

Health and Wellbeing Board (Local Outbreak Engagement Board)

Sub-Committee

2 March 2021 at 4.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution

Present Councillor S. Craddock (Chair)
Dr. A. Rischie, Clinical Commissioning Group (Vice-Chair)
Manjit Dehal, One Walsall
Mr. D. Fradgley, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. S. Gunther, Director of Public Health, Walsall Council
Councillor I. Robertson

In Attendance Councillor M. Bird, Leader of the Council
Dr. U. Viswanathan, Consultant in Public Health
Mr J. Elsegood, Interim Director of Communications
Ms. E. Thomas, Public Health Intelligence Manager
Mr. G. Griffiths-Dale, Walsall Managing Director, Black Country and West Birmingham CCGs
Mr. S. Baugh, Public Health Registrar
Mr. M. Fearn, Systems Lead

Welcome

At this point, the Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Local Outbreak Engagement Board and explained the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

58/21 Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Dr. Lewis.

59/21 Minutes

Resolved (via roll call)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2021, copies having been sent to each member of the Sub-Committee, be approved and signed as a correct record.

60/21 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

61/21 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985**

There were no items to consider in private session.

62/21 **Questions from the Public**

The Chair presented and answered a question submitted by a member of the public.

The question was:

Why does the Bloxwich Active Living Centre seem to have stopped vaccinations, have supplies run out, been diverted elsewhere in the area, and does it have anything to do with the our ranking as one of the lowest ranking health partnerships (as at 31st Jan) in terms of vaccination rollout?

Stats as taken from The Telegraph 8/2/2021: How many first doses have been given in your local area? Use our postcode tool to see if your healthcare authority is ahead or behind WS3 2AB The Black Country and West Birmingham (WS3 2AB) 16.3% of people in your area have received their first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine running up to Jan 31. That's 175,605 people now with a first dose of the vaccine out of a total population of 1,079,401, an increase of +4.4% since Jan 24 Your local partnership ranks 34th out of the 42 healthcare partnerships across England. How this breaks down: Over 80s: 83.9% Rank: 36th out of 42 Age 75-79: 79.1% Rank: 29th out of 42 Age 70-74: 39.0% Rank: 15th out of 42 Under 70s: 6.0% Rank: 32nd out of 42 Source: Most recent weekly NHS data as of Jan 31, 2021

The Chair provided the following answer:

Walsall has taken the approach to open a large number of vaccination centres to ensure that the over 60s population can be vaccinated as close to home as possible. Each vaccination centre can vaccinate large numbers of people per day and is therefore not required to be open every day. Bloxwich Active Living Centre has received regular deliveries of vaccine and has consistently been the first of the vaccination centres in the Black Country and West Birmingham to vaccinate its age cohorts. The numbers of vaccine released to each centre is controlled nationally, however, it is not possible for the local centres to vaccinate quicker than the national timetable.

The figures quoted in The Telegraph are measured at a regional level. He provided assurance that the figures for Walsall borough are consistently featured in the highest vaccination rates nationally.

63/21 Walsall Covid-19 Data

The Public Health Intelligence Manager updated the Board on the latest Covid-19 data.

(see annexed)

She explained that cases were reducing due to national lockdown restrictions. Excess deaths were still above average. It was estimated that 24,000 local people had contracted the virus during the last year.

Mr. Fradgley reported that critical care beds were 150% over peak capacity at the Manor Hospital. He noted that it had been higher, however, this was still a challenging situation. He also highlighted that there was a younger age range of patients in hospital during this wave of infections.

The Chair expressed his condolences to an elected Member who had a family member pass away from the virus.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

64/21 Covid-19 Variant Surge Testing

The Director of Public Health explained that surge testing had been taking place in two areas of Walsall following the discovery of two individuals testing positive for South African variant of Covid-19. Surge testing in area 1 had found no additional cases of the South African variant. Final results were awaited for area 2. He noted that 400 asymptomatic cases had been discovered which he hoped would contribute to a reduction in cases in the borough. He noted that there may be further requirements for surge testing in the future. This would be reflected in an update Local Outbreak Management Plan.

Following a question he explained that the door-to-door testing had been locally led and delivered. Mobile testing centres had been provided by a national resource.

He thanked all partners and volunteers for their work in delivering this important project.

Resolved:

That the updated Local Outbreak Management Plan be reported to the next meeting.

65/21 Covid-19 Vaccination Update

The Board were updated on the latest situation with delivering Covid-19 vaccines.

Mr. Griffiths-Dale reported that 92% of the eldest cohorts and 85% of those considered clinically extremely vulnerable had been vaccinated. Vaccines

were currently being offered to 60-64 year olds. It was forecast that the area was on target to vaccinate all over 50's by 15 April. By 30 July all adults will have been offered a first vaccine. Work had been taking place in the community to vaccinate groups with low take up in partnership with the voluntary sector. Repeat offers were made to those that had previously not accepted a vaccine appointment. Vaccination sites were being reviewed as younger cohorts would be vaccinated by a nationally led programme at larger sites

Mr. Fradgley added that partnership work with One Walsall and Walsall Together had been critical to the delivery of the vaccination programme. Approximately 40,000 vaccines had been delivered by the Manor Hospital. A vaccination site at the Saddlers Centre was planned to open in March to increase vaccination capacity further. He emphasised the safety of the vaccine.

Dr.Rischie highlighted that going into the community to deliver vaccines was working well and increasing uptake through improved accessibility and trust. He reported that the Duke of Cambridge had visited a local vaccination site. He also emphasised the safety of the vaccine and noted that he had received his first dose.

The Chair noted that it was important that residents did not see the vaccine as a 'free pass' to break restrictions. It was still critically important to maintain social distancing and obey the national lockdown.

In terms of hard to reach communities, it was reported that work was underway to improve engagement with the local Polish community.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

66/21 Symptom Free Testing (Lateral Flow Testing) Programme

The Public Health Registrar set out the symptom free testing programme to the Board. He highlighted that one third of Covid-19 cases were asymptomatic meaning that people inadvertently spread the virus. Regular testing of asymptomatic people would assist in eliminating this chain of transmission. Therefore residents were encouraged to take two lateral flow tests a week. Tests could be booked via the Councils website.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

67/21 Isolation Payments

The Systems Lead explained the isolation payments that were available to local residents if they were asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. He explained that the Council had widened the eligibility criteria to help more residents receive support.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

68/21 Communication with Residents

The Interim Director of Communications, Marketing and Brand gave a presentation highlighting high-level plans, key message, surge testing communications and engagement data from January and February 2021.

(see annexed)

In response to a question the Interim Director explained that communication messages were reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness. Radio adverts were syndicated over 30 different stations to reach as many different listeners as possible.

Ms. Dehal noted that voluntary groups were a useful method for communicating key messages.

The Chairman paid tribute to the Interim Director and thanked him for his help, support and guidance.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The meeting terminated at 5.48pm

Chair:

Date: