

2 February 2021

Covid-19 Update

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Craddock

**1. Aim**

To give an overview of the 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 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, the KPIs pertaining to incidence and test positivity rate are rated as **RED** due to the very high case rate per 100,000 of the population, and the proportion of tests returning a positive result.

There has been a steady decrease in the daily number of positive cases, following Walsall being placed in Tier 4 and then National lockdown. This decreasing trend allows this indicator to be marked **GREEN** (as of 20/01/21).

Exceedance of positivity is also currently rated as **GREEN**. 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 increased rapidly over the month of January, but appear to be gradually decreasing in the most recent week. The situation in Walsall Healthcare Trust is monitored daily by the Public Health Intelligence Team.

**Figure 1. Key Performance Indicator Barometer**

	KPI	Latest Data	Comments	Source
1	7 day incidence	2,087 Cases (11 <sup>th</sup> to 17 <sup>th</sup> Jan)	Walsall's cases remain very high	PHE Line List (last refreshed 20 Jan) <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>10-Dec 17-Dec 24-Dec 31-Dec 07-Jan 14-Jan</p> <p>172 232 313 578 792 722</p>	<p>The rate is currently at 722 per 100,000 population (9% reduction compared to the previous week)</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 20 Jan)
3	Exceedance RAG rating	<p>GREEN</p> <p>13/01/21 14/01/21 15/01/21</p> <p>16/01/21 17/01/21 18/01/21 19/01/21</p>	<p>Walsall is flagged RED in 3 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 20 Jan)
4	PCR Positivity rate in last 14 days (pillars 1 & 2)	<p>Pillar 1 = 17.9%</p> <p>Pillar 2 = 20.3%</p> <p>Pillar 1 &amp; 2 = 19.9%</p>	<p>Pillar 2 for Walsall is 20.3%, compared with WMids (17.1%) and England (15.8%).</p> <p>NOTE: As of 18/12/2020, tests and positivity are based only on PCR testing</p>	PHE LA Report (last refreshed 20 Jan)
5	Situation Awareness	RED	There continues to be community transmission and a range of exposures / outbreaks across the borough	Daily PHE line list mapping / PHE outbreaks & issues / PHE LA Report (last refreshed on 20 Jan)
6	Walsall Hospital NHS Trust Inpatients	 <p>Trust: BLACK COURT, SANDWELL ANL, THE DUDLEY, THE ROYAL, WALSALL HE, TOTAL</p>	Total of 252 confirmed COVID-19 inpatients	Daily Trust Sitrep (last refreshed on 20 Jan)
7	HDU/ITU Occupancy	 <p>Trust: Sandwell and West Br., The Dudley Group N., The Royal Wolverh., Walsall Healthc., Total</p>	18 HDU/ITU beds being occupied due to COVID-19.	Daily Trust Sitrep (last refreshed on 20 Jan)

**Key:**

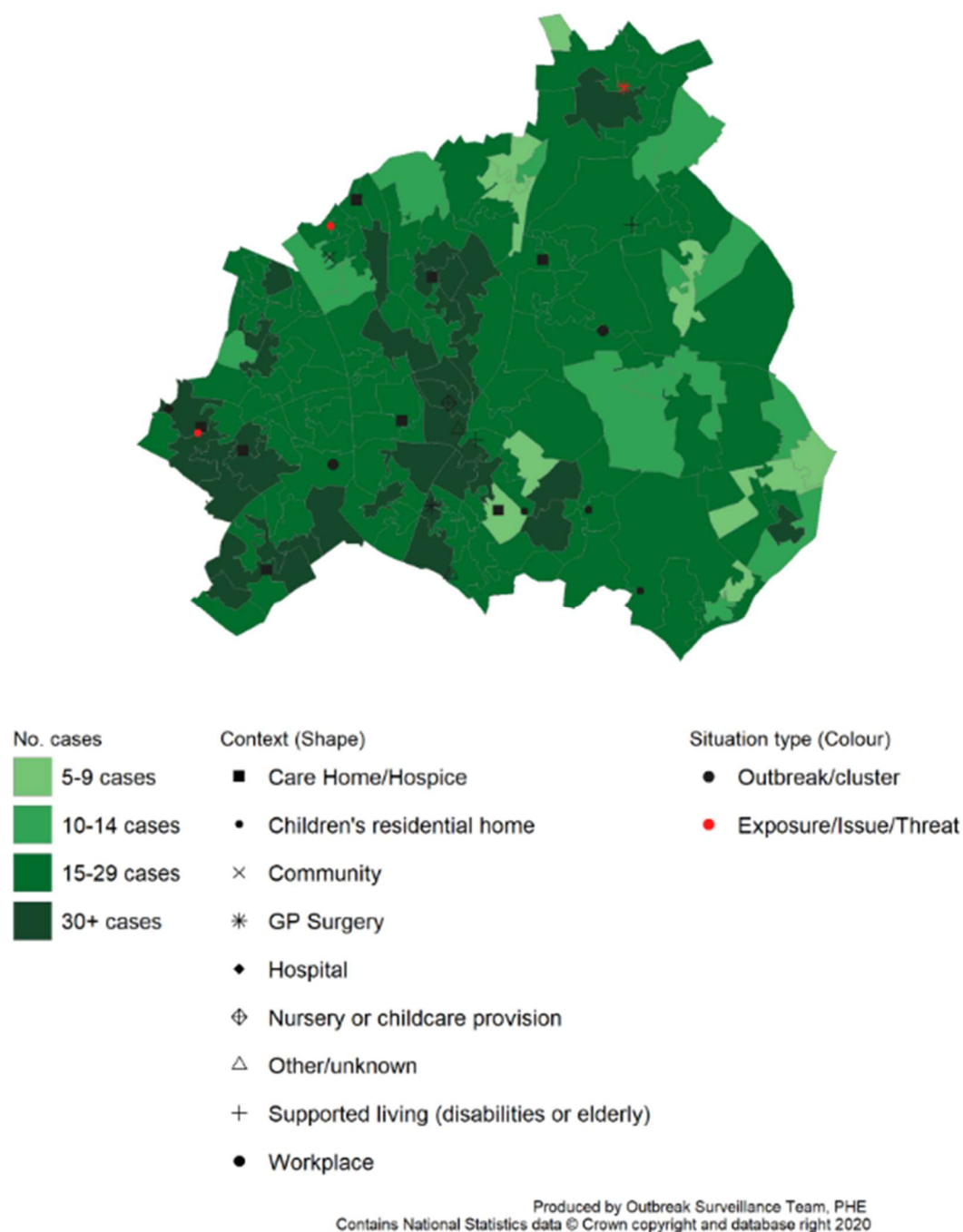
	KPI	Green	Amber	Red
1	7 day incidence (count)	0 to 40	41 to 99	100+
2	7 day trends (rate)	Either reducing or increase of 0 to 50%	Increase of 51% to 99%	100% + - Or - Statistically significantly higher
3	Exceedance Report RAG rating	0 to 3 days are red (out of 7)	4 to 6 days are red (out of 7)	All 7 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, with the recent LSOA level map demonstrating the impact across the borough.

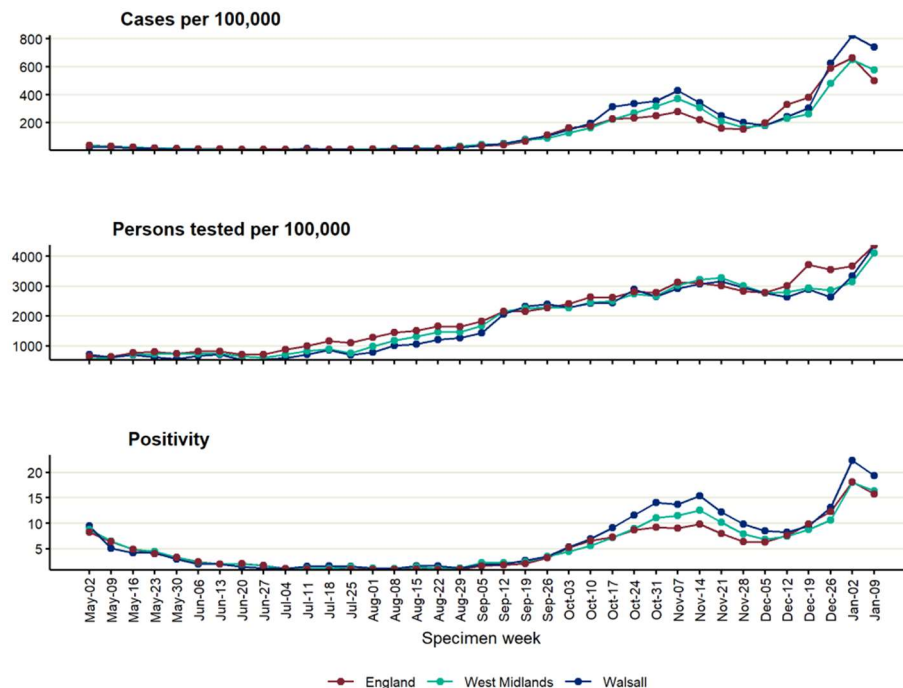
**Figure 2. Map of new Covid-19 cases from Pillar 1 and 2 testing by LSOA overlayed with new outbreaks / clusters in Walsall (past 14 days 6th – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021).**

Source – PHE Daily LA report



Pockets of high cases exists sporadically across the borough – for example parts of Palfrey, Willenhall (North and South), Darlaston South, Pleck, Paddock, Blakenall. ***What is clear is that no area is untouched.***

**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 regional and national rates. The rate of positivity has also decreased, but again, is still higher than both regional and national rates.

However, the number of tests performed per 100,000 population has increased in recent weeks, with Walsall now on a par with regional and national rates.

### **Impact of Covid-19 on the BAME Community**

The ethnicity of positive cases is included in PHE surveillance where it is available.

In December 2020, a new variant of Covid-19 was identified in the UK. However, throughout the pandemic, the overall proportion of cases in people from Walsall's BAME community has remained stable since December 2020, indicating that the new variant of Covid-19 is not disproportionately affecting BAME residents in terms of increased infection or positivity rate.

A "[Spotlight Report](#)" was recently published by PHE, which looked at the impact of Covid-19 on the BAME population in terms of mental health and wellbeing. In summary, early evidence suggests that on average, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani and White British men have all reported statistically significant declines in mental health; with Pakistani and Bangladeshi men reporting the largest declines.

Among women, there was no evidence of a difference in mental health decline between ethnic groups; but women in general reported a decline in their mental health and wellbeing.

It is important to note that the sample sizes for minority ethnicity respondents in these studies are relatively small. This makes the estimates less precise. In addition, the interaction between ethnicity and potential confounding factors needs further consideration. Potential factors include income, employment as a key worker and family/caring responsibilities.

Observations so far can only suggest associations. It is unlikely that ethnicity in itself is the cause of differences in the mental health and wellbeing impact of the pandemic. Instead ethnicity may be correlated with other factors that may cause a difference. It remains difficult to draw conclusions about ethnicity, interactions with gender and mental health during the pandemic.

## **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.

In addition, symptom free testing (lateral flow testing (LFT)) is now being 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 currently 3 sites live at:

- The EDC
- Blakenall
- University of Wolverhampton Campus

Four more sites are to be mobilised the week commencing 25 January 2021 at:

- The Depot
- Ryecroft
- Walsall Town Hall
- WHG

In coming weeks there are also plans to establish sites in Darlaston and Aldridge.

With the 3 sites that are currently live, LFT testing capacity is approximately 5,000 per day, which will increase as more site are mobilised.

## **Vaccination**

With the release and availability now of the Covid-19 **vaccination**, 'Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust Vaccination Centre' has been operational since Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Since then it has been:

- Working as part of Walsall Together Partnership which includes many of the PCNs
- 0800-2000 and expanding to 0700-2200 in January 2021
- Flow 500-600/Day stepping up to 1000-1200/Day as second doses required in early Jan 2021
- Updated national guidance issued 30 Dec 20 highlights updated scientific and political advice (strategic review on implications for Walsall underway)
- Capturing high risk/BAME NHS staff at Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, WMAS and key WBC Care Home and hospice staff. Looking to increase Over 80 in/out patients and then all other Hospital/WMAS staff
- Manor site remains as a frontrunner nationally with flow and numbers

Working within Walsall Together Partnership has seen:

- Walsall Local Authority support, including assessing community sites for vaccination centres
- Working with Oak Park Leisure centre to set up and go live as combined PCN/Walsall Together hub for East on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021
- Saddler Centre planning being prepared for mid Jan (TJ Hughes site) - awaiting date
- PCNs in East and South working with Walsall Together and Walsall Healthcare Community Division, going out to vaccinate in care home residents and some staff.

Focus on:

- Reviewing updated national guidance
- Sustaining operational model at Hospital Hub and Planning/Co-ordination Cell
- Rapidly operationalising Over 80 and Over 75 cohort pathways in hospital (in and outpatients)

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

WHT, the Tranche 1 Hospital Hub, is achieving circa 750 vaccinations/day. Wave 1-5 PCN sites are all established with Wave 5 commencing 4<sup>th</sup> Jan. The roving delivery model was activated w/c 21<sup>st</sup> December for care homes (with 50+ residents) in areas with activated PCN sites. Community Pharmacy delivery model is pending final outcome of the completed designation

The national reporting system is not currently available to the CCGs, therefore all reporting of the COVID vaccination delivery is being done nationally.

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

Vaccinations commenced using the Pfizer vaccine with packs of 975 doses delivered for administering by PCN sites and Hospital Hubs. PCN sites receive their delivery in a thawed state and administer over a 3½ day period (shelf life at 2-8 degrees centigrade). Packs of 75 doses are being delivered for administering to care homes, also delivered to PCN sites in a thawed state. The Oxford/ Astra Zeneca vaccine is now delivered to Hospital hubs and PCNs in batches of 400 doses.

There are currently 7 COVID vaccination sites live in Walsall

<b>Location</b>	<b>Lead Organisation</b>
Oak Park Active Living Centre, Walsall Wood	East 1/East 2 PCN with Walsall Together
Bloxwich Active Living Centre, Bloxwich	North PCN
Sycamore House Surgery	South 2 PCN with Walsall Together
Forrester Street Surgery	South 1 PCN
Keys Surgery, Willenhall	West 2 PCN
Darlaston Health Centre	West 1 PCN
Walsall Manor Hospital	Walsall Together



The programme will be offer vaccinations to a total of 211,228 adults, with each person receiving 2 vaccinations. Details of the numbers of residents to be vaccinated can be viewed in the 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

As the availability of vaccine increases it is expected that larger sites may be required to deliver the number of vaccinations required. The programme will continue to balance local accessibility with the scale required.

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 /

guided over 3,000 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](mailto:walsall.healthprotection@nhs.net) (01922) 658065.**

Finally, the impact of 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 has had 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 2nd March 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-spotlights/ethnicity-covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report)

## Authors

Stephen Gunther

Director of Public Health

☎ 07818 538715

✉ [Stephen.gunther@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.gunther@walsall.gov.uk)

Dr. Claire J. Heath

Senior Public Health Intelligence Officer

☎ 01922 655983

✉ [claire.heath@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:claire.heath@walsall.gov.uk)

Emma Thomas

Public Health Intelligence Manager

☎ 07944 274445

✉ [emma.thomas@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:emma.thomas@walsall.gov.uk)