

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD (PUBLIC)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Graham Bridgman, Lynne Doherty, Steve Masters, Matt Pearce, Martha Vickers and Howard Woollaston, James Townsend

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Mandip Bilkhu, Councillor Dominic Boeck and Shairoz Claridge

PART I

54 Minutes of the previous meeting dated 23 November 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 23 November were approved as a true and correct record.

55 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

56 Covid-19 situational report and incidents

Matt Pearce provided an update on the Covid-19 situation in West Berkshire. He stated that all data presented was correct as of the 6th of December 2020. He also noted that the slides being presented were now in line with the rest of Berkshire and would be published on the Berkshire Public Health website.

Changes to restrictions:

- National lockdown restrictions were lifted on 2 December and replaced with a local tier system
- Slough was in tier 3: very high alert
- Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Windsor & Maidenhead were in tier 2: high alert
- The local alert levels would be reviewed every 2 weeks

Situational awareness:

- He noted that the positivity rates per 100,000 had decreased across all Berkshire authorities compared to the previous week and now stood at 50.5 per 100,000 in West Berkshire, which was the lowest rate in Berkshire.
- The positivity rate was 2.9% in West Berkshire
- Cases per 100,000 for the 60+ age group stood at 27.3
- West Berkshire had now had 1,745 cases of Covid-19

Epidemiology of cases:

- There had been 14,340 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Berkshire. 68% of these had occurred since the beginning of October.

Deaths

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- There had been 144 COVID-19 related deaths in West Berkshire during the pandemic.
- 2 deaths were recorded for the last week (14th November to 20th November).
- Since March 2020, West Berkshire's all-cause mortality rate has been 21% higher than the previous 5 year average, which equates to 181 additional deaths.

Hospital activity

- Hospital activity information was not available for Berkshire hospitals or residents in a format that can be shared publicly. The information on this page therefore shows the latest data for the NHS South East Region.
- On 1st December, 1,265 patients were in hospital with COVID-19 in the South East. 111 of these were on mechanical ventilation. The hospital admission rate was beginning to decrease.

Outbreaks:

- An outbreak is defined by PHE as two or more cases with highly probable or confirmed epidemiological links. For care home settings one case counts as an outbreak.
- Number of new outbreaks in West Berkshire by setting (30 November – 6 December):

Setting	Exposures/Cluster/Outbreaks
Schools (inc early years, primary, secondary and HE)	5
Care Homes	0
Workplaces	0
NHS/Health	0
Other	1

Measures to prevent Covid-19

- The most effective method of stopping transmission of Covid-19 is to wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, to use a face mask in shops and enclosed public spaces and to keep 2 metres apart from others.

Summary:

- National lockdown restrictions were lifted on 2 December and replaced with local tiers. Slough entered tier 3, West Berkshire tier 2
- West Berkshire has had 1,745 confirmed cases of Covid-19 so far and 80 of those had been over the last 7 days (30 November – 6 December)

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- The weekly rate was 50.5 per 100,000 population. This was at 27.3 for those aged 60+.
- There had been 144 Covid-19 related deaths in West Berkshire since the start of the outbreak. 2 deaths were recorded between 14-20 November.

Vaccinations:

- Vaccinations do not give individuals the disease. Instead, they teach the body's immune system to recognise and fight the infection.
- Pfizer/ BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine was approved by the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on 2 December
- The vaccine had been through all the usual vigorous vaccine regulations
- Government has ordered 40m doses of the vaccine, enough to vaccinate 20m people.
- Vaccine is given in 2 doses, 21 days apart, with the second dose being a booster
- 50 'hospital hubs' initially chosen to serve as hubs for administering the vaccine- this is due to them having to store the vaccine at -70C
- NHS England was working with GP Practices to support the deployment of the vaccine in primary care
- It would take many months to vaccinate everyone so it is important to continue to follow Government guidance

Covid-19 vaccine prioritisation list:

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. Over 80's, front line health workers
3. Over 75's
4. Over 70's and clinically extremely vulnerable groups
5. Over 65's
6. Under 65's with underlying health conditions
7. Over 60's
8. Over 55's
9. Over 50's

57 Testing

Matt Pearce outlined information on Covid-19 testing.

Anyone with coronavirus symptoms can get a free test if at least one of the following applies:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- you've been asked to by a local council
- you're taking part in a government pilot project

You can also get a test for someone you live with if they have symptoms.

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Home testing:

- home testing kits can be delivered to a residents' door so they do not have to leave the house to get tested
- order a home test kit if you cannot get to a testing site
- get the test within 7 days of symptoms starting

Regional Testing Sites (RTS):

- Newbury Showground- large testing site where up to 800 people can be tested each day

Mobile Testing Unit (MTU):

- Mobile testing units travel across the UK to ensure those who need a test can access one
- They respond to need
- 2 sites in West Berkshire- Hungerford and Thatcham- with each getting 2-3 visits per month

Local Testing Sites (LTS)

- These provide a more accessible testing route in the community
- Operate as a walk-thru method rather than drive-thru for self-isolating
- Fixed locations that provide medium volume throughout in places of high population density
- Currently none in West Berkshire

Anti-body testing

- Not widely available yet
- Mainly for care and health workers

Other types of testing:

- Care homes- staff (weekly) and residents (every 28 days)
- Satellite testing sites- NHS staff & patients, key workers
- Schools- 10 testing kits and instructions on ordering more
- General Practice- can order 40 swab testing kits per week
- Universities- 10 testing kits per 1000 students

Community testing:

- To identify asymptomatic Covid-19 cases

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- The aim of this is to control community transmission by getting everyone who test positive to isolate
- Lateral Flow Testing kits are being rolled out across the country

Lateral Flow Tests- background

- These do not require lab processing so can return a result much quicker than a PCR test
- It has enabled community testing to be used as another tool to control Covid-19
- They are NOT a quick version of the PCR test
- The tests identify 90% of cases in individuals who have high levels of the virus, but only 60-70% overall

Local implementation:

- Testing seen on the scale in Liverpool is unlikely to be seen in tier 1 and 2 areas
- Currently awaiting further evidence and guidance on the approach in West Berkshire

58 Communications update

Martin Dunscombe provided an update on the work of the communications team in relation to Covid-19.

- The Tier system and what it meant had been shared via numerous streams, both online and via post
- Posters advising on staying safe during the Christmas break had been distributed
- Social media graphics sharing Christmas safety messages, translated into a number of languages
- Work with schools was on-going and social distancing at school gates, where schools could share this information with parents
- Banners were being created for the school gates
- Animations and campaigns on how Covid-19 can spread and videos with young people on how to stay safe
- Working with young medical professionals on their work during Covid-19
- General flu-vaccination messaging was on-going
- Information on what to do if contacted by the test and trace service had been released

59 Any other business

Councillor Woollaston stated that he would like to see an update from the hospitality industry if possible.

Councillor Bridgman stated that there was a need to be cautious with the messaging on Lateral Flow Tests, especially with care homes.

Andy Sharp stated that he agreed that there was a need to be cautious with the messaging around Lateral Flow Tests. He noted that there was a pilot on-going in Wokingham that would provide more clarity on this in the coming days.

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(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.39 pm)