

MEDWAY HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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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) and other recent updates in light of the Governments living with COVID-19 strategy. This report will focus on new updates since the last brief was presented to the Board on 14 April 2022.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 As part of the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) COVID-19 response and recovery strategy, Upper Tier and Unitary Local Authorities in England were mandated to develop a COVID-19 LOMP—formerly known as the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan—to reduce the spread of the virus within the community.
- 1.2 The DHSC requested that the LOMP 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 LOMPs 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 at local and regional levels— 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 LOMPs 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 In line with the strategic guidance set out in central government's living with COVID-19 strategy, the COVID-19 Contain Framework was withdrawn on 07 April 2022. The Contain Framework informed the manner in which national, regional, and local partners collaborated and worked together to prevent, contain and manage COVID-19 outbreaks. The latest version of the LOMP which was published in January 2022, is currently being updated to reflect the new policy landscape.

2. Background

2.1 Responding to the Reduction in Cases Nationally & Locally

2.1.1 Since the last convening of the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board in April 2022, COVID-19 infection rates nationally and in Medway have decreased substantially. The reduction in cases is being attributed to the success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, natural immunity, and increased scientific and public understanding about how to manage risk.

2.1.2 In line with the publication of the UK Government [COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19](#) strategy, from 31 March 2022, COVID-19 functions are expected to become integrated into standard business as usual responses to infectious diseases. The four main principles informing this strategy are:

- Supporting society to live with COVID-19 through removing domestic restrictions whilst encouraging safer behaviours through public health advice, in common with longstanding ways of managing most other respiratory illnesses
- Using vaccination and targeted testing to protect people most vulnerable to COVID-19, guided by advice provided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)
- Maintaining resilience through ongoing surveillance and contingency planning. Retaining the ability to reintroduce key capabilities such as mass vaccination and testing should an emergency arise
- Securing innovations and opportunities from the COVID-19 response, including investment in life sciences

2.1.3 The government's guidance on [Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19](#) was published on 01 April 2022. This document informs the actions to be taken in order to help reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19 and it being spread amongst the community. The key actions that need to be taken in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections include:

- Get vaccinated
- Ventilation and ensure the flow of fresh air if meeting indoors
- Practise good hygiene:
 - Wash your hands
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes
 - Clean your surroundings frequently
 - Wear a face covering or a face mask

2.1.4 The BA.2 variant, a sub lineage of the Omicron variant (BA.1), is currently the dominant variant in circulation across England. Preliminary analysis suggests higher transmissibility of the BA.2 variant compared to BA.1. There is however, no evidence of a greater risk of hospitalisation following infection with BA.2 compared to BA.1.

2.1.5 No other Variants of Concern (VOCs) have been detected in Medway since the detection of the Omicron Variant in the UK in November 2021. Additionally, no surge testing for variants has been required or undertaken in Medway. Detailed information on all variants and variants under investigation can be found on the Government website under [Technical Briefing 41](#) published by the UK Health and Security Agency (UKHSA) which was recently updated on 06 May 2022.

2.2 Main Changes: Living Safely with COVID-19 Post 01April 2022

2.2.1 The government will no longer provide free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public in England with some exemptions highlighted in section 2.3.3. Commercial private providers offer testing to the general public on a cost basis.

2.2.2 All health and safety requirement for employers to explicitly consider COVID-19 in their risk assessment has been removed. There is however guidance for employers and workplaces in the living with COVID-19 guidance.

2.2.3 The Government has removed the current guidance on domestic voluntary COVID-status certification. It is no longer recommend that certain venues use the NHS COVID Pass.

2.3 Updates to Local Testing and Tracing Capabilities

2.3.1 Routine contact tracing by Local Trace Partnership teams ceased on 24 February 2022. UKHSA maintains an overview of testing and tracing and advises on any specific on enhanced tracing and testing if required. Section 2.3.4 sets out precautions that people can take should they become symptomatic or believe they have come into contact with an infected person.

2.3.2 Asymptomatic lateral flow testing continues from April in some high-risk settings, including for some staff in the NHS, staff in adult social care, staff in some prisons and places of detention and in high-risk domestic abuse refuges and homelessness settings.

2.3.3 Symptomatic testing is available for staff of adult social care organisations who are eligible for free testing. Free symptomatic testing is available for residents in care homes and also for residents in extra care and supported living services. Further details can be found in [the COVID-19 testing in adult social care guidance](#).

2.3.4 Guidance has been published which advises people with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19, or a positive test result for COVID-19. People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people. People who have got a positive COVID-19 test result are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days after the day the test was taken. More details can be found [here](#).

2.4 The Vaccination Programme

2.4.1 The management and roll-out of the vaccination programme is the responsibility of the DHSC. Medway Council is working closely with NHS colleagues to support them in rolling out the vaccination programme.

2.4.2 To date, this programme has offered vaccination to all those 12 years of age and older, residents of care homes, frontline health and social care workers, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals, and those with underlying health conditions. In line with the programme rollout, coverage is highest in the oldest age groups. A range of options are being used to enable people to access COVID-19 vaccination. Information on how eligible individuals can get vaccinated can be found [Here](#).

2.4.3 COVID-19 vaccinations are currently being offered to 5- to 11-year-olds on a non-urgent basis. The 2 doses are offered with an interval of at least 12 weeks between doses. Uptake in Medway is being monitored.

2.4.4 As a precaution to those at extremely high risk, people aged 75 years and over, those in care homes and those aged 12 years and over with a weakened immune system are being offered the spring booster of COVID-19 vaccine.

2.4.5 As of 11 May 2022, over 53 million people have had their first dose in England. Approximately 50 million and 40 million people have had a second dose and a booster dose respectively. In Medway, 205,875, 194,611 and 150,108 people have received their first, second and booster doses respectively.

2.4.6 For people who are yet to take up their initial vaccine offer, the NHS continues to make vaccines available across the UK to ensure that every eligible person can be vaccinated.

2.5 Management of Local outbreaks in education and childcare settings

2.5.1 The contingency framework for education and childcare settings which set out the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare settings was withdrawn on 01 April 2022 and replaced with [emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings](#).

2.5.2 Guidance for twice weekly testing for staff and student in mainstream education and childcare settings has been removed.

2.5.3 However, staff and pupils in specialist Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) settings, Alternative Provision and SEND units in mainstream schools or equivalent in Further Education colleges, are currently advised to continue regular twice weekly testing.

2.5.4 There is ongoing management of the risks associated with COVID-19 in childcare and educational settings. Key things to note are:

- Children who are unwell and showing [the symptoms of an infectious disease](#) or following a positive diagnostic result, should be advised to stay away from their education or childcare setting for the minimum period recommended.
- The UKHSA can provide advice or support to educational settings, working with local authority public health teams should the need arise.
- All education and childcare settings should continue to ensure good ventilation in occupied spaces and appropriate cleaning regimes, including hand hygiene.

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. As the system moves from a response to preparedness phase, testing and assurance will be undertaken periodically to ensure plans are fit for purpose.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 For 2021/22 funding continued through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). We have received confirmation that we will be able to carry forward unspent funding to 2022/23 to continue to support outbreak management planning and to continue to help reduce the spread of coronavirus.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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
- 5.3 The Coronavirus Act 2020 was first introduced in March 2020 and has enabled the Government to support individuals, businesses, and public services during the pandemic. The Government have expired a number of provisions within the Act which were no longer needed, however a significant proportion remain active.
- 5.4 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 ("No.3 Regulations") were in place since 18 July 2020. These powers were revoked on 24 February 2022. Local authorities now manage outbreaks through local planning, and pre-existing public health powers, as they would with other infectious diseases.
- 5.5 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 have been in place since 28 September 2020 and impose a legal duty on individuals who test positive and certain close contacts to self-isolate. As set out in chapter 3, the legal duty to self-isolate has been lifted on 24 February 2022 and replaced by guidance.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Medway Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to consider and note this update report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None