

Meeting:	Health and wellbeing board
Meeting date:	30 June, 2020
Title of report:	Establishing a Herefordshire Covid-19 engagement working group
Report by:	Director of public health

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To agree to set up a working group of the Health and Wellbeing Board to oversee the localised development and the management of outbreaks; support stakeholder and community engagement to build trust, participation and providing community leadership in the prevention and management of outbreaks through the Local Outbreak Control Plan.

The working group once established will also support officers to deliver the Council's test and trace response and ensure that Herefordshire is delivering the right interventions to protect the health and wellbeing of our local residents.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The health and wellbeing board agrees to establish the Covid 19 engagement working group in accordance with the terms of reference set out in Appendix A**

Alternative options

1. By setting up a working group, it allows for flexible working and for private meetings to be convened to deal with urgent business as or where it arises. All of the work of the working

group will be reported to the public meetings of the health and wellbeing board. A sub-committee would be able to be as responsive.

2. To deliver Covid 19 engagement work through the existing Health and Wellbeing Board. This is not recommended because the Health and Wellbeing Board committee is not currently set up with all of the proposed members required to sit on the proposed working group. If the proposed working group arrangements are agreed, they will periodically report in to the HWBB

Key considerations

3. As the government begins to ease Covid 19 lockdown measures there is a refocussing from the immediate emergency response into a recovery phase. This is as a result of a sustained reduction in both the number of Covid 19 cases and deaths nationally. Medical professionals and government remain concerned, however, that there may be future spikes in Covid 19 cases and future waves of infection. A continued local effort will be required to monitor and manage such outbreaks. The most effective approaches to managing outbreaks and clusters of cases will involve the use of local intelligence and local engagement, hence the shift to more local control of the management and response to the pandemic.
4. In recognising that local councils, and local health and care systems know their communities intrinsically – they are being directed by national government to take a central lead to the next phase of combatting Covid 19. This is building on the usual local response to infectious diseases outbreaks that are in place all year round. As has been the case in Herefordshire, adult social care and public health directors have been working with the NHS on the Care Home Support response for many weeks.
5. The government's Covid alert system or NHS Test and Trace' initiative will provide new data on people who have been in contact with someone who has tested Covid 19 positive. This will provide important localised trends in infection rates. In addition, a new Public Health England data dashboard will provide anonymised data on the total number of tests conducted, the total number of positive tests, including a rolling average timescale at a local authority level.
6. The understanding that will be provided by new data sources will allow the local authority and local health system partners to have more effective surveillance systems in place. It gives the ability to plot outbreaks (two or more linked cases in a setting) clusters (a number of cases in a defined geography) and provides information on where the prevention, communication, engagement, management and escalation of a local outbreak needs to be focussed.
7. £300m has been allocated to local government to fund local authorities to play a front line role in the National Health Service (NHS) track and trace system. Herefordshire Council has received £845k of this allocation.
8. Directors of public health are being tasked with setting out 'local outbreak control' plans by 30 June. These plans will evolve and will need to be in place for the next 18months and beyond.
9. The purpose of this Plan is to support the quick and effective management of Covid-19 outbreaks in a range of settings. The specific objectives are to:
 - Reduce the spread of infection in Herefordshire, minimise the number of cases, protect our health and care system, and save lives;

- Support settings experiencing a new localised outbreak or complex single cases to mitigate the consequences of and help to keep as many services and businesses going as possible in a way that is safe and releases our economy; and
 - Give the public confidence that we are able to respond appropriately to outbreaks of Covid-1 in order to minimise anxiety.
10. This plan will be focussed around seven themes:
- Care homes and schools;
 - High risk places, locations and communities;
 - Local testing capacity;
 - Contact tracing in complex settings;
 - Data integration;
 - Vulnerable people, and
 - Local boards.
11. In taking forward local outbreak planning a Covid-19 local authority member led local engagement board is being proposed. This group is required as part of Local Outbreak Control Plans. It will have the role to ensure:
- Democratic oversight of the Local Outbreak Control Plan development and the management of outbreaks collectively;
 - Effective strategic communication with the public about the management of outbreaks.
 - Maintain understanding of and appropriate involvement in the use of local powers to support the effective implement of the Local Outbreak Control Plan.
12. The proposed terms of reference for the local outbreak engagement board, which are set out in full at Appendix A, will cover the following central areas of responsibility:
- Assessing the progress of the Local Outbreak Control Plan development and the management of outbreaks;
 - Support stakeholder and community engagement to build trust and participation in the Local Outbreak Control Plan;
 - Provide Community Leadership in the prevention and management of outbreaks through the Local Outbreak Control Plan;
 - Support officers to deliver the Council's accountabilities and financial monitoring relating to Test and Trace response;
 - Ensure that the Test and Trace response in Herefordshire is delivering the right interventions to protect health and wellbeing of residents.
13. It is proposed that this board should be set up as a working group of the health and Wellbeing Board. Under the council's constitutional arrangements Council, the cabinet and any committee may from time to time establish working groups which include in their membership councillors and/or officers. The health and wellbeing Board is being asked to consider this proposal at their next scheduled meeting, 30 June.
14. Working groups have no formal decision making responsibilities but may provide advice or recommendations. A report on the work of the group shall become a standing item on every HWBB meeting.
15. The membership of this group should comprise of local government, local health and care groups and practitioners, local business and community representatives. Membership will include relevant teams from Herefordshire Council: Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing; Leader; cross party membership, town and Parish Council representative Director of Public Health, Taurus, Wye Valley Trust, HSE, EH, CCG (IPC); Emergency Planning; PH (Health

Protection/Intelligence), Adults and Communities and Children and Families, Communications and Engagement;; Education; National Farmers Union; Faith Communities; Health Watch; Voluntary Sector representation; police/Tactical Command Group

Community impact

16. National Government have indicated that their ambition is that local authorities in England will have developed local outbreak plans and have teams in place by the end of June. The Council is being given flexibility to collaborate to bring this new initiative together.
17. This approach is underpinned by Herefordshire Council's County Plan (2020 to 2024) commitment to working more closely in partnership with town and parish councils, community partners, private enterprise and our fellow public sector organisations.

Equality duty

18. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

Resource implications

17. A grant has been allocated to support the implementation of the Local Outbreak Control Plan of £841K. This budget will be allocated to the Director of Public Health. The oversight of the use of the grant will be undertaken by the Outbreak Control Group who will report into the Covid-19 Engagement Group and the Council's Gold Group.
18. The final plan for the budget is yet to be determined but will include the following areas in the immediate future:
 - Additional Public Health (Health Protection focussed) capacity.
 - Outbreak response and HP/EH staff capacity/team
 - Communication and Engagement/translation
 - Swabbing and testing
 - Specialist infection control support
 - Vulnerable people support
 - Contract tracing

Legal implications

19. 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
 - a. Public Health England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
 - b. With Directors of Public Health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
 - c. With Chief Environmental Health Officers under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
 - d. With NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to collaborate with Directors of Public Health and Public Health England to take local action (eg testing and treating) to assist the management of outbreaks under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
 - e. With other responders specific responsibilities to respond to major incidents as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and
 - f. In the context of COVID-19 there are also powers and responsibilities under the Coronavirus Act 2020.
20. This underpinning context gives Local Authorities (Public Health and Environmental Health) the primary responsibility for the delivery and management of public health actions to be taken in relation to outbreaks of communicable disease. As officers will be charged with taking emergency decisions it is vital that local oversight of the plans and engagement is led by elected members.
21. This legal context for Health Protection is designed to underpin the foundational leadership of the local Director of Public Health in a local area, working closely with other professionals and sectors.

Risk management

22.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Risk: if key local partners are not included in the membership of the outbreak group it may limit the ability to reach and communicate to some of our more vulnerable members of society and new localised outbreaks may not be contained and treated effectively.	The outbreak group is building on already established and proven local working practices in tackling the Covid19 public health emergency. Those partnership arrangements will be continued, strengthened and kept under review as we transition from lockdown into the recovery phase.

Consultees

23. The proposed Outbreak Control Group members - namely:
 - Taurus - a federation of all 20 Herefordshire GP Practices.
 - Tactical Command Group
 - Wye Valley Trust
 - Herefordshire's Primary Care Networks - new local integrated health services treating populations of around 30-50,000.
 - NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) - established on 1 April 2020 following a merger of NHS Herefordshire CCG, NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG, NHS South Worcestershire CCG and NHS Wyre Forest CCG.

Appendices

Appendix A - Herefordshire Covid-19 Engagement Working Group, Terms of Reference

Background papers

None