

## **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD**

### **24 MAY 2022**

# **COVID-19 HEALTH PROTECTION BOARD QUARTERLY REPORT (QUARTER 4, 21/22): DELIVERING WORCESTERSHIRE'S OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN**

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#### **Board Sponsor**

Interim Director of Public Health

#### **Author**

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#### **Priorities**

Mental health & well-being

Being Active

Reducing harm from Alcohol

Other (specify below)

COVID-19

#### **Safeguarding**

Impact on Safeguarding Children

No

If yes please give details

Impact on Safeguarding Adults

No

If yes please give details

#### **Item for Decision, Consideration or Information**

Consideration

#### **Recommendation**

- 1. The Health and Well-being Board is asked to note the delivery of Worcestershire's Outbreak Control Plan (OCP), the arrangements for governance and the current situation of Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) operation.**

#### **Background**

2. This quarterly report for the COVID-19 Health Protection Board will describe the delivery of the Outbreak Control Plan from January 2022 to April 2022 (Quarter 4).
3. Quarter 4 has seen many changes in the guidance for how to effectively manage COVID-19 while encouraging a return to business as usual.

4. From 24 February 2022, domestic legal restrictions ended and COVID-19 began to be treated as other infectious diseases such as flu. However, self-isolation was still recommended, though no longer a legal requirement.
5. Free testing for the general public ended on 1st April as part of the Living with COVID-19 strategy. However, free COVID-19 tests continue to be available to help protect specific groups including eligible patients and health and care staff.
6. Case rates have been variable between January and March 2022, peaking at 1,862 per 100,000 in January. The lowest rates in the quarter were seen at the end of February with a rate of 348 per 100,000. Omicron and its sub lineages BA.1 and BA.2 were the most dominant variants.
7. Although case rates fell substantially from February through to March 2022, it is suspected that this fall was not a true reflection of community prevalence. This was potentially due to changes in testing, stay at home guidance and isolation rules.
8. The Office for National Statistics COVID-19 infection survey data has provided another source of information to understand patterns of infection. Between 1 in 11 and 1 in 14 people in Worcestershire were modelled to be infected with covid at the end of March 2022 (which had increased significantly). Increasing community infection rates led to increased numbers of patients with COVID-19 in Worcestershire acute hospitals through March, peaking at 177 in patients on 8 April 2022. Although this was the highest number of patients since 11 Feb 2021, presenting illness due to COVID-19 has not been as severe for the majority of people due to the success of the vaccination campaign.
9. In March NHS England launched its Spring Booster Programme, offering a booster vaccine to people aged over 75, who are residents in a care home, and those aged over 12 who have a weakened immune system.

## **Quarter 4 2022 COVID-19 situation**

### **Local Outbreak Control Team Activity**

10. In Quarter 4 the LORT dealt with a total of 491 situations and 1564 individual positive covid cases. This was a significant decrease compared to Quarter 3. This was due to a reduction of cases reported by education settings and workplaces.
11. In Quarter 4, 25 outbreaks were reported to the LORT by schools compared to 457 situations in Quarter 3. The reduction in cases reported to the LORT by schools is attributed to changes in testing guidance and local processes. In February 2022 regular asymptomatic testing in mainstream school settings ended. Schools were also given the option to manage outbreaks independently. However, LORT remained available for schools who required support. The LORT also continued to support outbreaks in special educational needs settings.
12. In Quarter 4, 56 outbreaks were reported to the LORT by workplaces compared to 263 in Quarter 3. The reduction is attributed to the changes in guidance and legal restrictions.

13. There continued to be an increase in outbreaks in Adult Social Care settings in Quarter 4. 319 situations were reported by Adult Social Care settings compared to 274 situations in Quarter 3. There was also a significant rise in individual cases. 1104 individual cases were reported in Quarter 4 compared to 346 cases in Quarter 3.

## **Contact Tracing**

14. In Quarter 4 the LORT contact tracing for positive cases was reduced to only include staff who worked in Adult Social Care settings.

15. Worcestershire Regulatory Services continued to provide the local contact tracing service on behalf of NHS test and Trace, until the legal requirement to self isolate was removed in February 2022.

## **Reduction in Local Outbreak Response Team Service**

16. From May 2022 the Local Outbreak Response Team operational hours and staffing levels will reduce. Mitigations will be put in place for settings who require support outside of LORT operational hours, including access to UKHSA support. The workload of the LORT will be continually reviewed. An infrastructure of active response will be maintained to ensure resilience so that a response can be quickly organised to a variant of COVID-19 if required.

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

17. Of the £15.9 million COMF grant, over £11.5 million was spent in 2021/22, leaving £4.2 million to be spent in 22/23.

18. Allocations for 2022/23 to date include £2,046,199 for Acute Response activities and a further £1,772,986 for other projects. Other projects focus on support for vulnerable groups and targeted community interventions, a total of £1.2million of the allocated funds, for projects which aim to reduce inequalities in communities most affected by COVID-19. Project examples include funding for Enhanced Youth Support, Asset Based Community Builders, Mental Health Support in Schools and further support for people facing homelessness.

## **Privacy Impact Assessment**

19. As appropriate

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

20. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of the overall Outbreak Control Plan. Impacts and mitigations are described for protected groups. The recommendations will further support action to prevent and control outbreaks that may affect protected groups.

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Public Health) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Worcestershire's Outbreak Control Plan:

[https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20769/coronavirus\\_covid-19/2273/coronavirus\\_covid-19\\_outbreak\\_control\\_plan](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20769/coronavirus_covid-19/2273/coronavirus_covid-19_outbreak_control_plan)