

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD

6 NOVEMBER 2020

QUESTION No. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No 36

Tom Lake to ask the Chair of the Outbreak Engagement Board:

Isolation

The themes of the Covid-19 Outbreak Engagement Plan do not mention isolation. Can the virus be contained without isolation? Is there no role for local Public Health and the local Authority in maintaining and supporting isolation?

Tom Lake
Information Officer
South Reading Patient Voice

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Chair of the Outbreak Engagement Board):

Thank you for your question Mr Lake. I very much suspect we share belief in the critical importance of isolation as part of test and tracing in order to combat Covid-19 and, in response to the first part of your question, the virus cannot be contained without isolation working. It is therefore highly alarming that the government's own scientific advisors estimate that less than 20% of contacts advised to isolate do so fully. My own view is that the inadequate financial support from government to those isolating means many cannot afford to do so and may also discourage some people from passing on contacts.

The local outbreak control plan for Reading covers contact tracing as number 4 of the 8 themes- this is on the RBC website at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/reading-covid-19-outbreak-control-plan/>

Contact tracing involves the identification of close contacts of a "case" and advising them of the requirement to isolate for 14 days. This isolation is an important part of how we look to control the virus as it breaks potential chains of transmission.

Until recently the NHS test and trace system was run nationally without a role for local authorities. However, in the last 2 weeks we have taken on a role in ensuring that we successfully communicate with local residents that have not been reached by the local system and thus ensure the necessary isolation is occurring in our town. We will be providing more information about this local service later in the agenda for today's meeting.

We have also been encouraging isolation for those who are cases or contacts through our regular communications. This includes our resident email, social media channels and advertising across the town.

We know that some people face financial difficulty if they are required to isolate and cannot work from home. We have therefore ensured access for Reading residents to the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This ensures that it is as easy as possible for people to isolate when they need to.