



ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH COMMITTEE

2nd March 2021

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

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with an update on surveillance data and key areas of development in relation to Wirral's COVID-19 response and delivery of the Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Adult Social Care and Health Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report, the progress made to date and to support the ongoing COVID-19 response.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of how we will work to Keep Wirral well and protect residents from the impact of COVID-19.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The report is for information and as such no other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 On 22 May 2020, the government asked all Councils to develop local COVID-19 Outbreak plans. Wirral published its Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan in June 2020, setting out:
- how we will prevent transmission of COVID-19 within the community
 - how we will ensure we have an effective and coordinated local approach to managing COVID-19 outbreaks across different settings within the Borough
 - how we will ensure vulnerable people are protected
 - how we will link with national and regional systems to ensure we get maximum benefit for the population of Wirral.
- 3.2 In December 2020, we published an update to this plan highlighting the progress that has been made to date along with a dynamic strategy for how we 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 updated plan can be found on the Wirral Council website: [Outbreak Plan Dec 2020.pdf \(wirral.gov.uk\)](#)
- 3.3 Currently we are again facing a challenging picture in relation to COVID-19 both nationally and locally. We undertake daily and weekly surveillance to understand the local picture – Up to date information on COVID-19 in Wirral is available here: [COVID-19 statistics for Wirral | www.wirral.gov.uk](#)
- 3.4 Due to Coronavirus cases rising rapidly across the country and growing pressure on the NHS the Prime Minister announced on the 4th January 2021, that the country would be put back into a national lockdown. Details of Current National Guidance is available here: [National lockdown: Stay at Home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 3.5 **Wirral Response to COVID-19**

A summary of key progress against the priority actions outlined within the Updated Wirral COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan is provided in the table below;

Priority	Progress to date and Future Plans
1) Effective Surveillance <i>Ensure access to the right local</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have established and embedded a local surveillance system to capture local outbreak data and provide targeted support to a variety of settings through Wirral's COVID-19 Hub. The development and roll out of the

<p><i>data and intelligence to inform local activity to prevent and manage outbreak</i></p>	<p>Microsoft Dynamics software will improve the collection and reporting of data captured from local settings, and enable closer collaborative working with the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub and the regional Public Health network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continue to hold multi-agency daily and weekly surveillance meetings at a local level to understand the epidemiology of current situations and to appropriately direct prevention and control measures, community engagement activity and target communications. • We have implemented a local information system bringing together regional and local data that provides a greater understanding of what is happening in Wirral, providing intelligence to inform key decisions when responding to COVID-19.
<p>2) Governance and Accountability <i>Establish robust governance structures for decision making</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our emergency response governance system, which oversees the Outbreak Plan and its delivery, is now fully embedded. This thread of governance and accountability works across local government teams, and includes work with Liverpool City Region neighbours, community organisations and NHS partners. • Where necessary prior to national lockdown restrictions we have used legal and enforcement powers to take action against persistent non-compliance and will continue to do so in order to contain the virus.
<p>3) Engagement and Communication <i>Build trust and participation through effective community engagement and communication</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral's Engagement Strategy and Action Plan has looked to recognise and support the work done by business, community and faith organisations and local people, and to gather insight to inform proactive action. • Over 560 local people have now signed up to the Community Champions programme, with work ongoing to develop this offer. The Engagement HQ platform is currently being developed and will act as an interactive digital tool to gather community insight and understand what is important to our residents. • We have continued to work with local community leaders within the black, Asian and minority ethnic engagement group as well as producing and promoting a range of easily accessible resources and toolkits to support our diverse local population. • An Engagement and Insight-Led Communication Plan has been developed to further utilise local intelligence to inform both proactive and reactive communications internally and across the Borough. The plan will be delivered by way of an ongoing cycle of insight collection and information sharing.
<p>4) High Risk Settings and Communities <i>Identify and support high risk</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wirral COVID-19 Outbreak Hub facilitates regular meetings with a number of partners; including local health trusts, community infection prevention control and Merseyside Police, in order to review case data and

<p><i>workplaces, locations and communities to prevent and manage outbreaks</i></p>	<p>identify high-risk settings and cases where additional support may be needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established a consistent dialogue with the specialist infection prevention and control team working with care homes, receiving daily updates on action relating to outbreak data from these settings. • Our dedicated school support team are now well established and have continued to provide timely advice and guidance to schools across the Borough on a number of issues including close contact definition, isolation periods and testing. • Wirral has been granted £375,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Community Champion’s Fund to support people shown to be most at risk from COVID-19 including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people and other high-risk groups. This funding is for 12 months, with the successful bid developed in collaboration with leaders across the borough as part of the BAME thematic group and will be used to support a number of schemes – including in-depth analysis and training relating to ‘health literacy’ levels, to improve the quality, translation and accessibility of COVID-19 restriction and vaccine information, and to help people to isolate. • We will continue to work with communities, organisations and groups to respond to the needs of local communities particularly at risk of COVID-19 and to safeguard vulnerable people.
<p>5) Local Testing <i>Manage deployment of local testing to ensure access for the entire population</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have four local testing sites operating in Liscard, Bebington, Birkenhead and Heswall, maintaining good access for residents to symptomatic testing. We have continued to source additional symptomatic testing, through co-ordinated deployment of mobile testing units. We signpost residents to the full range of testing available, including ordering home testing kits, and home tests are delivered for vulnerable groups accessing respite services, in partnership with Wirral’s Community Trust. • As part of the LCR community testing pilot, we continue to operate four asymptomatic testing sites in New Brighton, Birkenhead, Eastham and Greasby. Access to symptom-free testing is prioritised for key workers, unpaid carers, volunteers, those requiring a test in advance of a medical appointment, and others that are unable to stay at home. • There are a range of national testing programmes currently being rolled out, including expanding symptom-free testing in particular institutions and workplaces, accessible for employers of >50 staff. This extends across health, adult social care, educational settings, and other private and public sector workplaces. Wirral is

	<p>liaising with local employers to offer support with implementation of the national programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently developing plans for local community testing over the next twelve months, across the range of symptomatic, asymptomatic and outbreak categories, as one part of the wider strategy to control COVID-19. These plans will be flexible and responsive to emerging priorities, and the local and national situation, and will operate in conjunction with plans for contact tracing, supporting self-isolation, vaccination programme and the continued non-pharmaceutical interventions – hands, face, space etc.
<p>6) Local Contact Tracing <i>Deploy local contact tracing to complement regional and national capability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral Council’s COVID-19 contact tracing model is now in the final stages of implementation, with locally supported contact tracing to be brought fully in-house by March 2021. This model will continue to focus on reaching high levels of cases and contacts and ensuring that no individual, group or community is underserved by the contact tracing system. • A dedicated contact tracing team has now been established within Wirral’s COVID-19 Hub, with over 15 new staff recruited in early 2021 and a comprehensive training programme based around the wider ‘Find, Test, Trace, Isolate, Support’ model to be delivered throughout February 2021. • Work is ongoing, in partnership with local health trusts, to ensure that effective contact tracing is carried out for inpatients and those recently discharged from hospital – the locally supported contact tracing team will support acute and community settings to close any gaps in the identification of contacts for these types of cases. • A working group, led by Wirral with attendance from Cheshire and Merseyside colleagues, has been established to discuss local contact tracing enacted through Microsoft Dynamics in order to share best practice and ensure a holistic approach to regional contact tracing. • We will continue to develop our locally supported contact tracing system, working in collaboration with the National Test and Trace service, to ensure a flexible approach to evolving needs as the pandemic progresses.
<p>7) Supporting Vulnerable People and Communities <i>Support vulnerable people to self-isolate and ensure that</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established a group consisting of over 100 local community groups and organisations working in partnership with the local authority to deliver a range of initiatives to support local communities. • The Community Connector service, operated through Involve North West, has provided a huge amount of humanitarian support throughout the pandemic. The Connectors will continue to engage with communities into 2021 with an updated action plan focusing on

<p><i>services meet the needs of diverse communities locally.</i></p>	<p>restriction adherence, vaccination, and support around the indirect impacts of COVID-19 on Wirral residents, such as dealing with debt as well as employment and housing issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have co-ordinated funding for local community organisations to be supported as well as facilitating the local response to support clinically vulnerable individuals with food deliveries, prescription collection and wellbeing calls. • We continue to provide financial support to individuals to enable them to isolate without experiencing hardship.
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3.6 Vaccination Programme

The vaccination programme is progressing well in Wirral and at the time of writing, remained on track to have offered first doses to all individuals in the top four priority cohorts by 15th February 2021. These groups include residents in a care home for older adults and their carers; frontline health and social care workers; all those 70 years of age and over; and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals. The next cohorts are those 65 years of age and over and all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. Local delivery capacity remains high with the limiting factor being vaccine supply.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The delivery of the Outbreak Control Plan is funded via national grant funding as follows:

- Test and Trace Support Service Grant of £2,733,018 awarded to Wirral Council in June 2020.
- Test and Trace grant funding of £2,701,000 and £866,126 was received by Wirral Council when the Liverpool City Region was placed under the Tier 3 ‘very high’ COVID-19 alert level restrictions in October 2020.
- Test and Trace grant funding of £1,018,320.29, was received in December 2020 in recognition of the extended time Wirral has been under COVID Alert Level: Very High prior to the implementation of National Restrictions on 5 November 2020.
- Test and Trace grant funding of £648,022, was received in January 2021 for the Period Wirral was placed in Tier 2 ‘high’ `high COVID-19 alert level restrictions between 2 December 2020 and 29 December 2020 inclusive.
- Funding of £2,137,405 for Community Testing agreed as part of the approved Liverpool City Region Business case in December 2020.
- Funding of £375,000 was awarded in January 2021 from the Community Champions Fund allocated to support Wirral’s BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) organisations.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. New powers have been provided to support enforcement activities which have been reviewed and appropriately utilised locally.

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.

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, with information shared through the emergency response governance framework and cell structure to inform decisions and strategies. 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.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan December 2020

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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Adult Social Care and Health Committee
Adult Social Care and Health Committee
Adult Social Care and Health Committee

13th October 2020
19th November 2020
18th January 2021