



# COVID-19 Briefing



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## COVID-19 ICS update - 18 March 2021

This bulletin provides important information for people working in health and care across the North East and North Cumbria regarding guidance and actions being co-ordinated across our region to care for patients, staff and our communities in the light of COVID-19. We will do our best to keep you updated with the latest information and key decisions from the Health Co-ordinating Group. This group is led by Alan Foster, executive lead for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System. If you have any questions or would like us to send vital information to partners through this bulletin, please contact us [here](#).

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## Message from Alan Foster



## COVID vaccination programme

Our COVID vaccination programme continues to go from strength to strength, with [figures released today](#) showing that we have now delivered around 1.2 million vaccines across our ICS. This continues to be the highest cumulative number in the country, a phenomenal achievement. Thank you to everyone involved in the programme.

There is further good [news](#) on the vaccine front as Middlesbrough's Riverside Stadium is to open as our fifth large vaccination centre on Monday, adding even more capacity

to help the NHS vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible.

You will no doubt have heard in the news over the last week reports of issues with supply with AstraZeneca. This is a fast-moving situation and we will be monitoring it closely to find out what this means for our own supply moving forward.

That said, we will continue to do all we can to meet our target to offer all adults over 50 their first vaccine dose by 15 April and as you can see we are coming from a very strong position having vaccinated so many of our population so far. Clearly we will be protecting supply to enable delivery of second doses.

Also lots in the news about the efficacy of the AstraZeneca vaccine and our region's directors of public health have released this statement to reassure the public that they consider the vaccine safe and effective for use. You can read the statement in full [here](#). Please do all you can to help spread this important message.

### **Latest picture in the region**

We are continuing to see a reduction in the number of patients with COVID-19 in our hospitals, which is very positive news. Last week, we shared with you that the number of patients in hospitals had dropped below 500 for the first time in a long while and, as of the start of the week, this number had now decreased to below 250.

The number of community cases across the region are also continuing to fall, however we know that we must all continue to do our bit, especially as we start to see some restrictions lifted over the coming weeks.

I'd again like to thank all of our teams who continue to provide incredible healthcare to our communities. Your continued efforts are saving lives and helping to keep us all safe, which is very much appreciated.

### **One year on**

Tuesday 23 March will mark one year on from when we were first put into [national lockdown](#) and asked to stay home to protect the NHS and save lives.

Organisations and teams will be marking this in their own way and I would like to pass on my personal thanks to everyone. While the past year has been incredibly tough on us all, we have managed to achieve so much together and you should all be so proud of the work you have done. You have all made a difference.

The pandemic has affected each and every one of our lives and my thoughts are with those who have lost ones. With that in mind, I would like to remind everyone that support is available for our health and care teams across the region from our staff wellbeing hub. Please remember to share details of the hub with your teams, you can

find out more [here](#).

### **Sunderland Eye Hospital**

This week South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, in partnership with Sunderland City Council, unveiled exciting plans for a new eye hospital in the centre of Sunderland. This marks great investment in health and care in our region and demonstrates a commitment to continue to deliver the very best healthcare for our communities. It also shows that, despite currently being faced with incredible pressures, our region's NHS is determined to innovate and keep moving toward the future.

You can read more about the plans for the new eye hospital [here](#) which includes a message from our chairman Professor Sir Liam Donaldson.

### **Shielding update for clinically vulnerable patients**

Today the Department for Health and Social Care announced that clinically extremely vulnerable people in England will no longer need to shield from 1 April 2021.

This means that those on the shielded patient list can begin to follow the national restrictions alongside the rest of the population. From today and over the next two weeks, people on the shielded patient list will receive an advice letter that sets out practical steps on how to reduce their risk of catching the virus. You can read the latest guidance in full [here](#).

### **HSJ award winners**

Our regional NHS Find Your Place campaign won a prestigious Health Service Journal award yesterday for communications initiative of the year. The campaign is a further example of our region's incredible ability to work together as one. You can watch a film, which takes a look back at what the campaign has achieved since starting in 2015, which was shared with the HSJ judging panel [here](#).

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation trust were also highly commended in the acute trust of the year and staff engagement categories. I'd like to congratulate all other entries who were shortlisted for an award, you should all be incredibly proud.

Keep up the great work everyone.

Best wishes,

Alan

**Alan Foster is the executive lead for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System**

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## Other news and updates

**The R number in the UK:** The latest reproduction number (R) and growth rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK can be found here on [GOV.UK](#).

**Public Health England dashboard:** The Public Health England (PHE) dashboard can be found [here](#). Daily reporting includes deaths that have occurred in all settings where there has been a positive COVID-19 test, including hospitals, care homes and the wider community. The report also includes case rates per 100,000 resident population at lower-tier local authority level.

**National flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports:** A link to the weekly national flu and COVID-19 report, monitoring COVID-19 activity, seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses can be found [here](#).

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