

**24 November 2020**

**COVID-19 Local Outbreak  
Control Plan**

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**Report of Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health, Durham County Council**

**Electoral division affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is for Health and Wellbeing Board to receive the updated COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan (appendix 2)
- 2 Information contained in this report was correct at the time of writing, however some information may now be outdated or incorrect given the rate at which things are changing in response to the pandemic.

**Executive summary**

- 3 The Government requires all Local Authorities to produce a COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan. The overarching focus is to protect the health of local residents from COVID-19 and reduce any onward transmission from COVID-19.
- 4 In County Durham there are established health protection assurance arrangements with key partners working closely on infectious diseases, environmental hazards and emergency preparedness and response. This work reports annually to the Health and Wellbeing Board and has stood us in good stead to establish rapid partnership arrangements, including with the Public Health England (PHE) North East Health Protection Team, for developing the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan and preparing for complex cases of COVID-19 and outbreaks.
- 5 The work is managed by the Local Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB) building on the extensive cross Council and partnership planning and response to COVID-19. Recent updates relate to outbreak prevention and control; the developing case management to support the Local Outbreak Control Plan and capacity building with colleagues and partners to manage the unprecedented increase in demand as we enter a period of community transmission.

## **Recommendation**

Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to receive the updated COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan.

## **Background**

- 6 The Local Outbreak Control Plan for County Durham identified that cases would be expected to rise once restrictions were lifted and that an effective test, trace and isolate and outbreak management function would be required to contain the virus.
- 7 Each local authority is expected to have its own local outbreak management arrangements, the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan, to support the national test, track and trace programme. The role of the local authority is to provide an oversight of COVID-19 outbreaks including those in complex settings such as schools, care homes and workplaces, as well as provide direct support to cases and contacts who have been asked to self-isolate through the community hubs. This is built on established and longstanding relationships with PHE North East Health Protection Team.

## **Role of the Local Health Protection Assurance Board**

- 8 The key purpose of the Local Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB) is to lead, co-ordinate and manage work to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 9 The focus of local health protection work has been to undertake a risk assessment of settings where COVID-19 cases have arisen, providing public health advice and guidance, and gaining assurance that appropriate control measures are in place within the setting.
- 10 The HPAB continues to meet on a weekly basis.
- 11 Update on the work of the HPAB:
  - Progressed the implementation of the LOCP since its launch in July
  - Each setting has developed outbreak control teams (OCT), standard operating procedures (SOP) with Public Health England (PHE) for outbreaks (this includes additional groups that are relevant to County Durham for e.g. Durham University)
  - Developed a COVID-19 Communication Toolkit and Outbreak Management Toolkit.
  - Agreed local process for schools informing local authority of positive cases.
  - Provided training to partners and colleagues to further upskill and engage key staff to increase case management capacity

(Community Protection, Health and Safety and Education) and enhanced contact tracing (Durham University)

- Produced Covid Champions engagement strategy and action plan.
  - Developed a response to the contain framework and local escalation.
  - Actively responding to cases clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19.
  - Case management of single and multiple confirmed cases.
  - Engaged nationally to ensure accurate up to date data and intelligence is received locally.
  - Improved data analysis and the use of data to inform outbreak prevention, control and containment.
- 12 Currently there remains no vaccine or cure for COVID-19. Community transmission of the virus continues across the UK. Testing among the public has been extended, in order to identify if an individual with symptoms is infected. Those testing positive are expected to self-isolate, along with any individuals they have been in direct contact with. This process is part of the NHS Test and Trace Service.
- 13 Increasing capacity across Public Health, Community Protection, Communications had already been agreed as part of the plan and use of the Covid outbreak funding to resource this and the appointment of additional staff including an outbreak control team. Some funding was retained for contingency and support to Public Health England if required.
- 14 This core team was originally conceived as a supporting and coordinating unit that would oversee and facilitate the work of outbreak control teams established within the different settings outlined in the local outbreak control plan (e.g. education, care homes, community, workplaces, and prisons).
- 15 The team were able to support and most importantly contain local outbreaks including Stanley Empire, Burnside Working Men's Club, Durham University, and a number of outbreaks in care home and prison settings.

## **Community Transmission**

- 16 As cases increased rapidly at the beginning of September and we experience high rates of community transmission NHS Test and Trace began to escalate cases to Public Health England North East Health Protection Team (HPT). The HPT is there to focus on complex cases and settings and to support local authorities in managing outbreaks. Never-the-less where linked cases are identified our outbreak control response remains an essential part of reducing transmission rates.
- 17 This also coincided with the return of schools and a rapid increase in calls for advice, help and support despite a wide range of planning that had taken place.
- 18 Joint management arrangements with PHE were revised and Local Authorities were asked to follow up single cases on schools and workplaces.
- 19 PHE delivered training to local authority staff on case investigation and contact tracing in support of the aim to ensure that appropriate control measures were in place in settings. However Local Authority staff do not have access to the case management system CTAS to fully manage cases
- 20 Concerns had also been raised in relation to NHS Test and Trace and the need for this to have a more locally focussed approach. This had been raised by the Association of Directors of Public Health North East as well as the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health.
- 21 The increase in cases that the public health team have had to respond to over seven days since the beginning of September has resulted in a reduction in pro-active work and other priorities are at risk.
- 22 Since 31st August 2020 the public health team have supported more than 1,200 settings who have reported cases.

## **The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan**

- 23 The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan continues to provide a framework for leading, co-ordinating and managing work to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 24 The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan following key objectives remain:
  - Protect the health of our local communities through:
    - Provision of clear prevention messages in relation to COVID-19;

- Rapid detection of COVID-19 outbreaks;
    - Controlling onward transmission;
  - Provide support to those who need to self-isolate, building on our population health management approach to the pandemic;
  - Develop and apply intelligence, including the knowledge and insight providing by our local communities.
- 25 Seven themes identified, are addressed throughout this current plan. The detail in these elements is currently being revised to reflect developments to date:
- Care homes and schools
  - High risk places, locations and communities including universities
  - Local testing capacity
  - Contact tracing in complex settings
  - Data integration
  - Vulnerable people
  - Local boards

## **LA7 Regional Coordination**

- 26 The support sought from the seven North East Local Authorities (LA7) was for urgent Government support for the next six months as we move into winter. The North East already has the greatest health inequalities which have been exacerbated by COVID, both the virus itself and wider social and economic consequences of the virus. Without urgent preventative action the inequalities will widen further.
- 27 The objectives and ambition of the LA7 remain clear:
- Protect the most vulnerable from harm from the virus
  - Support schools to remain open
  - Support local businesses to operate safely
- 28 Whilst we are in the current national restrictions work continues to support the negotiations for the exit strategy and return to the tiered local restrictions.
- 29 This includes support for the North East Collaboration led by Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals providing integration and support for local systems, to interface seamlessly with NHS laboratory capacity – “as much as possible delivered as close to home as possible”.

- 30 Integration with established Health Protection Teams, Joint Biosecurity Centre and local authority public health teams.
- 31 Future-scanning and flexibility of response to anticipate evolving Covid-19 and other communicable disease threats and potential pandemics; optimising population protection and resilience.
- 32 In line with our Local Outbreak Control Plans the LA7 have developed a four stage approach:
- **Informing** – engaging with our local communities and being innovative in that approach and working collectively.
  - **Understanding** – using the deep understanding of our local communities to shape testing, test and trace, and support services that reflect local need.
  - **Compliance** – increasing the capacity and extending the existing compliance workforce.
  - **Enforcement** – having the ability to change North East restrictions from guidance to law to have a greater impact on transmission rates.
- 33 The LA7 negotiations are crucial to the Covid-19 North East response. Collectively, we believe that to go further faster, we need additional government resources to make the greatest impact quickly.

## Main Implications

- 34 Ability for all settings to respond rapidly to any outbreak situation.

## Background papers

- Included in Plan

## Other useful documents

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

#### Health Protection: Legal and Policy Context<sup>1</sup>

The legal context for managing outbreaks of communicable disease which present a risk to the health of the public requiring urgent investigation and management sits:

- With Public Health England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With Directors of Public Health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With Chief Environmental Health Officers under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- With NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups<sup>2</sup> to collaborate with Directors of Public Health and Public Health England to take local action (e.g. testing and treating) to assist the management of outbreaks under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With other responders' specific responsibilities to respond to major incidents as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- In the context of COVID-19 there is also the Coronavirus Act 2020.

### **Finance**

Funding being provided by government.

### **Staffing**

Staff time to implement the plan.

### **Risk**

Unknown due to the nature of COVID-19.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Community Hub has been developed to support vulnerable individuals.

### **Accommodation**

No impact.

### **Crime and Disorder**

No impact.

### **Human Rights**

No impact.

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<sup>1</sup> ADPH, FPH, PHE, LGA et al (2020) Public Health Leadership, Multi-Agency Capability: *Guiding Principles for Effective Management of COVID-19 at a Local Level*. <https://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guiding-Principles-for-Making-Outbreak-Management-Work-Final.pdf>

**Consultation**

Full consultation not possible due to impact of COVID-19.

**Procurement**

No impact but should inform council commissioning plans in relation to services that impact on the health of the population.

**Disability Issues**

No impact.