

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Health and Wellbeing Test and Trace Sub Group held at
2.00 pm on Monday, 7 December 2020
This meeting was held virtually

Present:

Board Members: Councillor K Caan (Chair)
Councillor Maton
Councillor M Mutton

Mandy Bambridge, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust
Elaine Clarke, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
Rachael Danter, Coventry and Warwickshire Health and Care Partnership
Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
Jo Galloway, Coventry and Rugby CCG
Ruth Light, Coventry Healthwatch
Stuart Linnell, Coventry Healthwatch
Kirsten Nelson, Director of Education and Skills
Nina Morgan, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
Gail Quinton, Deputy Chief Executive

Employees: V De Souza, Public Health
N Hart, Communications
L Knight, Law and Governance
R Nawaz, Public Health
M Rose, Law and Governance

In attendance: Lord Mayor, Councillor Lucas
Alison Cartwright, South Warwickshire CCG

Apologies: Pete Fahy, Director of Adult Services
Nina Morgan, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
Sue Ogle, Voluntary Action Coventry
Mike O'Hara, West Midlands Police

Public Business

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2020 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

31. Local Situation Report on Covid-19 - Data Update and Testing in Coventry

The Sub Group received a presentation from Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing which provided an update on the Covid 19 situation in Coventry including data information and the testing results in the city.

The presentation provided a comparison with the local districts including Solihull and Warwickshire which were showing a downward trend in Covid infections. Latest results recorded for Coventry showed 134 infections per 100,000 residents which compared with 170 for the West Midlands Combined Authority region. The figures were put into context with what was happening across the country with details being provided on the areas with the highest numbers of infections at this date. High rate infection areas were now spread evenly across the country with Medway then Stoke on Trent having the highest numbers. Further information was provided on case numbers in Coventry, with particular reference to the 60 plus age group, which required careful monitoring. A map of the city showed infections in different areas, with Willenhall currently having the highest infection rate. Officers were working to support residents in this area. Attention was drawn to the rolling seven day rate of infections city wide highlighting the downward trend.

The presentation concluded with information on the covid-19 deaths in the city, with reference to place of death, compared to all deaths. It was highlighted that there were less deaths now from covid compared to the first peak as the NHS was much better placed when treating patients.

Members asked about the implications of the flu season and whether it was anticipated that levels were due to rise. It was clarified that there has been a good uptake of the flu vaccination this year and with all the current social distancing measures in place it was hoped that there wouldn't be a significant increase. However, it was too early to say for definite since the season usually peaked in January.

RESOLVED that the contents of the presentation be noted.

32. Coventry Outbreaks Overview

The Sub Group received a brief update from Valerie De Souza, Consultant Public Health, which provided an overview of the Covid-19 outbreaks in Coventry.

The Sub Group were informed of the focus to manage any outbreaks in the city to reduce the risks of transmission. Officers were following up on cases in specific settings such as schools, care homes, work places and hotels. Where there was an outbreak, these were reported to the national Test and Trace and were then followed up locally to ensure all the right measures were in place to reduce the risks of further infections. 40 outbreaks had been managed across the city with positive responses always being received from the individual organisations who wished to protect their employees, residents or pupils.

RESOLVED that the Coventry outbreaks overview be noted.

33. Local Covid Alert Levels

The Sub Group received a presentation from Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing on the Covid alert level for the city.

Following the second national lockdown, Coventry was placed in tier 3 from 2nd December. The presentation detailed the associated restrictions which included: no mixing of households except in parks etc.; travel only for work and education; hospitality and accommodation closed; and shops, gyms, places of worship, hairdressers allowed to open. The Sub Group were informed that the West Midlands was all in tier 3 with the exception of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. There was an acknowledgement of the difficulties and challenges faced by the business community in the city. These restrictions would be reviewed on 16th December. Any changes to the city's status would come into effect on Saturday, 19th. No advance notice would be given to the city.

The Sub Group asked about the implications of the new restrictions to be in place from 23rd to 27th December. The importance of residents observing the three household Christmas bubble was emphasised. It was hoped that the closure of schools and businesses during the Christmas break would help to mitigate any rise in infections resulting from the relaxation in restrictions.

Clarification was sought on the schedule of reviews for the tier restrictions. The Sub Group noted that reviews would take place on a fortnightly basis although 30th December review could be moved to 4th January 2021. In response to a question about Government consultation with local Directors of Public Health about the allocation of tier status, members were informed that lobbying had been taking place. Reference was made to partners across the city having lobbied hard for Coventry to be placed in tier 2.

RESOLVED that the details of the local Covid-19 alert level be noted.

34. **Covid-19 Vaccination**

The Sub Group received an update from Alison Cartwright, South Warwickshire CCG on the local Covid-19 vaccination programme for Coventry and Warwickshire.

The Sub Group were informed that officers had been working on the local vaccination programme for the past two months steered by national, regional and local guidance. Daily meetings had been held and the intention was to deliver 1.2m vaccinations to the over 18 population by the end of May. Based on the available Pfizer- BioNTech vaccine, all patients would require two doses 21 days apart. This was subject to change should further vaccines become available.

UHCW was one of 50 local hospitals who would take part in the first national vaccination programme and vaccinations were due to start the following day. Information was provided on the priority cohorts for the vaccine which would start with hospital patients over 80; people working in care homes; and high risk NHS staff. Plans were in place for additional vaccination sites to be opened from 14th December with a gradual introduction of many other hospital and community sites.

Reference was made to the partnership working with Council officers to identify care home workers as part of the rollout of the programme to care homes in the city. In due course, local GPs would be making contact with their appropriate patients.

Members enquired about the complexities of small care homes not having the option of storing the vaccines and whether it was possible to take residents to the vaccination hubs. It was clarified that national guidance advised it was not appropriate to transport care home residents to be vaccinated.

The Sub Group placed on record their thanks to Alison Cartwright and all her colleagues for all the hard work being undertaken to ensure the success of the vaccination programme. The importance of partnership work and positive communication were highlighted. The Chair, Councillor Caan, referred to the kind offer from the Lord Mayor, Councillor Lucas to have her vaccination publicised to help promote the uptake of the vaccine.

RESOLVED that the update on the Covid-19 vaccination be noted.

35. Testing Capacity, Uptake and Lateral Flow Testing

Valerie De Souza, Consultant Public Health, provided an update on the local testing capacity, uptake and lateral flow testing in Coventry.

Reference was made to the five covid testing centres in the city, all of which required pre-booking. There was availability for same day appointments at each site with results being returned within 24 hours. The Sub Group were informed that the testing rate in the city remained low and the communications message was focussed on encouraging anybody with symptoms, no matter how mild, to get tested.

Lateral flow testing was started to be rolled out in the city which was very important bearing in mind the numbers of people with covid who had no symptoms. Identifying people in this manner would help to stop the transmission of the virus. It would also help to understand the prevalence of covid in certain communities where outbreaks were occurring.

The test involved a swab being taken with results being available in the next 20-30 minutes. It provided the opportunity to quickly test a large group of people. The rollout had commenced the previous Monday and involved testing employees of the City Council. It was the intention to ensure the process was robust before greater rollout. The next stage involved working with partners in Emergency Services. It was the intention to use this testing method in communities with higher infection numbers.

Members enquired about the option to use lateral flow testing in schools but this wasn't allowed at the present time. It was clarified that the national programme at present prioritised testing for care home visiting and university students to allow them to return home for Christmas. Further national guidance in relation to schools was still awaited. The Sub Group noted that numbers of school pupils with covid had reduced during the previous two weeks. Partnership work with the two universities was ongoing. Attention was drawn to the issues caused for care homes by the additional testing requirements.

RESOLVED that the testing capacity, uptake and lateral flow testing update be noted.

36. Communications and Engagement Update

Nigel Hart, Head of Communications and Valerie De Souza, Consultant Public Health provided an update on communications and engagement in relation to Covid-19.

Nigel Hart reported that the main focus of recent communication had been the move into tier 3 restrictions after lockdown. Simple and consistent messages were being put out with information being available in a range of languages. The focus of attention continued to be on the need to get tested and the importance of socially isolating along with emphasising that the rollout of the vaccine would take time. Support was also being given to the lobbying for Coventry to be moved back into tier 2 following the review of the current restrictions.

Valerie De Souza reiterated the close partnership working that was ongoing with the Communications Team and referred to the work of the community messengers who were being used to take messages into the local communities. Attention was being given to any barriers to the new vaccination programme including dispelling any myths around the vaccine. Work was being undertaken to address resident's concerns.

The Sub Group expressed support for all the communications work with Coventry residents. The importance of highlighting the need for testing was emphasised along with the message that restrictions were still in place over the festive period.

RESOLVED that the communications and engagement update be noted.

37. Any other items of public business

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.00 pm)