



Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Minutes - 12 November 2020

Attendance

Members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal (Vice Chair)	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Emma Bennett	Director of Children and Adult Services
Michelle Carr	Black Country Healthcare Foundation Trust
Tracy Cresswell	Healthwatch Wolverhampton
Ian Darch	Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council
John Denley	Director of Public Health
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Shadow Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Dana Tooby	Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership
Paul Tulley	Managing Director, Wolverhampton CCG
Vanessa Whatley	Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

In attendance

Madeleine Freewood	Development Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Chris Howell	Commercial Regulation Manager
Richard Welch	Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education)
Becky Wilkinson	Head of Adult Improvement

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received from Professor Ann-Marie Cannaby, Marsha Foster and Katrina Boffey.
- 2 Notification of substitute members**
Vanessa Whatley attended for Ann-Marie Cannaby and Michelle Carr attended for Marsha Foster.
- 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 29 September 2020 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**

John Denley, Director of Public Health delivered the COVID-19 Situation Update and Epidemiological Update presentation. The Daily COVID-19 Cases in Wolverhampton Resident Population graph provided results from NHS and Public Health England Laboratories as well as walk and drive through testing centres. There had been a rise in cases since October which was now slowly stabilising whilst the sharp dips shown were attributed to a lag in receiving lab results.

The COVID-19 case rates per 100,00 population table showed that Wolverhampton had been at 306.4 as at 7 November 2020, however as this changed continually, it was reported that the current number was 307 per 100,000. This had risen dramatically over the last eight weeks however the week to week results showed some stabilisation here as well.

The COVID-19 trend graph showed that, whilst the spread of the virus had been more prevalent in the 18 - 24 age range around September, this range had widened to include 18 – 64-year olds, i.e. residents of working age. It was noted that age combined with other factors such as other comorbidities still increased the risks of poorer health outcomes therefore it was reiterated that it was important to continue to ensure the vulnerable were supported and safe. The spread had not been as wide amongst children of school age.

In terms of geography, a map was displayed which showed the varying rates of positive cases throughout the City. It was noted that the purple areas representing the areas with higher rates coincided with the locations of test centres; which may mean that the higher rates were due to increased access to testing. It was noted that these areas were analysed to determine whether any other driving factors existed whilst areas where rates were low were examined to establish whether there were any barriers to testing or other factors at play.

It was noted that NHS admissions had neared a plateau which may be attributed to the Tier 2 measures however it was too early to see what impact the nationwide lockdown restrictions in force since 5 November had made. Mortality rates had reached a similar rate to that typical for the time of year however there had been a slight rise in COVID-related deaths in recent weeks.

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 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 addition to the information contained within the report, it was highlighted that there had been work undertaken to open two more testing sites and that Wolverhampton was one of the 66 local authorities across the country that would be using the emerging lateral flow testing technology. It was noted that the new method yielded

results in 15 minutes without the need for a laboratory. The roll out was currently under development in terms of the practical application of the testing and how it could be applied in various settings, for example how it could be used to periodically test care home or hospital workers.

It was acknowledged that the roll-out of the new vaccine would be the next long-term goal however, until this happened, it was important to continue to adhere to the key messages to prevent the spread of the virus.

In response to a query around whether the test could be self-administered, it was clarified that a clear clinical governance framework would need to be in place to ensure the test could be administered safely therefore ways of achieving this were being explored.

Resolved:

That the content of the COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group Update Report be noted.

8 **Incident Management Team (IMT) Update**

John Denley, Director of Public Health delivered the Incident Management Team Update. The update provided an overview of national restrictions, the formation of the Incident Management Team and the planned response to the second wave.

It was reported that it was typical for the Council to form a team to develop a response to an incident and the serious nature of the COVID pandemic had called for a wider multiagency approach with partners from across the City.

An Incident Management Team (IMT) had come together to explore how to tackle the impact of COVID collectively to protect and support the vulnerable and help the City recover.

It was reported that, in response to the second wave, a number of systems had been co-ordinated by the team. This included communications to vulnerable residents on how to stay safe and the expansion of the Stay Safe, Be Kind call centre as well as extensive work around testing and contact tracing. It was reported that the vaccinations may be ready to roll out by December 2020 – January 2021.

Resolved:

That the Incident Management Team Update be noted.

9 **Adults and Educational Settings Update**

Becky Wilkinson, Head of Adult Improvement provided an update around adult social care.

It was noted that discretion for allowing visiting relatives into care homes lay with the Director of Public Health as long as the local infection rate remained above average. The protocol had been refreshed to allow essential visits, which included visiting patients receiving end of life care or if a lead professional deemed the visit as vital to the patient's mental health. The Act ensured that the decision would also take into account the best interests of everyone at the care setting. It was clarified that the number of care homes now closed for new admissions during the outbreak had risen to seven. 41 EMI beds had been opened up due to isolation periods reaching an end.

National Portal testing was in place and turnaround time for test results had improved whilst the flu vaccination programme was underway with extra provision planned for November. It was reported that response plans were in place for a second wave and that the deadline had been met for the money received from the Government Infection Prevention Fund to be distributed to care homes.

In response to a query around access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for carers, it was clarified that it would be provided as soon as the service was aware it was required and that any gaps in provision would be investigated.

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services delivered the update on Educational Settings.

It was reported that attendance had remained fairly stable with only a slight dip since last week. Work had been ongoing with school headteachers to reduce bubble sizes, ensuring fewer children had needed to self-isolate relative to case numbers.

It was highlighted that the increase in elective home education, with COVID cited as the primary reason, had become a concern and follow-up work was being undertaken to ensure parents fully understood the impact of removing their child from their school place and what responsibilities they would be taking on.

It was reported that the Education IMT met three times a week which enabled members to keep active oversight of school estates and reinforce communications messages.

It was noted that, following the latest Government announcement regarding access to FSM support over the Christmas period, work was ongoing to establish what would be required in terms of planning and response.

Resolved:

That the Adult and Educational Settings update be noted.

10

COVID-19 Business Support

Chris Howell, Commercial Regulation Manager delivered the COVID-19 Business Support presentation which provided an overview of the support provided by the Authority to businesses across the City to ensure they could continue to trade safely. The model Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce had been implemented to support this.

Communications had been sent and multiagency visits had been undertaken to provide businesses with advice on safety measures and how to enforce them. Extra support had been supplied to non-compliant businesses to ensure they were brought into compliance. Action had been taken to revoke the licence of a non-compliant bar within the City and to close a barber's which had failed to follow correct procedures. The barber had been able to re-open following positive engagement to bring them in line with compliance.

It was noted that a COVID Business Support Team had been established, including Senior Environmental Health Officers to provide expert help and guidance. Undertaking this had been challenging, due to staff capacity however this had been

reinforced by the appointment of a team of 18 COVID Support Advisors to work with businesses, not as enforcement but to provide support and maintain the presence of safety and compliance messages within the City.

As part of the development of the COVID Compliant scheme, signage had been issued to identify businesses that had been visited and found to be adhering to COVID safety measures. A QR code had been included in the design directing visitors to an online survey to provide feedback on how safe they had felt during their shopping experience; it was reported that positive feedback had already been received from these surveys. Feedback from businesses on the support received had also been very positive.

A short video outlined the work of the COVID Support Advisors and that this was the only scheme of its kind in the West Midlands to date. COVID Support Advisors had continued their work over lockdown, which included delivering leaflets to homes with information regarding testing and It was reiterated in the video that they were not enforcement but ambassadors to provide assistance and support.

It was queried how the scheme addressed unfair treatment sometimes experienced by people unable to wear masks. It was reported that colleagues in Public Health were being consulted regarding the introduction of a recognised lanyard scheme to identify those who were genuinely exempt.

Resolved:

That the COVID-19 Business Support presentation be noted.

11

Communications Plan Update

Richard Welch, Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education) delivered the Communication Plan Update presentation which provided an overview of recent and planned communications and engagement.

It was reported that there had been a great deal of activity around the launch of the NHS COVID-19 app and local Tier 2 restrictions which had then been followed by information on the national lockdown. Leaflets had been distributed to low uptake areas with information regarding test centres and the introduction of the COVID Secure Scheme had been publicised. Press releases had gone out reminding residents to observe the restrictions during Hallowe'en and Bonfire Night with alternative solutions to the usual customs.

It was noted that future campaigns had been planned around Testing Sites/ potential pilot opportunities; Business support; a 'Shop Local' campaign, Ongoing key Public Health messages as well as enforcement work with Police and WMCA Youth Engagement to try and establish what was important to young people. In addition, a great deal of background work around Mental Health support had been undertaken and there would be something in the near future.

In terms of the Councillor and Community Champions, it was highlighted that Councillor Rupinderjit Kaur, Councillor Simon Bennett and Councillor Zareena had been nominated as political leads. They had been furnished with key messages and contact information to provide support to constituents and had been engaged in producing video content for social media. Work with Councillors work was ongoing

with the Learning Communities Partnership to coproduce material and a task and finish group had been established to take this forward.

Resolved:

That the Communications Plan Update be noted.

12 **Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business.

13 **Dates of future meetings**

The next meeting of Local Outbreak Engagement Board was scheduled for 3 February 2021. It was noted that there would be one in between if required.