



# Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Minutes - 3 February 2021

## Attendance

### Members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Emma Bennett	Director of Children's 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
Cheryl Etches	Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Opposition Leader
Dana Tooby	Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership
Paul Tulley	Managing Director, Wolverhampton CCG

### In Attendance

Madeleine Freewood	Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Joanna Grocott	Systems Development Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Ainee Khan	Consultant in Public Health
Suffia Perveen	Ethnic Minority Council - Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership
Richard Welch	Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education)

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1 Apologies for Absence**  
Apologies were received from Councillor Jasbir Jaspal, Professor Ann-Marie Cannaby and Marsha Foster.
- 2 Notification of substitute members**  
Cheryl Etches attended for Professor 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 12 November 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**

Ainee Khan, Consultant in Public Health delivered the COVID-19 Situation Update and Epidemiological Update presentation.

The COVID-19 case rates per 100,00 population table showed that Wolverhampton had seen the highest decrease in cases in the region.

The COVID-19 trend graph showed that case rates were falling in all age groups although it again showed that there were more cases amongst residents of working age.

The map depicting the case rates within the City by geographical area revealed that there were no consistent hotspots.

It was noted that hospital admissions had risen since December 2020 and figures showed that there were 300 in-patients in New Cross Hospital as at the day of the meeting. The Intensive Care Unit had expanded to twice its usual size to meet demand.

The mortality rate was higher than the peak of March 2020 however there were signs that the rate was starting to fall.

It was noted that the figures looked more positive than a week and a half previously, which was thought to be as a result of a combination of following restrictions, testing and delivery of the vaccine programme. It was noted that Wolverhampton had been a forerunner in lateral testing and the work around this was commended. Despite the positive figures, continual work was being carried out in partnership with Public Health England to ensure there were no areas that had been overlooked.

Concerns were raised around obtaining vaccines for workers in the voluntary sector working in face to face roles for organisations such as the Refuge and Migrant Centre or Age UK. Priority groups had been set out in national guidance however any organisation wishing to clarify whether their staff may be eligible were advised to contact the Black Country team or Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton CCG to check against the guidance.

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 (CSG) 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.

It was noted that the vaccine supply had been the key focus for the CSG and there had been some disruptions experienced with local deliveries. This had been a national issue however assurances were offered that key groups had been working in partnership with the NHS to keep the supply moving.

Decisions on how much of the vaccine is supplied to which area were made at a national level to ensure all areas moved through the priority cohorts at a similar pace. Officers were confident that the vaccine would have been offered to the top four cohorts by the anticipated date of 15 February 2021. The priority list was being followed closely to ensure only those four groups received their first doses of the vaccine.

In response to a query around cases of the South Africa variant emerging in the neighbouring authority of Walsall it was clarified that, until more was known, the same measures continued to apply; wearing masks, social distancing and regular handwashing, especially for those who needed to travel from Wolverhampton to Walsall for work.

Resolved:

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

## 8 **Adult and Educational Settings Update**

Emma Bennett, Director for Children's and Adult Services delivered the Adult and Educational Settings Update with supporting presentation.

All primary and secondary schools had moved to remote learning from 5 January 2021, excepting the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Work was being undertaken to ensure that vulnerable children continued to attend school where appropriate. Early years, maintained nursery settings, special schools and alternative settings remained fully open.

The Education Incident Management Team IMT met three times a week to provide continued support and guidance to educational settings.

Regular communication with settings took place via a twice weekly bulletin, as well as a weekly drop-in session and regular engagement sessions.

Secondary schools had all implemented lateral flow testing for staff and 2,183 tests had been administered since the beginning of January. Primary school staff had started using lateral flow test home devices in the last week.

It was anticipated that schools would not re-open before the 8 March 2021 however work was focused on supporting schools with re-opening plans in preparation for when further details would be announced.

Extensive work was ongoing to address the digital divide within the City. Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy and Heather Clark, Manager for Strategic Project Funding had been leading on the provision of digital devices for students. This was in addition to the support offered by the Department for Education and included a package of support for children and their families to boost ICT skills required to use the equipment.

In terms of adult services, it was reported that care home visits had stopped before Christmas as per Tier Four guidance.

It was noted that care homes had been offered the vaccination with 85% of residents vaccinated and 61% of staff and testing continued whether the vaccine had been received or not.

An increase in outbreaks had been seen during January across care homes in line with the increased rate in the City however it was now stabilising.

Ongoing support to care homes would continue regarding any outbreaks via the Incident Management Teams (IMT) and testing requirements for staff. Care Act Easement decisions are reviewed twice weekly at Adult IMT. We continue to maintain services at stage 2

The council has worked closely with CCG and RWT to manage the flow of patients more effectively to reduce risk of transmission.

Resolved:

That the Adult and Educational Settings update be noted.

## 9 **Communications Plan Update**

Richard Welch, Head of Partnerships and Commercial Services (Education) and Joanna Grocott, Place Based Manager jointly delivered the Communications Plan Update with supporting presentation. The presentation provided an outline of existing and planned communications as well as an update on the Councillor and Community Champions programme.

Key messages regarding national restrictions were being broadcast across social media platforms as well the promotion of a 'Wear It Properly' face covering campaign and a public health representative held a weekly slot on the Community Radio channel.

Similarly, messages promoting the benefits of the vaccine and dispelling common myths were also being disseminated. A post vaccination information leaflet was also provided to everyone receiving the vaccine.

Partnership work was ongoing with West Midlands Police to engage with and support local businesses with awareness of the current guidance and upholding compliance.

The Councillor Champion toolkit had been launched in December 2020 to provide support and information to Councillors to pass on to their local constituents.

It was reported that a Community Champion toolkit had also been developed enabling the newly appointed Community Champions to provide outreach and support to over 20,000 residents, including those in hard to reach communities.

It was noted that Wolverhampton had successfully secured funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which was intended to fund work to further develop the reach and scope of the Community Champions. The aim of this was to enhance the support provided for people most at risk from Coronavirus, including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people and others, to follow safer behaviours and reduce the impact of the virus on

themselves and those around them. Local Outbreak Engagement Board agreed to endorse this approach and receive regular update reports.

The work around targeting hard to reach communities was commended however concerns were raised around stressing the importance of compliance with regulations. The Intensive Care Unit at New Cross Hospital was still under significant pressure and deaths were still occurring raising the concern that some were still not appreciating the seriousness of the pandemic.

It was noted that heightened awareness and clarity was required around the fact that people could still potentially spread the virus even after having had the vaccine. It was noted that the medical staff administering the vaccine normally passed this message on verbally and provided an information leaflet, however it was agreed that this would be still be highlighted in further communications campaigns.

It was suggested that positive messages around the benefits of the vaccine needed to be heightened amongst the BAME community to increase uptake.

It was noted that improvements had been seen in gathering data and intelligence around why people were not accepting the vaccine which was informing the approach to targeting interventions to encourage take up.

In response to a query around mortuary capacity, it was confirmed that the Council was working closely with funeral directors, mortuaries and partners in Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust to obtain a daily overview and there was currently sufficient capacity.

A query was raised around communicating key messages to residents with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as including deaf and blind communities. It was noted that these groups had been picked up amongst the work identifying key audiences and a fuller update on this would be provided for the next meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the Communications Plan Update be received.
2. That the Local Outbreak Engagement Board agree to endorse the use of the MHCLG funding for further development of the Community Champions initiative and receive regular update reports.
3. That communications to key audiences with SEND would be an area of focus on the next update.

10 **Other Urgent Business**  
There was no other urgent business.

11 **Dates of future meetings**  
10 March 2021