



Health and Wellbeing Board

Report title: Local COVID-19 Outbreak Engagement Board update

Date: 4th March 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

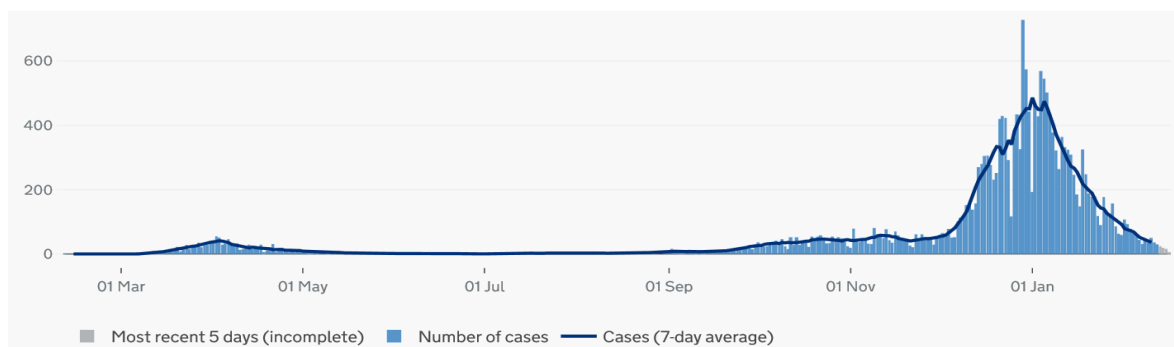
1. Recommendations

- 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. As of 12th February 2021, there have been a total of 20,988 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lewisham, which is a significant increase in cases since the last meeting of the Board in December 2020. This is demonstrated in Figure 1 showing the large increase in cases during late December and early January 2021 in line with the rest of the country. The sharp increase in case numbers was associated with the identification of a new variant of COVID-19 first detected in England. National restrictions were implemented on 5th January 2021 as a result of the sharp increase in cases nationally and continue to be in place.
- 2.2. Since the peak of cases in January 2021, the rate of COVID-19 cases/100,000 population in Lewisham has reduced and was 90/100,000 in the seven days between 6th and 12th February 2021, which is in line with infection rates in November 2020.

Figure 1. Daily number of new lab confirmed cases in Lewisham until 12th February 2021



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

- 2.3. Since the last Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in November, in addition to the existing COVID-19 control measures in place in Lewisham, we have commenced a programme of community asymptomatic testing (rapid testing) using lateral flow devices to identify asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 in the borough. To date we have three community rapid testing sites in Lewisham that are available to those who have to leave home for work during the period of national restrictions. Further details of these sites can be found here: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myserVICES/coronavirus-covid-19/get-tested-for-covid19/community-testing-for-covid19>
- 2.4. 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 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.
- 2.5. In this role, the Board has committed to ensure that residents are provided with timely communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lewisham COVID-19 Community Champion initiative continues to be a key tool in achieving this within the wider borough COVID-19 communications and engagement plan.

3. Lewisham COVID-19 Community Champions

- 3.1. Lewisham Council developed a COVID-19 Community Champion programme based on examples from Newham and Birmingham in September 2020.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. COVID-19 Community Champions were initially recruited via a number of webinars for faith leaders, voluntary and community sector groups and other partners in September 2020. Ongoing recruitment has taken place via digital promotion on social media and email invitations to wider partners. Champions use a Lewisham Council web form to sign up and agree to receive weekly emails and attend fortnightly webinars to receive and share up to date information on COVID-19. To date 172 Lewisham COVID-19 Community Champions have been recruited.
- 3.4. In December 2020, Lewisham Council was invited to submit an Expression of Interest to receive a funding allocation from the Community Champions: Local Authority Fund.
- 3.5. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Community Champions: Local Authority Fund aims to support a range of interventions to build upon, increase or improve existing activities to work with residents who are most at risk of Covid-19 - helping to build trust and empower at-risk groups to protect themselves and their families.
- 3.6. Funded projects are expected to:
 - Build residents' confidence to integrate and engage more widely in their local communities and mix with people from different backgrounds.
 - Adopt approaches to engagement that supports social connection to the local area

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and builds confidence to use local amenities and services.

- Provide practical solutions to overcome barriers, such as supporting those experiencing digital exclusion.
- Be targeted using the best available national and local sources of evidence of need.
- Exhibit good governance and the collection of robust evidence to enable measurement of progress in achieving the Funds aims.
- Deliver genuine value for money with robust programme management.

3.7. MHCLG have since awarded £275,917 funding to Lewisham Council to deliver the agreed objectives of the Community Champions: Local Authority Fund programme.

3.8. In the Lewisham Expression of Interest, the following areas of work were outlined, which will be overseen by a Lewisham COVID-19 Community Champion working group:

Work area	Description
Targeted communication and engagement	Using a number of channels to increase the number of COVID-19 Community Champion volunteers recruited from faith groups, VCS groups and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community members, staff groups and students by using 'Community Connectors' via existing community channels
COVID-19 vaccination campaign via Community Champions	Using video and text profiles of Champions who have had or would have the vaccination.
Young Champions	Outreach and communications targeting young people from BAME backgrounds age 11 - 24 to include transition groups as they play a key role in supporting families and community members, providing factual information regarding COVID-19.
Training	Expand the offer of a range of training for COVID-19 Community Champions (individuals and groups) to increase their capacity to integrate health promotion and share knowledge to ensure sustained sharing and provide ongoing opportunities for champions to access training.
Evaluation	To provide a focus on effectiveness of this work, opportunities for action on identified issues to inform recovery plans and sustainability of the Community Champions model in health promotion

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4. Financial implications

- 4.1. Lewisham Council has received an allocation from central government of £275,917 funding to deliver the agreed objectives of the Community Champions: Local Authority Fund programme.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. 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, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. 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.
- 5.6. 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

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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>

5.7. 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:

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

5.8. 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:

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6. Equalities implications

6.1. 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/a>

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[ttachment_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)

7. Climate change and environmental implications

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

8. Crime and disorder implications

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

9. Health and wellbeing implications

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

10. Report author and contact

- 10.1. Dr Catherine Mbema
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