

Intended Audience:	Local Outbreak Engagement Board		
Submitted by:	Wolverhampton Strategic Co-ordination Group		
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## 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Wolverhampton Local Outbreak Engagement Board on progress relating to the delivery of the local COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan. The Wolverhampton Outbreak Control Plan was refreshed in December 2021 and is published on the [Council website here](#). This report provides an update for the time period from 15 December 2021 to the next meeting of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board on 2 March 2022.

## 2.0 Local data & Intelligence

### 2.1 Local data and intelligence

A summary of the latest data will be provided at the 2 March 2022 meeting of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board.

## 3.0 Outbreak Control Plan (Key updates)

### Theme 1: Care Homes and educational settings

Care homes:

- The booster programme has been completed across care homes. New admitted residents will receive vaccines as required and requested through primary care on an individual basis.
- The Omicron wave is now receding within care homes, at peak level 25+ care homes were being actively managed as outbreaks, the highest point throughout the pandemic. In line with wider community trends, this most recent wave has not caused as much severe illness as previous waves with care home residents, with the exception of a small number of cases that required hospitalisation. A small number of deaths have also occurred where care home residents had tested positive, invariably these people had complex underlying health issues.
- Care homes have been supported to understand and implement changes in Government guidance as a result of the gradual abolition of COVID regulations. This has included changes to visitor restrictions, testing regimen, mandatory vaccine requirements and isolation periods.

- Following Government announcement to repeal mandatory vaccination for care home staff, which also extended to all health and social care staff, care homes have been provided with up-to-date information on the proposed changes.
- Weekly meetings between UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Public Health Wolverhampton, and other key partners continue to meet on a weekly basis to manage outbreak response.

#### Educational settings:

- Continued to provide a dedicated schools helpline to provide first line support and reassurance for issues, incidents and outbreaks.
- Continued to operate a local surveillance system to proactively identify potential outbreaks and respond accordingly. When community case rates began to peak, we adapted the proactive approach to target settings most at risk including special schools and boarding schools.
- Responded to incidents and outbreaks in educational settings, providing rapid risk assessments and offering tailored infection prevention and control guidance with the aim of slowing transmission whilst prioritising face to face education.

#### **Theme 2: Higher-risk settings, communities and locations**

- Facilitated a 'stay safe over festive break' campaign for University of Wolverhampton (UoW) students 1-2 December 2021 in partnership with CCG, WMP, WMFS, CWC, Bradley Pharmacy and UoW. During the campaign we conducted a student wellbeing survey on campus to identify student concerns around wellbeing and safety, distributed face coverings, lateral flow tests and provided an on-site vaccination clinic for both staff and students.
- Facilitated a 'safe return to campus' campaign for the start of the autumn term to encourage students and staff to keep testing before, during and following their return to campus, again distributed face coverings, lateral flow test kits and ran a 4-day pop-up vaccination clinic from 25-28 January.
- Continued to support the University in monitoring and responding to COVID-19 case and outbreak management and maintaining COVID-19 secure student accommodation.

#### **Theme 3: Community testing**

- Continued to ensure PCR and LFT testing is available and convenient across all wards in the city. This allows residents and visitors access a test quickly and locally should they need one.
- Responded to the high demand for LFT kits and testing during December and January when the Omicron variant was at a peak to ensure frontline and key services were able to deliver. During this period over 15,000 home test kits were distributed to individual residents and key partners, including Fire service, Domiciliary Care, Passenger Transport Services and Waste Services.
- Continuation of on-site LFT testing offer through selected community pharmacies.
- Testing continues to be used as a preventative measure, allowing for the early identification of positive cases, and prompt isolation to reduce the risk of onward spread.

#### **Theme 4: Contact Tracing**

- Continued to use data and intelligence to support Outbreak Investigation and Rapid Response.
- Worked closely with our dedicated COVID-19 IPC team to manage outbreaks in care settings, alongside other winter infections including flu and norovirus.
- Increased capacity of the Incident Management Team to support outbreak management when the emergence of the Omicron variant resulted in a surge of cases across the city.
- Further developed our flexible approach to outbreak management in response to Omicron and changes to national guidance. This included supporting settings to adapt to revised measures on self-isolation, contact tracing, IPC, testing etc.

### **Theme 5: Data integration and information sharing**

- Regular surveillance of all available data continues and is fed into the relevant response groups and partnerships for action or decision.
- The focus of surveillance has been on monitoring the scale of the omicron variant infection and its impact on education, hospitals and mortality. Case rates are broken down by age, geography and ethnicity so that action can be targeted appropriately, including vaccination access.
- The vaccination process has been data driven, using weekly information focusing on vaccination uptake in different MSOAs and in different JCVI cohorts.

### **Theme 6: Vulnerable People**

- Continued to provide food parcels for those who are self-isolating or with financial difficulties, supported by Welfare Rights team.
- Continued referrals to social prescribing team for those who are alone and worried or in need of additional non-financial support.
- Continued to identify and support underrepresented groups to register with a GP through Community Champion engagement and support.

### **Theme 7: Interface with the vaccine roll out**

Tackling disparities in vaccine uptake, since December 2021, we have:

- Continued to work with communities to understand the complexity behind low uptake in certain parts of the city and among certain community groups.
- Implemented the Community Vaccine Fund targeting voluntary and community sector groups in low uptake areas to develop initiatives and projects to support residents in their communities to access the vaccine.
- Delivered pop-up clinics to respond to the Governments Booster campaign, offering vaccines in local community centres, sports venues and in shopping centres. Success of this model has resulted in continued work to secure additional high footfall locations which can host vaccines sites to provide opportunistic vaccines.
- Developed a six-point plan to continue to address inequalities in vaccine uptake across Wolverhampton.
- Planning for future provision of the programme is underway, with an increased focus on community pharmacy delivery and opportunistic offers in GP practices rather than stand-alone bespoke vaccination sites delivered via PCN.

### **Theme 8: Governance and local boards**

- Wolverhampton's Outbreak Control Plan is published on the Council website: <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-and-information/covid-19-outbreak-control-plan> and the governance arrangements supporting the Plan are detailed on p10.
- Governance arrangements and the Outbreak Control Plan will be reviewed following the expected announcement of the Government's "Living with COVID" strategy on 21 February 2022.

## **4.0 Variants of Concern (VOC) and Variants Under Investigation (VUI)**

We have continued to monitor available data on current and emerging Variants and Mutations (VAMs):

- We worked in close partnership with UKHSA to provide a rapid but proportionate response to the emergence of the VOC identified towards the end of 2021, which became known as Omicron.

This included monitoring the growth of the Omicron throughout Wolverhampton, providing local advice to settings and adapting incident and outbreak response procedures.

## 5.0 Communications and Engagement Plan

Through the COVID-19 Communications Group, extensive communications and stakeholder messaging continue to focus on coronavirus advice and behaviours, and vaccine uptake. This includes sharing 'Return to Plan A' messaging that focus on safer behaviours, regular testing and getting fully vaccinated. We have continued to promote our city-wide walk-in vaccine clinics daily and more targeted communications have been focused on those who are vaccine hesitant. These include as groups which have seen the lowest uptake of the vaccine, including younger people and at-risk groups such as pregnant women. This work continues to be underpinned by the principals of behavioural science. The COVID-19 Communications Group are also looking at a 'Living with COVID' plan for the Spring.

## 6.0 Finance

Government have announced a number of one-off grants to support local authorities in their response to the pandemic. This includes allocations from the Outbreak Control - Test and Trace grant and the Contained Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) which are ring-fenced public health grants and have to be spent in line with the conditions of grant. In 2020-2021 the Council received a total of £9.3 million from these two grants.

The extension of the COMF into 2021-2022 totalled £400 million, Wolverhampton's allocation was £2.2 million, this grant continues to be subject to grant conditions and the submission of monitoring returns. The COMF will be used to support the activities outlined in the plan for 2021-2022. The Government have announcement the COMF grant can be rolled over into 2022-2023 to help further reduce the spread of coronavirus and support local public health initiatives. The refreshed Local Outbreak Control Plan provides an overview of where this money is being targeted.

## 7.0 Emerging Risks

A complete risk register (red, amber and green risks) is held by the COVID-19 Outbreak Control Planning Group (OCPG). Escalation of risk through the governance structure thereafter is as follows:

- OCPG escalate any amber and red risks to the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG)
- SCG escalate any red risks to the Local Outbreak Engagement Board.

As of 2 February 2022, there are no red risks to be escalated to the Local Outbreak Engagement Board.

## 8.0 Recommendations & Considerations

It is recommended that the Local Outbreak Engagement Board:

- Note the content of the report