

HEALTH PROTECTION BOARD - COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY ISSUES

Relevant Board Member(s)	Councillor Jane Palmer, Health and Wellbeing Board Chairman
Organisation	London Borough of Hillingdon
Report author	Dan Kennedy, Hillingdon Council
Papers with report	None

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	This report updates the Health and Wellbeing Board on Hillingdon's Local Outbreak Control Plan and HHCP recovery plan. This plan sets out how the Council and partners are working with residents, businesses, schools and a wide range of other organisations to prevent and contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus.
Contribution to plans and strategies	The Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan contributes to Hillingdon's Health and Wellbeing Strategy by helping to protect the health of residents.
Financial Cost	There are no direct financial costs arising from the recommendations set out within this report.
Ward(s) affected	All

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the work to date and underway by the Council and Board Members to prevent and control the spread of the Covid-19 virus be noted.

3. INFORMATION

Supporting Information

1. In line with much of London and many other areas of the country, Covid-19 infection rates in Hillingdon and London increased sharply from December but are now significantly lower following the third national lockdown from early January. As at 17 February 2021, Hillingdon's 7-day rolling infection rate per 100,000 population is 141.8. London was circa 117.3 per 100,000 population in comparison. The sharp rise in infection rates in London and nationally during December 2020 and January 2021 is understood to be largely attributed to a new variant of coronavirus. Work is underway to prepare a plan to implement rapid testing in the Borough should there be an outbreak of a variant of Covid-19.

2. As part of the national effort to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus, every local authority prepared a Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP) which sets out how the local authority and partners are working together to help reduce the likelihood of further outbreaks of Covid-19, particularly for some of the most vulnerable residents, such as those living in care homes. The plan presents preventative action as well as what the approach will be in the event of an outbreak.

Settings

3. Particular attention continues to be given to higher risk settings such as care homes, schools and accommodation for homeless individuals to ensure that infection controls are in place and are robustly adhered to.
4. Care homes continued to have multi-agency 'wrap around' support to enable them to continue to provide safe services to the residents of Hillingdon, prevent the spread of infection and ensure that safe visiting takes place (where this has been agreed).
5. In line with latest guidance, the Council and CCG will manage the discharge of patients who have tested positive for Covid19 from hospital to designated beds for isolation. All patients that are to be discharged from hospital to a care setting will be tested and their Covid status known. For those residents who are tested negative, they will be discharged to 'step down' facilities or to their original care home placement to enable a further period of isolation at home to continue.
6. Since early January 2021, schools have been closed to most children. The Council is working closely with the Borough's primary and secondary schools to support them through the pandemic. All schools have access to a Council link officer who acts as a central point of contact for Covid-19 queries to ensure they can follow the latest Government guidance to help keep their schools safe. Education advisors are also on hand to support headteachers with maintaining education provision and provide additional support and guidance.
7. During lockdown, children receive a mix of remote and face-to-face learning (for vulnerable and critical worker children). Schools provide a mixture of remote learning provision from live lessons, to pre-recorded lessons and worksheets. Through a combination of assistance from the Department for Education and the schools, electronic devices and internet access has been provided to families in need, to support home learning. Schools continue to provide eligible children with Free School Meals support for those attending schools or learning from home during term-time.
8. Housing providers in the Borough have been contacted and provided with nationally published information to share with tenants living in shared housing. This sets out what they can do to keep safe and to help prevent the spread of the virus. Landlords of shared accommodation and their tenants have been written to by the Council setting out practical advice and guidance to prevent the spread of the infection. For vulnerable residents testing has been undertaken and is available.

Helping Residents to Shop Safely

9. The Council introduced Covid-19 marshals in November to assist the public as part of an

ongoing effort to slow the spread of coronavirus and remind residents and businesses what actions are needed to help keep everyone safe.

10. The marshals have been busy patrolling areas throughout the Borough to help drive down infection rates by raising awareness of the Government restrictions in place. They have also been explaining how the public should comply with Covid-19 public health measures such as social distancing, using face coverings and hand washing.
11. Since January, licensing and environmental health and regulatory officers have carried out more than 1,300 visits to businesses across the Borough to ensure they are Covid compliant, and 97 warnings have been issued for breaches of regulations. So far this year, the Council has issued fines totalling £42,000 to businesses that were repeatedly caught flouting regulations. Should any fines go unpaid, businesses may be taken to court, and the Council has the power to close premises for serious Covid-19 failures.

Testing

12. A key element of the national strategy to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus is to establish a robust testing strategy, targeting specific occupations, such as care staff. Working jointly with the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Council has put in place regular testing arrangements for care settings. In terms of the broader approach to testing, in Hillingdon this has involved:
 - Mobile testing units visiting on a regular basis;
 - Access to home testing kits, available to all residents;
 - Pop-up testing sites as required; and
 - Local testing sites (walk through).
13. Testing for residents who do not have symptoms - Free rapid tests are available at seven sites across the Borough (Hayes, Harlington, Harefield, Uxbridge, Northwood, Sipson and South Ruislip) for anyone not showing Covid-19 symptoms.
14. As many as one in three people who have Covid-19 show no symptoms but could be passing the virus on to others. Testing those who do not have symptoms enables those who test positive, and their contacts, to self-isolate, which can help to drive down transmission locally and save lives.
15. The rapid testing process is simple and results are often provided within an hour. Specially trained staff are on hand to help through all parts of the process. All sites are open Monday to Friday, with some open Saturdays and up to 8pm, to enable as many people as possible to get tested.

Local Contact Tracing Introduced

16. The Council is continuing to support the national contact tracing effort by using its local knowledge to successfully trace hard-to-reach individuals. In November, the Council introduced a Covid-19 contact tracing service in support of the NHS. The scheme sees NHS Test and Trace pass details to the service of residents who have tested positive for the virus, but who they have been unable to contact. The team makes contact with these residents either by text, phone or email to enable them to capture information about their activities in the days prior to their positive result.

17. If they are unable to speak with the resident, officers will make a socially-distanced face-to-face visit to the address provided. Since the service started on Wednesday 11 November 2020, more than 2,113 residents have been successfully contacted.

Covid-19 Vaccinations

18. The NHS is offering the Covid-19 vaccine to people most at risk. The vaccine is safe and effective. The vaccine, like all vaccines in the UK, has been approved for use after meeting the strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. So far, reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare. No long-term complications have been reported. The Covid-19 vaccine also does not contain any egg or animal products.

19. The NHS is vaccinating people in priority order. The first four groups are:

- residents in care homes 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; and
- all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

20. The programme has gathered pace during the past month, and more than 13 million people have been vaccinated across the UK. As at 9 February 2021, 94.6% of vaccinations were completed in Hillingdon for the 70 years and upwards cohort.

Monitoring / Surveillance

21. Covid-19 infection rates are closely monitored by the Council on a daily basis (seven days a week) so that any patterns in infection rates are swiftly identified and responded to in order to limit the spread of the virus. Monitoring includes the following:

- The rate of infection for Hillingdon per 100,000 population (the standard measure used by Public Health England which allows for comparison across local authorities);
- The number of new infections registered for Hillingdon in the last 24hrs;
- Cumulative demographic information on gender, age and ethnicity;
- Number of tests completed and the positive infection rate;
- Incidences of infection broken down at ward level; and
- Comparative information from geographic neighbours (West London and Home Counties).

22. In addition, officers of the Council are working closely with colleagues in the Clinical Commissioning Group and health partners to exchange information to help track changes in infection rates. Analysis and interrogation of Covid-19 related data continues to evolve and develop as the understanding of patterns of infection becomes more sophisticated and the data available to the Council improves.

23. The take up of the vaccine is being closely monitored by the NHS and the Council.

Supporting businesses

24. The Council is providing a range of targeted support and guidance to businesses throughout the pandemic, ensuring that financial assistance is given to those who are

eligible. In light of the most recent lockdown, further grant schemes were made available by the Government. So far, the Council has paid out £8.7 million of the new Local Restrictions Support Grant and continues to process new applications as quickly as possible.

Supporting Vulnerable Residents

25. The Council is putting its residents first during the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to coordinate support, working with partners for vulnerable residents who need to self-isolate. This helps to keep residents safe by helping to prevent the spread of the virus, particularly important for those that are clinically extremely vulnerable.
26. Hillingdon's approach to protecting and supporting residents is centred on:
 - Practicing social distancing and hand and respiratory hygiene and wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in line with Government guidance;
 - NHS testing for the presence of coronavirus if residents display symptoms;
 - Supporting the tracing system if residents have tested positive and have been in close contact with others; and
 - Supporting self-isolation for those who have tested positive or have been in close contact with those who have tested positive for the presence of the virus.
27. During the pandemic, the Council has maintained a Covid-19 Community Hub within the Council's Contact Centre to respond to Covid-19 enquiries. It is open from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. The Council has a dedicated contact centre which responds to resident queries. The Council is supporting local foodbanks to provide food parcels where required and signposting residents to Hillingdon 4 All and other charities to provide support.
28. Residents on a low income can claim the £500 financial support payment when self-isolating through the Hub. Schools and other businesses enquiries have been routed into the Contact Centre.
29. The Hub is fully scalable to increased demands and relevant data is monitored to ensure correct resources are allocated. The Council maintains the ability to reactivate its own food distribution service if the local food bank capacity is exceeded.

Communications and Engagement

30. The Council, together with partners, has and continues to be proactive in delivering health protection messages to residents using a range of communication channels.
31. Since the start of the pandemic, the team has publicised key guidance to residents and businesses, ensuring that they are aware of:
 - Important health, testing and any restriction/lockdown messages;
 - The impact on Council events and services;
 - The Council support available, i.e., community hub;
 - Various Government campaigns; and
 - The easing of restrictions and subsequent recovery of Council services.
32. Coronavirus messaging has been widely communicated using all available Council channels, including the Council's website (including the specially created coronavirus subsection), social media platforms, media relations, regular e-newsletters (the frequency of

these has been increased), GP texting, Hillingdon People, JC Decaux boards, refuse lorries, lamp post banners, posters and signage and internal communications.

33. The team produced communications plans and localised assets for raising awareness of coronavirus, local outbreaks, the tier alert levels and the second national lockdown.
34. The team is also working with a range of services to support their messaging, ensure consistency and amplify/target messages to their audiences. This has included services working with schools and universities, businesses and community and faith groups.
35. Corporate Communications has also linked up with a variety of communications colleagues from neighbouring, pan-London and outer London local authorities, PHE and partner agencies to share best practice and resources and, in the case of partners, amplify messages via each other's channels.
36. The Council is supporting health partners and the rollout by sharing NHS information and messaging to ensure that residents are well informed about the Covid-19 vaccine. The Council is encouraging residents to have the vaccine when they are told that it's their turn so that they can protect themselves, their friends, families and local community – and keep Hillingdon safe. The Council is also working with H4All (a collaboration of local charities) to deliver the Community Champions scheme to support those most at risk from Covid-19 and boost vaccine take-up by providing advice as well as tackling misinformation.
37. The Council has already built a strong network of community, faith and voluntary sector groups since the start of the pandemic, working closely with health partners. The Community Champions scheme will further strengthen this by working with trusted local champions from faith and community groups to help reach older people, disabled residents and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
38. During the week commencing 8 February 2021, two sessions were held with community/voluntary/faith groups. 45 organisations attended across the two sessions. Police and a local GP were present at the virtual sessions. Nine people have stepped forward to be community champions and further recruitment is underway.

Targeted Actions

39. Whilst there is a degree of confidence that the action taken to date has helped to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus in the Borough, there is no room for complacency. It is recognised, therefore, that there will be a need for a range of ongoing proactive actions to keep Covid-19 infection rates as low as possible. This includes: continuing to deliver a communications and engagement campaign, restating national infection control messages, quality assuring and inspecting care services, the hospitality sector and retail organisations to support them to ensure compliance with Covid-19 guidelines; supporting the expansion of Covid-19 testing and vaccination arrangements; and providing support to residents who need assistance to keep safe and well.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial costs arising from the recommendations set out within this report.

4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

Preventing and controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus will help to keep Hillingdon's residents safe.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The development of Hillingdon's Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan has involved joint working with a range of partner organisations, including the Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS provider organisations and the Police, amongst others. The plan will continue to be kept under review and will be updated, in line with the latest NHS guidance and advice.

Policy Overview Committee comments

None at this stage.

5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Hillingdon Council Corporate Finance comments

Corporate Finance has reviewed the report and concur with the financial implications set out above, noting that there are no direct financial implications arising from the report recommendations.

Hillingdon Council Legal comments

The Borough Solicitor confirms that the Council's Local Outbreak Control Plan complies with the requirements of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and associated legislation. In addition, detailed legal advice on individual cases is provided whenever necessary to enable the Council to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

Relevant Service Groups

The development of the Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan has involved all Council Directorates.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.