
Public Health COVID-19 Update: Stakeholder Briefing

4th June 2021



Position in Plymouth

There is a lot of good news about the case rates across Plymouth – our rates are low, close to the South West average, and well below the average for England.

However, as we approach the 21 June milestone in the roadmap there is still a lot of uncertainty. Various experts have been sharing different views and while there is a lot of speculation and opinion across the media, it is too early to be sure where the country will be by that date.

On the one hand, cases remain low overall and the vaccine rollout is going well. Evidence suggests the vaccine is working, with low rates in older and more vulnerable people, even in the areas that currently have higher case rates. On the other hand, caution is key as we are seeing significant outbreaks in some areas of the country, which are linked to new variants. This is making people unwell and putting pressure on hospitals.

The next few weeks will help us to see which of the many models is right, and what steps can safely be taken on 21 June.

Hands, Face, Space

It is important to recognise that the opening up through the roadmap is about the legal limits to what people can do – they are not targets. COVID will not disappear on 21 June and it will be down to our own efforts to take the right measures and keep ourselves safe. This includes:

- Keeping a social distance
- Avoiding crowded places – especially indoors
- Wearing a face covering
- Regularly washing or sanitising hands

Testing yourself regularly using lateral flow devices is also vital to help prevent people with no symptoms spreading the virus. The majority of people who develop symptoms and test positive via a PCR test have no idea where they caught it from. One of the biggest dangers with COVID-19 is that you can pass it on without knowing.

It is also a great time of year to take advantage of nicer weather. Aim to be outside as much as possible, especially when meeting people who are not in your household. If you do need to be inside, open the windows and doors to let as much fresh air in as possible.

B1.617.2 or the Delta variant

COVID-19 variants have now been renamed by WHO using the Greek alphabet. This is to avoid naming them after the country or area they were first detected, but also to make them easier to say.

We are currently seeing the new Delta variant (previously referred to as the Indian variant) spreading across the country. While the Delta variant is more infectious than the COVID-19 virus that we are currently dealing with in Plymouth, there is no evidence to suggest it causes a more serious disease. The vaccines also still work against this variant but are slightly less effective. It is also important to remember that the vaccines take a few weeks to work properly.

There is no evidence that this variant is spreading in Plymouth or surrounding areas, yet - but we do have to expect it to arrive soon. We saw a similar pattern in December, when it was the Alpha variant (previously referred to as the Kent variant B117) that was initially seen in a few geographical areas, but then spread to become the main variant in circulation.

Vaccine rollout update

The Government has now announced that vaccination centres can start to call people over the age of 30 for a vaccination. Home Park has availability, so if you are eligible you can book a slot either online at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/> or by calling 119.

Over 150,900 people across the city have had their first dose of the vaccine and many will now be receiving their second. Every day, more people are taking up the vaccine to keep themselves safe and to take care of others. Data on this can be seen at:

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/coronaviruscovid19information/positionplymouth>.

The vaccine rollout is an important part of getting back to normal and living alongside coronavirus. If anyone has any questions or concerns about the vaccine, we have provided more information on the Plymouth City Council website at:

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/coronaviruscovid19information/vaccines>. You can also watch our Q&A session with a panel of health and care experts from across the city at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0IYVm5yg40>.

If you have previously been offered a vaccine but did not want it at the time, it is not too late to book yours if you have changed your mind.

Help and support is available

- Plymouth City Council's dedicated COVID-19 web pages are updated frequently at: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/coronaviruscovid19information>
- Help with food, money and supplies for anyone needing to self-isolate is available at: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/coronaviruscovid19information/ineedhelp>

How you can help us?

Please help us to keep Plymouth safe. The more people we can encourage to be COVID-safe, the more we can protect each other and slow the rise in cases across the city. The best way to avoid further restrictions is if everyone works together.

Follow us on social media @plymouthcc, retweet our public health messages and campaigns, refer people to our website:

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/coronaviruscovid19information> and follow the guidance!

How can we help you and the communities you are in touch with?

We understand that everyone will have different needs or concerns and it is important for the Public Health Team to be able to address those, equipping everyone with the support they need in order to keep Plymouth safe. Part of our work is looking at how we can better help people across the city. If there is anything that we can provide that will benefit the communities you are in touch with, please share these with us by emailing us at: COVID19@plymouth.gov.uk. You can also use this email address to contact us with any queries you might have.

We have had a great response to our COVID-19 Community Information Champions campaign, but it is not too late to join us. Find out more at:

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/coronaviruscovid19information/covid19communityinformationchampions>