



ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

14th June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with an update on key areas of development in relation to Wirral's COVID-19 response and delivery of the Local Outbreak Management Plan, as well as the Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026.

This matter affects all wards within the Borough; it is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and the progress made to date in the continued COVID-19 response, and the wider emerging health protection priorities and plans to protect the health of Wirral residents.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of how Wirral Council will continue to work with partners to Keep Wirral Well and protect residents from the impact of COVID-19, and other health protection threats.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Local Outbreak Management Plan and associated strategic priorities highlighted within this report have been developed to prevent and control COVID-19 in Wirral and protect Wirral residents from other infectious diseases and environmental hazards. Although no other viable options have been considered at this time; it is regularly reviewed to ensure the most appropriate response is in place.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Delivery of Wirral's Local Outbreak Management Plan

In May 2020, Wirral published its initial Local Outbreak Management Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Local Outbreak Management Plan sets out how we will:

- prevent transmission of COVID-19 within the community
- ensure we have an effective and coordinated local approach to managing COVID-19 outbreaks across different settings within the Borough
- ensure vulnerable people are protected
- link with national and regional systems to ensure we get maximum benefit for the population of Wirral.

The Local Outbreak Management Plan was updated throughout the various phases of the pandemic, highlighting the progress made to date along with a revised strategy for how the Council and local partners will continue to protect our communities from the impacts of COVID-19 as well as the wider effects on the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of Wirral residents. The plan can be found on the Wirral Council website: [Wirral Local Outbreak Management Plan](#).

A summary of key progress against these priority actions outlined within the Local Outbreak Management Plan is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

3.2 Learning to Live Safely and Fairly with COVID-19

The Prime Minister's announcement on 21 February 2022 set out how we will live safely with COVID-19. With the Government's plan for removing the remaining legal restrictions, the focus is to protect people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and maintain resilience, with the following objectives:

- Living with COVID-19 – moving to managing COVID-19 through advice and guidance, enabling people to make choices and assess individual risk.

- Protect those at high risk from COVID-19 – focus on protecting people and settings at high risk from COVID-19, ensuring we control outbreaks in vulnerable settings and supporting delivery of antivirals.
- Resilience and contingency – deliver effective surveillance to monitor the epidemiology and detect/assess new variants, retaining a proportionate test, trace, data, logistics and skills infrastructure to be able to scale up in the event of future COVID-19 wave.

A national Contingency framework is anticipated to inform and guide the ongoing response and plans for future surge preparedness. Locally, work is ongoing to review and update our continued local response to:

- Shift the focus from breaking every chain of transmission to protecting those most vulnerable and at risk.
- Manage COVID-19 locally as part of a wider all hazards approach, using existing health protection frameworks.
- Ensure we retain local capacity and contingency capabilities to deal with future uncertainty and a range of scenarios for the pandemic.

3.3 Wirral's Local Outbreak Management: priorities for a local response:

- To continue COVID-19 outbreak management in high-risk settings to reduce the risk to vulnerable people within these settings. This will include working proactively with such settings to reduce the risk of importation and spread of COVID-19.
- To support COVID-19 outbreak investigation and management in other settings when needed to protect public health, alongside other respiratory illnesses.
- To support a range of settings to reduce the risk of, and to manage, COVID-19 outbreaks as part of usual practice, now including COVID-19 alongside other respiratory illnesses.
- Community engagement to support public health messaging and behaviour change including working with local partners, employers and with vulnerable people in their community through tailored and targeted communication. This includes continuing to promote positive behaviours that can reduce the transmission of respiratory and other viruses.

3.4 Wirral Health Protection Board

As we move into the next phase of the pandemic and out of emergency response mode the Outbreak Control cell has been stood down and we have re-established the Wirral Health Protection Board. The multi-agency Health Protection Board will be responsible for the oversight of health protection arrangements in Wirral and provide assurance to the Health and Wellbeing Board that there are safe, effective, integrated arrangements and plans in place across the borough to protect the health of the population and to reduce health inequalities.

The scope of health protection issues to be considered by the Board include:

- The prevention and control of infectious diseases including COVID-19;
- Increasing vaccination uptake (COVID-19, Flu and wider immunisation programmes);
- Tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR);
- Reducing healthcare associated infections;
- Improving infection prevention and control
- Strengthening preparedness and emergency planning;
- Protecting Wirral communities from environmental hazards (air quality, contaminated land, climate change).

3.5 Wirral's Health Protection Service

COVID-19, alongside the threat of other infectious diseases, requires a resilient local approach that is flexible and adaptable. There is a need locally for contingency and winter planning, local surge capacity and assurance around business continuity, involving collaboration with internal and external specialist services and partners as one Health Protection Service.

Work is underway to review, re-shape and transition the existing Local Outbreak Hub to a Health Protection Delivery Service by September 2022, supporting and building upon Living Safely and Fairly with Covid-19 and wider public health priorities. Further details of this new service will be brought to a future committee.

The Local Outbreak Hub has already started working beyond the direct COVID-19 response across the wider Wirral health protection priorities, examples of work undertaken to date is included within Appendix 2.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The delivery of the Local Outbreak Management Plan has been funded via national grant funding with the prime funding source being the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). During the period of June 2020 to March 2022, Wirral was allocated a total of £14,784,032, £6,817,546 of which was received in March 2021.

In addition to COMF, Wirral has received funding for the delivery of Targeted Community Testing. The total for the financial year 2021-2022 was £2,331,187. On 21st February 2022, the Government announced that the Community Testing programme would conclude from 31st March 2022.

To date, oversight of the funding for the local outbreak response took place at the COVID-19 Outbreak Strategic Control Cell. A COMF Working Group was then established in late 2021 to steer further investment to support local communities.

In late December 2021, it was announced that previously received COMF allocations could be carried forward to be used during 2022-2023. No additional funding has been provided for the budget year 2022-2023.

Overview of COMF Spend, 2020 - 2022

Contain Outbreak Management Fund Areas of Spend	Planned Spend
Hub Operations	£3,175,107
Community Engagement	£3,679,932
Infection Prevention Control Service	£555,106
Communications	£517,974
Supporting Educational Settings	£475,695
Supporting Housing & Homeless Services	£795,910
Regional Test and Trace Hub	£390,246
Vaccination & Testing	£382,294
Intelligence	£209,646
Renewal & Resilience	£4,602,122
TOTAL	£14,784,032

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 A duty for the management of communicable diseases that present a risk to the health of the public requiring urgent investigation and management by the Council, in conjunction with Public Health England, sits with:

1. The Director of Public Health under the National Health Service Act 2006; and
2. The Chief Environmental Health Officer under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984

5.3 The Director of Public Health has primary responsibility for the health of the local community. This includes being assured that the arrangements to protect the health of the communities that they serve are robust and are implemented through developing and deploying local outbreak management plans. Each authority must make available the necessary resources to investigate and control any outbreak at the request of the Outbreak Control Team. The Council's Local Outbreak Management Plan has been developed in accordance with the Authority's statutory duties and UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) guidance.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 This report is for information to Members and as a result there are no resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 It should be noted that data relating to case rates, hospitalisation and operational management of the COVID-19 response is frequently changing and as a result, some of the information contained within this report is likely to be outdated by the time of publication.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 No direct public consultation or engagement has been undertaken in relation to this report. However, community engagement is a key priority in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council continues to engage with a wide range of stakeholders regarding the future local health protection response.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. Equality considerations were a key component of the actions noted in 3.5 of this report, however there are no further direct equality implications arising.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct environment and climate implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The success of the health and care system in meeting the health and care needs of the community depends on many factors, but the response to the Covid-19 pandemic clearly demonstrates the importance of joined up approaches to strategy development and decision-making across the system and communities. During the pandemic, we saw the brilliance and dedication of the health and care workforce enhanced by the strengthening of existing, and development of new, partnerships.
- 11.2 The case for Community Wealth Building is stronger than ever, with the pandemic having a clear and significant impact on our residents, communities, and businesses. It is vital that everything we do at the Council contributes to the recovery and the development of a resilient and inclusive economy for Wirral.
- 11.3 Community Wealth Building in Wirral focuses on partnerships and collaboration, both within the Council and with external partners and stakeholders, including residents. The Council will work together with partners and residents to develop the place-based partnership arrangements in Wirral that meet the needs of the population, with a focus on reducing health inequalities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Wirral Response to COVID-19
Appendix 2: Wider Health Protection Work

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Local Outbreak Management Plan (Revised August 2021)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	13th October 2020
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	19th November 2020
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	18th January 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	2nd March 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	7th June 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	29th July 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	23rd September 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	13th October 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	16th November 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	25th January 2022
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	3rd March 2022