

Appendix 1 - Wirral Response to COVID-19

Priority	Progress to Date and Future Plans
<p>1) Effective Surveillance</p> <p><i>Ensure access to timely local data and intelligence to inform local activity to prevent and manage outbreaks.</i></p>	<p>We continue to utilise a local surveillance system to capture timely local outbreak data and provide support to a variety of settings through Wirral's COVID-19 Hub. The Microsoft Dynamics case management platform has led to improvements in the collection and reporting of data captured from local settings, as well as proactive identification of exposures and sources of potential outbreaks. The Hub's prioritisation criteria are continually reviewed to ensure capacity is well utilised and directed to support the highest risk settings. The Microsoft Dynamics system has also allowed us to work more closely with colleagues across the Cheshire and Merseyside region.</p> <p>Daily and weekly multi-agency surveillance meetings continue to be held at local and regional levels to understand the epidemiology of current situations and to appropriately direct prevention and control measures, community engagement activity and target communications. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Situational Explorer Portal continues to be used in conjunction with contact tracing data and local intelligence to identify likely transmission hotspots and high risk settings. Locally, daily surveillance is reviewed at regular OIRR (Outbreak Identification and Rapid Response) meetings to closely monitor current case rates, common exposures, and postcode coincidence data. These meetings are an opportunity to undertake screening and prioritisation, to interrogate data and to carry out a combined risk assessment resulting in direct actions for teams across the Hub. Discussion and review at these daily meetings also provide an opportunity to prioritise high risk settings.</p> <p>Utilising local intelligence has also allowed us to identify inequalities in vaccination uptake which has allowed further targeted engagement to take place. This process has proved particularly valuable in supporting social care and business settings to encourage staff vaccination. We will continue to ensure soft intelligence and community engagement feedback is reviewed in conjunction with quantitative data to direct resources appropriately.</p>
<p>2) Engagement and Communication</p> <p><i>Build trust and participation through</i></p>	<p>Colleagues across the Council's intelligence, engagement and communications continue to meet fortnightly to plan and review activity, examining data, setting parameters for engagement and feeding back insight to inform local and targeted communications messaging. These meetings are also attended by NHS Wirral CCG and third sector representatives to ensure a whole system approach to community engagement.</p>

<p><i>effective community engagement and communication.</i></p>	<p>Wirral's Community Champions network has now enlisted 715 local people, with recent improvements to the regular newsletter meaning that it is now easier for the Champions to access and utilise COVID-19 resources. Further virtual sessions with our Champions have taken place in February 2022, with the Hub Engagement Team working together with Healthwatch Wirral to deliver two training sessions around the #Spare 5 campaign; providing an opportunity for Champions to learn more about what support is available locally for their networks, how they can make a positive difference and how to make #Spare5 a part of their day.</p> <p>In Summer 2021 an evaluation of the Community Champions programme was initiated, facilitated by Hitch Marketing, as part of the LGA behavioural science project evaluating the effectiveness of the Council's Community Champions role in affecting behaviour change. In December 2021, the Champions were encouraged to undertake training around Making Every Contact Count (MECC), holding difficult conversations and using social media. The next step in the evaluation process will include targeting the Champions with key messages to support their role, as well as assessing how our individual Champions would most want to engage with the programme. Further analysis will then be carried out to support the development of the programme and further interventions. The evaluation is due to be completed in March 2021. More information on the Community Champions Programme can be found here: Keep Wirral Well during COVID-19 www.wirral.gov.uk</p>
<p>3) Higher-Risk Settings, Communities and Locations <i>Identify and support high risk workplaces, locations and communities to prevent and manage outbreaks.</i></p>	<p>The COVID-19 Hub continues to work closely with local partners to prevent and manage outbreaks in high-risk settings with a robust daily review process and use of local intelligence to proactively target settings at higher risk of outbreaks, with the COVID-19 Hub team in place currently until September 2022 to continue to prevent and manage outbreaks across the Borough.</p> <p>There is a co-ordinated health and social care response; overseeing capacity, trends, resources, and updated guidance, leading the partnership across the system including voluntary sector, to respond to emerging pressures and system needs. We continue to build on learning to date and work in partnership to ensure our health and care system is able to deliver high quality COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 care.</p>

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	<p>The COVID-19 Hub works in close partnership with Wirral Intelligence Service and community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) colleagues, as well as the Cheshire and Merseyside regional Hub, to ensure positive cases at health and social care settings are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity. As a result of the recent increase in case rates with the Omicron variant, the Hub team have supported local IPC colleagues during this time of high demand by providing guidance and advice to domiciliary care providers across the Borough on their behalf.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Hub School Support service continues to work with Children's Services to provide dedicated support for educational settings in managing COVID-19. The telephone school support line is now well established, with further guidance available through a monitored mailbox, to complement national support available through the Department for Education helpline. Since the start of the new school term in September 2021, 464 advice requests and case notifications from educational settings have been managed by the COVID-19 Hub (as at 16/02/22); with the team assisting school settings with a range of support measures from additional controls, to helping reduce transmission, to testing advice. Schools have received bespoke support from a multi-agency team led by the local Hub, when experiencing outbreaks.</p> <p>The Hub's engagement team continue to meet regularly with stakeholders from across the borough, attending Council meetings as well as partner forums such as the Youth Collective Forum and Digital Enablement and Choice Group to gain insight and promote key messages. Regular meetings are held with representatives from across the local business sector, including the Wirral Chamber of Commerce, to support COVID safe organisational settings.</p> <p>The Council's Business Toolkit has been reviewed and updated in line with changes to national policy, with a winter refresh issued before Christmas to ensure employers and employees understand their responsibilities and are supported to maintain safe environments and manage COVID cases and outbreaks effectively.</p> <p>In late December 2021, the COVID-19 Hub's Prevention and Control team undertook key proactive engagement work with close contact services (such as hairdressers and beauty salons) as well as Wirral's largest employers. As of 16/02/22, the Hub team have attempted to contact 220 close contact services and 20 large organisations to offer support and provide guidance on current compliance measures, as well as open lines of communication and</p>
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	<p>engagement with local businesses. This proactive work will continue throughout the winter period.</p>
<p>4) Supporting vulnerable and underserved communities Proactively support individuals and communities, ensuring services across test, trace, isolate and support systems are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our local communities.</p>	<p>We have maintained excellent community links with over 100 local community groups and organisations through the Humanitarian partnership and regular meetings, working together to support local communities and have ensured targeted communications in areas of high incidence, to over 35,000 properties, highlighting current guidance and support available as well as maintaining regular contact with our clinically extremely vulnerable residents.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Hub's Engagement Team has continued to focus on digital enablement for those members of the community who are excluded, working with voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise representatives as well as the health sector to deliver a joined up digital support offer.</p> <p>We continue to work with under-represented and disproportionately impacted groups to promote and ensure ease of access to regular symptom-free testing. The team of Black and Ethnic Minority Link workers are proactively supporting our local ethnic minority communities and working with local leaders to tackle vaccine hesitancy and promote COVID-19 key messages.</p> <p>We plan to maintain communication with our clinically extremely vulnerable residents and continue to ensure that they can access a wide range of support where required. In addition to this, we will be conducting a comprehensive asset mapping exercise of all local areas to ensure that Wirral Infobank contains most relevant and up to date information for residents to access for support.</p>
<p>5) Vaccination Support the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, identifying and tackling inequalities in vaccine coverage.</p>	<p>Wirral Council, in partnership with Wirral CCG and Primary Care Networks, continue to ensure an effective delivery model to support the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Wirral.</p> <p>As of 16th February 2022, 84.7% of the eligible population of Wirral had received the 1st dose of the vaccine, with 79.6% having received both doses. 83.6% have received their booster vaccine (Eligible numbers for the booster vaccine include all residents aged 18+ who are more than 3 months from the date of their 2nd vaccination).</p> <p>To ensure the vaccine is targeted and uptake is maximised in areas of deprivation and groups at increased risk of illness and mortality actions are coproduced based on local and national data, insight and evidence. The plans continue to reflect the needs of the local community, the</p>

	<p>socially excluded and socio-economically disadvantaged and those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Collaboration will continue with key partners to continue to offer first, second dose and booster vaccination to all eligible residents. Broader efforts to increase overall uptake across all cohorts will include walk in appointments and targeted communications as part of the NHS 'Evergreen' offer.</p> <p>The Public Health team are working with NHS partners and other Council colleagues to develop a regular planned outreach vaccination programme, building on the learning from the summer outreach and pop-up vaccination clinics. These will take place in settings such as retail, sport and leisure, with walk-in vaccinations available. Sessions will take place at varying times and days to ensure a flexible offer for residents. Outreach will be continuously evaluated to ensure that plans are meeting the needs of the borough. Targeted communications and engagement is underway through the council, CCG and partners, including engagement in local areas in advance of the pop-up sessions to market the offer to local people.</p> <p>The Council and health partners are working with the NHS to monitor local uptake and reasons for vaccine hesitancy amongst the workforce in preparedness for the mandatory vaccination of all frontline NHS workers by 1st April 2022.</p> <p>The following table summarises the COVID-19 vaccination uptake across staff working in Wirral's CQC registered care homes, as of 16th February 2022. Work is ongoing to continue to increase uptake for this cohort.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="630 1456 1476 1720"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Total Staff 3775</th> <th colspan="3">Total Agency/Bank Staff 161</th> </tr> <tr> <th>1st Dose</th> <th>2nd Dose</th> <th>Booster</th> <th>1st Dose</th> <th>2nd Dose</th> <th>Booster</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>3680</td> <td></td> <td>1,880</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>97.5%</td> <td>3661</td> <td>49.8%</td> <td>112</td> <td>106</td> <td>21.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>97%</td> <td></td> <td>69.6%</td> <td>65.8%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total Staff 3775			Total Agency/Bank Staff 161			1 st Dose	2 nd Dose	Booster	1st Dose	2nd Dose	Booster	3680		1,880			35	97.5%	3661	49.8%	112	106	21.7%		97%		69.6%	65.8%	
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<p>6) Testing <i>Identify cases of COVID-19 by ensuring access to testing for those</i></p>	<p>Wirral's Testing Strategy and Operational delivery plans have been reviewed for the Winter period, aligned to the national plans, maintaining accessible testing for people with or without symptoms, and testing in outbreak situations.</p> <p>In December 2021, Wirral welcomed the government confirmation that Targeted Community Testing would</p>																														

<p><i>with and without symptoms and for outbreak management.</i></p>	<p>continue to be funded beyond 31 Dec 2021, until at least 31st March 2022, and extended staffing contracts accordingly. We continue to seek clarification from national bodies around testing beyond the current financial year.</p> <p>With the Omicron variant and changes to national testing and self-isolation policies in December / January 2022, Wirral’s testing service has effectively managed local capacity for Lateral Flow and PCR testing for the most vulnerable and high-risk cohorts during a period of significant increased demand, particularly over late December/early January 2022. Essential workers were prioritised for receipt of home-testing kits in order to manage local supply, due to national shortage/delays. Care homes and NHS partners were supported by the Council’s local testing service to supply required test kits to help keep staff and residents safe. The shortage was experienced on a regional and national scale, and we continue to closely manage our testing stock levels.</p> <p>Wirral’s Testing Team have been focussing efforts working closely with local organisations to develop clear pathways and ensure symptom free testing is easily accessible, encouraging uptake amongst target cohorts including those hard to reach and disproportionately impacted by covid, third sector organisations and essential worker employers, including Council employees delivering front line services.</p> <p>The mobile testing offer delivered over the summer months has been replaced by outreach testing at indoor ‘pop-up’ locations, maintaining symptom and symptom-free testing at fixed site locations.</p> <p>The Council’s Testing Service has continued to work closely with Children’s Services and Education Teams, to support those secondary schools with identified need for on-site support with testing throughout the start of the new school term in early 2022.</p> <p>We will continue to promote and, where possible, support testing within settings and workplaces for high risks occupations, highlighting testing can help prevent outbreaks and maintain business continuity. Discussion around testing provision, as well as vaccination uptake, is an established part of our prevention and control work and outbreak management process.</p>
<p>7) Contact Tracing Effectively deploy local</p>	<p>In response to the surge in cases of the Omicron variant, the Local Tracing Partnership (LTP) model was paused in December 2021 to enable the local contact tracing team to</p>

<p><i>contact tracing to reduce the onward transmission of COVID-19.</i></p>	<p>focus on hard-to-reach cases that the National Team were unable to reach. However, we were able to resume Wirral's model in January 2022, focusing on specific postcodes, and targeting those areas with a high number of cases and low take up of vaccines. As part of the 'Local-8' LTP hybrid model, the local team are currently directly receiving cases living in 5040 of Wirral's 8511 postcode areas – or 59.2%. Alongside contact tracing, the local team have also undertaken welfare calls to both positive cases and contacts, including those who have completed the 'digital journey', to offer support with self-isolation.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub, UK Health Security Agency and the Department of Health and Social Care Local Tracing Partnership forums, to influence and strengthen the local contact tracing system, enabling us to reach people who the national system has been unable to contact and to prioritise and respond to high-risk complex cases and settings. In February 2022 our contact tracers have also attended 'change agent' workshops with other Cheshire & Merseyside Local Authorities and the C&M Hub to help identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>We have continued to support health and social care, schools, local businesses, and other settings through intelligence led contact tracing and where a focused outbreak response is appropriate. Wirral's COVID-19 Hub also continues to provide formal support to local NHS Trusts, helping where contacts of positive inpatients or recently discharged residents are identified and making them known to the national system so that they are eligible to access all support available.</p>
<p>8) Support for Self-Isolation Ensure access to support, including where appropriate financial support, to ensure people who need to self-isolate can do so.</p>	<p>We have information available on the Council website, Wirral InfoBank and in leaflets distributed by Community Connectors, on self-isolation for a range of target audience cohorts. This includes advice and guidance on accessing the self-isolation payment scheme, wider welfare support and non- financial support available, as well as working with Wirral Chamber and local businesses to support awareness of employer responsibilities in supporting staff to self-isolate when required.</p> <p>Self-isolation support is also aligned to local contact tracing, with support needs identified during the customer journey and referrals for practical support managed by a commissioned team of Community Connectors. Wirral continues to process applications for both discretionary and eligibility Test & Trace Support Payments (TTSP), with</p>

	<p>guidance and help with applications completed via the dedicated COVID-19 helpline. To date we have supported 4,004 residents to self-isolate through financial and practical support and advice pathways, with 4,023 applications for financial support approved (as at 8th February 2022).</p> <p>Meetings are held regularly between Council and Involve Northwest colleagues in order to identify potential opportunities to improve self-isolation support and to keep our processes under review given the changing situation. Since 1st December 2021, the local contact tracing team have also offered direct assistance on the TTSP application process. This has improved our internal processes and removed barriers to ensure support with applications for the TTSP is provided at the first point of contact, with advice provided to 147 cases and contacts in this time.</p> <p>We have increased capacity in our local information and advice service to allow better access and support for individuals financially impacted by COVID-19, as well as expanding the Community Connector service to ensure there is improved capacity within our local communities to address the non-direct impacts of COVID-19. We have also further utilised the Wirral Community Champions programme to enable Champions to act as self-isolation ambassadors; providing information and advice around self-isolation support directly to their networks and providing the tools for them to signpost residents to services available.</p> <p>We have continued to engage with regional and national colleagues to identify best practice and use this insight to improve our local self-isolation support offer.</p>
<p>9) Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC) <i>Develop robust plans and working with local, regional and national partners to enable surge capacity, to respond to local outbreaks and VOC.</i></p>	<p>Local outbreak and consequence management processes continue to reflect the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant by triggering immediate outbreak control meetings with input from UK Health Security Agency, Testing and Communications to put actions into place as quickly as possible to control and manage the virus.</p> <p>A key part of our response to a VOC is effective communication and community engagement to ensure local communities understand the purpose of the VOC response, and what people need to do to contain the spread of the virus. We will continue to work closely with UKHSA, the Department of Health and Social Care and North-West local authority colleagues to ensure we have the most effective local processes in place for managing outbreaks linked to a VOC.</p>

<p>10) Compliance, Enforcement and Living with COVID-19 (COVID secure) Work collaboratively to guide, inform and support local compliance with regulations and restrictions, support local enforcement where necessary, and plan for gradual re-opening of wider society.</p>	<p>We have an established system in place to ensure effective partnership working and communication between the COVID-19 Hub and local Environmental Health and Enforcement teams, to promote and support COVID-safe practice across Wirral. We have monitored the operations and compliance of local businesses including responding to reports of non-compliance across hospitality, close contact services, supermarkets, retail, and other premises.</p> <p>As legislation changes move to increased emphasis on personal responsibility and health and safety requirements, as well as the continued importance of a risk-based approach to learning to live and operate safely during COVID-19 and being prepared to adjust plans if necessary. We will also continue to support local businesses in investigating cases of COVID-19 to identify transmission and support workplaces to develop the appropriate control measures to prevent and manage outbreaks, empowering them with best practice guidance.</p> <p>Wirral's Event Safety Advisory Group continues working closely alongside the Public Health team to take a pragmatic approach to safely managing events in Wirral. Guidance from the Public Health team is being used alongside the national guidance, as part of the approach to considering applications for events, with resident safety the utmost priority.</p> <p>Council enforcement, Licensing and Communications teams continue to work with the Hub to promote awareness for businesses, community groups and residents, around the importance of maintaining up to date risk assessments that are regularly reviewed, to ensure COVID-safe environments. Proactive engagement with businesses is ongoing to ensure positive working relationships, with the recent update to the Council's Business Toolkit in line with changes to national policy, ensuring understand their responsibilities and are supported to maintain safe environments and manage COVID cases and outbreaks effectively.</p> <p>Environmental Health and Hub Prevention and Control colleagues are developing a plan of work following take up of the national offer from the Health and Safety Executive, around proactive work with local businesses around COVID-safe environments.</p>
<p>11) Governance, accountability, and resourcing</p>	<p>We have adapted the robust emergency response governance system established in March 2020, revising the local COVID-19 governance structure recently to continue</p>

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<p><i>Establish robust governance structures for decision making with clear accountability and effective resource use.</i></p>	<p>to hold organisations to account, taking decisions and agreeing necessary actions to manage and respond effectively to COVID-19.</p> <p>We will continue to actively participate across the Liverpool City Region and Cheshire & Merseyside forums to work collaboratively, and share learning and best practice, as requirements of the COVID-19 response have evolved.</p> <p>Plans are in place for the Wirral COVID-19 Hub to be retained until September 2022 to build resilience in our experienced and established local teams. We have developed a resilient team for early 2022 through further recruitment during late 2021 across the Hub and Health Protection team.</p> <p>We plan to keep our local capacity and capabilities under constant review, as well as continuing daily intelligence monitoring and taking a flexible and agile approach, to ensure we have a sustainable local system throughout the next phase of responding to the covid-19 virus.</p>
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