

Email response received on 17/08/21:

Thanks for making me aware of this motion. Councillor Fitzgerald is correct that any action of this sort gets channelled through the County Council, so I hope it's appropriate for me to respond.

First, can I formally express my thanks to Allerdale Borough Council and its officers for the work that you and your teams have undertaken throughout the last 18 months. Your work particularly on contact tracing and outbreak control has been exceptional, and everything you've been doing to support the Borough to be Covid-secure, including enhanced regulatory and enforcement activity and supporting people to self-isolate through running the support grant schemes, has been a crucial part of the pandemic response. It has been a pleasure working with you and your officers throughout – despite the circumstances – and I am extremely grateful for the part that your teams have played.

Of course as the Council recognised through supporting this motion, the pandemic is far from over. As things stand, case rates in Allerdale are reasonably stable, though at a much higher rate than previous stable levels – around 260/100k/week. This is around the Cumbria average and below the England figure, which is currently around the 300/100k/week mark. Fortunately, thanks to the vaccination programme these relatively high rates are not currently translating into high levels of hospitalisation or death.

I meet every week with colleagues from the Regional Contain Team and the Joint Biosecurity Centre to discuss the position in Cumbria and whether any additional support from the national system is needed. The result of these discussions is then fed into the weekly national planning round, resulting in Ministerial decisions on what support to provide to which areas. We have requested and received such support in the past, notably when we carried out a 4-week programme of surge testing aimed at all 12-30 year olds in the County, and when we requested specific national communications to be done regarding safe and appropriate travel to the Lake District. At this point, however, with case rates stable and below the England average, there is very little likelihood of additional national support being made available to us, and certainly not in the form of additional funding.

As you're aware, we have already received considerable resources through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, much of which has been disbursed to District Councils to enable you to carry out your vital contact tracing and enforcement role. However we have retained some of this resource unallocated to enable us to respond to any additional unforeseen pressures. At the Health Protection Oversight Group this week I will be initiating a piece of work to identify where there is any further demand that might need additional resource. As such if there are any such resource requirements identified for Allerdale these can be picked up as part of this process.

Thank you again for all your input so far, and in anticipation of this continuing over the autumn and winter!

All the best,

Colin

Colin Cox
Director of Public Health
Cumbria County Council