

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

17 JUNE 2021

COVID-19 LOCAL OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT PLAN BRIEFING

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Summary

This report will provide an update on the Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) including top-level outcomes of recent stress tests made since the last update was presented to the Board on 13 April 2021.

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 Management Plan (LOMP) - formerly known as the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan - to reduce the spread of the virus within the community.

1.2. On 25 February 2021, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) requested that the Local Outbreak Management Plan be updated to reflect the changed landscape of the pandemic and to consolidate the best practice that has emerged locally in its first year through the creation of a Best Practice Document. The objectives of these updates are outlined below:

- To ensure that updated fit for purpose local outbreak management plans are in place across England
- To identify any additional support Local Authorities may need from national or regional teams, particularly in relation to surge activity to detect new variants
- To identify good practice and local and regional level– most particularly in respect to Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) that can be used to reduce/prevent transmission of the virus and use this learning to inform regional and national policy

- To ensure there is effective governance and clarity on roles/responsibilities at all levels of response
 - To ensure Local Outbreak Management Plans reflect cross-cutting considerations, such as inequalities
 - To provide ongoing assurance and justification of the need for financial support from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and self-isolation fund.
- 1.3. The current Medway [Local Outbreak Management Plan](#) recently updated on 16 April 2021 is publicly available on the Medway website and is set out at Appendix A to the report. Revisions and updates to the LOMP have been informed by the [COVID-19 Contain Framework](#), updated on 18 March 2021. The contain framework sets out how national, regional, and local partners will work with each other, the public, businesses, institutions, and other local partners in the community to prevent, contain and manage COVID-19 outbreaks. Alongside the LOMP sits the [COVID-19 Testing Strategy](#) slide deck which provides testing information for members of the public. This is also provided at Appendix B to the report.
- 1.4. Local authorities receive additional funding from central government through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). This funding is directly allocated to support delivery of the objectives set out in the Contain Framework.
2. Background
- 2.1. ***Responding to the Rise in Cases Nationally and Locally***
- 2.1.1. Rates of COVID-19 in the UK continue to decrease since the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board last convened. This decline in cases has been accredited to the success of the vaccination programme and symptom-free testing at scale.
- 2.1.2. On 22 February 2021, the Government announced the National Spring 2021 Roadmap out of Lockdown. This is a 4-step data-driven approach to enable the relaxation of restrictions. Before proceeding to the next step, the Government will examine the data to determine whether it is safe and feasible to progress to the next phase of opening. The four tests that inform the progress through each phase are:
- The rollout of the national vaccine programme continues successfully
 - Evidence showing vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
 - Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations and therefore do not put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
 - Assessments of the risks is not changed fundamentally by new Variants of Concern
- 2.1.3. The current Step 3 of the National Spring 2021 Roadmap started no earlier than 17 May 2021. This Step aims to see the end of most social contact

rules. However, gatherings of over 30 people remain illegal at this time. Indoor entertainment will still apply the rule of 6 or 2 households although this will remain under close review. Step 4, starting no earlier than 21 June 2021, will aim to see the end of all legal limits on social contact, the reopening of nightclubs, large events, and performances. This step will potentially see the removal of all limits on weddings and other major life events.

- 2.1.4. As we commemorate over a year since first going into lockdown, it is important to recognise how dramatically the virus itself has changed since that time. To date, four major Variants of Concern (VoCs) have shown signs of transmission within the population; most notably VOC B.1.1.7 (first potentially identified in Kent in December 2020). This variant has gone on to become the dominant form of COVID-19 in circulation nationally. Two subsequent variants, first identified in South Africa (VOC B.1.351) and Brazil (VOC P.1), have also been sequenced within UK borders. They are monitored closely due to their potentially vaccine resistant qualities. All novel variants have shown signs of being more transmissible and potentially more deadly compared to the original COVID-19 pathogen. The most recent Variant of Concern (B.1.617.2) was first identified in India on 21 April 2021 and has recently been sequenced within the UK. This variant has shown signs of being more transmissible however not deadly compared to the other VoCs. Detailed information on these new variants can be found on the [website for the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- 2.1.5. No surge testing for new variants has been undertaken in Medway at this time. Surge testing was however undertaken for the VOC B.1.351 variant (first identified in South Africa) in the ME15 postcode (Maidstone area) for 3 days from 2 February 2021. Over 9,600 test kits were disseminated. Initial findings have not at this stage identified new variants but sequencing of these tests is ongoing.
- 2.1.6. In addition to current National Spring Roadmap, the Director of Public Health (DPH) has taken several other measures to continue to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Medway including:

2.2. ***Asymptomatic Testing***

- 2.2.1. Medway Council has launched a mass COVID-19 rapid testing pilot for asymptomatic residents; the first of its kind in the South East of England. Medway Council currently has four permanent sites and multiple pop-up sites for this purpose. The exact addresses of these four permanent testing sites are:

1. Chattenden Community Centre, Swinton Avenue, Chattenden, Rochester, ME3 8PH
2. The Student Hub (The Deep End), North Chatham Maritime, Chatham, ME4 4AG
3. The Oast House, Granary Close, Rainham, ME8 7SG.

4. MidKent College, Glassbox Theatre building, Medway Road, Gillingham, ME7 1FN

2.2.2. Underpinned by Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs), this rapid testing pilot has enabled Medway Council to better understand levels of asymptomatic transmission in their communities. LFTs process human nasal swabs, throat swabs, or sputum samples with a Lateral Flow Device (LFD). If SARS-CoV-2 antigens are present in the person's sample, a coloured line appears on the device after 10-20 minutes, signalling a positive result; its absence – after 30 minutes of waiting - indicates a negative result.

2.2.3. This initiative is operating in accordance with a framework provided by the Department of Health and Social Care. Those eligible for testing are contacted via text, NHSNoreply or letter and can book online. The testing programme initially prioritised hotspot areas where disease transmission was highest; key and essential workers (and their dependents) across Medway including all blue light services, social care, education, the military and within critical infrastructure. As the disease was brought under control, access was rolled-out to those unable to work from home. The programme is now ubiquitous. All Medway residents are encouraged to seek symptom-free testing each week. As of 26 May 2021, over 134,627 symptom-free tests have been conducted in Medway. The local testing strategy will evolve and be adapted as required to tackle the pandemic.

2.3. ***The Vaccination Programme***

2.3.1. The management and roll-out of the vaccination programme is the responsibility of the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). Medway Council is working closely with stakeholders from the DHSC to support them in meeting their vaccination targets for the local area. To date, this programme has offered vaccination to the following key groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI):

- All residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
- All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
- All those 75 years of age and over
- All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
- All those 50 years of age and over

2.3.2. Currently, the vaccine is being offered to those aged 30 and above in England, those at high risk of being infected with COVID-19, eligible frontline or social care workers, individuals with a learning disability and carers of those with high risk from COVID-19.

2.3.3. Vaccines are currently delivered by two types of vaccination sites:
1. Vaccination centres – using large-scale venues such as football stadiums; accessed via a national booking service

2. Local vaccination services – made up of sites led by general practice teams collaborating via pre-established primary care networks and pharmacy teams through community pharmacies.
- 2.3.4. The hospital hubs that were ran by hospital trusts for health and care staff and some patients have now completed their work.
- 2.3.5. All vaccination delivery options are available in Medway.
- 2.3.6. As of 30 May 2021, 39,379,411 people in the UK have been given their first dose of vaccine. In Medway as of 30 May 2021, over 151,471 people have received their first dose.
- 2.4. ***Changes in Governance Structure***
 - 2.4.1. As of May 2021, the Strategic Coordinating Group has stood down. This has changed the Health Protection Board's terms of reference. The Death Process Management Group and Enforcement Cell will be reporting to Health Protection Board.
- 2.5. ***Monitoring Events over the Course of the National Spring Roadmap***
 - 2.5.1. In light of the easing of restrictions and movement towards Step 4 of the Government roadmap where all restrictions hope to be lifted, the vast majority of events in Medway are allowed to take place in a COVID-secure manner. Mass gatherings and events scheduled later in the year will continue to be risk assessed by the Kent Resilience Forum Societal Cell and COVID-19 Enforcement and Restrictions Cell in close consultation with Roadmap allowances and restrictions.
3. **Risk Management**
 - 3.1. By running stress test exercises on a variety of scenarios related to the LOMP, we aim to minimise the risks associated with similar events occurring by (i) identifying any gaps within the LOMP, (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 LOMP, as described in paragraph 3.1 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. Stakeholders from national agencies are also invited where relevant.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Initial funding was provided through the Test, Track & Trace Support Grant using 2020/21 Public Health allocations as a basis for distribution. Funding continued throughout 2020/21 through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). The COMF has been extended to June 2021 although now encompasses support for compliance and enforcement activities that were previously delivered through alternative grant funding streams. In addition, the DHSC have committed to fully fund the cost of the testing programme until the end of June 2021 and are in discussions with the Treasury to agree funding beyond that point.
- 5.2. Monitoring and oversight of expenditure is managed via the Contain Programme Regional Convenor for the South East. There is a detailed framework that sets out the key areas that can be funded; these will evolve over time and are tailored to local need.
- 5.3. As mentioned in paragraph 1.2, the LOMP updates requested by the DHSC were made to inform how monies from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) should be allocated going forwards on a 'greatest need' basis.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. Medway Council, under the leadership of the Director 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 council's 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 Management Plan to reduce the viruses' spread.
- 6.4. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) (Steps) (England) (No.364) Regulations 2021 revoke and replace the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 with effect from 29 March 2021. They contain the legislative framework to implement Steps 1-3 of the Government's National Spring Roadmap and enable a number of public health measures to be taken to reduce the public health risks posed by the spread of COVID-19 including authorisation for the DPH to apply step-by-step restrictions, close individual premises and public outdoor places as well as restrict events with immediate effect if he concludes 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 such direction is given and to review at least once every 7 days to ensure that the basis for the direction continues to be met.

7. Recommendation

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

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Appendices

Appendix A - Kent and Medway Local COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan
Appendix B - COVID-19 Testing Strategy Slide Deck

Background papers

None