

Report Title	Briefing on Test, Trace and Isolate in Hackney
Meeting	Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission
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1. Summary:

- 1.1 As part of the next phase of response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a national contact tracing programme (NHS Test and Trace) has been implemented in order to maintain low levels of community transmission of COVID-19 to support the easing of nationwide lockdown.
- 1.2 The national system is based on a tiered system of response, with Level 1 managing complex settings or outbreaks (e.g. in schools or care homes), Level 2 giving advice to cases (people who have had a positive Coronavirus test) and identifying their contacts; and Level 3 giving advice to contacts about self isolation and symptoms to look out for.
- 1.3 Local Authorities will primarily be required to use local intelligence and resources to support the management of complex settings or outbreaks, alongside Level 1; investigate and manage community clusters; carry out preventive work; engage with communities to participate in testing and contact tracing; and provide support to vulnerable individuals.
- 1.4 Hackney has developed a high-level Local Outbreak Control Plan to guide the Hackney response and implementation of the national system and is participating in the London Learning Network (one of 11 nationwide), to rapidly implement this plan, evaluate and share learning.
- 1.5 Further work will include the development of local Standard Operating Procedures for management of outbreaks, engagement of the voluntary sector to encourage uptake, evaluation and a bid for funding.

2. Background:

- 2.1 COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the recently discovered coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. This virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic (i.e. a global outbreak) by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020.
- 2.2 Most people with COVID-19 experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring specialist treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.
- 2.3 At this time, there are no specific vaccines for COVID-19 and few specific treatments. The antiviral drug remdesivir has recently been authorised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for treatment of people with severe COVID-19 disease. There

are still many ongoing clinical trials evaluating other potential treatments, as well as developing vaccines.

- 2.4 Management of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK has required a number of public health, NHS and wider societal measures, including hygiene advice, social distancing, capacity building (across sectors) and 'Stay at Home' / 'Stay Alert' lockdown policies.
- 2.5 Following the peak in hospital admissions in April, the numbers of new COVID-19 cases have fallen significantly and the Government has started relaxing social distancing measures, guided by the UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy. At this point, wide-scale testing and contact tracing are crucial to help prevent a rapid rise in community transmission of COVID-19.
- 2.6 A national contact tracing programme (NHS Test and Trace) was launched on 27th May 2020 to enable rapid isolation of contacts of possible or confirmed COVID-19 cases and maintain low levels of community transmission to support the ending of the current lockdown in the UK.
- 2.7 The national contact tracing programme will have phone based and digital aspects:
 - a. A workforce of 3,000 contact tracers (Level 2) will carry out phone-based contact tracing of and give advice to confirmed cases or, when available, symptomatic cases identifying themselves through an app
 - b. A workforce of 21,000 call handlers (Level 3) will follow up contacts of cases and give advice to isolate and request a test if they become symptomatic
 - c. Cases have the option to enter their contacts into a web-based tool, the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS), or be followed up by phone.
 - d. A mobile app to supplement the tiered system for symptom reporting, ordering of tests and sending tailored and targeted alerts to other app users who have been in close contact with a symptomatic and/or lab confirmed COVID-19 app user is currently being developed and is being tested on the Isle of Wight. However, the timeline for nationwide roll out of this app has not yet been confirmed.
- 2.8 Complex settings, such as outbreaks in homeless hostels, schools, care homes or community clusters will be escalated to and managed by local Public Health England (PHE) health protection teams (Level 1), which in London is the PHE London Coronavirus Response Cell (LCRC). The LCRC will work closely with Local Authorities, who will be able to provide local intelligence and targeted support, to manage these settings and community clusters.
- 2.9 In addition, Local Authorities will be required to use local intelligence and resources to carry out preventive work, engage with communities to participate in testing and contact tracing, and provide support to vulnerable individuals.
- 2.10 In order to support this system locally, Local Authorities are expected to develop and implement Local Outbreak Control Plans which determine the local response and how it works alongside the national system (by the end of June for all Local Authorities).
- 2.11 Hackney are participating in a Learning Network (one of 11 nationwide) with Barnet, Camden, Newham. The immediate aim of the Learning Network is to rapidly develop and implement a Local Outbreak Control Plan, evaluate the implementation and share learning with other Local Authorities and the national Advisory Group, before the end of June.
- 2.12 The pilot aims to tailor and inform Local Authority responses and ways of working between Local Authorities and the national system. The pilot is being supported by DHSC.

£300 million has been made available to support Local Authorities to implement Local Outbreak Control Plans. However, details of how this funding will be allocated have not been made known yet.

3 Current work areas:

3.1 Work on developing the Hackney and City Local Outbreak Control Plan started in the first week of May, through the Hackney and City Contact Tracing Working Group.

3.2 The Local Outbreak Control Plan is a high-level plan which aims to guide the development of tailored local responses to outbreaks, local response to support vulnerable individuals affected by contact tracing/isolation, proactive preventive work to limit the risk of outbreaks occurring and maximise uptake of testing and contact tracing, establish ways of working, use of data and engagement with partners and the voluntary sector.

3.3 The plan includes the following seven areas:

- a. Planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools. This includes preventive work (including support for infection prevention and control) and the development and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures for the management of outbreaks working alongside the LCRC.
- b. Planning for local outbreaks in other high-risk places, locations and communities of interest, including sheltered housing, dormitories for migrant workers, transport access points, detained settings and rough sleepers. Again, this includes preventive work and the development and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures.
- c. Identifying methods for local testing to ensure a response that is accessible to the entire population, including strategies for response to local clusters and availability for those affected by the digital divide.
- d. Assessing local and regional contact tracing and infection control capability in complex settings and the need for mutual aid, including Local Authority staff support to the Level 1 system if required.
- e. Integrate national and local data and scenario planning through the Joint Biosecurity Centre Playbook. This includes establishing a local data hub, reviewing local requirements for data security and linkages, for example with the NHS.
- f. Supporting vulnerable local people, including to get help to self-isolate. This includes a continuing and enhanced local system for support to isolating individuals, and support to individuals who are less able to access testing, the contact tracing system, or follow self-isolation guidance.
- g. Establishing governance structures for local escalation and decision making.

3.4 The high-level plan has been developed and is currently awaiting agreement.

3.5 Work is continuing on developing specific aspects of the plan, including local Standard Operating Procedures for the local management of different types of outbreaks, a communications strategy and a strategy for engagement with and deployment of voluntary sector partners.

3.6 Links have been established between this work stream and other established workstreams in Hackney that are contributing to the COVID-19 response, including humanitarian assistance, the digital divide and enhanced support for care homes.

3.7 Development of the plan has been supported by materials provided by the London Council Chief Executives Task and Finish Group for contact tracing, including a Local Authority toolkit, a Joint Agreement and Standard Operating Procedures developed by LCRC, and

resources developed through a London multi agency Contact Tracing working group including membership from PHE, DsPH, GLA and NHS.

4 Future work areas

4.1 The Contact Tracing Working group will continue to develop and implement specific aspects of the plan, including:

- a. Standard Operating Procedures for management of outbreaks and community clusters.
- b. Identifying and providing support to vulnerable individuals who are isolating in conjunction with the humanitarian assistance team.
- c. Establishing a data hub (likely to be in conjunction with regional partners).
- d. Supporting the recruitment and training of volunteers to increase engagement and provide support to communities.
- e. Providing capacity and support to Level 1 if required.

4.2 The implementation of the Local Outbreak Control Plan will be evaluated over the coming weeks as part of the Learning Network, with the aim to share learning with other Local Authorities. Details for the evaluation of this pilot are still awaited from the London Borough of Camden, which is the London lead Local Authority for the Learning Network.

4.3 In response to the funding commitment announced to support the Local Authority response to contact tracing, the Contact Tracing Working Group is working on a bid/business case for funding for implementation. Depending on when the funding is released this will also be supported by findings from the early evaluation of the pilot.

5. Recommendations

5.1. It is recommended that the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission notes this briefing.