



Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Minutes - 15 December 2021

Attendance

Members of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal (Vice Chair)	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Michelle Carr	Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
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	Black Country and West Birmingham CCG
Rose Urkovskis	Healthwatch Wolverhampton

In Attendance

Madeleine Freewood	Public Health Partnership and Governance Lead
Emily Hackett	Senior Public Health Specialist
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Dr Ainee Khan	Consultant in Public Health
Vanessa Whatley	Deputy Chief Nurse, Royal Wolverhampton Trust (RWT)
Becky Wilkinson	Deputy Director of Adult Services

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received from Emma Bennett, Debra Hickman, Katrina Boffey, Marsha Foster and Tracy Cresswell.
- 2 Notification of substitute members**
Michelle Carr attended for Marsha Foster and Rose Urkovskis attended for Tracy Cresswell.
- 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 17 September 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**

John Denley, Director of Public Health delivered the COVID-19 Situation Update with supporting presentation. It outlined that the current variant of concern, Omicron, was much more transmissible and cases had been confirmed in the Black Country. There had been indications of lower severity of illness thus far.

It was noted that Wolverhampton was in the bottom quartile and, at the time the slides were produced, case rates were at 402.8 per 100,000 people. It was stressed, however, that this was still concerning as the England case rate was around 500 per 100,000.

Graphs showed case rates per 100,000 in relation to geographical neighbours over the last six months and that Wolverhampton case rates had been fairly stable but had started to rise in the last month. Continued caution was urged and the public warned of a potentially challenging time ahead.

In terms of age, children and young people were driving transmission of the virus although this had an effect on working age people as the virus was carried from school to home and on to workplaces and vice versa.

In terms of vaccine uptake and efficacy, a bar graph showed less transmission amongst the age groups that had been vaccinated. Vaccine uptake was urged to protect those who were vulnerable as many people mixed socially with a wide range of age groups.

It was reported that vaccine availability was being widened with a choice of walk-in and bookable venues, increased capacity at existing venues, plus three more venues to be confirmed later on the <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk> website. Statistics from the vaccine 'shop' situated in the Mander Shopping Centre indicated that encouraging numbers from previously hard to reach communities had been attending supported by family and friends to take up the vaccine.

In response to a query around lateral flow tests supply issues, it was reported that this had been experienced nationally due to a sudden spike in demand. It was thought the shortage would be temporary and general advice was to only order as needed and use existing supplies before collecting more to avoid worsening the problem. Anyone in urgent need were advised to contact the Council who would look to source any available kits.

The role of community pharmacies was acknowledged and commended including their part in the roll out of vaccines, supply of LFT kits and demonstrations of their use. Thanks were also extended from partners to health colleagues for working to keep the City safe during a stressful and challenging time.

Concerns were raised around misinformation and residents were urged to consult reliable sources before making final decisions about vaccine refusal.

It was confirmed that there had been no evidence received by public health to support an emerging theory that vaccinated people passed on the Omicron variant more easily.

It was acknowledged that physical health and protection from the virus was paramount, however the impact on mental health resulting from the pandemic was still ongoing. It was confirmed that learning from the early days of the pandemic had been applied and more support mechanisms were in place than when the pandemic began. Continued partnership working, building resilience and learning to live with the virus had also been embedded into the Outbreak Control Plan.

Resolved:

That the COVID-19 Situation Update be received.

7

Winter Preparedness

Dr Ainee Khan, Consultant in Public Health, Becky Wilkinson, Deputy Director of Adult Services and Vanessa Whatley, Deputy Chief Nurse, RWT delivered the Winter Preparedness presentation. The presentation provided an update on the expansion of 'flu vaccination programme and summarised existing and anticipated Winter pressures in all settings.

The Health Protection Response 2021 – 2022 set out preparations in place including ongoing partnership engagement, exercises to establish who would provide key roles and points of contact and Winter Information Packs for various settings.

The additional pressures presented by COVID within social care were outlined and plans were detailed on responding to these challenges, including planning around finances and staffing. The presentation also outlined the launch of Wolverhampton Cares, a partnership network established in November 2021 to support and strengthen the City's care sector.

Vanessa Whatley, Deputy Chief Nurse, RWT provided an update of the work being undertaken within the Royal Wolverhampton Trust and in partnership with the Council's Adult Services. The presentation detailed the Trust's ongoing work towards preventing the spread of infection alongside supporting the continuation of elective surgery and other services.

It was confirmed that at present the two separate COVID and 'flu vaccines could be taken on the same day. Although there had been no news of 'flu circulating, it was stressed that 'flu immunisations should not be forgotten.

In response to a query around prevention of cross-contamination between hospitals and care homes, it was confirmed that measures and monitoring systems were now in place following learning from the early days of the pandemic. There were separate, designated spaces in two separate locations – one for positive cases and one for close contacts. These were regularly inspected by the Care Quality Commission and would remain in place throughout the winter.

A query was raised around support for people being discharged from hospital, particularly those going home alone. It was noted that there was some provision in place however it was agreed that joint discussions would be held outside of the meeting between Adult Services and the Voluntary Sector to explore expanding the offer of support in this area.

Resolved:

That the presentation on Winter Preparedness be received.

8 **Wolverhampton COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan December 2021 - Playing Our Part: Relighting Our City**

Madeleine Freewood, Public Health Partnership and Governance Lead and Emily Hackett, Senior Public Health Specialist presented the Wolverhampton COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan December 2021 - Playing Our Part: Relighting Our City report and highlighted salient points.

The report outlined that every Local Authority was required to produce and publish a thematic Local Outbreak Control Plan specific to COVID-19 and that the aim of the Wolverhampton Outbreak Control Plan was to:

- Reduce the spread of COVID-19 infection and save lives;
- Help as many people as possible return to normal life in a way that is safe, protects health and care systems and supports the economy to recover.

It was noted that, as part of the collective efforts to prepare the City and system for winter 2021 pressures, the multi-agency Wolverhampton COVID-19 Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) had made the pro-active decision to undertake a further update of the current plan. It was stressed that the COVID situation was continually evolving and the plan needed to remain dynamic to keep abreast of this. The presentation summarised the key changes as detailed within the report and it was agreed that once the refreshed Plan was ready, it would be shared with the Local Outbreak Engagement Board membership for a final review and sign-off prior to publication.

Resolved:

1. That the winter refresh of the Local Outbreak Control Plan be approved.
2. That a copy of the refreshed Local Outbreak Control Plan be circulated to members of Local Outbreak Engagement Board for final review and sign-off.

9 **Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business.

10 **Dates of future meetings**

- 17 February 2022
- 20 May 2022