

READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD MINUTES - 2 JULY 2021

Present:

Councillor Hoskin (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing & Sport, Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Andy Ciecierski Councillor	GP and Urgent Care Clinical Lead for Berkshire West CCG RBC
McGonigle Councillor	RBC
O'Connell Councillor	RBC
Robinson Councillor	RBC
Rachel Spencer Councillor	Chief Executive, Reading Voluntary Action
Terry Councillor	Lead Councillor for Children, RBC

Also in attendance:

Niki Barton	Strategic Communications Manager, RBC
Francis Brown	Member of the Public
Karen Buckley	Acting Consultant in Public Health, RBC
Pat Bunch	Healthwatch Reading Manager
Michael Graham	Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, RBC
Deborah Glassbrook	Director of Children's Services, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC)
Katie Heath	Principal Environmental Health Officer, RBC
Eiliis McCarthy	Reading Locality Manager, Berkshire West CCG
Gail Muirhead	Prevention Manager, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
David Munday	Consultant in Public Health, RBC
Becky Nadal	Senior Strategic Projects Manager, University of Reading
Kate Reynolds	Director of Education, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC)
Nicky Simpson	Committee Services, RBC
Chris Stannard	Wellbeing Programme Officer, RBC
Katie Summers	Berkshire West Vaccination Lead and Director of Place Partnerships, Berkshire West CCG
Parveen Yaqoob	Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Reading

Apologies:

Mandeep Bains	Chief Executive, Healthwatch Reading
Seona Douglas	Director of Adult Care & Health Services, RBC
Dom Hardy	Chief Operating Officer, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
Paul Illman	West Hub Group Manager, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Janet Lippett	Chief Medical Officer, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
Steve McManus	Chief Executive, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
Frances Martin	Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Meradin Peachey	Director of Public Health for Berkshire West
David Shepherd	Chair, Healthwatch Reading

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. LOCAL COVID-19 DATA UPDATE

David Munday gave a verbal update, presented slides and answered questions on the latest situation in Reading on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The presentation slides were made available on the Reading Borough Council website. The presentation included information on:

- A selection of information from the latest Berkshire data on Covid-19. This included cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 population - Reading had 165 cases per 100,000, which was an increase, in line with other authorities in Berkshire and regional and national increases. The positivity rate was now only 3.5%.
- A “heat map” showing cases in different age groups, with a gradual increase, particularly in the 18-24 age group, who were mostly unvaccinated or only recently vaccinated and did not yet have significant levels of immunity, whereas for the older age groups the roll out of the vaccination programme was being effective in stopping the spread of Covid-19. Younger people were also more likely to be employed in the service sector which was now opening up, and Reading had a large number of students.
- Comparative data showing case rates for Reading and other Berkshire authorities in comparison to regional and national rates.
- Information about the alpha and delta variants. The delta variant transmitted more easily but the vaccine was being effective at preventing people becoming seriously unwell and hospitalised and reducing transmission. The number of confirmed delta cases in Reading had increased quickly and 100% of the cases in Reading were the delta variant, as was the case nationally.
- Data on mortality rates in Reading - in week beginning 11 June 2021 there had been one Covid-related death in Reading, but prior to that there had been none since Easter and overall the Reading mortality rate was lower than average for the time of year.
- Data on Contact Tracing - over a 6 week period, 77% of the Reading positive cases had responded to the National Test and Trace programme within 24 hours and, of the 23% passed on to the Reading local contact tracing team, 60.7% had been successfully contacted to give advice - this gave an overall 90% success rate locally.
- Data on Isolation Support activity - demonstrating the volume of calls taken and support offered.
- Information on vaccinations, giving the percentage of people vaccinated with at least one dose across different age groups and vaccination uptake across Reading. Uptake increased by age from 40% in 25 to 29-year olds to 92% in over 80s and not all under 25s had yet had the opportunity to be vaccinated. Reading numbers were slightly under the average when compared to England and similar areas to Reading, and a “surge” vaccination clinic had been set up at the Civic offices and there had been other initiatives to encourage vaccinations.
- The presentation also presented the national planned process for release from lockdown, with Step 4 now deferred from 21 June 2021 to no earlier than 19 July 2021.
- The new lambda variant had not yet been detected in Berkshire.
- The new Johnson & Johnson/Janssen single dose vaccine was awaiting the approval process for the UK and was expected to be available in late summer/early autumn, depending on supply.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

3. COVID-19 - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TEAM ROLE

Katie Heath gave a presentation on the Environmental Health team's role in dealing with Covid-19. The presentation slides were made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

The presentation included information on:

- The role of the team in:
 - Complaints
 - Proactive interventions and advice
 - Events
 - Supporting Reading Football Club preparing for return of spectators
- The actions the team could take, including:
 - Triage
 - Checking if premises were Covid-secure
 - Recommendations
 - Prioritising resources
- Two cases studies, involving a national hospitality chain and a local independent community centre, setting out details of the situations and the actions taken by the team.
- The role of the team when dealing with premises, including monitoring of complaints for compliant premises and potentially escalated enforcement for non-compliant premises.
- Since 8 March 2021, 81 complaints had been received regarding non-compliance, 104 Covid inspections had been carried out, business advice had been provided on 86 occasions, 23 revisits had been conducted, four Covid improvement notices had been issued and one improvement notice had been served.
- The challenges being experienced by the team.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

4. ADDITIONAL "SURGE" TESTING & VACCINATIONS

Michael Graham and Niki Barton gave a presentation on surge testing and vaccinations in Reading. The presentation slides were made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

The presentation explained that a decision had been taken on 1 June 2021 to proceed with surge testing because of rising case numbers of the Delta variant, rising rates in Reading's younger population (aged 17-25) and high rates in some ethnic minority groups in the town. A joint project had been carried out with Wokingham to offer additional testing to Reading and Wokingham residents.

Around two thirds of non-travel cases had been within four post code sectors of Reading, so although not accounting for all cases of the Delta variant, surge testing had been focused on those four areas. The project had covered around 30,000 people, inviting and encouraging everyone over 12 years who lived worked or studied in RG1 3**, 5**, 6** and 7** to receive a test. The original offer had been from Monday 7 June to Sunday 20 June 2021.

READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD MINUTES - 2 JULY 2021

Ten Surge testing sites had been provided in Reading and Wokingham and the testing strategy had covered the following:

- Residents - wide communications & targeted groups
- Businesses - targeted approach with visits to premises, delivery and collection of kits
- Schools - direct delivery and collection
- Hospital - direct delivery and collection

Niki Barton explained that the Covid-19 Communications Plan was continuing to have a strategic approach to:

- Amplify national messages by sharing NHS, Public Health England (PHE) and Government resources, eg new rules and best practice/health advice; NHS 'we're open' messages
- Respond to emerging issues, eg delay to release of lockdown restrictions, spread of Delta variant, changes to testing and vaccine programmes, travel destinations.
- Focus on local issues, eg surge testing/vaccination, language, hotspots, areas of low vaccine take up, Reading festival etc.

The presentation explained that the current focus was on testing and vaccination and gave examples of the audience, key messages and channels being used. It gave details of the results of the surge testing, with the numbers and percentages of tests delivered and collected, with an overall total of around 50% for Reading against the 30,000 target. The project had also identified 49 positive Covid cases, allowing them to take appropriate measures and it had raised awareness and helped people be aware of the risks.

It was explained that, part way through the surge testing, an additional support project providing surge vaccinations had been offered, and a walk-in vaccination clinic had been set up at the Civic Offices, initially for 17-25 June 2021, subsequently extended to 2 July 2021 and now to be extended further to 9 July 2021. The offer had originally been to the specific RG1 postcodes, but it had been extended from 22 June 2021 to all residents over the age of 18 for a first dose vaccination. This had been a walk-in offer, with no appointment needed, and details of the numbers attending were given, which had on some days exceeded the 240 planned for, as well as examples of the communications used to publicise the offer.

Katie Summers gave a further update on other vaccination activity, including the places where vaccinations were available in Reading, details of a mobile "health on the move" van travelling across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire, including some targeted work in Reading with ACRE, and provision of funding for an event and mementos to celebrate the vaccination programme and thank those involved. She noted that plans were being developed for a Covid booster vaccination programme in the autumn, alongside the flu vaccination programme.

Eiliis McCarthy reported on a door knocking project which had been carried out by the electoral canvassing team to visit low vaccine uptake areas; 636 households in the Oxford Road area had been visited so far and she gave examples of the benefit of the project to identify reasons for hesitancy or refusal to feed into further vaccination encouragement work and as a data cleansing exercise (49% of the homes visited had no

READING COVID-19 OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD MINUTES - 2 JULY 2021

answer or the person was no longer at the address). A Wellbeing event was to be held on 15 and 16 July 2021 at the Oxford Road Community Centre, which would include vaccines being available, two other areas with low uptake in East and South Reading were going to be targeted and this work would be repeated as the flu and Covid booster programme developed. Partners were working with Healthwatch to plan an online event to target particular groups with low vaccine uptake, to allow people to ask questions and hear from members of the Nepalese, Muslim and Chinese communities about their vaccination experiences.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

5. LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE

David Munday gave a presentation on the development of the Local Outbreak Control Plan to plan action to prevent outbreaks and how to respond as and when outbreaks occurred. The presentation slides were made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

David Munday noted that the alpha variant had now given way to the delta variant and gave details of the national picture regarding VOC (Variants of Concern), explaining that surveillance of the VOCs would remain an important part of the local response work. Every PCR test automatically went for genetic sequencing so that the variant causing the positive result could be identified.

He stated that the traffic light system for returning travellers from abroad was likely to remain past 19 July 2021 and that it was hoped that more local data could be made available on returning travellers.

He gave details of the latest situation regarding targeted lateral flow testing, noting that the successful community collection scheme was going to be continued and the Town Hall had now reverted from the surge testing to a lateral flow test site. Fixed site supervised testing would be reviewed against the mobile option to support targeted work and guidance was awaited regarding testing for schools and universities after September 2021.

Long Covid was emerging as a key issue and David Munday gave details of the condition, which was still poorly understood, noting that 1 in 9-10 people self-reported a reduction in ability for day-to-day activity 12 weeks after infection and this rose to as high as 1 in 2 if they had been hospitalised. Katie Summers reported that the NHS had recently released a Long Covid enhanced service specification and GP practices would be asked to work to this.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved - That the next meeting of the Board be held at 2pm on Friday 3 September 2021.

(The meeting started at 2.03pm and closed at 3.52pm)