
Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 9th September 2021

Report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

Local and National Covid-19 Developments and Local Outbreak Management Plan

Purpose

1. To provide and update on Dudley's Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) to the scrutiny committee and update on local and national Covid-19 developments.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Scrutiny:
 - Review and note Dudley's progress to date with Covid-19.
 - Support the update of the LOMP, based around the Covid-19 Contain Framework which will also incorporate local lessons learnt and achievements to date.

Background

3. We are in unprecedented times there is no doubt; since March 2020, we have learnt so much about Covid-19, the devastating impact it has had on our residents and communities and on life as we knew it. While the central government direction of travel is changing, the pandemic is not yet over with infections, outbreaks and deaths continuing to occur nationally and regionally.
4. At time of writing (20.08.21) nationally there have been 6.39 million cases and over 131,000 people have lost their lives and countless others scarred from the effects of the virus in one way or another. And yet throughout the pandemic the resilience and determination of Dudley people and businesses has shone through.
5. In Dudley there have been nearly 36000 cases of the infection and tragically, 799 deaths.
6. We want to thank people living and working in Dudley for all they continue to do to keep themselves and their families, friends, and communities safe.

7. Whilst the vaccine brings us hope and we see the removal of most legal requirements around mask wearing and social distancing, as well as allowing all businesses to open without limitations, we should encourage our communities to be vigilant and all play our part by continuing to distance where possible, wear a face covering when they feel it is appropriate, practice good hand hygiene, get tested and accept the vaccine.
8. Dudley Council has a long history of working closely with our partners in the NHS. The COVID-19 vaccination programme is the biggest in health service history and is a crucial shared priority in Dudley. The wider local authority team are playing a key role in delivery and ensuring maximum uptake. This includes the delivery of hyper local approaches and the continuing offer of agile, mobile vaccination focusing on areas of low uptake and disproportionately impacted and underrepresented groups.
9. At time of writing a total of 84% of eligible residents have received their first vaccination and 73.7% have received their second dose. Whilst this figure is below the UK average, Dudley has the highest uptake compared to our Black Country neighbours.
10. The Dudley local outbreak management plan (LOMP) has been developed by Dudley Council and its key partners to provide the system-wide response needed to manage Covid-19 and to continue to mitigate the impact on the health and social care system, communities and local economy as well as preparing Dudley for the next phase of the journey to recovery, including living with Covid-19. It has been continually reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose as the pandemic landscape changes.
11. With the implementation of Step 4 of the Government Roadmap, we note that mandated rules on social distancing, face coverings and capacity at any kind of gathering have been removed and all venues can reopen without capacity limitations. While no longer enshrined in law, we will continue to encourage and support our communities to exercise caution when interacting with anyone outside of their household. We will respond appropriately at local, regional and national levels, working with neighbouring local authorities to ensure consistency and parity across the region.
12. The revised Contain Framework was published on August 5th which provides a guide for local decision makers for the next stage of the pandemic and how national, regional and local partners should continue to work closely together.
13. The Framework puts Local authorities at the heart of the response. Through Directors of Public Health (DsPH) and Chief Executives they will continue to have statutory responsibility and strategic leadership in bringing the local system together.
14. Elected members continue their essential role as local community leaders, facilitating systems relationships, community engagement and scrutiny of decisions on behalf of our residents.

15. Our Local system priorities moving forward include:

- aligning Dudley Borough's response to Covid-19 with the Government Roadmap, refreshed Contain Framework and local partner and regional plans.
- rapidly identifying and responding to local outbreaks incorporating the knowledge gained since the pandemic began.
- building upon and capturing best practice in Dudley using case studies and stories from local communities, volunteers and staff.
- providing insight for the regional and national teams on Dudley's approach and response.
- building on and adapt sustainable local governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities and partnership contributions to each aspect of the Covid-19 response.
- addressing inequalities that have been further impacted by Covid-19, especially on some of our most vulnerable communities.
- regularly reviewing with partners and elected members national strategy, local and regional need, and emerging evidence to predict future requirements. The key factors that are being addressed are: changing trends in case rate, testing rates, hospital admissions, morbidity rate as well as evolving policy, legislation, and guidance.
- whilst the national strategy to support workplace testing ended in July, we continue to support workplace testing through our Community Testing Programme.
- as part of our local Covid-19 response, we have adapted our local workforce to meet the changing demands of the pandemic. This includes the development of an agile team of COVID Response Officers, who have the ability to flex their role in line with current demands, including advice to the community and businesses, testing, contact tracing, welfare support, and vaccination uptake.
- our daily review and management of cases through our "COVID Response Cell" has been reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and streamlined to avoid duplication. We maintain a local outbreak function and a single point of contact 7 days a week.
- we continue to create innovative communications and amplification campaigns across a range of mediums to promote the testing and vaccine offers, as well as promoting positive behaviours, despite the relaxation of the rules.
- as a responsible employer, DMBC continue to lead by example following best practice. We continue to support and produce guidance for our staff to ensure a safe working environment.

- We work to ensure that all services have robust business continuity plans, to ensure that we are able to meet the next stage of the pandemic, including planning for winter.
- With respect to winter planning, it is unclear, based on modelling the severity of challenging that we will face over winter from Covid and other infectious diseases. Planning will be informed by local and subregional exercises which will take place over the next two months. The exercises should also influence the model of working between the local subregional and national public health system which is vital given transfer of Public Health England functions into the new public health system from 1st October 2021.
- To respond to revised Contain Framework which will be published in October 2021.

Finance

16. Dudley Council has worked closely with partners to deploy the Contain Outbreak Management Fund and to plan for the ongoing use of resources to enable us to implement our Local Outbreak Management Plan.
17. In terms of additional financial support to put additional public health and outbreak response measures in place, Dudley has been awarded £1,941,764 in respect of the Test & Trace Support Grant, and £10,360,650 Contain Outbreak Management Fund. The Test & Trace Support Grant has been fully spent in financial year 2020/21. £3,749,658 of the £8,085,842 Contain Outbreak Management fund awarded in 2020/21 was carried forward to 2021/22, and an additional £2,274,808 has been awarded for 2021/22.

Law

18. Two key items of primary legislation (as well as associated Regulations) contain emergency powers relating to coronavirus and health protection in England.

Coronavirus Act 2020

Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984

19. **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** Businesses are required to carry out a risk assessment which should include consideration of appropriate Covid controls. The risk assessment could be specifically for Covid or could be included in a more general risk assessment. Non-compliance of the risk assessment requirement is by Improvement Notice and prosecution, which can be a long and protracted process. The Health and Safety Executive have produced guidance to support this [here](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm) www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm



20. **The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (England) (No 3) Regulations 2020** have been extended to the end of September. These Regulations enable
- (1) A local authority may give a direction under regulation 4(1), 5(1) or 6(1) only if the authority considers that the following conditions are met—
- (a) that giving such a direction responds to a serious and imminent threat to public health,
- (b) that the direction is necessary for the purpose of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection by coronavirus in the local authority's area, and
- (c) that the prohibitions, requirements or restrictions imposed by the direction are a proportionate means of achieving that purpose.
- Self-isolation requirements are still legally enforceable subject to proposed exemptions. Discussions have previously been had within EH & TS around self-isolation enforcement; it has been agreed that enforcement of a self-isolation breach lies with the Police.

Risk Management

21.	Risk	Impact	Mitigation
1	Community fail to adhere to Covid-19 recommendations post August 16 th .	Rates of infection continue to increase causing pressure across the system and available resources Business continuity of council and partner services is undermined	Continue to prioritise this work and increase partnership working further to ensure key messages are continuously re-enforced Workplace measures remain in place. Business continuity plans are reviewed and additional measures put in place as needed. Reinforced communications.
2	No restrictions on national / international travel meaning increased risk of cross-border transmission . Changing restrictions on international travel control measures Travellers failing to comply with international travel measures Impact of refugees arriving in the borough	Case numbers increased and greater risk of new variants from international travel.	To work with partners across West Midlands region to ensure consistency of approach when implementing 'living with Covid-19' measures and sharing regional intelligence with regards to Managed Quarantine Services.
3	Other VoC emerge pressurising the system	Resource may be insufficient to cope with variant demand	To build internal and cross partner resource that can respond in a rapid and flexible

			manner to address any further Covid-19 demands in line with central government strategy.
4	Vaccine uptake slows	Lower levels of vaccine uptake could affect the overall immunity levels with Dudley meaning greater risk of further infection surges	To ensure vaccine delivery methods remain current and relevant to meet community expectations whilst addressing any concerns they may have. An agile, targeted vaccine offer with strong community engagement and ongoing communications are key to successful delivery within the most hesitant groups, with specific focus on vaccine myth busting.
5	Government funding/grants reduced	Unable to manage ongoing Covid-19 defence work whilst supporting the Dudley community recover from the pandemic	Seek assurance from Central Government on ongoing financial support and ensure localised offers of support are available for the local community.
6	National testing programmes are reduced/discontinued	Reduced coverage of testing	Seek confirmation from Central Government that these will be ongoing throughout 2021/22 or whether alternative local programmes will be required.
7	Powers of enforcement are further limited by removal of restrictions.	Control of spread will be difficult if legislation does not maintain control on high-risk settings.	Request that Central Government give clearer guidance to the public and / or clear guidance to LA's for how to manage locally.
8	Covid-19 vaccine supplies are impacted.	Lack of vaccine supply will limit overall area immunity	Seek assurance from Central Government that vaccine supplies will be sufficient and consistent.
9	Recovery of normal services across the community	Reopening of key public services to a normal schedule may take longer due to continued Covid-19 work. Back-log of work will continue to grow placing indirect pressure on the system	Continue to press with Track, Trace and Vaccinate to expedite recovery timeline.

10	National Public health system reorganisation creates uncertainty regarding decision making, roles and deployment of resources undermines the regional and local response	Local systems are unable to respond as required.	Continue dialogue at regional and national level to shape new organisations and structures.

Equality Impact

22. There is growing national evidence of the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on specific communities from a social, economic and health perspective, particularly highlighted in the [Marmot Report](#). This includes the ethnic minority communities, deprived communities, those already financially struggling on benefits or low incomes and those with existing long-term health issues that make them at higher risk of serious illness or death due to Covid-19. In addition to taking an inclusive approach to outbreak control, assessment and engagement, additional work has also been targeted at specific higher risk communities. The team has expanded with dedicated resource to address these issues.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

23. The aim was to develop a sustainable workforce model for contact tracing and outbreak response. Increasing case numbers and the pressure for staff to return to their substantive roles meant it was necessary to examine the existing workforce structure. This provided an opportunity to identify efficiencies in the system. The decision was made to combine the Covid Business Advisors, Covid Community Support Officers, Contact Tracers and Testers into one core team. This workforce enables us to react with agility and flexibility across all previous work streams as well as creating a more resilient workforce with greater development opportunities for staff. Importantly, it provides a stronger governance structure and support framework for staff often working in challenging situations, as well as an improved sense of belonging to a team.
24. The wider Covid workforce has trained both specialist and generic staff within the council on our standing operational procedures. Additionally, we have recruited interim health protection nurses and environment health officers to assist with our response.

Commercial/Procurement

25. There are no commercial or procurement implications arising from this report

Council Priorities

26. Dudley outbreak management plan's vision is to develop a model that will build confidence and resilience in our communities, to ensure that they are able to understand and manage their risk appropriately.
27. We will achieve this through:
- Maintaining and strengthening relationships with our communities, businesses, educational settings and organisations.

- engaging, listening and adapting our plans.
- co-designing “hyper local”/neighbourhood approaches with communities.
- using intelligence and insights.
- building on and sharing local and national best practice continued active support and engagement with the vaccination programme.

28. Our outbreak plan continues to be underpinned by the five following principles:

- Prevention will be at the forefront of all elements of our plan. All key themes will have preventive and response approaches to meet the objectives.
- The plan will build on our existing local, regional and national partnerships and systems to provide a co-ordinated response to outbreaks including provision and timely response of sufficient resources.
- The plan will establish new arrangements for engagement with communities. This is key to building trust and ensuring public participation in the Test and Trace programme.
- A programme of monitoring and evaluation to review whether we are achieving our objectives will be in place. Outcomes will be shared with partners and local boards.
- Develop sustainable processes to provide the continued response to Covid-19 and to support the recovery from the pandemic.



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List of Background Documents

COVID-19 contain framework: a guide for local decision-makers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

Dudley Local Outbreak Management Plan

<https://www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/localoutbreakcontrolplan>