

Adults, Wellbeing and Health
Overview and Scrutiny Committee



15 April 2021

**COVID-19 Local Outbreak
Control Plan**

**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 Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive an update on our COVID-19 response and on the transition from the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan to Local Outbreak Management Plan.

Executive summary

- 2 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.
- 3 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 LA7 regional coordination or work, including the evaluation of the Beat COVID North East communications campaign, our use of Covid-19 data, the development of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme and the growth of Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) programmes.
- 4 The Government has published the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', which sets out the roadmap out of the current lockdown for England. As part of this roadmap Local Authorities are required to

update their Local Outbreak Control Plans (LOCP) with a revised Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP).

- 5 The main aim of the County Durham COVID-19 LOMP is to set out arrangements for the protection of the health of the local population in the context of COVID-19.

Recommendation

- 6 The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to receive this update report and note progress to date on the development of and transition to the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan.

Background

- 7 COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plans are based on the tried and tested practice of preventing and containing outbreaks in individual settings such as workplaces, schools, universities and care homes, enhanced with a broader range of partners, capacity, communications and governance.

Reason for Review

- 8 The initial plan recognised that the current pandemic is a dynamic situation and anticipated that the plan would require updating as appropriate and presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Protection Assurance Board. Locally, the plan has been continually revised to reflect local response as the pandemic has progressed.
- 9 Nationally, however, it has been recognised that there is an urgent need for the Local Outbreak Management Plans to be reviewed and updated as necessary to:
- incorporate the learnings of the past nine months;
 - plan for the next phase of the response;
 - account for the associated funding; and,
 - reflect potential changes in local roles, responsibilities, and resources.
- 10 Furthermore, it presents an opportunity to identify and share good practice and to reflect developments since the original plans were produced, such as local contact tracing partnerships, enhanced contact tracing and the need to respond to Variants of Concern (VOCs).

Role of the Local Health Protection Assurance Board

- 11 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.
- 12 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.
- 13 The HPAB continues to meet on a weekly basis. The current work of the HPAB includes:

- Data and intelligence analysis, including health data from County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CCDFT) and the County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- Developments and innovation: eg. Vaccination Programme and the Spike Detection Tool.
- Outbreak management
- Settings, including educations, care homes, community, workplaces, University, etc.
- PCR Testing and LFD Testing – rapid targeted community testing / school testing / University testing / LA7 testing proposal.
- Funding.
- Local Tracing Partnership.
- Regional oversight of LA7 work.

The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan

- 14 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.
- 15 The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan key objectives remain:
- Protect the health of our local communities through:
 - Provision of clear prevention messages for 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.
- 16 Seven themes identified, are addressed throughout the plan. These are:
- 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
- 17 And in addition, the Local Outbreak Management Plan is to include the following:
- Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC)
 - Action on enduring transmission
 - Enhanced Contact Tracing, in partnership with HPT
 - Ongoing role of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)
 - Interface with vaccines roll out
 - Activities to enable 'living with COVID' (COVID secure)
- 18 The draft COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan is in development and will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in June. The plan will then be shared with Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a later date.

Covid funding

- 19 The funding provided to support our Covid response and the Local Outbreak Control Plan is overseen by the Health Protection Assurance Board.
- 20 The Covid Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) has the same purpose as the Test and Trace funding being as follows 'to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19'. The guidance has specified however that the funding can be expended up to 31 March 2022.
- 21 Increasing capacity across Public Health, Community Protection, Communications, Community Hub and Covid-19 Champions has been implemented. Some funding was retained for contingency and support to Public Health England if required.
- 22 In addition, the government have also announced an extension of COMF into 2021/22 with a national sum of £420 million available. Detail is still awaited on allocation methodology and grant conditions.
- 23 A detailed funding update will be presented at the next Health and Wellbeing Board.

LA7 Regional Coordination

- 24 The seven local authorities of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, and Sunderland

have been working as a collective LA7 since September 2020 focusing on a joint approach to COVID-19. This has included political leadership to seek early intervention and restrictions in September 2020 when infection rates were increasing rapidly across the area, coupled with lobbying for increased financial support.

- 25 This approach is based on a deep understanding of our local communities and informed by data and intelligence which centres around the inequalities that local communities face, either directly or indirectly due to COVID-19. Core principles of this work includes taking our communities with us and representing the needs of those most affected by COVID-19 has been central to our work with communities and our COVID community champions have been core to this work.
- 26 The joint approach has centered around a small set of priorities, informed by Directors of Public Health:
 1. Engage our communities and work with them to address inequalities;
 2. Localised, regionally coordinated Test, Trace and Isolate programme;
 3. Roll-out of targeted community testing;
 4. Protection of vulnerable individuals in the community;
 5. Rapid implementation of a vaccine programme.
- 27 The collaborative approach has included funding and delivery of a well evaluated public facing campaign Beat COVID NE informed by insights from local people. This has given a joint message across the LA7 geography <https://www.beatcovidne.co.uk/>
- 28 The development of a more localised test and trace programme has centered on the Integrated North East Integrated COVID Hub and the move towards a more regional and local focused test and trace programme. This has included local tracing partnerships, support for testing and has drawn additional funding into the North East.
- 29 A joint approach to testing based on a set of principles has also been developed for the LA7 to ensure the roll-out of targeted community testing. This is based on protecting the most vulnerable, supporting safe working arrangements and contributing to action to reduce COVID-19 transmission and COVID-19 related health inequalities.
- 30 Dedicated work with our care homes has formed part of this work, including the production of materials to support guidance, quality assurance and support for testing arrangements within care homes.

- 31 More recently the LA7 has supported the implementation of the vaccination programme by seeking a core data set, providing leadership into the oversight of the vaccination programme and undertaking insight work on vaccine hesitancy. A dedicated group to ensure high uptake of the vaccination programme has been established, alongside operational coordination groups.
- 32 The LA7 is now also taking a joint approach to recovery, embedding health and wellbeing as a key outcome of economic recovery.

Covid-19 Data

- 33 Data and surveillance have been central to informing our understanding and response to the pandemic. Further information on local COVID-19 infection rates, cases by age band analysis, local rates by Middle Super Output Area (MSOA), vaccinations, hospital bed/ICU occupancy, COVID-19 deaths can be found on the Durham Insight web pages [COVID-19 dashboard](#).
- 34 The Government has published the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', how the Government will continue to protect and support citizens across the UK and provides a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England [COVID-19 Response Spring 2021](#)
- 35 Due to the relatively uniform spread of the virus across the country, the Government plans to ease restrictions at the same time across the whole of England. The roadmap seeks to balance health, including mental health, economic and social factors and how they disproportionately impact certain groups, as well as epidemiological evidence.
- 36 The roadmap outlines four steps for easing restrictions. Before proceeding to the next step, the Government will examine the data to assess the impact of the previous step. This assessment will be based on four tests:
- a. The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.
 - b. Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
 - c. Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.
 - d. Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

- 37 The roadmap recognises that it takes around four weeks for the data to reflect the impact of the previous step and the Government will provide a further weeks' notice to individuals and businesses before making changes. The roadmap therefore sets out indicative, "no earlier than" dates for the steps which are five weeks apart. These dates are wholly contingent on the data and are subject to change if the four tests are not met.

Vaccination Programme

- 38 The Covid Vaccination Programme in County Durham has been delivered in line with national guidance and priorities. Initially between mid-December 2020 and early January 2021 this was via 13 Primary Care Network (PCN) sites across the county, chosen for their ability to provide suitable facilities, staffing and vaccine storage so that vaccinations could be administered efficiently and safely. The sites operated seven days a week and also acted as vaccine distribution hubs for vaccination clinics run in individual GP surgeries.
- 39 In February 2021, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) was asked to vaccinate health and social care staff, which was done via hospital hubs: Darlington Memorial Hospital and County Hall acting as a satellite site for University Hospital North Durham. First doses were completed on time and second doses are currently being given.
- 40 In March 2021, a Mass Vaccination Centre opened on the outskirts of Durham City. Further mass vaccination centres are being opened across the region and community pharmacies are being established as additional distribution channels.
- 41 To date, vaccination in care homes giving second doses continues. The County Hall vaccination centre continues to focus on second doses for health and care workers. Work is underway to bid for capacity to target hard to reach groups in 18 areas of the County including the introduction of a mobile vaccination unit
- 42 Good practice to note includes the collaboration between partners, data surveillance enabling information about health inequalities to inform decisions about the location of sites and the development of communications resources, vaccination of care home residents and housebound patients, utilisation of volunteers to support the staffing arrangements for the programme.

Lateral flow device (LFD) testing

- 43 Within County Durham we have developed a rapid and targeted asymptomatic community testing solution to complement our local

Covid testing sites. This helps support our actions to control the transmission of the virus in local areas, determine prevalence of the virus in local communities if appropriate, and respond to rising cases in local areas.

- 44 In line with the roadmap out of lockdown we are offering free LFD testing to the following groups:
- if you can't work from home and your workplace doesn't offer LFD testing
 - if you are a carer for a vulnerable person
 - if you are in a childcare bubble and can't access the education LFD testing
 - if you leave home for recreation or exercise outdoors and meet up with another household or up to five other people.
- 45 Since 22 February 2021 we have delivered lateral flow testing from six leisure centre sites across the County undertaking approximately 950 tests a week.
- 46 As the leisure centres are due to re-open we have implemented a transition plan (6-14 April) to move from leisure centre venues to a broader dispersed delivery model covering the 14 AAP areas, with one LFD testing site in AAP area. This includes using; 11 Libraries, 2 Community Centres (Barnard Castle Hub and Youth Centre at Aycliffe) and 1 Leisure Centre (Spennymoor) confirmed as the sites.
- 47 In addition, other national lateral flow testing programmes are also delivered in County Durham. This includes the Department of Education's schools testing programme and University testing programme and the Department for Health and Social Care's testing for Care Homes.
- 48 Community Collect is an online 'click and collect' service to pick up LFD test kits for home testing and is currently dispensed at the testing sites at County Hall, Territorial Lane, Durham and Chester-Le-Street site. By 14 April we are hoping that all LDF testing sites become Community Collect points too.

Outbreak control and community transmission

- 49 The present low case rates experienced across County Durham indicate lower levels of community transmission. Outbreak management can in turn lowers the threshold for when to initiate investigation and importance of the timely identification of new cases/clusters and

potential outbreaks. Systematic data review processes are in place to facilitate this.

- 50 COVID-19 outbreaks continue to follow the PHE joint management arrangements as agreed. Arrangements between PHE and the local authority have been agreed via an overarching Standard Operating Procedure and then several more specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) based on different settings.
- 51 The Director of Public Health and the Local Health Protection Assurance Board work closely with PHE if an OCT is required. The OCT draws on existing local authority expertise depending on the setting or group of people affected, such as school, workplace, prison etc.
- 52 Since its establishment, the Outbreak Control Team has worked across the council and with partners to respond to the rising numbers of cases and outbreaks. The team have put in place a range of procedures, including a triaging system, staff rotas in and out of hours, initial investigations of cases across all settings and have worked closely with the Health Protection Team, supporting formally-convened Outbreak Control Teams. The council has committed to continue to fund the team until March 2022. The team has also:
- developed a case management system and internal infrastructure for escalating concerns;
 - provided regular situation reports to COVID CMT and the Local Health Protection Assurance Board for oversight; attended PHE HPT training and weekly review meetings to keep abreast of guidance and policy developments and updates, cascading this learning to the wider public health team and partners.
- 53 Supported by the wider Public Health team and the capacity and capabilities built across the council including the Community Hub, the team has responded to and supported over 3,000 reports of positive cases, stood up 25 Outbreak Control Teams (to provide outbreak management in a specific setting) and responded to over 10,000 enquiries.
- 54 Other developments include the implementation of our Enhanced Support Framework providing a rapid process for detecting, investigating and responding to local spikes in COVID-19 cases across County Durham utilising our Community Spike Outbreak Management Group, Scenario exercises both internal and with partners e.g. Durham University, VCSE colleagues to ensure preparedness, for example, surge testing.

County Durham Together Community Hub – Local Tracing Partnership

- 55 Durham County Council launched the Local Tracing Partnership (LTP) on 4 January 2021. Currently, County Durham Together (CDT) Community Hub receives cases from NHS Test and Trace 32 hours after they are loaded onto the CTAS system, where nationally they have been unable to contact the positive case. In practice this means:
- where the NHS Test & Trace service is unable to reach people who have tested positive (cases) within their usual timeframes, local call handlers will take over.
 - the local call handlers will then attempt to make contact with cases to gather details of their close contacts. This will be through a variety of methods including text messaging, and a call from a local phone number and if there is no response a wellbeing check, face to face visit.
 - when contact is made, the case will be asked about their movements in the days prior to the start of symptoms, or a positive test, as well as relevant information about close contacts. This information will be shared with the national Test and Trace team who will follow-up the contacts.
 - the local call handlers will also be able to offer advice on local support that is available to self-isolate if required, as well as picking up on any welfare and wellbeing concerns.
- 56 National monitoring shows the improved performance, increase in completion rates (above the recommended national target) and increased effectiveness of contact tracing where LTPs are supplementing the national NHS T and T programme. As a result, the national team has enabled Local Authorities to access cases earlier in the trace journey.
- 57 Local Trace Partnerships (LTPs) are now the norm with 312 of 314 Lower Tier Local Authorities (LTLAs) in operation (149 of 151 UTLAs).
- 58 From 6th April Durham County Council/County Durham Together will receive cases as they are added on to CTAS and they will be available for the team to contact immediately, providing a significant opportunity to work with cases as soon as possible and elicit contacts and offer local support and reduce onward transmission of the virus.

Main Implications

59 Ability for all settings and the community to respond rapidly to any outbreak situation.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Health Protection: Legal and Policy Context¹

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 Groups² 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.

¹ 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.