
**Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee –
26th January 2022**

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 the Scrutiny Committee review and note Dudley's progress to date with the management of COVID-19 within our community.

Background

3. Building on strong foundations of local partnerships, active communities and a dedicated programme team, we are working to provide a framework for the next phase of Dudley's system-wide approach of the journey to recovery, including living with COVID-19. A de-escalation plan is being developed to ensure an effective and coordinated approach for the ongoing prevention, rapid detection and management of COVID-19 within Dudley. The plan will align Dudley borough's response to COVID-19 with the government roadmap, refreshed Contain Framework and local partner and regional plans.
4. However, given the emergence of new variants of COVID the timeframe and ability to deescalate our response to the pandemic will need to be flexible and have the ability to meet the needs of our community.
5. At time of writing (30.11.21) nationally there have been 10.19 million cases and over 145,000 people have sadly 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.

6. In Dudley there have been 54,437 cases of the infection and tragically, 867 deaths. As we enter winter the NHS faces one of the most challenging periods in its history, so we will continue to ensure that the collaborative approach taken throughout the pandemic continues, so we support each other and try to minimise the impact.
7. COVID-19 will remain part of our lives for the foreseeable future. This means we will need planned approaches to continue to keep our communities safe through the management of infection to the lowest level possible and to be rapidly responsive to outbreaks at all levels of our community.
8. Following the emergence of the Omicron variant, identified in the UK on 27th November 2021, tighter restrictions were introduced on Tuesday 30th November which include:
 - **Face coverings** compulsory in shops and on public transport in England
 - Pupils at secondary schools in England "strongly advised" to wear face coverings in communal areas. The guidance also applies to staff and visitors at all schools and childcare settings.
 - All contacts of suspected Omicron cases required to self-isolate for 10 days, regardless of a person's vaccination status
 - Anyone entering the UK will require a **PCR test within 48 hours of arrival** and will need to self-isolate until they have a negative result
 - 1m-plus social distancing guidance remains in places such as hospitals and passport control
 - People are advised **to test for Covid before going to crowded places** or spending time with those who are at greater risk from Covid
 - Anyone testing positive must self-isolate.
9. Only time will tell the infectivity and severity of the new variant, but we will continue to place all our efforts to reduce the impact and slow down any new variant, to ensure the COVID-19 vaccination programme can minimise the effect on our residents.
10. Both national and local efforts to expand the vaccination programme continue. The vaccination programme remains our best hope against the virus, even with the emergence of new variants.
11. Vaccine and particularly the booster programme are the main line of defence to protect our residents of Dudley and reduce transmission through this winter. We continue to encourage our communities to be vigilant and all play our part by following these COVID preventative measures and accept the COVID and Flu vaccinations when offered.
12. We will respond appropriately at local, regional, and national levels, working with neighbouring local authorities to ensure consistency and parity across the region.
13. We continue to encourage our communities to be vigilant and all play our part by continuing to distance where possible, practice good hand hygiene, get tested and accept the vaccine.

14. Dudley Council continues to work 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.
15. Public Health continue to focus on community engagement with different communities in low uptake areas and working with community groups, faith leaders and voluntary organisations to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, promote vaccination and gain intelligence around vaccine hesitancy.
16. During the summer period the Public Health team conducted research into reasons for vaccine hesitancy in the United Kingdom to better understand why certain communities had low uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine. We expanded upon this initial work with local insights, surveying over 200 individuals in Dudley who had declined vaccination. The Public Health team held regular question & answer sessions to address Dudley residents' concerns in real-time. This included: multiple sessions with local care home staff, after the national care home vaccine mandate was introduced; face-to-face vaccine discussions with students at all of Dudley's colleges, after the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) announced vaccinations of 16-17 year olds; and ongoing work to provide parents of 12-15-year-olds with information on the teenage vaccination programme (through Black Country Radio interviews) as well as engaging with the young people themselves in these discussion, through a session co-produced with the Dudley-based youth voluntary organisation, The What? Centre.
17. Whilst gathering and disseminating information is important to our work, engagement and empowerment of Dudley residents lay at the heart of Public Health's strategy. Based on our insights into vaccine uptake, we have removed barriers to vaccine uptake (for example, the use of a mobile vaccine van to the wards with lowest uptake, enabling individuals to be vaccinated who otherwise may not have the time, finances, or mode of transportation to reach distant vaccination sites). Public Health have worked with voluntary organisations, community leaders and faith leaders who are situated in low-vaccine uptake communities to dispel vaccine misinformation and build trust – not only in Public Health's vaccination campaigns but in the wider operations of the council in general. This strategy seeks to empowerment residents, engage them in Council services thus addressing their unmet needs, and strive to make Dudley a place they are proud to call home.
18. Vaccination data updated on 23rd November 2021 shows a total of
 - 82% of eligible residents (12+) have received their first vaccination
 - 76% have received their second dose
 - 27% have received their booster.
19. Whilst this figure is below the UK average, Dudley has the highest uptake compared to our Black Country neighbours.
20. 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.

21. The revised Contain Framework, published on August 5th, provides a guide for local decision makers on containing and managing the next stage of the pandemic, where the focus is shifting towards a more proactive long-term management of COVID-19 and the required change in behaviour needed. We continue to reflect upon the latest situation with regards to COVID-19 and continue to review and streamline our mechanisms and infrastructure as part of our enablement plans.
22. 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.
23. Elected members continue their essential role as local community leaders, facilitating systems relationships, community engagement and scrutiny of decisions on behalf of our residents.
24. Our Local system priorities moving forward include:

Guidance/Public Health Messaging

- aligning Dudley Borough's response to COVID-19 with the most recent Government guidance;
 - 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;
 - we continue to support the dissemination of new Public Health messaging in relation to COVID-19 with a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing, which is emerging as a connected priority;
 - building on and adapt sustainable local governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities and partnership contributions to each aspect of the COVID-19 response;
 - 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/or changes in the rules.
25. Addressing inequalities



- addressing inequalities that have been further impacted by COVID-19, especially on some of our most vulnerable communities
- Over the last three months the community inequalities strategy has been focused on the borough's response to COVID-19 and ensuring that our most vulnerable residents were being protected and supported.
- Dudley Community Voluntary Service (DCVS) set up COVID-19 Community engagement meetings which have met regularly across the 5 Township Groups in Dudley to promote the uptake of the COVID vaccine and testing and to engage and disseminate the key COVID-19 communication messages through key people: including community leaders, local people, businesses, council members and residents.
- In light of the current situation we will be reviewing the community engagement meetings and their role with DCVS and the way forward to look at their role and function in the coming months.
- A key focus has been the promotion of the mobile vaccination van when it is located in the community. The Focus has been to increase and promote the vaccination and testing across the local community and businesses: using a number of approaches including 'feet on the street', door knocking, working with businesses and the local community including local businesses. The proactive 'feet on the street' have involved a wide range of people including voluntary and faith groups, council staff, members, volunteers, council staff including volunteers across the council, community development workers and Covid Response officers.
- The Council have also commissioned a roving Vaccine Van delivered by Solutions4Health which has helped to work in partnership with the NHS and engage with the Head of the Dudley Colleges and students across 3 college locations where low uptake had been identified. Over a 3-month timescale September – November 2021 the roving Vaccine Van increased the coverage and uptake rates in the borough vaccinating 960 students from Dudley, King Edwards VI, and Halesowen Colleges.
- Vaccination rates in Black British, Caribbean and Asian remain low in comparison to White British across Dudley. We have targeted St James, Castle and Priory, St Thomas, Lye and Stourbridge North to increase uptake in minority ethnic and excluded communities. We are making good progress working with the community to understand their concerns about the vaccination through engagement with community leaders, and faith groups to promote the vaccine through trusted community voices. This remains an area of constant focus for the Public Health Team.

26. Best Practice

- Through the use of case studies we continue to capture best practice in Dudley. A commissioned Heathwatch report illustrating how the Council's response to



Shielding will be shared and will provide valuable feedback from clinically extremely vulnerable residents and staff who were part of the shielding response

- 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.

27. Outbreak Management

- Rapidly identifying and responding to local outbreaks incorporating the knowledge gained since the pandemic began.
- Our daily review and management of cases through our “COVID Response Cell” continues to be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and streamlined. There are plans to scale back the Cell in January 2022 - reducing to 6-day cover Monday - Saturday (anything from Sunday being picked up on Mondays). Cell meetings will be reduced to 3 days per week.
- The Covid Response Cell collectively has engagement across health and wellbeing with specialist knowledge and experience in dealing with outbreaks of Covid in a variety of settings. With winter pressures and emergence of other infections the cell members are also responding to other infectious disease over the winter period.
- Operational processes and officer support for the Dudley Test and Trace Cell (DTTC) over the festive period have been finalised to ensure continuity of service and the ability to respond to outbreaks.

28. Welfare Support

- We continue to offer a 7-day Local Contact Tracing service through Dudley Council Plus. The overall rate for Dudley residents completing contact tracing since 6th April 2021 is 92.7% since our last report this has increased from 90%
- The Council continues to provide welfare support calls to those self-isolating. 2204 calls were made between 21st June to 30th November 2021 to individuals who had requested local authority support. These calls resulted in 68 emergency food parcel deliveries, 632 signposted to financial support and 58 referrals for mental wellbeing support.
- 1681 Covid Response Officer (CRO) home visits have been completed since June 2021, on 26th August the option for cases to complete contact tracing on the doorstep was introduced and at time of writing 292 individuals have engaged and completed contact tracing when visited by the CROs.
- In agreement with Adult Social Care, we are mainstreaming the Pleased to meet you service and extending welfare support to our most vulnerable to ensure we have robust, sustainable approaches ensuring our most vulnerable residents are

protected and have access to wrap around services and support. This will provide further resilience for our clinically extremely vulnerable across adult social care services.

- Through Adult Social Care Services, we are extending access to emergency food parcels provision to support those who are clinically vulnerable.

29. Vaccination Initiatives

- The mobile vaccination unit visited 28 locations since August and a further 1,278 doses were given. The focus was on two wards with lowest uptake - St Thomas and St James.
- For increasing uptake, the 'feet on the street' team (largely made up of covid response officers, public health and wider council employees) used supportive covid conversations to speak with the public and posted flyers to resident's homes. We also trialled a period of door knocking. The engagement was additional to existing communications (e.g. social media, calls to unvaccinated patients from GP lists, speaking to local businesses, signage and ad van) used to promote the vaccination van and finding opportunity to address vaccine hesitancy.
- The vaccination on wheels project also visited colleges providing first doses for students aged 16-17 years old and focused on health and social care students. The van revisited the colleges week commencing 8th November to provide second doses for H&SC students who were eligible after 8 week interval and any first doses. A total of 921 doses were given in colleges.
- Since 21 June 2021, the vaccination on wheels project has provided a total of 2,784 vaccinations at 51 locations.
- There are 9 remaining days of the commission. It has been agreed with the provider that we pause the project due to feedback from communities therefore no further work for the vaccination van is in place.
- Public Health are undertaking community engagement with different communities in low uptake areas and working with community groups, faith leaders and voluntary organisations to address the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. The community engagement work is focusing on the wards of lowest uptake – Lye and Stourbridge North, St James, St Thomas, Castle & Priory.
- Dudley MBC are continuing to support the NHS in improving uptake among our residents at the time of writing the local authority are supporting the development of a new mass vaccination site within the borough with the option of 2 sites being considered.

30. Community Testing



- continue to provide a sustainable community testing offer.
- due to the success of community-based testing through pharmacy, online ordering and collection points e.g. places of worship, local libraries and Leisure Centres means that the onsite testing at Saltwells Education Centre is to cease on 23rd December 2021. This will enable use of the EDC for support of Children's Services or if vaccination programmes are accelerated a mass vaccination centre.
- as part of the September review and the Government's updated asymptomatic testing guidance our communication messages will change to encourage the use of rapid lateral flow COVID-19 tests to manage periods of risk.
- 196,337 PCR tests have been undertaken in the last 90 days, of those 18,113 were positive, 9% positivity rate. This positivity rate has declined since mid-November but as they opened the schools in September had steadily increased to this point. PCR testing remains available at 6 locations across the borough to ensure as much access as possible for our residents. The Department of Health are strongly recommending the use of postal PCR kits as a more cost effective and efficient way for residents to get tested and we continue to encourage their use. Since the start of the autumn term the number of people choosing the postal kit has increased with a total of 16,854 having been ordered since September with a positivity rate of 10.2%.
- The overall national testing strategy is due to be reviewed in January 2022 and we will continue to work with Department of Health colleagues to ensure equity of access for our residents.
- In the last 90 days 281,585 Lateral Flow Tests have been registered as undertaken of those 3000 were positive with a positivity rate of 1.1% as a local authority we continue to support the pharmacy model to reach out into our communities along with various collection points.
- Whilst we await national guidance on the continuation of the asymptomatic Lateral Flow Testing Dudley MBC will continue to work with our partners to provide access to Lateral Flow Tests to continue to aid the fight against Covid.
- With the emergence of a Variant of Concern (Omicron) we will review our plans to ensure that where testing is required of our residents it can be achieved rapidly and seamlessly using the knowledge gained from previous new variants.

31. Community Initiatives

- One year on from the start of the initiative, the learning from and achievements of the COVID-19 Champions Programme are being reviewed, with the input and involvement of current champions who are also shaping the next steps. Champions have told us that their work has had a positive impact on their community. The online update sessions proved useful in enabling them to share



information regularly with their community. The majority wish to continue in their role as COVID-19 Community Champions and some would also like to take on health champion and Public Health volunteer roles. Positive feedback has been received from many champions, who have praised the programme as “an excellent initiative” and “helpful in getting the key messages out”.

- Awareness and support for the dissemination of new Public Health messaging in relation to COVID-19 will continue to be a focus, alongside mental health and wellbeing, which is emerging as a connected priority. The role of champions in providing community feedback and insight to inform Dudley’s approach to Living with Covid will also continue. The Champions will come together for a celebration event in early December, and with the programme lead, will discuss and agree how to move forward. Opportunities and potential for broader health champion activity across a wider range of public health issues will be considered.
- The Community Development Worker Team continue to connect with communities in support of an asset based approach to enabling people to make things happen in their area. This has encompassed Cluster Connect work, in partnership with Dudley Council for Voluntary Service, working together with communities to implement responses to issues and priorities they have identified. Community Conversations are also taking place, supported by training developed and delivered by the Healthy Communities team, which involve peer to peer enquiry into the experience of living with Covid and how the Council and communities can work together to enable people to live safely with the virus. Areas of low vaccine uptake have been the focus to date.

32. Support to Educational Settings

- We continue to provide Public Health support to all Dudley education settings through the Schools Contingency Framework in regard to the implementation of testing to maximise the number of children and young people in face-to-face teaching.

33. Support to Businesses

- In preparation for the winter period, the Covid Response Team will be engaging with all wards in Dudley Borough, with an emphasis on local, customer facing businesses to promote the Council’s Be Kind and Safe messages over Christmas for both Covid and Flu – through testing, vaccination, and awareness of safe infection control behaviours.
- Covid Response Officers supporting small businesses do all they can to be prepared and Covid safe with advice on risk assessments and advising the public why they need to follow the measures to protect small businesses in the community.

34. Winter Planning

- We continue to 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.
- Winter planning exercises have taken place and the Dudley Winter Plan is being finalised.

Finance

35. 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.
36. 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

37. 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

38. 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](#)

39. 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.

Equality Impact

40. 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

41. 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.
42. 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

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

Council Priorities

44. 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.

45. 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.

46. 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>

