



# Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Minutes - 17 September 2021

## Attendance

### Members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal ( <b>in the Chair</b> )	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Tracy Cresswell	Healthwatch Wolverhampton
Ian Darch	Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council
John Denley	Director of Public Health
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Opposition Leader
Dana Tooby	Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership
Paul Tulley	Wolverhampton Managing Director, Black Country and West Birmingham CCG
Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education

### In Attendance

Madeleine Freewood	Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer

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Item No.	Title
1	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Brookfield, Emma Bennett, Marsha Foster, Adrian Philips.
2	<b>Notification of substitute members</b> Councillor Jasbir Jaspal attended in the Chair for the Leader, Brenda Wile attended for Emma Bennett.
3	<b>Declarations of interest</b> There were no declarations of interest made.
4	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of 26 May 2021 be approved as a correct record.
5	<b>Matters arising</b> There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

6 **COVID-19 Situation Update**

John Denley, Director of Public Health delivered the COVID-19 Situation Update with supporting presentation.

It was identified that Wolverhampton case rates were 50<sup>th</sup> highest in the country which was similar to Black Country counterparts. It was highlighted that the vaccine had reduced transmission by a small amount. Cases had reached a plateau in Wolverhampton and the aim was to reduce it back down to former low levels.

It was noted that the current focus was on learning to live with COVID rather than allowing the population to become complacent or forget about risks. 'Hands, face, space' was a continued message as well as urging people to get vaccinated to ensure the virus did not have the significant impact it did in the early days of the pandemic.

It was reported that efforts had continued in public engagement to encourage vaccine uptake and a great deal of work in collaboration with the Black Country and West Birmingham CCG had been taking place to maintain these efforts.

Resolved:

That the COVID-19 Situation Update be received.

7 **COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group Update Report**

John Denley, Director of Public Health presented the COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group Update Report and highlighted salient points. The report provided a summary of recent progress relating to the delivery of the local COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan.

In response to a query around vaccination uptake for carers, it was confirmed that this had improved from 50% to around 90%. There had been several different reasons for vaccine hesitancy, ranging from fears around side effects, conspiracy theories or fertility issues to false assumptions that people had missed their opportunity to have the vaccine. It was reiterated that, despite misconceptions, receiving the vaccines was a far safer method than contracting COVID to gain immunity.

A query was raised on communicating the message for vaccine uptake in 16 – 17-year-olds and if this age group were able to use the mobile vaccination sites. It was clarified that 12 – 15-year-olds who were clinically vulnerable themselves or who lived with family who were clinically vulnerable were due to be able to receive the vaccine. In terms of the vaccine buses, it was noted that staff required additional qualifications and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to work with young people of this age therefore these arrangements were being explored.

It was suggested that arranging for pharmacies to administer COVID booster vaccines would encourage uptake as well.

The importance of providing the public with the information to make the right decision was acknowledged as well as that organisations needed to continue to promote 'hands, face, space' as well as continual testing and vaccinations.

Resolved:

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

8 **Educational Settings Update**

Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education delivered the Educational Settings Update with accompanying presentation. The presentation provided a high-level update on the impact of COVID 19 on Wolverhampton schools including information on infection rates, testing and attendance.

Settings had responded by putting numerous precautions in place, such as holding events which would normally involve larger groups mixing as virtual events. The infection rates were higher than in June however the information was useful to determine how many year groups were affected.

It was noted that schools returning had coincided with many people returning to work therefore there was risk of cross-infection within households and to be mindful of this as winter and the flu-season approached.

It was noted that the vaccine programme for 12 – 15-year-olds had been approved and efforts were now engaged in working with schools and partners organisations on how to deliver the programme.

Thanks were extended to the Council's public health and education teams for working together and for approaching Wolverhampton schools so promptly.

Resolved:

That the Educational Settings Update be received.

9 **Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business.

10 **Dates of future meetings**

- 15 December 2021 at 10:30 am
- 17 February 2022 at 11:00 am
- 20 May 2022 at 11:00 am