

Covid-19 Member Engagement Board

Tuesday 5 January 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Council Representatives

Councillor Les Caborn (Chair) and Dr Shade Agboola (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillors Margaret Bell, Jacky Chambers and Marian Humphreys (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Sally Bragg (Rugby Borough Council)
Councillor Jo Barker (Stratford-upon-Avon District Council)
Councillor Judy Falp (Warwick District Council)

NHS Representative

Adrian Stokes (CCGs)

Healthwatch Warwickshire

Chris Bain

Other Attendees

Jagdeep Birring, Nadia Inglis, Nigel Minns, Catherine Shuttleworth, Paul Spencer, Jayne Surman, Emily van de Venter and Duncan Vernon (WCC Officers)
Robert Weeks (SDC Officer)

1. Apologies

None.

2. National, regional and local update (including testing and contact tracing)

Dr Shade Agboola, WCC Director of Public Health provided a verbal update covering the following areas:

- Reference to the national lockdown imposed, following the increase in Covid-19 case numbers.
- Across the country, the rate per 100,000 of population was now above 200 in nearly all areas, rising to over 900 in the south east. There were higher rates of positivity of test results, more cases in rural areas, and a higher number of cases amongst people aged over 60.
- It was hoped that the lockdown would reverse these trends. The council was in a support role to care homes, businesses and schools.

- There were five sites open for community testing at Water Orton, Bedworth, Nuneaton, Rugby and Warwick. A centre would open at Stratford-upon-Avon the following week, giving capacity for approximately 15,000 tests per week. Demand for tests remained good.
- Clarity was being sought about asymptomatic community testing which was expected to continue during the current lockdown. To date approximately 18,000 tests had been completed with a positivity rate of 1.12%.

Discussion took place on the following aspects:

- It was questioned if data was available on the proportion of the population who had had the virus. There were prevalence estimates which give a range, estimated at 2-3% in December, which was now likely to have increased. This would be researched from data available from Public Health England. Nigel Minns added that this might be an area which could be explored by the WCC Insight team, using data from the Office of National Statistics.
- A question about secondary school testing, which was expected to continue as planned. With the reduced numbers of pupils and teachers in schools, due to lockdown, this should be easier to manage.
- Discussion about the 196 positive lateral flow test (LFT) results and whether these were subsequently confirmed by a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. The data regarding subsequent PCR tests was owned by the DHSE and could be researched. An outline was given of the process undertaken after the LFT and reporting arrangements.
- Arrangements for testing children who were not at school presently and how it would be managed. The school testing programme was led by the Department for Education, but Public Health was kept informed. The lockdown meant that the number of pupils tested would reduce significantly, other than for vulnerable children, those of key workers and teachers. The aims of the school testing programme were explained. Children not in school could go to a community testing facility.
- Staffing capacity both for community testing and vaccinations. To date there had been adequate staffing levels, working in partnership with each district and borough council and use of agency personnel. Secondary school testing would require considerable additional staffing, which would need to be considered.
- The Chair asked for an update on vaccinations, noting that a formal update would be provided by the clinical commissioners at the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) the following day. Shade Agboola and Adrian Stokes provided an update. This week 19,000 vaccinations had been provided, with the expectation to provide 24,000 vaccinations next week on a prioritised approach, targeting care homes and those aged over 80. Three hospital hubs were now operational, with the Partnership Trust commencing at the end of the week. By the end of the week there would be 12 local vaccination centres across Coventry and Warwickshire. Subject to sign off and vaccine supply, a further eight centres would launch the following week. So far residents of 23 care homes had received vaccinations.
- Ensuring residents served by smaller GP surgeries were able to receive vaccinations. By next week, there would be a total of 20 local vaccination centres covering all of the Coventry and Warwickshire area.
- It was questioned if visits to a care home would be permitted once its residents had been vaccinated. This would not be the case immediately as there would be a period before they

received the booster and were protected totally. Additionally, the national lockdown would prevent such visits currently.

- Arrangements for contacting elderly residents to book their vaccinations. Adrian Stokes offered to research how this was being undertaken and the councillor was asked to email him. Via the chat dialogue, it was confirmed that letters and phone contact were being made.

4. Data and intelligence

Duncan Vernon, gave an update, including a slide deck on the following areas:

- The Warwickshire epidemic curve highlighting the higher case numbers at the end of December. From the data approximately one in thirty Warwickshire residents had now tested positive for Covid-19.
- The seven-day rates of cases per 100,000 population, showing the comparative position of Warwickshire (387.76 cases) to other areas both locally and across the West Midlands. He added that the rates in London and the south east were much higher at around 1200 cases per 100,000 population.
- Case rates for each district and borough area of Warwickshire were shown. Duncan Vernon highlighted the recent increases which reflected the national position and outbreaks in Rugby at both schools and care homes.
- Testing numbers using PCR tests and the increasing proportion of positive test results.
- Epidemic curves for the over 60s, children and those of working age. Comment on the impact of Christmas and positive cases resulting from greater social interaction and home visits during this period.
- Death figures and place of death.
- Geographically, higher case numbers were being seen in Leamington, Nuneaton and Bedworth and some wards of Rugby, with lower numbers in the Stratford-upon-Avon area.

A question was submitted on the position in Warwickshire hospitals. More people were surviving Covid but requiring longer hospital stays. The position on capacity and to deliver elective care was questioned. Duncan Vernon offered to research this and to circulate further information.

5. Local incidents and outbreaks

Emily van de Venter gave a verbal update. Staff had been reactive and on call over Christmas and the New Year period. There had been a large number of outbreaks, including significant and rapidly spreading cases in some care homes. Key messages were being emphasised to care home personnel. Reference to outbreaks at workplaces and the challenges made to employers to ensure that people worked from home where they could. It was evident that community transmission was a key aspect.

A question about the testing arrangements in care homes, the types of test used and if there were any concerns about use of the LFT. Officers explained the testing regimes in place both for staff and residents, the additional testing where cases were identified, and the measures implemented to ensure rapid return of PCR test results. Shade Agboola added that the requirement to use LFT for care home testing had been introduced recently. Prior to that PCR tests were used, when these outbreaks had occurred. This was more about fatigue and not exclusive to care homes, with people forgetting to observe the key behaviours. It was supported by the evidence from incident

management teams used after every outbreak. There were concerns that the new variant of Covid-19 may be causing rapid spread.

6. Communications update

Jayne Surman provided a verbal update covering the following aspects:

- Communication of key messages related to the new national lockdown.
- Reminding vulnerable people of the support available, including a radio campaign publicising the council's hotline.
- Issues for vulnerable families, promotional information of the support available including the welfare scheme.
- Remote learning arrangements and encouraging people to participate. Early years settings would remain open.
- Businesses – providing messaging about staying open in a Covid safe way.
- Mental health and wellbeing – a lot of information would be provided on the five ways to wellbeing, with members being asked to cascade this too.
- Vulnerable children – clear messaging on childcare bubbles, also safeguarding aspects and making people aware of the multi-agency safeguarding hub where any concerns should be reported.
- Accidents in the home – work to promote home safety.

In response to a question about domestic violence, it was confirmed that there had been a campaign running over the Christmas and New Year period. It was a known time of difficulty, exacerbated because of the lockdown. Appropriate messaging was being provided.

7. Any other business

Emily van de Venter gave a verbal update on community engagement activity:

- Three community champions courses had now been completed, with another commencing the following week.
- A young champions course was being progressed.
- Funding had been approved for a theatre project to capture young peoples' experiences during the pandemic.
- Engagement with BAME communities on the mental health impacts of the pandemic and accessing support.

The findings from the Covid survey would be reported to the HWBB the following day. An outline was given of some of the findings around food and alcohol consumption, smoking, wellbeing, loneliness and mediation measures. The Chair suggested that media releases be provided following the HWBB meeting and in relation to young people volunteering.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 26 January 2021.

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Councillor Les Caborn, Chair

The meeting closed at 2.55pm