill getting Royal Assent, there will be Government consultation on BNG statutory instruments and regulations o Spring 2022 – Government response to consultation o Spring 2023 – BNG site register and statutory credits sales platform go live o Winter 2023 – Biodiversity net gain expected to become mandatory for all TCPA developments

- BNG is already covered under the current wording of the NPPF, so there is policy provision for LPAs to request BNG in advance of the mandatory BNG roll-out should the LPA wish to do so.

On 11th January, the Environment Minister Rebecca Pow launched a consultation on government proposals for the formal introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain, in line with the new statutory duty set out in the Environment Act, which becomes a mandatory requirement two years after Royal Assent. Developments will have to be delivered in a way which helps to reduce and restore any biodiversity loss during the building phase, and crucially also deliver a 10% boost to the area's biodiversity. The consultation is asking developers, planning authorities, environmental professionals, landowners, and other interested parties for their views on the details of how biodiversity net gain should be delivered when building new housing or commercial development.

The press release accompanying the announcement of the consultation also indicated that a new funding pot of over £4m is being provided by Government to help LPA expand ecologist resource and upskill ecologist teams, increasing their capacity to work with developers and communities to provide biodiversity gains by helping restore wildlife, plants, and landscapes after building work has taken place. This can take place on the site, elsewhere in the local area or, if this is not possible, by purchasing credits for nature restoration elsewhere in England. The consultation closes on 5 April 2022

New Environmental Land Management Schemes – On 6 January Defra unveiled two new environmental land management schemes that will reward farmers and landowners for actions which benefit the environment, supporting sustainable food production alongside vital nature recovery and work towards net zero. The Local Nature Recovery scheme will pay farmers for locally-targeted actions which make

space for nature in the farmed landscape and countryside such as creating wildlife habitat, planting trees or restoring peat and wetland areas. The Landscape Recovery scheme will support more radical changes to land-use change and habitat restoration such as establishing new nature reserves, restoring floodplains, or creating woodland and wetlands. These pilot projects are expected to deliver:

- the creation of 10,000 hectares of restored wildlife habitat
- carbon savings between 25 to 50 kilotonnes per year – roughly equivalent to taking between 12,000 – 25,000 cars off the road
- improved status of around half (45-57%) of the most threatened species in England, including the Eurasian curlew, sand lizard and water vole These schemes join the previously announced Sustainable Farming Incentive.

Best wishes

Cllr Lois Samuel