



Health and Wellbeing Board

Report title: Local COVID-19 Outbreak Engagement Board update

Date: 15th December 2021

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Dr Catherine Mbema, Director of Public Health, London Borough of Lewisham

Outline and recommendations

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board in its role as the Local Outbreak Engagement Board.

The Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:

- Note the contents of the report

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board in its role as the Local Outbreak Engagement Board.
- 1.2. The Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to note the contents of the report.

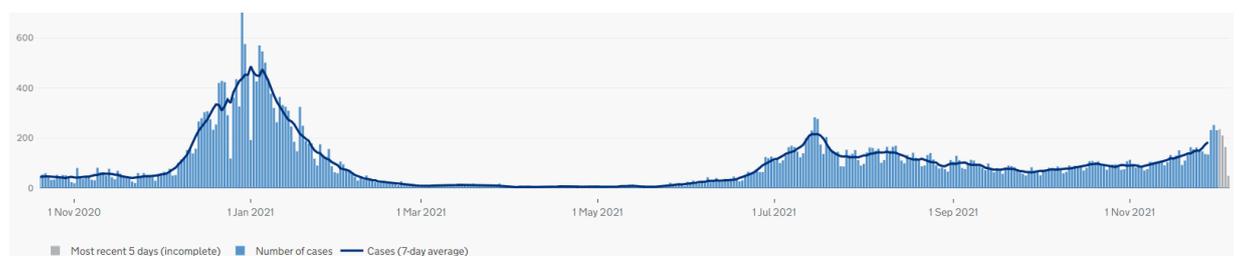
2. Background

- 2.1. At the September 2020 meeting of the Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board, it was agreed that the Board will act as the Local Outbreak Engagement Board as part of the governance of the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan.

3. COVID-19 Cases in Lewisham

- 3.1. As of 6th December 2021, there have been a total of 41,460 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lewisham. Since September 2021 there was an initial stabilisation in confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lewisham followed by a recent increasing trend in case numbers. This is demonstrated in Figure 1. The case rates for COVID-19 are currently lowest in those over the age of 60, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Daily number of new lab confirmed cases in Lewisham until 1st December 2021



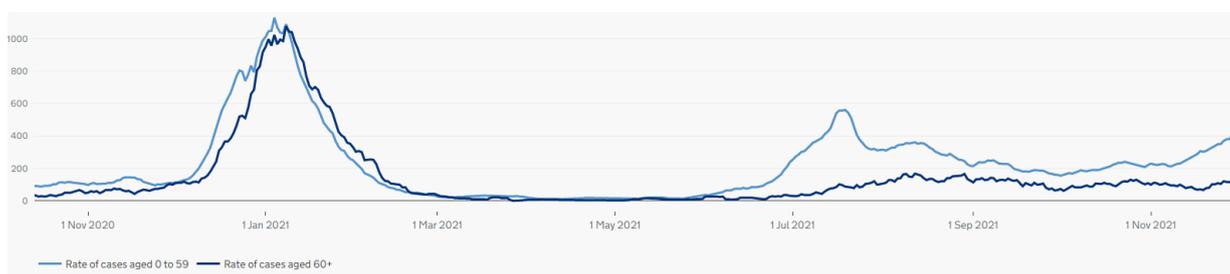
Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/cases>

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Figure 2. Daily numbers of new cases (people who have had at least one positive COVID-19 test result), by age (0-59 or 60+), and rate per 100,000 people of the number of new cases in the rolling 7-day period



Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/cases>

4. COVID-19 Variant of Concern (B.1.1.529) – Omicron

- 4.1. The UKHSA designated variant B.1.1.529 as a variant under investigation (VUI) on Thursday 25 November. It was then designated a Variant of Concern (VoC) on Saturday 27 November.
- 4.2. The Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant includes a large number of spike protein mutations as well as mutations in other parts of the viral genome. These are potentially biologically significant mutations which may change the behaviour of the virus with regards to:
 - Vaccines
 - Treatments
 - Transmissibility
- 4.3. As of 5th December 2021, there were 246 confirmed Omicron COVID-19 cases in the UK, 197 confirmed cases in England, 82 confirmed cases in London, with 5 in Lewisham.
- 4.4. The Government has introduced several new measures in light of the new variant cases, which include international travel restrictions and pre-/post-arrival in England testing; mandatory use of face coverings on public transport and a number of indoor settings such as shops, banks and post offices; self-isolation for all contacts of suspected Omicron cases; and extending eligibility of COVID-19 booster vaccinations to those aged 18 and over. Full details of these measures can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- 4.5. As part of our local response to respond to the new variant, efforts to maximise vaccination uptake continue in Lewisham. Some ongoing initiatives that are supporting these efforts to maximise access and confidence in COVID-19 vaccination include:
 - 4.5.1. **Late night pharmacy opening for COVID-19 vaccination**

Three pharmacies in the borough offer the vaccine on weekday evenings. Residents can walk in without an appointment to get their first, second or booster dose. Evening vaccination clinics run at these pharmacies:

- New Cross Pharmacy, Amersham Vale, SE14 6LD - Mon-Fri 7-9pm
- Vantage Pharmacy, Conisborough Crescent, SE6 2SP - Mon-Fri 7-9pm
- Lewisham Pharmacy, Lee High Rd, SE13 5PJ - Mon-Fri 6-8pm.

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4.5.2. Walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinics

A number of sites in Lewisham offer walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinics including University Hospital Lewisham offering clinics between Monday to Saturday between 9am-4pm; and the Waldron Health Centre every Saturday between 9am-1pm and 2pm-6pm. Further information on these offers can be found here: <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/pop-up-clinics/>

4.5.3. COVID-19 Community Champions

The COVID-19 Community Champion programme continues to provide up to date and accurate information about COVID-19 including vaccination to Champions recruited to share with their networks, friends and family. A further update on the programme and its evaluation is included in Section 5 of this report.

4.5.4. COVID-19 Vaccination Call Back Service

A free, confidential telephone call back service offers Lewisham residents and workers the chance to arrange a conversation with a healthcare professional on the COVID-19 vaccination. A free, confidential conversation can be booked in via phone or email with a healthcare professional - a local pharmacist - who is able to provide residents and workers with the latest information on the vaccination.

5. Lewisham COVID-19 Community Champions – Evaluation

5.1. Lewisham Council introduced the COVID-19 Community Champions Programme in September 2020. The programme aims to:

- Disseminate messaging, information and resources regarding COVID-19 and related health topics to the wider Lewisham community.
- Empower community leaders, voluntary and community sector groups and residents with relevant information and training to disseminate to others.
- Use trusted people, voices and groups to disseminate timely and accurate information to Lewisham residents and provide community insights.

5.2. An independent evaluation was commissioned in Spring/Summer 2021 to assess the impact of the COVID-19 Community Champion Programme and to plan for the future of the programme.

5.3. The evaluation was undertaken by Justice Studio who used a mixed-methods evaluation approach with literature reviews, online surveys, in-depth interviews, discussion groups and participant observation.

5.4. Key findings from the evaluation include:

- The Programme has been successful in engaging and empowering Community Members to become Champions. There are now 200 Champions in Lewisham and a Young Champions network has been launched. Members of communities have appreciated the factual and locally-informed aspects of the Champions role.
- Champions are able to decide whether to be covert or overt in their communities and they value their autonomy on this. The majority of Champions feel that the Programme is inclusive but they feel that further work needs to be done as not all communities are

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represented, some Community Members choose not to engage, and it can be difficult to build up trust with some communities.

- The issue of trust/distrust has emerged as a key theme throughout the evaluation, from all data types, and is a key issue for the team to discuss in the future development of the Programme.
- The Programme can be seen to have had a positive influence on COVID-19 related behaviours in some places in Lewisham, including vaccine uptake.
- Community members were complementary about the Champions they had interacted with but some felt that more needed to be done to counter the negative impacts of misinformation in communities, particularly those who are impacted the most by health inequalities.
- This evaluation has shown that Community Champions can be key connectors in communities and have an important role in helping Council information reach people in communities that may be particularly isolated, marginalised or disadvantaged.
- The Programme can be seen to be a good model for other healthcare initiatives, particularly in communities where there are high levels of distrust of the Council, where people may choose not to engage with the Council.

5.5. A summary of the report of the evaluation is appended to this report. The full evaluation report will be presented to COVID-19 Community Champions and at the Lewisham Borough Based Board to take forward the evaluation recommendations for future planning for the programme.

6. Financial implications

6.1. There are no significant financial implications of this report.

7. Legal implications

7.1. The legal context for managing outbreaks of communicable disease which present a risk to the health of the public requiring urgent investigation and management sits:

- With 'Public Health England' under the Health and Social Care Act 2012,
- With Directors of Public Health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With Chief Environmental Health Officers under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- With NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to collaborate with Directors of Public Health and Public Health England to take local action (e.g. testing and treating) to assist the management of outbreaks under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- With other responders' specific responsibilities to respond to major incidents as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Specifically within the context of COVID-19 there is the Coronavirus Act 2020 which received royal assent on 25th March 2020.

7.2. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.3. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability,

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gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.4. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7.5. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed at above.

7.6. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The Mayor must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance>

7.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- [The essential guide to the public sector equality duty](#)
- [Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making](#)
- [Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#)
- [Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities](#)
- [Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities](#)

The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

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<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

- 7.8. The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on specific groups including older adults, and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. Health and Wellbeing Board Members' attention should be drawn to the following reports regarding these inequalities:

- Disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID-19, PHE, 2020 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892085/disparities_review.pdf)
- Beyond the data: understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups, PHE, 2020 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf)

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1. There are no significant climate change and environmental implications of this report.

10. Crime and disorder implications

- 10.1. There are no significant crime and disorder implications of this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1. The health and wellbeing implications for this report are outlined in the main body of text.

12. Report author and contact

- 12.1. Dr Catherine Mbema
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