



Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Minutes - 26 May 2021

Attendance

Members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Tracy Cresswell	Healthwatch Wolverhampton
John Denley	Director of Public Health
Suffia Perveen	WEDP
Matthew Reid	Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Leader of the Opposition
Paul Tulley	Managing Director, Wolverhampton CCG

In Attendance

Jim Brennan	Community Champion
Madeleine Freewood	Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Joanna Grocott	Place Based Manager
Satvinder Goraya	Community Champion
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Josie Kelly	Community Champion
Dr. Ainee Khan	Consultant in Public Health
Mahmood Khan	Community Champion
Paul Watson	Community Champion
Richard Welch	Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education)

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received from Marsha Foster, Adrian Philips, Dana Tooby, Yvonne Higgins and Emma Bennett.
- 2 Notification of substitute members**
Suffia Perveen attended for Dana Tooby and Matthew Reid attended for Yvonne Higgins.
- 3 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest made.
- 4 Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting of 10 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

6 **COVID-19 Situation Update**

The Chair moved to take items 6 and 7 together.

Dr Ainee Khan, Consultant in Public Health delivered the COVID-19 Situation Update with supporting presentation. In terms of daily cases, a graph illustrated that Wolverhampton was currently seeing a low number of cases, with no sign of a resurgence yet despite lifting of some restrictions.

It was reported that rates were currently highest amongst young people and working age adults.

It was noted that Wolverhampton case rates currently ranked among the lowest in the West Midlands and numbers by geographical area were very small.

In terms of hospital admissions, numbers of inpatients remain in single figures, which was encouraging. Vaccination uptake was slightly below England average, but still at high levels in eligible age groups. It was noted that over 60% of the adult population of the City had received at least one dose.

John Denley, Director of Public Health provided an update on the current variant of concern (VOC) with supporting presentation. The presentation defined a VOC as when the changes to a mutated virus or variant had a clinical or public health significance based on three key indicators:

- If the variant was more transmissible
- If the variant made people more ill
- If the variant had an impact on the effectiveness of current vaccines.

It was outlined that a response to a new VOC was typically modelled on the response to the South African Variant of COVID-19 (known as Operation Eagle) and the learning gained from this.

The Wolverhampton Local Outbreak Control Plan had adopted this framework which involved the use of 'Surge' or large-scale lateral flow or PCR testing, identifying cases and tracing/isolating contacts.

It was reported that Wolverhampton currently had a low COVID-19 infection rate of 11.4 per 100,000. It had been identified that the new variant was circulating within the community and it was anticipated that it would likely be the dominant variant in the area, region and country over the next few weeks.

It appeared to be more transmissible, although there were no early indicators that it was having an impact on hospital admissions and deaths and there was confidence that the current vaccines provided a good level of protection, particularly after both doses had been administered. It had been reported that many of the people more severely affected by the new variant had not yet been vaccinated.

A calm, considered and cautious approach had been adopted and it was recommended that the response would be to accelerate vaccine delivery, increase testing and surveillance and enhance contact tracing and support. A summary of key actions to be undertaken to support this approach was provided.

In response to a query around what the key message for the population would be, it was agreed that foremost was to encourage people to attend for a vaccine when called as vaccination was currently the best defence. The message was to urge people to think of their family and friends when considering their options.

Furthermore, it was noted that Coronavirus was unlikely to be removed entirely, at least in the short term, and that it would be a virus with which the general population had to coexist for some time.

It was acknowledged that life could still continue to a high standard with an awareness that variants may occasionally emerge that required a response or extra caution.

Resolved:

That the COVID-19 Situation Update be received.

7 COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group Update Report

Resolved:

That the COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group (CSG) Update Report be received.

8 Update on the Community Champions Network

Joanna Grocott, Place Based Manager delivered an update on the Community Champions Network with supporting presentation. The presentation provided an outline of the Community Champion Scheme which had been established to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on certain communities, develop engagement strategies and provide outreach support for the most at-risk places and groups.

It was noted that the scheme had been administered by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which had been providing funding to local authorities for provision of support for people shown to be most at risk from Coronavirus (COVID-19) including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people.

An outline of work undertaken to date was provided which had included a great deal of engagement activity to encourage vaccine uptake and promote safer behaviours for residents to reduce the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them.

Community Champions Satvinder Goraya, Paul Watson, Josie Kelly, Jim Brennan and Mahmood Khan attended as guests to provide a first-hand update account of progress made thus far. It was outlined that key approaches for Community Champions and Ambassadors were to build trust, listen to residents' concerns and dispel any myths surrounding the vaccine.

Amongst other achievements, it was highlighted that innovative methods of conveying positive messages around the vaccine had been utilised through media such as song, poetry, video, digital games and art.

It was reported that pop-up clinics had been delivered to take the vaccination centres into the heart of communities, with particular success being felt with clinics held in familiar places of worship which made residents feel more at ease. Champions had also engaged with schools, teachers and parents and accessibility had been enhanced with interpretations of information in different languages or a choice of audio recording or videos.

It was acknowledged that the project had grown since Christmas and developed into a whole City approach with the involvement of Council, business owners, partner organisations and residents. Local celebrities and other influential people within the City had contributed to promoting the uptake of the vaccine by posting images of themselves receiving the vaccine. It was noted that an initiative undertaken in Italy offering free pizzas with every vaccine had inspired plans to develop a similar incentive scheme in Wolverhampton. It was suggested that vouchers for a coffee or cake in a local business could be offered whilst businesses would be reimbursed using the MHCLG funding.

Resolved:

That the Update on the Community Champions Network be received.

9 **Vaccination Roll-out Update**

Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provided a verbal update on the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine programme.

It was reported that there had been good coverage in the over 40s cohort and vaccines would be available to the over 30s age group from the day this meeting took place. Work had been undertaken in partnership with Council colleagues in public health to focus on the uptake in the over 60 cohort.

Paul Tulley acknowledged that the work achieved by the Community Champions was excellent and the Chair also commended the valuable contributions of the Wolverhampton CCG, RWT and NHS.

Resolved:

That the Vaccination Roll-out Update be received.

10 **Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business.

11 **Dates of future meetings**

To be confirmed.