



# Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Minutes - 29 September 2020

## Attendance

### Members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Emma Bennett	Director of Children's Services
Professor Ann-Marie Cannaby	Chief Nurse, Royal Wolverhampton Hospital Trust
Tracy Cresswell	Healthwatch Wolverhampton
John Denley	Director of Public Health
Marsha Foster	Director of Partnerships, Black Country Healthcare NHSFT
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Opposition Leader
Paul Tulley	Managing Director, Wolverhampton CCG

### In Attendance

Madeleine Freewood	Development Manager - City Health
Joanna Grocott	Systems Development Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Neeraj Malhotra	Consultant in Public Health
Dr. Kate Warren	Consultant in Public Health
Richard Welch	Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education)

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1 Apologies for Absence**  
Apologies were received from David Watts and Katrina Boffey.
- 2 Notification of substitute members**
- 3 Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest.
- 4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
Resolved:  
That the minutes of the meeting of 6 August 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- 5 Matters Arising**  
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

## 5a Urgent Business Item: Board Membership

It was noted that the Board was newly established and evolving constantly to incorporate cross-partnership working and engage with communities across the City. Following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, it was therefore proposed that membership be extended to include representatives nominated by the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and the Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership. It was agreed that the terms of reference would be amended accordingly and the nominated representatives would be invited to future meetings.

It was acknowledged that this would encourage wider diversity and ensure that communities could be reached therefore the proposal was endorsed.

Resolved:

1. That Local Outbreak Engagement Board agree for the membership to be extended to include representatives nominated by the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and the Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership.
2. That the Local Outbreak Engagement Board Terms of Reference be amended to reflect the new appointments.
3. That the Local Outbreak Engagement Board agree for nominated representatives to be invited to future meetings.

## 6 COVID-19 Situation Update

Dr. Kate Warren delivered the COVID-19 Situation Update presentation which outlined the current COVID-19 situation within the City.

The vast majority of cases were in the community with hospital cases low yet increased over last week or so.

The rate per 100,000 was 69.5 which, in relation to statistical neighbours, put Wolverhampton behind Birmingham and not much further ahead of the rest of the Black Country.

It was acknowledged that cases had risen across the country and not just in Wolverhampton.

Data still showed that older people were more at risk from the effects of the disease. Proactive testing within care homes had picked up more older adults. Older adults living in multigenerational households were at risk as it often spread easily within the household via younger people living there.

Despite schools reopening, there had been a very small number of positive COVID-19 cases among young children.

A shaded map of Wolverhampton provided a ward-by-ward overview; the darker the shading the higher the infection rate in that ward. It was noted that the data in some of the wards may have been skewed by a large household in that ward testing positive. The map shown was correct at 17 – 23 September 2020; the latest data available at the time of the meeting.

It was reported that NHS capacity was being monitored closely and extra precautions were being taken with staff in the older adult age range. Staff absence had increased but wasn't as high as levels experienced in March – April 2020.

Not all patients in intensive care were using ventilators however many were receiving Level Three Care which was the highest level of care and monitoring.

It was noted that there may be a lag between the intervention measures currently being introduced and the stabilisation or reduction of cases. This was due to the time taken between initial infection and for symptoms to show to prompt a test, therefore new cases would continue to emerge.

In terms of mortality, levels had dropped to rates which were normal for this time of year. The disease had been circulating more prevalently amongst younger age groups and they had not been as affected as older adults might be.

It was highlighted that extensive work to prevent the spread was continuing as, if it was not mitigated, infection rates could potentially rise to similar to those seen in March and April 2020.

Resolved:

That the COVID-19 Situation Update be noted.

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

John Denley, Director of Public Health presented the COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group Update Report. Every Local Authority is required to produce a Local Outbreak Control Plan specific to COVID-19 as outlined in the August 2020 national framework.

The report provided an update to the Wolverhampton Local Outbreak Engagement Board on progress relating to the delivery of the local COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan. The information within the report covered the time period from the date the Wolverhampton Outbreak Control Plan was published, 30 June 2020, to publication date of this report, 18 September 2020.

Particular attention was drawn to the Emerging Risks highlighted on page 11 of the agenda pack. It was noted that in respect of access to testing, issues had been experienced nationally as well as locally however local issues were close to being resolved as additional walk-through and drive-through testing stations had been introduced.

There had been some negativity on social media where it had been perceived that the public were receiving mixed messages over testing stations being closed. Reassurances were offered that none had been closed, however availability had recently been low due to Wolverhampton testing stations taking pressure off other areas who had run out of testing capacity.

It was important to reinforce the message to get tested as soon as symptoms show and not be dissuaded by perceived difficulties.

It was noted that the testing infrastructure was in its early stages nationally however, five sites had been set up around the City for use by the public to increase availability.

Resolved:

That the Wolverhampton COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan Report be received.

## 8 **Escalation Intervention Plan**

John Denley, Director of Public Health provided an update of the Escalation Intervention Plan. It was outlined that the rise in infections was being monitored throughout the Black Country and required immediate response, therefore a Citywide Incident Management Team (IMT) had been established to control the risk.

It was important to establish what was driving the increase and how it could be tackled collectively to drive it back down by working in partnership with representatives throughout the City such as CCG, NHS, WVSC, WEDP, business groups, Chamber of Commerce, Wolverhampton and Bilston BIDs, University of Wolverhampton, to name but a few.

It was reported that a five-pronged approach had been devised with an overarching communications plan to enhance and build upon contact tracing data to understand what is driving the rise in infection rates and to reinforce compliance.

It was agreed that there should be a maintained focus on the City's most vulnerable residents. Those identified as vulnerable had been written to with advice on how to safely conduct as normal a life as possible in an effort to support them to recover and live through the pandemic. It was reported that an initial 10 – 15,000 emergency food parcels had been placed on standby to supply to foodbanks or residents as needed.

It was acknowledged that a tremendous amount of intensive work had been undertaken over the last two weeks with many positive outcomes achieved, most notably that Wolverhampton had achieved eighth highest testing rate in the country and highest in the region.

Resolved:

That the update on the Escalation Intervention Plan be received.

## 9 **Education Settings Update**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services delivered the presentation on the Education Settings Update.

It was reported that all schools were now open and had shown promising attendance, although some parents had exercised extra caution around sending children in who were feeling unwell.

A robust attendance pathway was currently in place with the Attendance Team taking a proactive approach and engaging well with families.

There had been an increase reported in elective home learning, which had been expected as families either had found they preferred this method of learning or had concerns around possible infection in school. A dedicated Home Education Officer

had been appointed to provide support and initiate conversations with parents around what home education entails, its benefits and pitfalls.

Numbers were constantly evolving however at the time of the meeting, 3,000 children across the City were self-isolating and 67 incidents of positive cases had been reported.

The Authority had been working closely with the Department for Education to support schools and headteachers in navigating the guidance and making informed decisions on isolating the right bubbles. It was noted that it was important to balance safety with avoiding the risk of too many pupils missing school unnecessarily.

It was noted that schools needed to have a Remote Learning Plan in place by the end of September 2020. Many schools across the City had them finalised already and School Improvement Advisors had been analysing them to ensure they met the National Curriculum.

It was noted that the Authority were having daily conversations with the Department for Education to raise any issues.

It was reported that support for vulnerable learners was being continued by ensuring safe school transport for children and testing availability in special schools.

A concern was raised around the numbers of children self-isolating and the impact this had on teaching staff in terms of staff needing to self-isolate if their own children had to. It was noted that, to date, 50 pupils and 16 staff had tested positive which had resulted in 3,000 pupils and 200 members of staff self-isolating. This situation was being closely monitored and, as intelligence such as 'Test and Trace' became more efficient, it would become possible to safely send home smaller bubbles and fewer pupils and staff would be affected. In addition, guidance had been issued around childcare bubbles to assist and headteachers had been reporting promptly on positive cases as they became more familiar with the process.

In response to a query around what provision there was in place to support home-schooling due to the national increase in elective home learning as a result of COVID-19. It was clarified that all parents had the right to elect to home school their child for varying reasons and support was made available from the Authority, including learning resources, support group contacts and home visits. Parents did not have to accept support, although each case was cross-referenced with other vulnerabilities, checked to ensure parents were home-educating for the right reasons and that the arrangement was sustainable. It was important to stress to parents the great responsibility to make this decision.

Resolved:

That the Education Setting Update be noted.

10

### **Communications Plan Update**

Richard Welch, Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education), provided an update on the Communications Plan. Key communications activities to date had been divided into two categories: Universal (messages aimed at the general population such as wearing masks, testing, avoiding house to house contact) and Targeted (aimed at specific groups or settings, such as schools or care homes).

It had been identified that messages around staying safe and following guidelines had begun to get lost in repetition and not cascading effectively through communities.

It was proposed that, in order to strengthen communications, Councillor and Community leads be appointed as Champions to play a part in leading communities through the COVID-19 crisis. The Champions would engage with residents, acting as a bridge between local communities and the Authority, to provide information and advice, facilitate support and identify areas of vulnerability.

In addition, Local Outbreak Engagement Board members were asked to agree, adapt and promote 10 key messages to communities across the City on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It was noted that the decision to appoint Board members from Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and the Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership had been timely as this would further the reach across the City's communities.

The Board agreed to nominate representatives to be part a task and finish group to further develop a toolkit to inform the activity of Councillors and Community Champions. It was agreed that they did not have to make a decision today, but anyone wishing to nominate a representative for or volunteer to contribute to the task and finish group could contact Madeleine Freewood, Development Manager for further details.

The Board also agreed to endorse the proposed role and principles of Councillors and Community Champions.

Resolved:

1. That members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board agree to nominate representatives to be part a task and finish group to further develop a toolkit to inform the activity of Councillors and Community Champions.
2. That any member of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board wishing to volunteer or nominate a representative for the task and finish group contact Madeleine Freewood, Development Manager in the first instance.
3. That members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board agree to endorse the proposed role and principles of Councillors and Community Champions.

11 **Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business raised.

12 **Dates of future meetings**

- November 2020
- 10 March 2021

13 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 2 of the Act, namely information that is likely to reveal the identity to an individual.

14 **Detailed COVID-19 Situation Update (Exempt)**

This item was exempt as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 2 of the Act, namely information that is likely to reveal the identity to an individual.

15 **Other Urgent Business (Exempt Information)**

There was no other urgent business.