

Local Outbreak Engagement Board (Health and Wellbeing Board sub-committee)

Monday 27th September 2021, 1.00pm

Present: Cllr Jason Fazackarley, Cllr Jeanette Smith, Roger Batterbury (Healthwatch), Helen Atkinson (Director of Public Health), Dr Linda Collie (Portsmouth CCG), Councillor Judith Smyth, Councillor Suzy Horton, Louise Wilders (HIVE Portsmouth), Ed Skinner (Regulatory Services, PCC), Dominique Le Touze (Consultant in Public Health), Matthew Gummerson (Strategic Lead for Intelligence, PCC), Kelly Nash (Strategy Unit, PCC).

Apologies: Stef Nientowalski (Shaping Portsmouth), Richard Lee (Regulatory Services)

1. Notes of last meeting (2nd August 2021)

The notes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Local Intelligence Summary

Matt Gummerson provided an overview of the latest data and key messages.

In terms of the local infection data, Matt reported that there have been 631 new cases reported in the last week with the 7 day infection rate per 100,000 in Portsmouth now at 294, an increase of 7% on the previous week. Rates are highest locally among the 0-14 age group, and still increasing, and rates are also high and increasing among secondary school children.

A reasonably sustained period of falling cases has meant that there has been no increase in covid-19 related activity in the hospital, where there are 46 covid patients with 6 on ventilation.

There have been 2 covid-related deaths in the last 7 days but deaths in the city overall remain below that which would usually be seen for the time of year.

Cllr Smyth asked how worried we should be about the increase in the infection rate and Helen Atkinson responded that it is less concerning than this time last year because a substantial proportion of the population is vaccinated and there is learning around the impact of antibodies, but the concern is the emergence of variants. There is currently not a big covid impact on the NHS, but the system is incredibly busy because of other pressures, including backlogs. Matt added that modelling work still predicts a significant future wave of hospital activity, and the expectation is of a very challenging winter. It was also noted that the current rate of mortality would see c50,000 deaths a year.

Cllr Smith asked if there was any correlation between flu jab and covid numbers - Dr Collie reported that the flu vaccine programme is getting really good uptake. However, primary care is seeing a lot of work and seeing cases where people present having had a negative lateral flow but still getting a positive PCR test. Also seeing that a number of people poorly and testing positive are not presenting with the three main symptoms of cough, fever or loss of taste or smell, and instead seem to be reporting sore throats and headaches.

Cllr Horton asked about communication related to the booster vaccine, and that a lot of this seems to be carried out by text which some vulnerable people (particularly the elderly) might not receive. It was confirmed that a wide range of methods are used to make contact as well as text, and no-one should miss being notified because of this.

3. Director of Public Health and Head of Regulatory Services Update

Helen Atkinson set out the details of the new Autumn and Winter plan for the country, in which the the Government will aim to sustain the progress made and prepare the country for future challenges, while ensuring the National Health Service (NHS) does not come under unsustainable pressure.

The Government plans to achieve this by:

- a. Building our defences through pharmaceutical interventions: vaccines, antivirals and disease modifying therapeutics.
- b. Identifying and isolating positive cases to limit transmission: Test, Trace and Isolate.
- c. Supporting the NHS and social care: managing pressures and recovering services.
- d. Advising people on how to protect themselves and others: clear guidance and communications.
- e. Pursuing an international approach: helping to vaccinate the world and managing risks at the border.

The Plan also contains Plan B, where additional measures could be introduced, and it was noted that at present there is no real expectation of local decision making.

Ed Skinner also explained that most regulatory powers have now expired or been repealed, with self-isolation and international travel regulations extended till March 2022. It is quite hard to see how any regulations could be imposed locally outside of a national framework.

There were no questions.

4. Local Outbreak Management Plan

Kelly Nash provided an overview of the revised Local Outbreak Management Plan, which takes account of the updated Contain Framework and the Autumn and Winter Plan. It was noted that the current position related to Test, Trace and Isolate and the vaccination programme are reflected.

The Board were asked to comment on whether they felt it continued to be helpful to meet on a monthly basis or whether they would like to move to a different schedule and it was agreed that a monthly pattern still seemed appropriate and future meetings would be set accordingly.

The Board agreed the revised Local Outbreak Management Plan and thanked officers for their work in pulling the plan together.

5. Test, trace and isolate

Dominique Le Touze provided a brief update on the test, trace and isolate activity. Cllr Smith asked if there was any evidence of a spike from Victorious and Matt Gummerson reported

that early analysis suggests that there were no spikes in any particular age groups and that there were very few cases noted through common exposures data. It was noted that unlike some other events and festivals that had made headlines over the summer, the festival had been largely outside and had a different age profile, with probably a higher proportion of vaccinated visitors which will have had an impact.

6. Assurance report

The Board received the report which covered:

- Local context - updated with the information taken from the data reporting (and updated to include information about variants of concern and enduring transmission)
- Local activity - bringing together a range of information about what our work is telling us about our preparedness
- Assurance around high-risk settings, populations and underserved populations.
- Key risks, including relating to the relaxed restrictions.

There were no questions, and the Board noted that on the basis of information and evidence that they have received, they have a high degree of assurance on local arrangements.

7. Any other business

An update on the Long Covid Working Group was requested at the next meeting.

8. Future dates

Future meeting dates will be established until March 2022.