

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2020
OPEN QUESTIONS**

Questions from Councillor H. Anderson

1. To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

Can you advise us of the number of adults with learning difficulties living within Scottish Borders, the percentage tested for Covid-19, the percentage of those have tested positive and what the mortality rate is? An analysis across different types of care provision would be helpful, if possible.

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

In the Scottish Borders, during COVID, the learning disability service has had contact with 638 people with learning disabilities. The predicted population prevalence is 2.2% but the specialist service is not involved with everyone with a learning disability and there is likely to be people in our communities with a learning disability who do not have a diagnosis of learning disability (LD) and live independently. We do not collect data on this cohort of people.

- There are 3 small Care Homes for adults with learning disabilities (46 beds in total) and there is a testing available in place for those who will consent/assent to this should they become symptomatic. Testing is available for the staff teams also. Any incidences of suspected or actual COVID within this population are reported through a national portal in the care home sector. Our local data indicates that there have been 0 Covid +ve tests in these LD care homes and 0 Covid deaths.
- Adults with learning disabilities living in their own homes or within supported accommodation are only tested, along with the rest of the Scottish population, if they present with COVID symptoms. There is currently no proactive screening process in place for this client group in Scotland. Our local data from LD providers indicates that there has been 1 Covid +ve test in this population this individual has recovered. We do not collect data for this client group on Covid deaths.
- Incidences of COVID and all deaths in registered support services are reportable to the Care Inspectorate so it may be that a request could be made to them.

We ask learning disability service providers to report on a weekly basis any suspected or actual incidences of COVID within their staff or service user groups. We do not ask for this data from GPs who may be aware of other people not known to the learning disability service.

Supplementary

Councillor Anderson commented on a recent news report that the mortality rate for this group was 6 times higher than for others in the same age group and asked if there was anything more the Council could do to support them and their carers with regular testing. Councillor Weatherston advised that he would take this back to officers but he was confident that this support was already being provided.

2. To Executive Member for Sustainable Development

In November 2021 the eyes of the world will be on Scotland as we host CoP26 in Glasgow. What actions are Scottish Borders Council planning to take to mark this globally important event?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

Councillor Anderson's question is welcome. The Council is very conscious that 'the eyes of the world will be on Scotland' during COP26.

Between 1 and 12 November 2021, the UK Government, with assistance from the Scottish Government, will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (hence COP26) at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow. COP26 will be biggest summit the UK has ever hosted, and is being described as the most significant climate event since the 2015 Paris Agreement. The climate talks will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to report on progress since the Paris Agreement and to agree further coordinated action to tackle climate change.

The Council's 'Responding to the Climate Emergency Report' agreed in September identified the Council as having two fundamental responsibilities in this area:

- a) The first responsibility is to deliver a comprehensive reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate adaptation across the Council as an organisation.
- b) The second responsibility is to provide leadership and to influence climate action across the Scottish Borders region.

As the question implies, COP26 presents an opportunity to manifest the Council's commitment to action on Climate Change both in its organisational response and in its leadership role for the Scottish Borders.

Discussions have already taken place to explore these matters. They have involved the Leader, Executive Member for Education and me (as Executive Member for Sustainable Development). As those conversations are at an early stage, it would be premature to go into detail, but discussions relate to how the Council shows its commitment in its actions on greenhouse gas reductions and adaptation, and how it engages with the public, particularly young people, in developing its policy approach and action plan. I would hope to be able to engage members of our Sustainable Development Committee in a discussion around our engagement process as early as our next meeting on 4 December.

The broader picture and our approach action will be developed with Member engagement as we move through the Spring of 2021, and towards COP26.

Supplementary

Councillor Anderson suggested that consideration be given to talking to young people about their aspirations and suggested that every pupil be given the opportunity to plant a tree and asked that these ideas be considered by the Sustainable Development Committee. Councillor Aitchison advised that he had already talked to senior pupils at Peebles High School, was to meet senior pupils at Galashiels Academy that afternoon, and would be attending tree planting by pupils at Stow Primary School the following week. He assured Councillor Anderson that there would be an ideas session at the Sustainable Development Committee on how best to engage with young people.

Question from Councillor Bell

To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

During the first wave of the pandemic there was unfortunately an outbreak of Covid-19 in the Saltgreens Care Home in Eyemouth and sadly there were some deaths. This facility is run by SB Cares and since July I have repeatedly asked for Elected Members to be apprised of the outcome of internal investigations into all aspects of this outbreak.

It is important to ensure that any learning from this serious incident is taken on board by the Council and our partners.

When will a report be given to Elected Members?

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

Can I start by offering my condolences to the relatives and close family of anyone who has sadly died during the COVID 19 pandemic. But I wish to pay a particular tribute to those families whose relatives died in Saltgreens Care Home or in any other Care Home during the first wave of the pandemic earlier this year. These were challenging times for us all but they must have been

particularly challenging for anyone who could not regularly see their relatives and whose relatives died in any circumstances at this time.

The Council has applied the most robust response and recovery models available across every aspect of responding to the pandemic. We have worked collaboratively with NHS colleagues through our active participation in Incident Management Team meetings and also through our work with the Care Home Oversight Group.

At the core of this work are reviews of the action taken and in particular a focus on staff on the ground to ensure that they have the best possible guidance and support in providing care for the most vulnerable in our society. There has been a particular focus on ensuring adherence to all Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland and NHS guidance that continues to be updated on a regular basis.

Learning lessons from the experience of our staff is a critical part of strengthening our response and providing the best care possible. I am clear that lessons have been learnt on an ongoing basis as we have developed our response to this most challenging of situations.

Officers will update members at our forthcoming briefing on 3 December in respect of not just the response at Saltgreens but also at Deanfield in Hawick and to the outbreak in Jedburgh. They will also update on the response in our schools where they have been impacted by COVID 19.

Supplementary

Councillor Bell added his condolences and asked that, while he welcomed the Members briefing, could the learning points which respected client confidentiality be made public. Councillor Weatherston advised that this would be considered after the briefing on 3 December.