

## DECISION BOOK

**Issue: 606      Date: 30 JUNE 2020**

Decisions set out in the book have been made under delegated powers by the Chief Executive, Executive Directors or the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, in consultation either with the relevant committee or Lead Councillor.

The Decision Book process has been altered to suspend the current Councillors' call-in arrangements within the 10-day period after its publication and replace it with the ability during that period for three Councillors to request a retrospective review of the decision in writing to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

The decision book can be accessed on the Council's website - [www.reading.gov.uk/decisionbooks](http://www.reading.gov.uk/decisionbooks).

The officer reports accompanying the decisions are attached.

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## DECISION BOOK - ISSUE 606 - 30 JUNE 2020

### 1. READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
1. READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN	COUNCILLOR BROCK	BOROUGHWIDE	1

This report sets out the decision to agree the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan ('the Plan').

The report summarises how Reading Borough Council has engaged with other agencies to develop the Plan, which meets national requirements and addresses the particular issues and risks which COVID-19 poses for Reading. The Plan sets out how partners will work together to keep residents safe from COVID-19 pending the development of more effective treatments and/or a vaccine.

Plans to respond to COVID-19 in England have been set nationally to date. However, as national restrictions are lifted, local action is likely to prove necessary to respond to localised outbreaks and to prevent further spread.

It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Councillor, to approve the summary Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan as attached at Appendix A.

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ADULT CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES

LEAD COUNCILLOR :	COUNCILLOR JASON BROCK - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
DATE:	30 JUNE 2020		
TITLE:	READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN		
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- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to agree the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The report summarises how Reading Borough Council has engaged with other agencies to develop the Plan, which meets national requirements and addresses the particular issues and risks which COVID-19 poses for Reading. The Plan sets out how partners will work together to keep residents safe from COVID-19 pending the development of more effective treatments and/or a vaccine.
- 1.3 Plans to respond to COVID-19 in England have been set nationally to date. However, as national restrictions are lifted, local action is likely to prove necessary to respond to localised outbreaks and to prevent further spread.

## 2. DECISION

- 2.1 It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Councillor, to approve the summary Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan as attached at Appendix A.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 On 23rd May 2020, the Department of Health and Social Care issued a letter to all local authorities in England setting out the requirement to develop Local Outbreak Control Plans as part of the continuing response to the COVID-19 virus. A national Test and Trace service has been launched, alongside which local systems will play a critical role in helping to contain the spread of the virus and enable a gradual resumption of many of the activities which have been restricted in the first phases of the national COVID-19 response.
- 3.2 Councils need to involve partners in the development and implementation of Local Outbreak Control Plans, providing strategic direction and building on local expertise and activity already in place. An agreed Plan needs to be in place by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020,

and there is local discretion on the process by which approval is secured. This timing makes it impractical to approve the initial Plan via a Council committee, but the Plan includes arrangements for the Plan to be refined, adapted and reviewed via a public facing partnership Board.

- 3.3 The annexed Plan has been approved by the Health Protection Board for Berkshire West, which is another component of the new governance arrangements required to establish a local response mechanism to complement the nationally driven arrangements. The Health Protection Board will provide oversight of local outbreak management and review the latest data on infections at a local level. It will direct resources at a sub-regional level as required to support the actions taken by Reading Borough Council's Gold Command emergency response forum in accordance with the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan.

#### 4. THE DECISION

- 4.1 The annexed Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan has been approved as the Local Outbreak Control Plan for the borough of Reading. This sets out the local approach to identifying and managing local COVID-19 outbreaks.

- 4.2 The primary objectives of the national Test and Trace service are to control the Covid-19 rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of infection and save lives, and so support a return to normal activities for as many people as possible. The intention is that a range of activities and services important to public health and wellbeing and to the economy can be reinstated in a way that is safe and protects our health and care systems. This requires a co-ordinated effort from local and national partners, and the general public.

- 4.2 The Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan is organised around seven themes:

1. Preventing and managing outbreaks in care homes and schools;
2. Preventing and managing outbreaks in other high-risk places, locations and communities;
3. Making the best use of local testing capacity;
4. Achieving effective contact tracing in complex settings and for complex groups;
5. Accessing the right local data to achieve the aims of the Local Plan;
6. Supporting vulnerable local people who need help to self-isolate, and ensuring services meet the needs of diverse communities; and
7. Establishing structures to engage and communicate with the public about and in accordance with the Local Plan.

- 4.3 The Plan provides for the establishment of a Local Engagement Board, which will be proactive in reviewing plans to realise the benefits of a localised approach to controlling future COVID-19 outbreaks, and also provide a mechanism for review and scrutiny of decisions taken in support of the Local Plan either by the Berkshire West Health Protection Board or by Reading's Gold Command emergency response forum. This will facilitate learning from local outbreak responses to inform future iterations of the Control Plan or its supporting Communications Plan, or other community engagement to strengthen future responses.

#### 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Approving the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan contributes to the following Corporate Plan priorities:

- *Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable* - by supporting those who are vulnerable to be able to self-isolate as required, and by preventing and managing outbreaks in care homes or within other high risk communities;
- *Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living* - by focusing on the prevention and management of outbreaks in schools;
- *Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active* - by helping to reduce the spread of infection and supporting a safe return to physical activity; and
- *Providing infrastructure to support the economy* - by establishing a localised response system which allows more businesses to resume trading.

5.2 The decision also contributes to the Council's strategic aim *to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all* by putting in place local health protection arrangements specific to COVID-19 but which recognise and address the risk which the virus poses to exacerbating health inequalities.

5.3 The Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan also supports the three-point strategic framework that the Council has adopted in response to COVID-19:

- *support and protect vulnerable children and adults by ensuring the social care system continues to function effectively;*
- *support the people who are most vulnerable and isolated in our communities; and*
- *support businesses and the local economy, and secure Reading's economic recovery.*

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2 There are no direct environmental or climate implications of approving the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan. The Council will continue to be mindful of these considerations as the Plan is refined, adapted and reviewed.

## 7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

7.2 The Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan provides for the establishment of a Reading Outbreak Engagement Board to involve the public and partners in the evolution of the Plan, and to support swift and effective local communication with all residents potentially impacted by a local outbreak.

7.3 The Reading Outbreak Engagement Board will function to ensure that:

- Reading residents and partners have a voice in the ongoing approach to delivering the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan;
- System leaders are accountable for the policy and operational decisions taken in support of the Plan;

- a Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Communications Plan is developed and kept under review to ensure it is building public trust and participation in the Plan; and
- local plans respect and promote equality and diversity, and demonstrate how disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups can be mitigated.

7.4 The Reading Outbreak Engagement Board will be a sub-group of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board was established to provide collective leadership to improve health and wellbeing for the people of Reading. It is a partnership board that brings together the Council, NHS, police, fire and rescue service, local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation and the Local Healthwatch provider. With an established focus on reducing health inequalities, early intervention, and the prevention of poor health, it is well placed to oversee the functions of the new Engagement Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board has experience of considering health and wellbeing impacts across a range of services - including housing, social care, schools, community services, environment, transport, planning, licensing, culture and leisure - and so used to the balancing the competing challenges which may arise in determining the optimal scope of a localised outbreak response.

## 8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact across different population groups, with older people and people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, in particular, more likely to die from the virus. Social distancing rules introduced in response to COVID-19 have been stricter over a longer period for people with particular long-term health conditions or of advanced age, and the economic impacts to date have been felt more by those already on lower incomes. Local response measures may continue to have a similar disproportionate impact.

8.3 It is therefore appropriate that the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan makes explicit reference to these differences and addresses them at the adoption of the Plan and at every subsequent opportunity to refine, adapt and review the detail. This is integral to ensuring an effective local response as well will include as ensuring that the various public bodies involved in the Plan discharge their duties under the Equality Act. An ongoing and living Equality Analysis will be more effective than a single Equality Impact Assessment to achieve this, however.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Reading Borough Council constitution provides for certain decisions to be made by an officer at the level of Director or above, acting in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor, subject to the Decision Book Procedure, which permits for a review of the decision by the responsible Committee if requested by not less than three Members of the Council.

## 10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 To support its overall COVID-19 control activity, Reading Borough Council has received a one-off grant of £901k. This is ring fenced for the following purpose *“to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19”*.
- 10.2 To support the response work occurring at a Berkshire wide and at a Berkshire West level, the council has committed to contributing £386k of this money to the Berkshire shared Public Health team to support the following roles and functions;
- Dep Director of Public Health
  - Covid Surveillance Specialist
  - Analytical capacity
  - Health protection cell project management support
  - Public Health Expertise - capacity for Health Protection Cells
  - Capacity for out of hours triage of notifications and response to organisational queries
  - Specialist public health Comms & Engagement.
  - Social media management and delivery of campaign work
  - Comms and engagement budget
- 10.3 That leaves a further £515k for Reading Borough Council to use at its discretion, within the conditions of the grant, to support local COVID-19 response and outbreak control. Further work will be undertaken to determine the most cost-effective use of these monies on local priorities.

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

*Decision Book Procedure* - report taken to Policy Committee 24.03.2020

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s10880/DecisionBookReport.pdf>

*Local Outbreak Control Plans* - letter dated 23.05.2020 - from Nadine Dorres, MP, Minister of State for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health - to all local authority leaders in England

## 12. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan (summary slide deck)

# Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan

June 2020



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# Why do we need an Outbreak Control Plan for Reading?

- We want to keep our residents as safe as we can from COVID-19 until better treatments and/or a vaccine is available.
- The initial phase of COVID-19 was countrywide. As national restrictions are lifted, sporadic cases are likely which will need local action to prevent spread.
- Building on local knowledge and trusted partnerships our local plan adds to national programmes.



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# Key features of Reading

- Reading is the principal regional and commercial centre of the Thames Valley. The Borough of Reading is home to 167,700 residents with the wider urban area of Reading reaching into the neighbouring Wokingham and West Berks Local Authority areas. The age of the Reading population is younger than UK average
- The town is a major transport interchange, benefitting from its strategic location on the M4 corridor and proximity to Heathrow Airport and London as well as home to the second busiest train station in the South East
- The largest employers in the Reading area include business such as Microsoft and Oracle, the University of Reading and public sector organisations such as the NHS and Local Authorities. A large percentage of the local working population are highly skilled
- Reading houses the regional Royal Berkshire Hospital, the University of Reading, the region's leading professional football team, 73 schools and is home to the international music festival- Reading Festival



# Reading and COVID-19

- Like all parts of the UK, Reading has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- The community spirit in Reading is strong and came together in a range of ways as the pandemic hit and lockdown occurred. The One Reading Community Hub has been an example of this in action, available at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirussupport>.
- The Hub has supported over 1,000 people in Reading who were required to shield, as well as having linked up over 1,500 people for further support with our local voluntary sector groups
- The urban nature of Reading and the close proximity of testing facilities may have caused the higher than average confirmed number of cases that we saw early in the pandemic- with numbers in May and June reducing in keeping with other areas that are similar to Reading
- A particular focus in Reading has been on providing support to those most vulnerable to the infection, especially our local care homes.

# Our Outbreak Control Plan has the following themes:

## 1. Care homes and schools

Prevent and manage outbreaks in specific individual settings (e.g. schools, care homes)

## 2. High risk places, locations and communities

Prevent and manage outbreaks in other high-risk locations, workplaces and communities

## 3. Local testing capacity

Deploy local testing capacity optimally

## 4. Contact tracing in complex settings

Deliver contact tracing for complex settings and cohorts

## 5. Data integration

Access to the right local data to enable the other 7 themes and prevent outbreaks

## 6. Vulnerable people

Support vulnerable people and ensure services meet the needs of diverse communities

## 7. Local Boards including Communication & Engagement

Take local actions to contain outbreaks and communicate with the general public

## 8. Workforce

Keeping our workforce safe



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# Managing risks locally

- COVID-19 does not travel on its own. It is transmitted largely in droplets, coughed out by people who are infected.
- Keeping a social distance, using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and disposing of them safely, washing hands often and isolating infectious people are key protection measures to prevent spread.
- Some people seem more likely to catch COVID-19 or to become more sick as a result. These people need extra protection.
- Some settings are more risky, for example where infectious people are being cared for, where social distancing and isolation are more challenging or where there are people at particular risk of harm from COVID-19.
- It is likely that COVID-19 will be harder to spot and control in the winter and we need to be prepared.



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# Managing risks locally

In Reading we are working with Public Health England and developing focussed outbreak plans for the following settings and population groups as we know outbreaks may be more likely in these areas or people may be more impacted by them or they maybe more complex to control if they occur



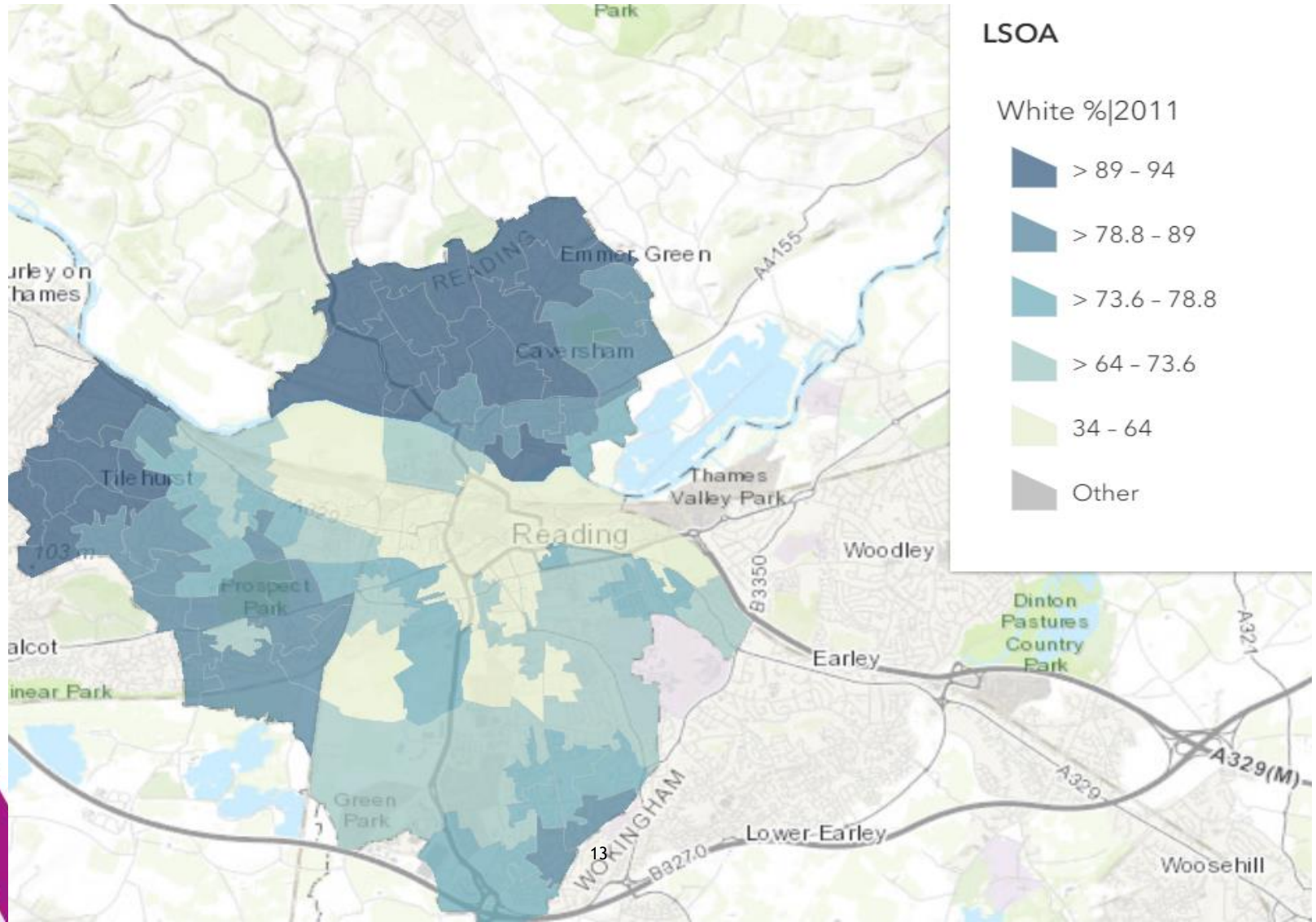
- Care homes
- Social care services
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Primary care facilities
- Returning travellers from abroad
- Traveller and homeless population
- Social housing
- Leisure facilities
- Libraries and cultural facilities
- Retail and the town centre
- Transport hubs
- Offices/ workplaces
- Food outlets/ licenced premises
- Council run buildings
- Places of worship
- BAME community
- University of Reading



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# Ethnicity in Reading

Reading has an ethnically diverse population with BAME groups located in some specific parts of the Borough



# What actions might be taken or recommended if an outbreak occurs?

- Alert messaging
- Focussed testing of people with and without symptoms
- Special testing facilities set up
- Additional contact tracing
- Closure of premises
- Restricting visiting
- Cancelling events
- Closing playgrounds or other facilities
- Enhanced monitoring of people isolating
- Specific advice on PPE and infection prevention and control measures



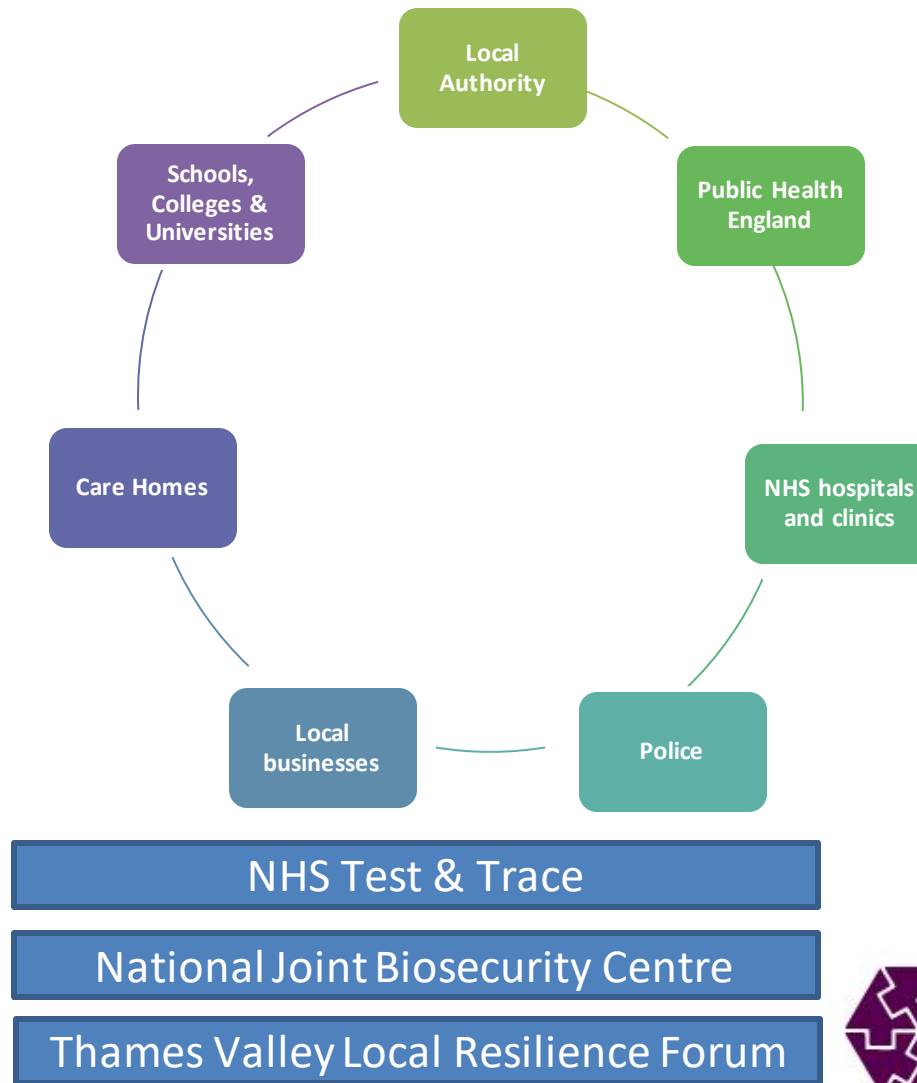
# How will we respond to an outbreak in Reading?

- We will watch data on cases and risks closely, so we spot outbreaks early.
- We will support our residents to stay safe, encouraging handwashing, social distancing and isolation and assisting those who need help to comply.
- The actions we take will be those most likely to be effective, based on evidence.
- We will act swiftly to put local actions in place to support Public Health England's recommendations on controlling spread.
- We will communicate with local people and organisations to help them keep safe.



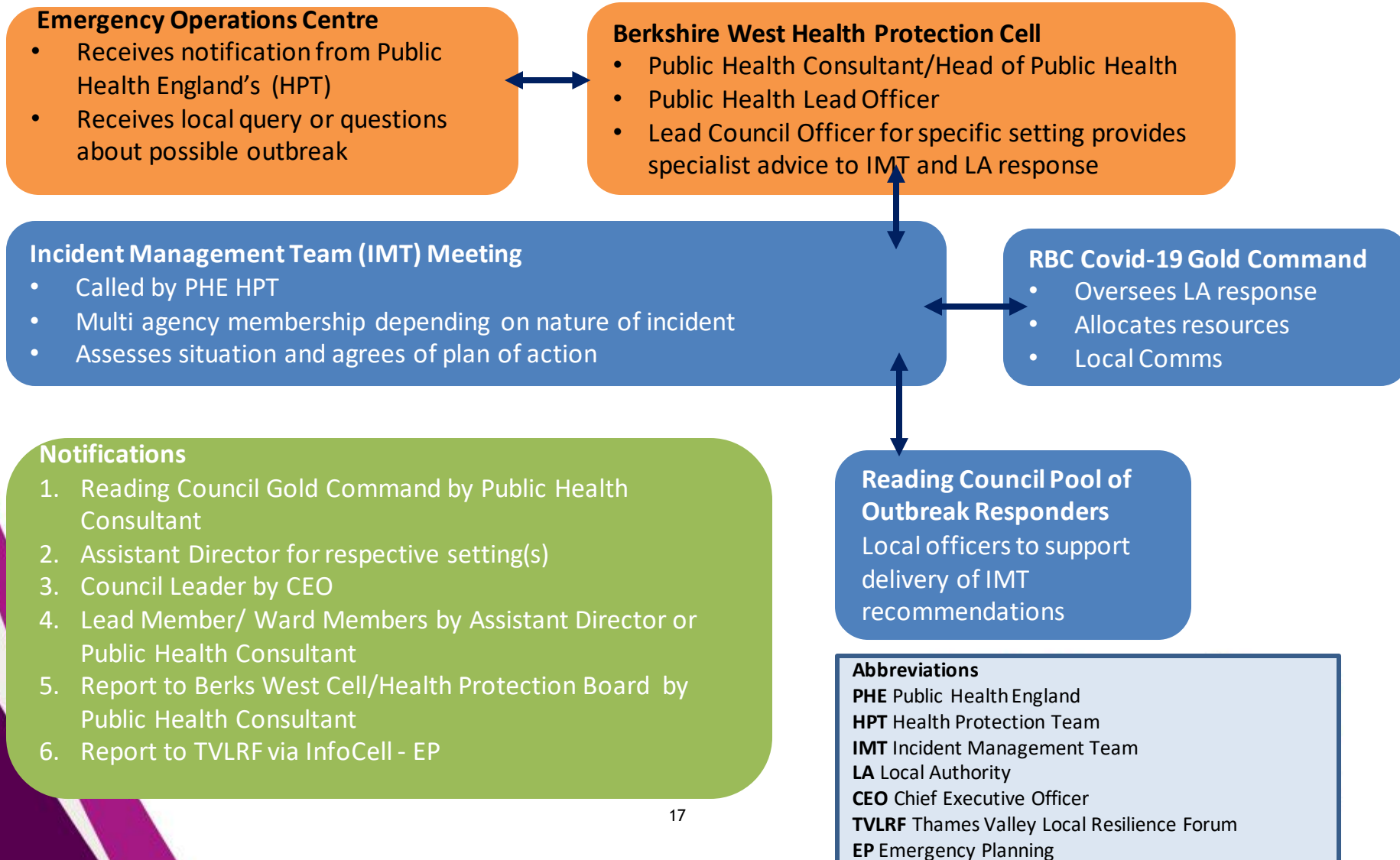
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# Managing a local outbreak is a team effort

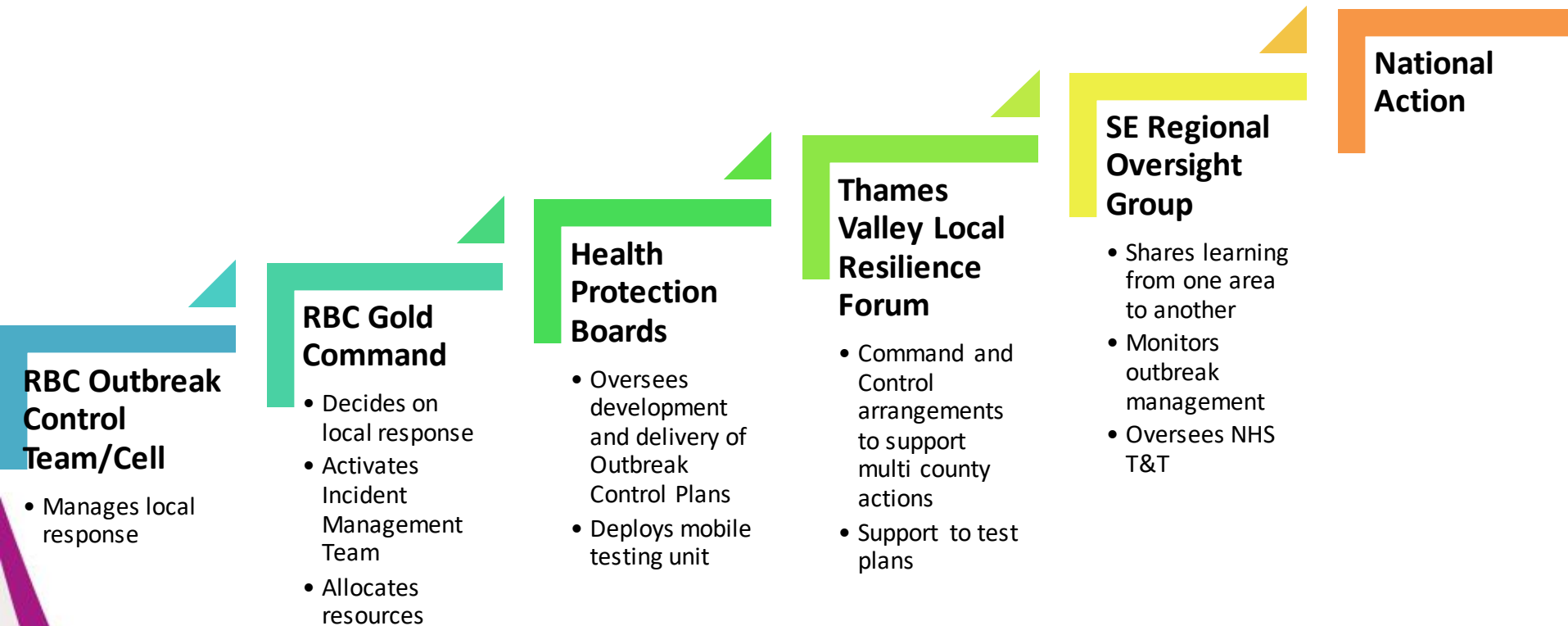


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# How are the right people and organisations informed if cases or outbreaks occur?



# What if more action is needed?



# When to get in touch with Reading Borough Council?

Contact the Council via

[CV19Notifications@reading.gov.uk](mailto:CV19Notifications@reading.gov.uk) or 0118 937 2707

- if you have been contacted about being a COVID-19 case or contact and are not sure what to do
- if you think there are cases in your workplace, school, organisation or other setting

If you have symptoms, stay home and contact NHS Test & Trace to arrange testing at <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or call 119



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# Communication with residents

- Our new Outbreak Engagement Boards will be held in public regularly as needed, led by local Councillors and accountable to the public.
- We will keep our website up to date with the latest information and guidance.
- We will use social media to spread the word.
- We will work with services, businesses and organisations to make sure information is clear and accurate
- We will make information available in accessible formats and languages other than English.



# Governance

- This work will be overseen by our Berkshire West Health Protection Board where key partners will work together to control spread locally.
- The Reading Outbreak Engagement Board will listen to your views and keep the public informed about COVID-19.
- The Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum will put Command and Control arrangements in place to act across a broader geography if needed.
- The South East Regional Oversight Group will help us learn from other areas.

# Next steps for the Reading Outbreak Control Plan

Refine

Refine the plan with partners

Adapt

Adapt the plan as we learn more about Covid and local outbreaks

Review

Review our plans alongside new national programmes such as the Joint Bio-Security Centre