



MEDWAY HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

3 NOVEMBER 2020

COVID-19 LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN BRIEFING

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Summary

This report will provide an update on the Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP) including the outcomes of and plans for stress testing the LOCP.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1. As part of the Department of Health and Social Care's COVID-19 response and recovery strategy, Upper Tier and Unitary Local Authorities in England were mandated to develop a COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan to reduce the viruses' spread.
- 1.2. With provision of £300M in national government funding to support the Plan's delivery, the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan will follow national outbreak management standards and put in place local measures to prevent, identify, and contain COVID-19 outbreaks. This plan was published online on 30 June 2020.

2. Background

- 2.1. Responding to the Rise in Cases Nationally and Locally
 - 2.1.1. The number of new COVID-19 cases has gradually started to increase again both nationally and locally in Medway.
 - 2.1.2. This has resulted in more restrictive infection control measures being implemented nationally during September including, the "Rule of 6" prohibiting social gatherings of more than six people, the 10pm closure of a number of businesses including pubs and restaurants, and a more extensive compulsory usage of face coverings.

- 2.1.3. In addition to current national infection control measures, The Director of Public Health (DPH) has taken several other measures to continue to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Medway including:

Local Testing Sites (LTS)

Given the start of the university academic year, in order to ensure that students have adequate access to testing, a Local Test Site has been established at the Medway Campus which is shared between the University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christchurch University and University of Kent. The DPH has put in an additional request for another LTS to be established in Medway.

Mitigating Reduced Availability of Pillar 2 Testing

Increased demand on the testing system which has led to a reduction in availability of booking at test sites which fall under Pillar 2 testing capacity including Mobile Testing Units, Regional Test Sites, Home Testing and Local Test Sites. The DPH has escalated these concerns to the regional coordinating group and has been advised that this could continue for several weeks. The COVID-19 Testing Workstream has worked with acute trusts to ensure key workers are still able to access testing under Pillar 1 capacity and that Pillar 1 testing can be used to respond to outbreak. It has been agreed that Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, to identify those who are currently infected with COVID-19, will be prioritised over antibody tests.

Monitoring and Cancelling Events

The DPH has taken the decision to cancel all external events taking place on Medway council grounds for the foreseeable future. Several other events which were to be held at other private sites in Medway have also been cancelled based on review of their risk assessments and their adherence to national guidance. All upcoming mass gatherings and events continue to be monitored by the Kent Resilience Forum Societal Cell and COVID-19 Enforcement and Restrictions Cell.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board – Engagement Strategy

The Kent and Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Board as the acting Local Outbreak Engagement Board have agreed a strategy to facilitate 2-way communication and engagement. Residents will be able to submit any queries and questions regarding Kent and Medway's Local Outbreak Control Plan via an online form prior to each meeting for the Joint Board to respond to.

South East Local Authority Test & Trace System

Work is currently ongoing to prepare Local Authorities (LA) to support NHS test and trace capability. LAs have been asked to handle cases that the national system cannot locate. DPHs across LAs in the South East have agreed to work together on this and have put forth a proposal to Public Health England.

BAME System Plan

As a direct response to the evidence suggesting that COVID-19 may have a disproportionate impact on people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic

(BAME) groups, partners across Kent and Medway have developed a number of COVID-19 workstreams that aim to address these inequalities. This includes a plan to protect our frontline health and social care workforce, improved clinical management, targeted test and trace and a social marketing project.

Communication

Work has been done to improve communication and delivery of several key messages to the public and across a variety of settings locally in Medway. In particular, (i) reassuring the public that they should still visit healthcare settings (ii) parent and teachers recognising symptoms of COVID-19 in children and when to get tested (iii) encouraging organisations to account for at risk members of their workforce in their risk assessments (iv) advising the public not to go to hospitals or to primary care settings to get a test (v) advising and supporting businesses to fulfil their their obligations for NHS Test and Trace, especially with the launch of the App (vi) working with university and college students to gain their insight into what communications and messaging works for them.

2.2. Stress Testing Local COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan

2.2.1. Local authorities across England were requested by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to test their Local COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP).

2.2.2. An LOCP stress test development group was formed with representation from multiple agency partners and members of the Health Protection Board (HPB) to produce the exercise scenarios for Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council (MC) to be tested. These included:

Scenario 1 – Farm Outbreak Stress Test

Outbreaks occurred in a school and hotel in Medway and on a farm, with onsite residence, in Maidstone, Kent. Members of one household were linked to each of those settings after one family member who worked on the farm tested positive with COVID-19 initially. A series of events occurred that resulted in the 3 settings being required to close. The aim was to clarify the details of the process leading up to the closure, to understand what the next steps were to facilitate this, who and what resources needed to be mobilised and what the resulting actions were. This scenario was discussed at an HPB meeting.

Scenario 2a – Rising Tide (HPB) Stress Test

Between August and November 2020, a gradual increase in community spread of COVID-19 was seen in both Medway and Kent. An Incident Control Team (ICT) was convened. The ICT put in place a range of infection control measures over time to try and stem the spread of the virus. By November however, the situation had escalated to the extent that it was decided a full local lock down was required in both Medway and Kent. The aim was to understand what the next steps were at each stage of a rising tide scenario that led to a local lockdown. Also, to determine who and what resources needed to be mobilised, what the resulting actions were and who

would be responsible for taking these actions forward. This scenario was discussed at an HPB meeting.

Scenario 2b - Rising Tide (SCG) Stress Test

Based on the outcomes of the Scenario 2a test, the Directors of Public Health (DPHs) of KCC and MC escalated to the Strategic Command Group (SCG) to ask for their support in implementing this a full local lock down (as defined by the ICT) and communicating to the public. The aim was to review the escalation process of the HPB to the SCG and understand the strategic issues for the SCG in moving forward with the recommendations made by the HPB in the event of a local lockdown and to ensure these were in line with the LOCP. This scenario was discussed at an SCG meeting.

Scenario 3 – Pan-Kent and Medway University Stress Test

In preparation for the upcoming academic year, further stress testing of the LOCP was undertaken based on a university scenario. This test was specific to universities in Kent and Medway and representatives from those universities were invited to participate. The scenario and discussion was centred around the response to (i) an outbreak in a university residential hall setting and (ii) widespread community spread of the virus resulting in a local lockdown in the area. Outcomes of this test placed a large emphasis on the communication between partners and the key messages that would need to be delivered to a variety of stakeholders. There was also discussion around the resources that were needed and how these could be mobilised.

- 2.2.3. The outcomes and learning from these tests have been incorporated into the LOCP and have also been summarised into a report. This report includes and details of the full scenarios and their outcomes. It was approved by HPB and the Health and Social Care Cell.
- 2.2.4. Several external stress tests have also been undertaken in collaboration with partners nationally:

Cross-border Local Resilience Forum Stress Test

This was coordinated by the Local Outbreak Plan exercise working group (LOPex WG) which included representatives from the Kent Resilience Forum. The exercise was held virtually on the 10 September 2020. Members of the HPB were invited to participate in this exercise. Outcomes and learnings resulting from this will be included in a report which will be incorporated into the LOCP.

Cross-border Greenwich University Stress Test

Following conversations with the University of Greenwich and given their campuses and residential halls are located in both Medway and the Royal Borough of Greenwich local authorities, it was decided that a joint exercise should be conducted. This took place virtually on the 3 September 2020. Members of the HPB were invited to attend this exercise to allow for shared learning as well as their respective counterparts from the Royal Borough of Greenwich local authorities and The University of Greenwich.

- 2.2.5. Further scenario planning and stress testing of the LOCP is expected to take place in the coming weeks. This includes:

Scenario 4 - Food Processing Industry Stress Test

This is being run in collaboration with a food manufacturing company based in Sittingbourne. This test is aimed at identifying the actions that will need to be taken in this setting in response to an outbreak and clarifying the role of environmental health officers in this response.

Scenario 5 - College Stress Test

This will be run in collaboration with a further education college with campuses in both Kent and Medway. This test is aimed at identifying the actions that will need to be taken in this setting in response to an outbreak and in the case of wider restrictions being put in place.

Scenario 6 - Domiciliary Care Stress Test

This test is aimed at identifying the actions that will need to be taken in response to an outbreak in a domiciliary care setting. Details to be confirmed.

Scenario 7 - EU Exit Manston Site Stress Test

In preparation for the UK's exit from the EU, Operation Fennel have raised several issues relating to COVID-19 which will need to be addressed. This includes (i) access to Pillar 2 testing sites due to traffic congestion, specifically regional sites at Manston and in North Kent, local testing site in Canterbury and any mobile testing sites and (ii) outbreaks occurring at lorry holding sites (Manston, Sevington and Waterbank). This test will involve participants from various national and local agencies and partners and will likely have multiple components based on any outcomes of the exercise that require escalation.

3. Risk Management

- 3.1. By running stress test exercises on a variety of scenarios related to the LOCP, as outlined in section 2.2 of the report, we aim to minimise the risks associated with similar events occurring by (i) identifying any gaps within the LOCP, (ii) creating awareness of the communication channels that exist between the agencies, (iii) creating awareness of the roles of different agencies, (iv) clarifying the escalation triggers and process, (v) identifying areas where additional support may be required, (vi) identifying any potential challenges and their solutions and (vii) identifying actions that need to be taken and when.

4. Consultation

- 4.1. Stress Testing the LOCP as described in section 2.2 of the report, has and continues to be undertaken in consultation with partner agencies across Kent and Medway as well as stakeholders from other local authority areas where relevant.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Financial resources have been allocated to Medway Council through the Local Authority test and trace service support grant, allocations for which have used the 2020/21 Public Health Grant allocations as a basis for distributing the funding. Medway Council received £1,592,918. This non-recurrent funding covers an 18-month period and will be earmarked for health protection and recovery activities outlined in the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. Medway Council, under the leadership of the Directors of Public Health, has a statutory duty to protect the population's health by responding to and managing communicable disease outbreaks which requires urgent investigation and presents a public health risk.
- 6.2. The legal context for the councils' response to COVID-19 sits within the following Acts:
- The Coronavirus Act 2020
 - Health and Social Care Act 2012
 - Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- 6.3. As part of the Department of Health and Social Care's COVID-19 response and recovery strategy, Upper Tier and Unitary Local Authorities in England were mandated to develop a COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan to reduce the viruses' spread.
- 6.4. The Coronavirus Act 2020, Health Protection (Coronavirus Restriction) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020 now gives the DPH the authority to close individual premises and public outdoor places as well as restrict events with immediate effect if they conclude it is necessary and proportionate to do so without making representations to a magistrate. The DPH is required to notify the Secretary of State as soon as reasonably practicable after the direction is given and review to ensure that the basis for the direction continues to be met, at least once every 7 days.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the update presented in the report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None