

15th April 2021

Covid-19 Update

Ward(s):

Portfolios: Cllr Craddock

1. Aim

To give an overview of Covid-19 management response in Walsall.

2. Recommendations

That colleagues play their part in the Local Authority and Partner management response to Covid-19 in Walsall and support the government messages.

3. Report detail

There are a number of action areas in relation to the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Walsall to date. This report will cover several of these including:

- Barometer (7 key performance indicator overview)
- Outbreaks
- Testing / access to
- Vaccinations
- Schools / care homes
- Hospital situation

The **barometer** offers an overview of the current situation based on five key performance indicators and their RAG ratings (the defined parameters agreed regionally).

As of 31st March, 2021, the KPIs pertaining to the incidence of infection is rated as **RED** due to the high number of residents testing positive for Covid-19. . Although this has decreased significantly in recent weeks, the rate of decline has stabilised

However, the 7-day rolling case rate per 100,000 of the population is now rated as **GREEN** (as at 31/03/21), and is currently at 70 per 100,000. In addition, the proportion of tests returning a positive result is now at 3.4%, which is similar to the West Midlands regional rate, but still higher than the national average for England (2.6%) This metric is now also marked as **GREEN**.

As at 31/03/21, the exceedance of positivity is currently rated as **AMBER**. An exceedance means that an area has a greater than expected rate of infection compared with the usual background rate for that location. This is a way of assessing a recent change in incidence in that area. This is assessed by PHE

every day, and so can change on a daily basis, and thus the rag rating of this indicator should be carefully considered within the context of other intelligence.

There are also two supplementary indicators offering an acute perspective in terms of inpatient numbers and critical beds occupied; both of which have decreased significantly over the month of March, but have also stabilised in the most recent week (26-31st March). The situation in Walsall Healthcare Trust is monitored daily by the Public Health Intelligence Team.

Figure 1. Key Performance Indicator Barometer *(repeated at end of document in larger format)*

KPI	Latest Data	Comments	Source
1 7 day incidence	201 Cases (23 rd Mar to 29 th Mar)	Walsall's case reduction has slowed down recently	PHE Line List (last refreshed 31 Mar) <i>Note the last 4 days are subject to reporting delays</i>
2 7 day rate trends	<p>Rate per 100,000</p> <p>Week ending date</p>	<p>The rate is currently at 70 per 100,000 population (a 2% reduction compared to the previous week). Walsall ranked 67/314 English LTLA.</p> <p>(Each bar represents a rate for positive cases over 7 days; the date range for the rate is always earlier than for the case count in KPI 1 due to reporting delays)</p>	PHE Daily Report (last refreshed 31 Mar)
3 Exceedance RAG rating	<p>24/03/21 25/03/21 26/03/21</p> <p>27/03/21 28/03/21 29/03/21 30/03/21</p>	<p>Walsall is flagged RED in 4 out of the last 7 exceedance reports.</p> <p>NOTE: Daily exceedance should be considered alongside other available indicators.</p>	PHE Daily Exceedance Report (last refreshed 31 Mar)
4 PCR Positivity rate in last 7 days (pillars 1 & 2)	<p>Pillar 1 = 0.9%</p> <p>Pillar 2 = 3.4%</p> <p>Pillar 1 & 2 = 2.7%</p>	<p>Pillar 2 for Walsall is 3.4%, compared with B&BC (3.3%) and England (2.6%).</p> <p>NOTE: Positivity are based only on PCR testing. B&BC covers Birmingham & Black Country</p>	PHE LA Report (last refreshed 31 Mar)
5 Situation Awareness	AMBER	There continues to be community transmission but very few exposures / outbreaks across the borough	Daily PHE line list mapping / PHE outbreaks & issues / PHE LA Report (last refreshed on 31 Mar)
6 Walsall Hospital NHS Trust Inpatients	<p>Trust: Black Country, Sandwell and West Br., The Dudley Group Pl., The Dudley, The Royal, Walsall Hl., Total</p>	30 confirmed COVID-19 inpatients	Daily Trust Sitrep (last refreshed on 31 Mar)
7 HDU/ITU Occupancy	<p>Trust: Sandwell and West Br., The Dudley Group Pl., The Dudley, The Royal, Walsall Healthcare, Total</p>	7 HDU/ITU beds being occupied due to COVID-19.	Daily Trust Sitrep (last refreshed on 31 Mar)

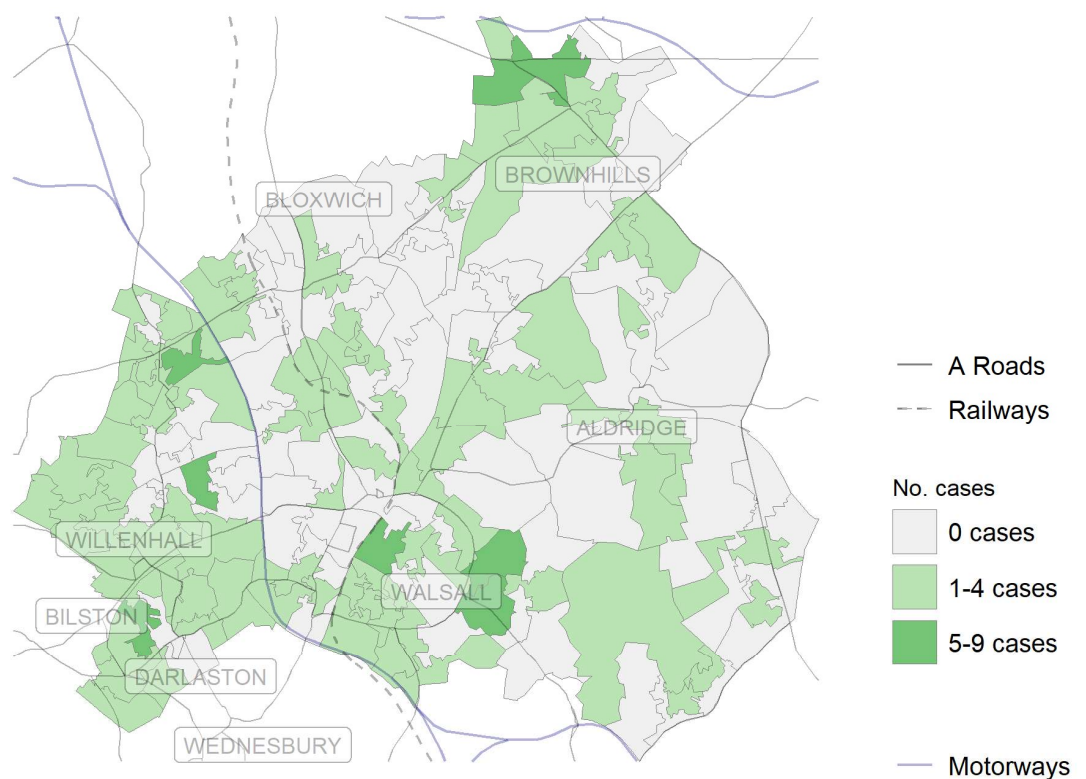
Key:

KPI	Green	Amber	Red
1 7 day incidence (count)	0 to 40	41 to 99	100+
2 7 day trends (rate)	Either reducing or increase of 0 to 50%	Increase of 51% to 99%	100% + - Or - Statistically significantly higher
3 Exceedance Report RAG rating	0 to 3 days are red (out of 7)	4 to 6 days are red (out of 7)	All 7 days are red
4 Positivity Rate (Pillar 2 only)	0 to 5%	6 to 9%	10%+
5 Situation Awareness	Isolated exposure	Cluster / incidents	Large cluster / outbreaks

The **outbreaks** / exposures currently occurring in Walsall continue to suggest a large proportion of residential dwelling transmission which the local Test & Trace team act upon as soon as data is received.

Mapped positive case data is monitored daily, at LSOA level to demonstrate the impact across the borough.

Figure 2. Map of new Covid-19 cases from Pillar 1 and 2 testing by LSOA overlayed with new outbreaks / clusters in Walsall (past 7 days 23rd – 29th March 2021).

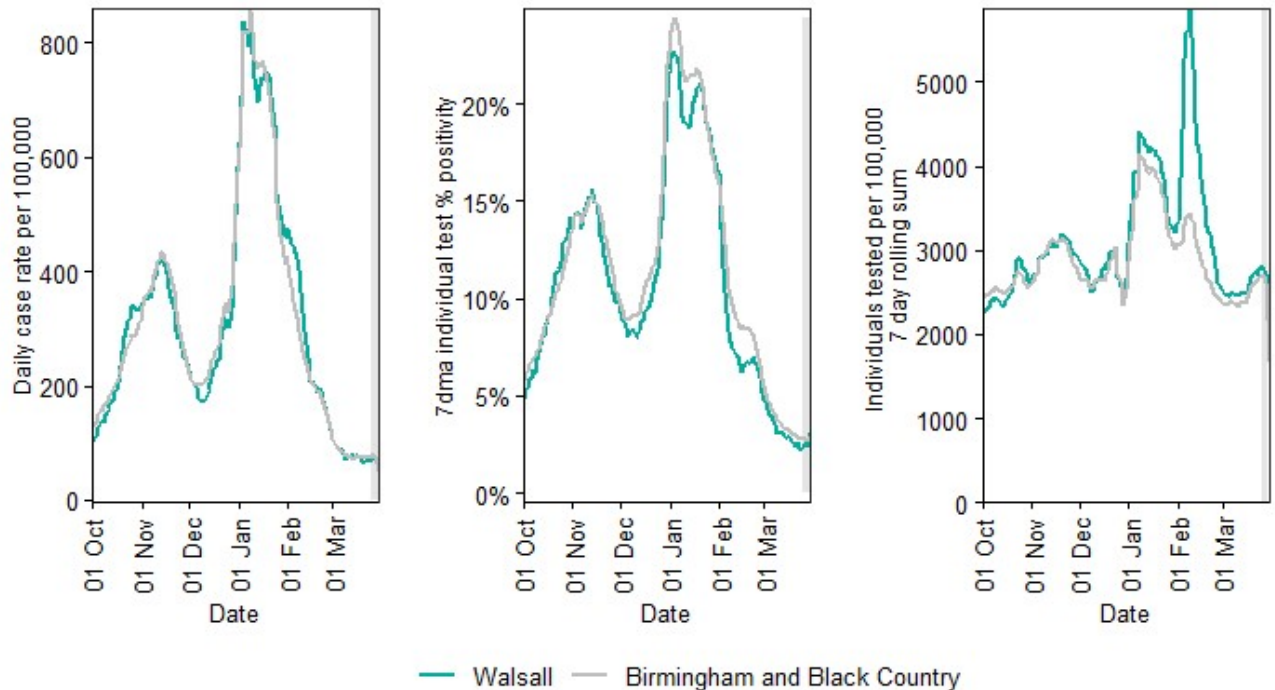


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Source – PHE Daily LA report

Covid-19 cases have occurred all across the borough. ***It is clear that no area has been untouched by the pandemic.***

Figure .3 Persons PCR tested and cases diagnosed per 100,000 population, and PCR positivity per week in Walsall, West Midlands, and England



The testing data shown above is based on PCR testing only.

As previously noted, positive cases have decreased in Walsall, but are still higher than the national rate. The rate of positivity has also decreased, but again, is still higher than national rates.

However, the number of tests performed per 100,000 population has increased in recent weeks, with Walsall's testing rate (2,282) is now higher than both the Birmingham and Black Country average (2,167) and the National average for England (2,093).

Testing

There are currently three 'local testing sites' for those with Covid-19 symptoms within the borough located at:

- Walsall Town Hall,
- Darlaston Community Centre and
- University of Wolverhampton campus.
- Additionally, a 'mobile testing unit' currently located at Wakes Ground Car & Lorry Park in Willenhall.

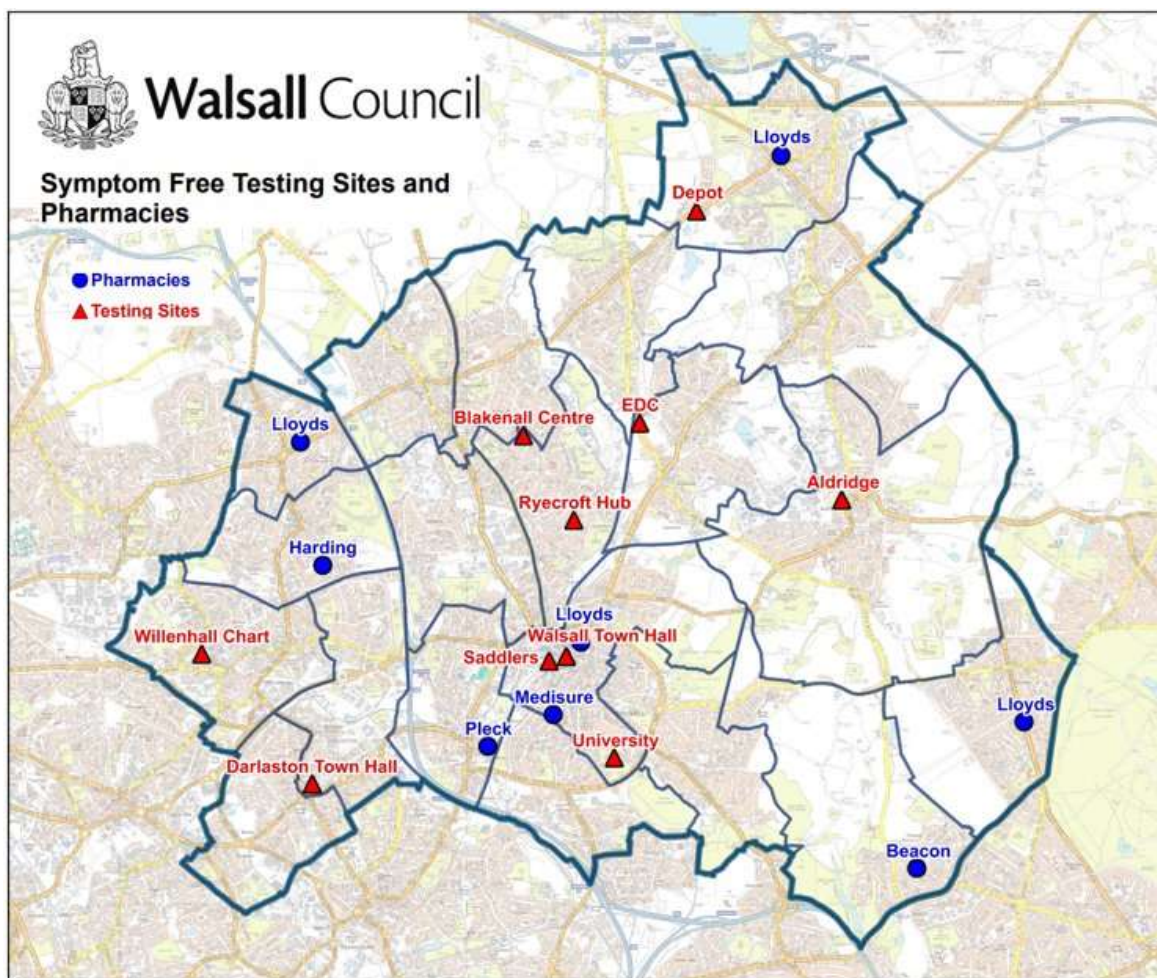
Lateral Flow Rapid Testing

In addition, symptom free testing (lateral flow testing (LFT)) has been rolled out to key workers across Walsall. The testing prioritisation process for accessing testing sites, including critical key workers, as well as businesses that are critical to COVID-19 response or EU transition process as defined by DHSC.

There are now 10 LFT testing sites throughout the borough (see Figure 4). In addition 8 pharmacy sites also went live on the 22nd March, further increasing geographical coverage across Walsall.

In addition to critical workers and the priority groups originally defined by DHSC, school and college children and members of their households are now also invited to take twice weekly LFT tests. Home testing kits can now also be collected from the community testing sites (except The Depot and The Town Hall), and a [booking site now available and live on Council website for those that meet the criteria to book a testing slot at any testing site](#).

Figure 4. Map of Community Testing Sites in Walsall.



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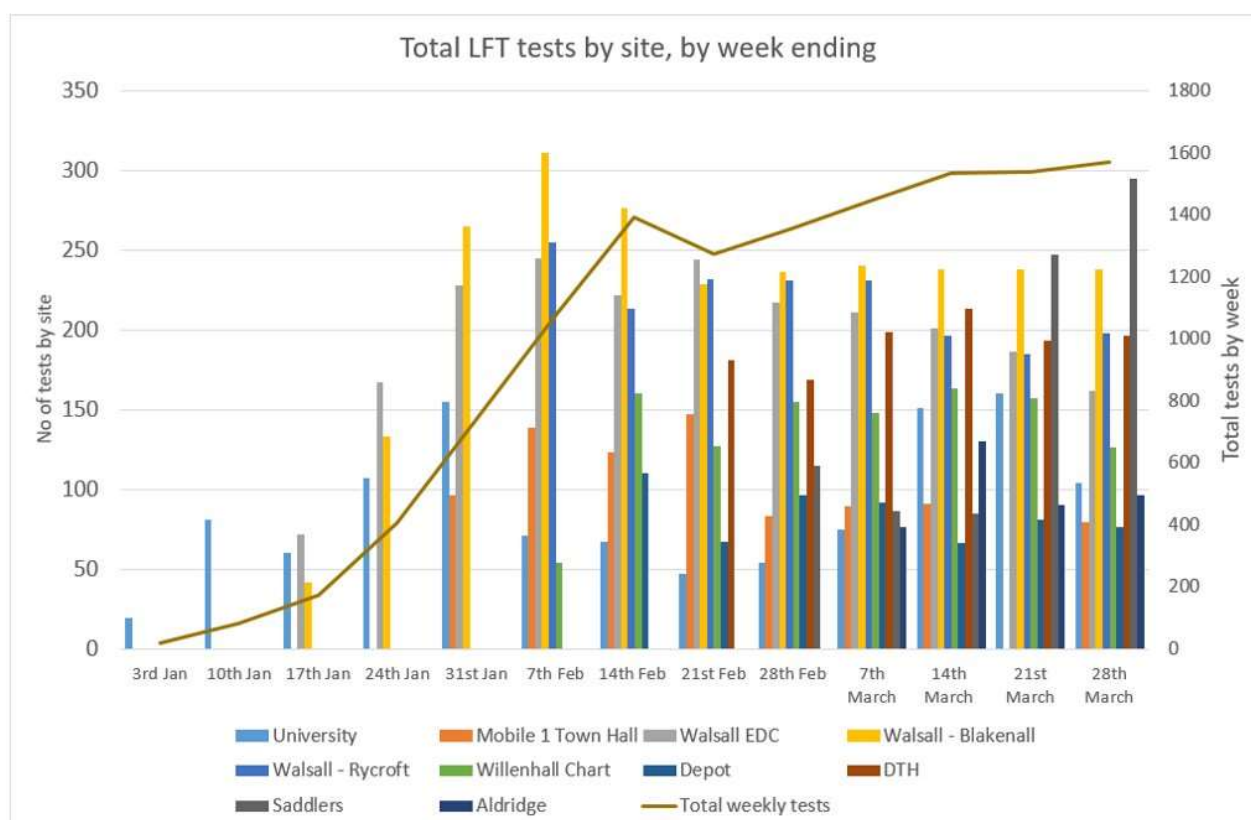
Lateral Flow Testing over the last week

- No. of weekly tests completed (w/c 22/03/2021): 1,570
- **Positive tests: 6; Positivity rate: 0.4%; Void tests: 9**
- Weekly testing capacity: 12,000

Testing since 4th January

- No of tests completed up to 01st March: 12,557
- **Positive tests: 54; Positivity rate: 0.43%**

Figure 5. Numbers of Lateral Flow Tests Performed at Community Testing Sites in Walsall.



Vaccination

The vaccination roll-out has continued at the Manor Hospital site and the six PCN sites: Oak Park Leisure Centre; Bloxwich Active Living Centre; Sycamore House Surgery/Birmingham Rd; Keys Surgery/Willenhall; Darlaston Medical Centre; and Forrester Street Surgery/Pleck.

The Saddlers Centre site started from 15 March 2021. There are also two pharmacy sites, one at Moxley and one at Bloxwich. The delivery of the vaccination programme is a major undertaking and the CCG has been working with a wide variety of partners to ensure the vaccine can be delivered as quickly as possible.

Ward level coverage is shown on the following illustration.

Electoral Ward Uptake % for All Ethnic Group(s) and 50 to 59, 60 to 69, 70 to 79 and 1 more Age Group(s)
(updated 01/04/2021 10:08:43)



- **Figure repeated at end of document in larger format**

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust is leading the Workforce Bureau and is committed to establishing a workforce model for the vaccination programme, which doesn't impact adversely on the capacity of the acute providers, particularly given the significant challenges and pressures of COVID-19.

One Walsall has been working in partnership with Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust to ensure there is a rota of volunteers in a marshalling role on each site.

The total programme will offer vaccinations to a total of 211,228 adults, with each person receiving 2 vaccinations. The focus to-date has been to maximise the uptake in cohorts 1 to 9 (see table below).

Cohort	Sub Group	Qty
RC	Residents	1354
	Workers	3401
80+	80+ Housebound	1794
	Non Housebound	11082
DE	All Detained Estates	1
HCW	NHS Trust	6106
	GP Staff	884
	Community Pharmacy	450
	Dentists	442
	Optometrists	67
	Other	0
SCW	Day Care	151
	Domiciliary Care	4130
	Community Care	1105
75-79	Housebound	1258
	Non Housebound	7961
70-74	Housebound	678
	Non Housebound	11473
65-69	Housebound	608
	Non Housebound	11689
High Risk	Housebound	0
	Non Housebound	1185
Mod. Risk	Housebound	850
	Non Housebound	22596
60-64	Non Housebound	9076
55-59	Non Housebound	10943
50-54	Non Housebound	13070
Key Worker	Education and Childcare	5238
	Food and Necessary Goods	3353
	Not At Risk Key Public Services	1030
	National and Local Government	341
	Public Safety and National Security	1192
	Transport	1747
	Utilities and Communication	3772
18-49	BAME Non Housebound	12434
	Non BAME Non Housebound	59767

It is recognised that there has been a lower level of uptake in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, and the Walsall Community Champions Programme has been implemented to help address this. The programme is primarily aimed at supporting residents from our (BAME) communities, people with disabilities and others who are most at risk of COVID-19.

Funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the role of [Community Champions](#) is:

- to help increase vaccination uptake
- to prevent the spread of COVID 19
- to tackle the spread of misinformation around COVID and the vaccine

- to reduce the impact of the virus on families, neighbourhoods and wider communities

The aim is to create a diverse network of COVID-19 'Community Champions' and community, faith leaders and respected voices; who can help address barriers, misconceptions, myths and amplify truths around the virus and the protection the vaccine offers.

As part of the response / management of Covid-19, schools and care homes have been a particular focus. The Public Health On-Call Cell has been operational since the summer 2020, 7 days a week, 12 hours a day and has supported, advised and guided over 5,700 contacts, with the majority being from care homes and schools. Additional resource has been taken on to continue this dedicated service.

Contact details for this service: walsall.healthprotection@nhs.net (01922) 658065.

Finally, the impact that Covid-19 has / is having from an acute (**hospital**) perspective. The KPIs on inpatients and critical care bed occupancy have increased throughout January, emphasising that the need for the national lockdown was essential in order to help protect the NHS.

As a Local Authority, collaborative joint working will continue to ensure the best possible outcomes for Walsall residents.

4. Financial information

Funding for response to the Covid-19 pandemic is supported by a grant of £1.3m. Further funding is also provided by government for those residents who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEVs).

5. Reducing Inequalities

The impact on Walsall residents as well as staff Covid-19 continues, however there will come a time where it will diminish and the learning from this pandemic can be put into perspective. Some of this work, such as the recent resident survey and the enablement of remote working is already taking place.

In addition to responding to this pandemic, the organisation continues to work hard on reducing inequalities in Walsall, be that through the refresh of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to identify focussed priorities; through other corporate strategies such as the Corporate Plan and through the transformation work.

6. Decide

Response to the pandemic continues with a Partnership approach. The pace of increased cases at present (locally within Walsall, but across the country as a whole) has led to a management approach as opposed to a containment approach. Those key organisations and Partners continue to meet weekly as part of IMT to work collaboratively and will continue to do so at present.

There are also weekly Outbreak Plan meetings involving a broad range of colleagues across the Local Authority and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust. These

meetings have a core agenda and cover - Business insight, risks, schools, local businesses, care homes, regulatory services, local test and trace and communications. Regular meetings across the region also assist with future decision-making.

7. Respond

As individuals, we all have a responsibility and can do our part, however small. The message of “hands, face, space” is imperative.

The Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB) (a sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Board) meets regularly to discuss core Covid-19 related matters and questions are encouraged from members of the public. The meeting can also be watched live through YouTube. The next one is 13th April 2021.

8. Review

Covid-19 is reviewed regularly through a vast number of avenues and throughout the hierarchy of the organisation. Key general information is available on the Walsall Council website - [HERE](#) with subsections covering FAQs as well as weekly refreshed data.

Background papers

Key links to Covid-19 related intelligence include:

- [Walsall Council](#)
- [gov.uk website](#)
- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-spotlights/ethnicity-covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report](#)

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