

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Knowsley's Covid-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan

July 2021





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CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the world with the most significant public health challenge in a century.

- In June 2020, as part of their response to the pandemic, the Government asked every upper tier local authority area in England to create a Local Outbreak Management Plan.
- Things have moved on at pace since we produced our first Local Outbreak Management plan in July 2020. This new plan reflects the current context in which we are tackling COVID-19, it captures the actions we have taken so far to tackle the pandemic and the actions we need to take over this coming winter.
- The context in which we are operating has moved at a pace over the past 16 months. There have been significant developments in the range of measures to identify and contain COVID-19 and a greater shift to local rather than national led action. This includes provision of targeted and community testing for people without symptoms, surge planning to respond to new variants, local systems for contact tracing and greater support for people who must isolate with self-isolation grants. A key game changer has been the mass roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme since January 2021. These new developments are reflected in the priorities in this plan alongside other key areas

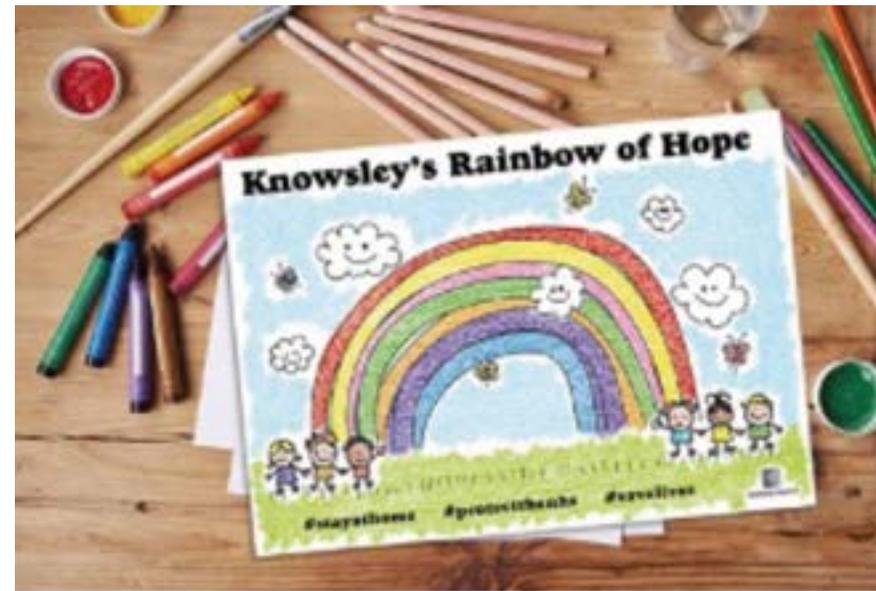
of maintaining surveillance to target actions, engagement and communication and continuing to protect high risk settings and our most vulnerable communities.

- COVID-19 has presented many challenges and has hit Knowsley hard. During late December 2020 and January 2021, we saw another local and national surge in COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations and deaths, and we experienced a third national lockdown. Knowsley Council has responded to the pandemic through partnership and collaboration. Much has been achieved to rapidly put in place measures and services to ensure the safety and welfare of residents, maintain health and social care services, enable local businesses and facilities to operate safely in response to changes in guidance and easing of restrictions.
- There are many examples of excellent work that has been driven by the council, working with partners. This plan captures some examples of this through case studies to bring alive the range of interventions that have been mobilised quickly as part of the response to COVID-19. This includes innovative campaigns, the rapid establishment of asymptomatic testing sites, training for care homes, domiciliary and supported housing staff to know when and how to safely wear personal protective equipment to protect those they are caring for, welfare support for vulnerable residents and grants for businesses to ensure they are operating safely for their staff and customers.

- This Plan has been refreshed in line with the principles of effective implementation outlined in the [UK Government's COVID-19 Contain Framework](#) and Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) '[Living Safely with COVID](#)'.
- The UK Governments Contain Framework recognises the integral role of Local Authorities and their local system partners in the response to COVID-19 and their continued vital role as we move into this next phase.
- The ADPH guidance sets out four principles that should guide decision making over the coming months:
 - keeping transmission as low as possible with everyone in society playing their part,
 - quickly identifying and responding to new variants,
 - delivering a robust and connected test, trace, isolate and support system; and
 - continue to roll out the vaccination programme in an effective and equitable way.
- This Local Outbreak Management Plan outlines the ongoing work we continue to deliver in partnership to protect our communities from COVID-19. The plan reflects on the pandemic to date, what we have done and what we will do as we learn to live with and recover from COVID-19.

We would like to take the opportunity to say **'thank you'** to all residents, community groups, schools, local businesses and other partners who have supported and will continue to support the delivery of our Local Outbreak Management Plan.

We strongly believe that Our Knowsley Better Together approach enables us to deliver the first line of defence against COVID-19 and critically underpins our approach in the longer term.



PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

The overarching aim of this Plan is to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, protect lives and support the functioning of our health, care and education systems, society and the wider economy as we move from response to living safely with COVID-19.

This Knowsley Local Outbreak Plan sets out how we will work in partnership with local, regional and national partners and our local community to:

- **PREVENT:** prevent and keep transmission of COVID-19 low through surveillance, high vaccine uptake and a robust and connected test, trace and isolate system.
- **CONTAIN:** respond quickly and effectively to manage outbreaks across different settings within the borough as well potential threats from Variants of Concern
- **MANAGE:** ensure vulnerable people are protected and supported and we mitigate the wider health impacts of COVID-19.

We will ensure that our approach is:

- **FLEXIBLE WITH ABILITY TO SURGE:** to respond to changing circumstances including variants of concern and changes in needs through the Winter of 2021.
- **SUSTAINABLE:** to operate effectively over winter 2021 and beyond.
- **BETTER TOGETHER:** we work collaboratively as a whole system.

Our understanding of COVID-19 is evolving as we learn more about the disease and the effectiveness of the vaccine programme. We will update this plan quarterly to ensure it is responsive to the changing context we face.



LOCAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

- Knowsley has suffered four waves of COVID-19 with periods of sustained and unprecedented pressure on our health and care services. With the December to January 2021 surge being the worst of the pandemic to date.
- During summer 2020, following the national lockdown in March 2020, Knowsley's case rate was low across all wards, and we were seeing on average two to six cases per day across the whole borough. Case numbers again rose in September 2020, dipping as we moved in and out the lockdown of autumn 2020 only to rise steeply in January 2021 when the Alpha variant became prominent. At this point, Knowsley sustained the highest rate of COVID nationally. Since June 2021, cases have risen again due to the Delta variant and release of restrictions in spring/summer 2021.
- To date in Knowsley we have had over **22,000 confirmed cases** of COVID-19 (this will be an underestimate of the true spread of the disease as not all will have been tested), and tragically **435 deaths**. Knowsley's overall rate of COVID-19 is the second highest nationally, behind Blackburn with Darwen, due to the high peaks of cases recorded. The impact of consistently high rates and extended lockdowns have been far reaching across Knowsley.
- We have been collectively working to contain this virus for 16 months now, and the burden on local hospitals have been significant. At the peak more than 30% of hospital capacity was COVID-19 patients which has had knock-on impact to treatment of other illnesses and conditions. During this period, life expectancy for people in Knowsley has fallen and while many deaths are directly related to COVID-19 there has been a seismic impact on health.
- The COVID-19 vaccination programme is a significant step to enabling a new state where we live with COVID-19. The data so far illustrates how the vaccine is effective against current variants in circulation of COVID-19.
- Latest modelling shows that hospital admissions are rising, but at a slower pace than previous waves of COVID-19. The reduction in testing and fall in positive cases can be potentially connected to increased vaccination coverage, school holidays and warmer weather leading to socialising outside. However, we need to also be mindful there could be considerable undetected larger numbers of cases in Knowsley.
- We also need to maintain vigilance against new variants of concern which may escape the current vaccine. We therefore need to ensure our outbreak management responses and health and care system are prepared for further surges in COVID-19. Winter planning is of paramount importance as the effects of COVID-19 will be compounded with other circulating infectious diseases such as Flu.

TACKLING INEQUALITIES

- As described above Knowsley has been hit hard as a borough with long periods of high rates of cases. The impacts of COVID-19 have not been felt equally – the pandemic has both exposed and exacerbated long standing inequalities in our borough as a whole and between and within our local communities.
- This year's [Public Health Annual Report](#) focussed on the Impact of COVID-19 and found a range of factors that have contributed to Knowsley's higher rates.
- There are many possible reasons for high numbers of cases in Knowsley. These include high levels of co-existing long-term conditions within the population which puts the population at higher risk of contracting severe COVID-19. Residents in Knowsley are more likely to work in public facing jobs which increase their number of contacts in, and traveling to and from, work. Low car ownership also means residents are more likely to use public transport or car share.
- Knowsley has large areas of industrial parks which have continued operations including on site work throughout lockdowns. This has meant we have seen large numbers of cases, outbreaks and clusters across a range of industries in particular in manufacturing and production industries.
- We will continue to reduce community transmission through delivery of the priorities outlined below in this plan, which include the robust connected provision of test, trace and isolate, alongside the vaccination programme. We will also ensure there is additional flexible and targeted provision to tailor interventions and support those at greatest risk of COVID-19.
- We will maintain a clear focus to work with communities to identify, understand and resolve barriers that communities face which can exacerbate inequalities.
- We will work to deliver the wider recommendations of the Public Health Annual Report on Impact of COVID-19 to address the structural and underlying issues that make Knowsley communities more at risk of COVID-19 impact and transmission.

OUR LOCAL PRIORITIES

We have revised the priorities of our local outbreak management plan, acknowledging the significant developments across the COVID-19 response system. Guided by the national framework, our plan to prevent, manage and contain COVID-19 in Knowsley focuses on ten key themes:

PRIORITY AREA 1: Vaccination

Support the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine programme including this winter's Booster programme, identifying and tackling inequalities in vaccine coverage.

PRIORITY AREA 2: Effective surveillance

For those with and without symptoms and for outbreak management.

Ensure access to timely local data and intelligence to inform local activity to prevent and manage outbreaks.

PRIORITY AREA 3: Engagement and communication

Build trust and participation through effective engagement and communication.

PRIORITY AREA 4: Higher-risk settings, communities and locations

Identify and support high risk workplaces, locations and communities to prevent and manage outbreaks.

PRIORITY AREA 5: Supporting vulnerable and underserved communities

Proactively support individuals and communities, ensuring services across test, trace, isolate and support systems are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our local communities

PRIORITY AREA 6: Testing

Identify cases of COVID-19 by ensuring access to testing for those with and without symptoms

PRIORITY AREA 7: Contact tracing

Effectively deploy local contact tracing and welfare calls to reduce the onward transmission of COVID-19.

PRIORITY AREA 8: Support for self-isolation

Support our residents to access both financial and practical support as appropriate for self-isolation

PRIORITY 9: Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC)

Working with local, regional and national partners to develop robust plans that enable surge capacity to respond to local outbreaks and variants of concern.

PRIORITY AREA 10: Compliance, Enforcement, and Living with COVID-19 (COVID secure)

Work collaboratively to inform best practice and enable a safe return to living with COVID-19. Guide, inform and support local compliance with regulations and restrictions including taking enforcement action where appropriate.

PRIORITY AREA 1: VACCINATION

Support the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine programme including this Winter's Booster programme, identifying and tackling inequalities in vaccine coverage.

What We Have Done

- We are working together to deliver the largest vaccination programme in British history. We have established a multi stakeholder COVID-19 Vaccine Board which is jointly led by Knowsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Knowsley Council. Key partners also include Knowsley's three Primary Care Networks, NHS England/NHS Improvement, Healthwatch Knowsley and local community groups.
- The COVID-19 vaccination programme started in December 2020 and was initially prioritised to the most vulnerable groups. Vaccination is now available for anyone aged 16 or over. To the end of July 2021 63.2% eligible residents have had their first dose and 74.7% of residents have had two doses of the vaccine. (based on eligibility criteria at that time).
- To increase uptake and ensure all residents can easily access the vaccine we have put on additional walk-in clinics in Huyton and Kirkby town centres as well taking a mobile vaccine bus to deliver vaccine into the heart of communities where uptake has been low.
- To help address barriers to get to vaccine sites due to low car ownership we have provided free taxi transport to and from vaccination centres through Healthwatch Knowsley, as well as providing 1,000 free bus vouchers targeting our most vulnerable residents.
- We have delivered an extensive communications campaign, including targeted communication in lower uptake areas, to highlight the importance of the vaccine, not only to individuals, but those around them. We have also provided on the ground engagement in areas of low vaccine uptake to encourage residents to get the vaccine.
- We are working with a range of partners to understand barriers to uptake and vaccine hesitancy. Part of our response to this has been to promote the vaccine through trusted voices. This includes community leaders, businesses and care providers. The development of young person's campaign featured on page 14 is an example of new ways to encourage high take up of the vaccine in specific groups.

What We Will Do Now

- Continue to progress with offering first and second dose vaccination specifically targeting groups and geographical areas with lower uptake. This includes further expansion of mobile vaccine offer and clinics which do not require appointments and exploring options for workplace clinics.
- We will continue to offer residents a free taxi service to enable anyone who has not had their first or second vaccine dose to get to their nearest vaccine site.
- We will undertake further behavioural insight work with service providers and young people to understand and address barriers and maximise enablers to encourage further uptake of the vaccine.
- We will continue to develop and deliver an extensive and engaging communication campaign including the development of targeted digital assets such as short films aimed at the younger population.
- We will work across the health care system to implement this Winter's COVID-19 booster programme alongside ensuring we continue to work to increase uptake of the universal COVID-19 vaccine offer. We will ensure this programme also strategically aligns with this Winter's Flu immunisation programme.
- Monitor data and intelligence to understand the local impact of the vaccination programme on COVID-19 cases, transmission, and our health and social care system, as the roll-out continues.

CASE STUDY: Covid Vaccine Bus

- Working in partnership with Arriva we have deployed a vaccine bus in the heart of our communities, providing vaccinations for local residents without needing an appointment. Recent insight work with residents being vaccinated on the bus found that this local, mobile service was highly valued by those who would have found it difficult to access vaccines at other clinics. Feedback was that being vaccinated on this bus was easy and convenient – people said “I was passing and saw the bus”, and “I just wanted to get it done”. Residents welcomed the opportunity to protect themselves and their families, and the freedom that two doses of vaccination will give them to attend events and travel abroad.



PRIORITY AREA 2: EFFECTIVE SURVEILLANCE

For those with and without symptoms and for outbreak management.

Ensure access to timely local data and intelligence to inform local activity to prevent and manage outbreaks.

What We Have Done

- Established a COVID-19 dashboard to track performance and have an early warning system for changes to inform leadership and decision making. This captures key metrics and intelligence includes rates, variants of concern, hospital occupancy and vaccination progress.
- Put in place analysis of case rates and characteristics coupled with common exposure data to inform and prioritise interventions. This includes where we prioritise testing and outbreak investigation and management. Intelligence is shared with and reviewed by a multi-disciplinary COVID-19 Management Group.
- Analysis of vaccine uptake by geographical areas, cohorts and characteristics to target interventions.
- Continued to support the development of the CIPHA (Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action) integrated data and analyst network resource for Cheshire and Merseyside, sustaining a regional understanding of the epidemic and likely demands on health and social care systems.
- Continued to be open with data and insight, proactively using our data and intelligence to support targeted community engagement and messaging through regular updates at community forums, and communications with residents.
- Reviewed data on differences in the risk and outcomes from COVID-19 in Knowsley to understand why the borough has been hit so hard by cases and inform the ongoing COVID-19 response.
- Developing insight alongside the data through several focus groups and interviews. This has been critically important to inform responses around communication in particular.

What We Will Do Now

- Continue to develop and improve intelligence and surveillance systems to inform our local approach, for example tracking community testing uptake and test site data to target areas with low uptake.
- Continue working with NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England (PHE), to join up information systems and data, share best practice and further joint work.
- Further develop our approach to using data and intelligence to deliver specific messages for target audiences, to gain further insight on attitudes and behaviours, which in-turn will support our COVID-19 response and lessons learnt.
- Continue to monitor COVID-19 vaccination roll out to identify inequalities in uptake for targeted engagement work. This includes universal two dose provision as well as the targeted winter booster vaccine.
- Continue to evaluate the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on health and wellbeing and use this intelligence to inform work related to strategic recovery within the borough
- We will review and improve the scope and design of our local data and intelligence framework / dashboard in order to further focus our local recovery priorities.



PRIORITY AREA 3: ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Build trust and participation through effective community engagement and communication.

What We Have Done

- Developed and delivered extensive communications across all aspects of the pandemic. This including updates on restrictions and rules, promotion of testing, importance of self-isolation, vaccination myth-busting, when and where to get your COVID vaccine, COVID-19 secure guidance and important information about how to access support and guidance for all parts of the community.
- Delivered targeted communications for key groups during the pandemic, for example, business communications on how to be COVID-19 secure and advice to schools including key messages to share with staff, pupils and parents/carers.
- Delivered multi-channel communications (print, online, media, paid for promotion etc) to ensure maximum reach and exposure
- Developed a central online 'hub' on www.knowsleynews.co.uk to provide a one-stop-shop of trusted information with the most up to date advice and guidance. From Mar 2020 to Mar 2021

we shared approximately 4500 individual social media posts with COVID-19 related information. Unique visits to www.knowsleynews.co.uk have increased by 118% over the same time period, compared to the previous year – from 167,988 to 366,010 visits

- Further utilised the strong partnership relationships, including partner organisations, community leaders and volunteers, in the borough to share and cascade messages through all communications channels and networks.
- Introduced regular COVID-19 briefings for Elected Members and local MPs to ensure understanding of key issues and where to direct residents and businesses for support.
- Worked collaboratively as part of the Merseyside Resilience Forum Communications Group to coordinate regional wide messaging and establish joint responses and updates on key issues.
- Devised and delivered several high-profile communications campaigns to support COVID-19 priorities e.g. 'Let's Get Tested,' 'Stop. Think. Do the Right Thing,' 'Grab a Jab' and 'Keep Life Moving'.
- Continual regular engagement with the local media and facilitated interviews with local, regional and national outlets to ensure accurate information and guidance was being shared.
- Clear strategic approach and focus throughout – using real time data and insight – to ensure information is easy to access, up to date and as easy as possible for people to understand.

What We Will Do Now

- Maintain timely and proactive communications based on up-to date Public Health data / advice and Government updates as we progress through 2021.
- Continue to regularly review the data, identify any emerging trends and deliver targeted communications to support where appropriate.
- Maintain strategic focus on ensuring all information is easy to access, up-to-date and as easy to understand as possible.
- Be prepared for any anticipated future waves, learning from - and developing - what worked well during the previous waves.
- Continue to prioritise messaging to maximise vaccination take up in all age groups and encourage testing as key ongoing actions to support recovery
- Further emphasise the importance of hygiene measures (handwashing in particular) to stop the spread of infections – not just COVID-19.
- Ensure messaging retains underlying note of caution as we approach winter – to encourage people to maintain some of the positive behaviours established during the pandemic
- Align COVID-19 and seasonal flu messages, particularly around vaccinations.
- Further build on the partnership networks established to broaden the reach and exposure of messaging

- Continue to work collaboratively across the Liverpool City Region to share learning and coordinate messaging for the region as a whole.
- Further utilise Behavioural Insight findings to shape future communications strategy and approach.
- Develop the Behavioural Insight Strategy and Delivery Plan to more effectively gather insights from local Community Leaders and Residents.
- Continue to engage with local communities through two-way mechanisms, including forums and targeted communications.

CASE STUDY: The Test, Isolate, Vaccinate Campaign for Young Adults

- Insight work with men and women aged 18-29 years using a qualitative survey during July 2020 found that this age group would welcome more information on the specific benefits of being vaccinated. Hesitancy around vaccine uptake was rooted in not considering oneself to be at risk – including because individuals had already been infected with COVID-19 in the past. This group also needed greater reassurance around vaccine safety, and some of the views expressed showed that there are members of the community who believe that the vaccine presents a greater risk than COVID-19 infection itself.

- Following this insight work, the council has launched a new, innovative local 'Test, Isolate, Vaccinate' social media campaign which centres on messaging around following COVID-19 guidance to 'Keep Life Moving'.
- The graphics are based around the interests of young people, such as going out, protecting friends and sports, and look to engage young people through emotive triggers which resonate with them.
- The campaign moves away from the formal style of public health messaging to a more playful colour-based approach using taglines and rhetorical questions to engage the audience. Further insight is being gathered to inform next steps.



PRIORITY AREA 4: HIGHER-RISK SETTINGS, COMMUNITIES & LOCATIONS

Identify and support high risk workplaces, locations and communities to prevent and manage outbreaks.

What We Have Done

- Identified high-risk groups and settings within the borough to focus efforts, tailoring our approach and working directly with stakeholders to support with prevention, and compliance.
- Established the Knowsley COVID-19 Management Group to ensure a robust and joined up approach to preventing and managing outbreaks in high-risk settings with a daily review process. The team involves a highly skilled team of specialists, with a wide range of diverse backgrounds and experiences. The team includes Public Health, Environmental Health, Intelligence, Education, Communications, Emergency Planning as well linking to external agencies / services of Knowsley CCG, Public Health England and Mersey Care Infection Prevention and Control Team.
- Expanded the provision of the Infection Prevention and Control Service to enable greater support to our vulnerable social care settings.
- Delivered regular COVID-19 updates and two-way discussions with local community leaders and faith groups, supporting local actions to slow transmission.
- Worked closely with Adult Social Care providers, holding regular forums and training sessions on infection prevention and control including how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We have produced localised guidance and provided funding to implement additional measures to reduce the risk of outbreaks and support the frontline social care workforce to self-isolate during COVID-19 related absence.
- Additional training offered to help enhance existing provision (i.e., care home management communication and liaison skills).
- Piloted symptom-free testing in social care settings and local large employers in advance of national programme roll-out. We continue to support all social care providers to deliver testing for both staff and residents.
- Advised care homes and supported them to facilitate safe family visits in accordance with national guidance.
- Provided support to schools through their link officer and regular briefings to prevent and manage outbreaks, guidance on national policies and support in implementing required measures including testing with national guidance.

What We Will Do Now

- Continue COVID-19 Management Group to ensure early identification of outbreaks and clusters and joined up approach of their management.
- Continue to support social care settings to support them to implement routine testing to identify asymptomatic cases and maximise vaccine uptake in their staff and residents / service users.
- Continue to support social care settings to respond to changes in guidance.
- Work with care homes to mitigate any risk when introducing new legislation for mandatory vaccination.
- Continue to work with Adult Social Care providers to prepare for winter and the delivery of COVID-19 vaccine booster alongside seasonal flu vaccination.
- Continue to work with local third sector, voluntary and other organisations and groups to respond to the needs of local communities particularly at risk of COVID-19.
- Continue to work with Public Health England and Cheshire and Merseyside Hub to ensure we continue to work together to share best practice, have clear roles and responsibilities in responding to incidents and outbreaks.
- Continue to develop the most effective, efficient Outbreak Investigation and Rapid Response with partners across Cheshire and Merseyside.

CASE STUDY: PPE Training and Support for Social Care staff

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training has been offered to all providers of health and social care. It has been imperative during the pandemic that PPE is worn safely and appropriately. The sessions have included practical demonstrations, with audience participation, of donning and doffing (putting on and taking off) of PPE as well as the safe disposal once used.
- Depending on the scenario, different PPE will be required. For example, full PPE (gloves, mask, apron and maybe eye protection) would be needed for personal care but all these items would not be necessary if completing medication rounds or performing meal rounds. Staff need to be confident about what PPE to use and when.
- Advice and support were also given to staff about wearing PPE when providing care to a resident who may not understand or may not comply with social distancing or reach out to touch. Wearing PPE in hot weather increases the risk of heat stress. It was highlighted to staff the importance of taking regular breaks and to keep hydrated.
- The sessions were delivered virtually, were well attended, and evaluated positively.



PLEASE PRACTICE
SOCIAL DISTANCING

PRIORITY AREA 5: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Proactively support individuals and communities, ensuring services across test, trace, isolate and support systems are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our local communities

What We Have Done

- Established the COVID-19 Knowsley vulnerable persons group to bring together stakeholders to share best practice, translate guidance and address challenges such as access to tailored information and services such as testing and vaccination.
- Worked together with local community groups and organisations through the Better Together partnership. This included facilitating local community forums to cascade messages and get feedback on needs. Work undertaken by Healthwatch Knowsley and Knowsley Older People's Voice to support residents, see case study.
- Increased capacity in the local information and advice service to allow better access and support for individuals financially impacted by COVID-19.

- Supported those who need to self-isolate with follow up welfare calls signposting to financial and non- financial support available and provided practical support including access to food, carer support, dog walking and medical prescription deliveries.
- Contacted our clinically extremely vulnerable residents to reinforce national guidance and offer sources of local support, responding to all requests for assistance.
- Provided local access to testing for vulnerable groups including care home residents, supported housing and hostels until national pathways were put into place.
- Worked with local drugs and alcohol service provider, local hostels and refuge centre to establish on site symptom free rapid testing for service users and staff.

What We Will Do Now

- Work with local NHS partners to closely monitor and address vaccine hesitancy, promoting key messages to our most vulnerable communities.
- Understand health literacy levels amongst vulnerable groups to ensure materials produced are in the most appropriate languages and formats to best support our local communities.

- Continue to support our vulnerable residents that are required to self-isolate by signposting to financial assistance and providing practical support to enable them to isolate.
- Provided Community Grants to the Community sector as part of Knowsley's recovery from COVID-19. This has included grants to develop and deliver mental health and wellbeing support to our residents.
- Promote access to testing for groups at higher risk of infection owing to a range of social, economic, ethnic or geographical factors.
- Continue to ensure that our clinically extremely vulnerable residents can access a wide range of support including welfare support if required to self-isolate.

CASE STUDY: Healthwatch Knowsley and Knowsley Older People's Voice

- Healthwatch Knowsley has continued to operate and support residents with health and social care issues in a variety of ways, including working with the Volunteer Support Hub. Support has included calls to hundreds of members of Healthwatch Knowsley and Knowsley Older People's Voice to check on their wellbeing and help with prescription deliveries or financial support.

- To support residents' mental health and wellbeing and to keep them informed of national and local updates, regular E-bulletins were produced including a daily blog with contributions from; volunteers, staff, and colleagues from Knowsley CCG and the Local Authority to offer different perspectives on how people are responding and coping with the pandemic, resulting in positive feedback from readers.
- Most of the agency's normal engagement activities were moved to online video call and supplemented with additional online meetings and social activities such as bingo and quizzes introduced to keep people connected, consulted and informed.
- To acknowledge those who were digitally excluded and as a replacement for the annual Christmas lunch, a Christmas gift bag was delivered to the homes of all Knowsley Older People's Voice members and other identified vulnerable residents. The gift bags contained seasonal treats, relevant health and social care information and a letter written by children from St Gabriel's Primary School. The bags were well received with residents expressing their gratitude.



PRIORITY AREA 6: TESTING

Identify cases of COVID-19 by ensuring access to testing for those with and without symptoms and for outbreak management

What We Have Done

- Worked with local, regional and national partners to develop appropriate local testing offer across symptomatic, asymptomatic and outbreak testing.
 - Established seven days a week accessible testing for people with symptoms, with three local testing sites at Huyton, Kirkby and Stockbridge Village. This is complemented by mobile testing units which can be sited in a wide range of location across the borough based on local ward rates.
 - We have supported through training and advice social care settings including care homes, supported housing and extra care to establish regular asymptomatic testing of both staff and residents.
 - In December 2020, Knowsley was one of the first areas to commence symptom-free Community Testing, operating seven testing sites and prioritising testing for those who are unable to stay at home. We now have four town centre sites in Huyton, Halewood, Prescott and Stockbridge which offer asymptomatic tests Tuesday to Saturday.
- Supported local businesses and education sector with establishing asymptomatic rapid testing within those settings.
 - Revised our local Testing Strategy in June 2021, aligning to the national plans for Community Testing to target underserved and vulnerable communities, confirmed until at least the end of September 2021.
 - We have established a mobile asymptomatic testing service which can deploy assisted testing in sites across the borough and distribution of home test kits. This service also engages with residents to promote vaccine offer.

What We Will Do Now

- Continue to support social care settings to undertake regular asymptomatic testing to identify COVID-19 and reduce risk amongst vulnerable residents.
- Maintain access to testing for people with and without symptoms at dedicated local sites.
- Further expand our capability to deploy mobile outreach symptom-free testing, targeted towards communities and cohorts at higher risk of COVID-19 and settings and areas with outbreaks and clusters.

- Build resilience and flexibility into our plans and delivery models, with the ability to respond and mobilise surge mass testing as required, for example due to a variant of concern, and align to enhanced contact tracing.
- Use local intelligence, and community engagement, to ensure our testing offer remains flexible to target areas with the greatest needs and reduces health inequalities.

CASE STUDY: Asymptomatic Community Testing

- In December 2020 Knowsley responded as forerunner in establishing mass community asymptomatic testing so all residents could access symptom free testing. In the space of 10 days the council, working closely with the military and Knowsley Works had redeployed and recruited new staff, delivered training and re-purposed buildings to host testing. This resulted in establishing community sites across the borough to ensure all residents had a local offer. We now also have a mobile response service and unit which deploys to different locations based on COVID-19 rates. To the end of June 2020 126,628 asymptomatic assisted tests have been undertaken by residents since December 2020.



PRIORITY AREA 7: CONTACT TRACING

Effectively deploy local contact tracing to reduce the onward transmission of COVID-19

What We Have Done

- On a regional and national basis, worked with Public Health England and Department of Health and Social Care Local Tracing Partnership forums, influencing and strengthening the local contact tracing system, enabling us to reach people who the national system has been unable to contact.
- Further developed our local contact tracing service capacity and capability, recruiting additional staff to ensure to maintain provision when rates are high. This includes undertaking welfare calls to cases when they have been followed up by the NHS track and trace service. These additional calls often find out more information than that was shared with NHS Track and Trace.
- Improved case completion rate, using local intelligence to increase contacts and refine the local process, building in further contact attempts and messages from recognised numbers/voices.

- Positive engagement with residents, welcoming local contact due to understanding of local area and communities, and effective signposting to local support for self-isolation.
- Continued to support health and social care, schools, local businesses and other settings through intelligence led contact tracing and where a focused outbreak response is appropriate.
- Knowsley Single Point of Contact team investigated cases and clusters in businesses and other organisational settings identified through surveillance and local intelligence. Frequently unearthing exposures and contacts of positive COVID-19 cases that have not been reported to NHS Test and Trace, advising these contacts of their status and isolation requirements to prevent the further spread of infection.

What We Will Do Now

- Reduce duplication with NHS Test and Trace working closely with Local Tracing Partnerships and the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub, driving improvements, aiming for all cases and contacts to receive a high-quality contact tracing service regardless of where their journey begins and ends across the local health and care system.
- Continue to take steps to improve performance in contact tracing, reaching additional contacts to stem outbreaks and further improve our understanding of the local epidemiology.

- Gain a better understanding of reasons for failure to engage and utilise this insight to shape communications and support.
- Continue to analyse the case data to ensure a rapid response to outbreaks and clusters. Ensure a focused outbreak response, reducing national response- times by extracting cases directly.
- Better link contact tracing efforts with targeted testing and individual/community support.



PRIORITY AREA 8: SUPPORT FOR SELF-ISOLATION

Ensuring access to support, including where appropriate financial support, to ensure people who need to self-isolate can do so.

What We Have Done

- Co-ordinated the local Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme to provide financial support to individuals to enable them to isolate without experiencing financial hardship.
- Produced self-isolation guidance materials for a range of target cohorts, which included advice on accessing the self-isolation payment scheme, wider welfare support and non- financial support available.
- As well as providing guidance to individuals, we have worked with Knowsley Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to increase awareness of employer responsibilities in supporting staff to self-isolate when required.
- Invested additional Council funds to support the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Promoted and reinforced self-isolation requirements and provided welfare support through direct contact with positive cases via local contact tracing team.

- Expanded our local community and support services offer through Innovate Knowsley to provide self-isolation signposting, practical and emotional support for residents to enable them to self-isolate.
- Engaged directly with Knowsley residents, including targeted cohorts, through our local Community Navigators programme and Better Together partnership, to better understand the barriers for local people to self-isolation.

What We Will Do Now

- Continue to co-ordinate the Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme, extended until the end of September 2021, incorporating the extended eligibility criteria.
- Strengthen the links between policy and strategy for self-isolation, particularly financial support, with other areas of COVID-19 response activity, including test and trace, to align with local intelligence and plans across the portfolio of outbreak management.
- Use insight to identify any gaps in our local response, both in terms of the financial support available, including the discretionary fund, as well as the non-financial practical and other areas of support.

- We will continue to capture insight on the challenges local people face in order to comply with self-isolation requirements and share this on a regional and national basis into any wider reviews across the system.
- We will continue to embed the guidance set out in the advisory framework for self-isolation issued by Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Test and Trace, when considering local communications and our practical support offer to improve outcomes.



PRIORITY AREA 9: RESPONDING TO VARIANTS OF CONCERN (VOC)

Working with local, regional and national partners to develop robust plans that enable surge capacity to respond to local outbreaks and variants of concern.

What We Have Done

- In February 2021, Knowsley responded locally to the identification of a variant under Investigation (VUIs) across the North West, working with national and local partners to undertake enhanced contact tracing, access to additional symptomatic testing capacity and effective public communications.
- Locally we have learnt from experiences across the country in responding to variants of concern and have contingency plans that we can mobilise to rapidly step up a local response in Knowsley if required.
- We have identified a wide range of suitable sites which can host mobile testing to ensure we can quickly set up testing sites which target small geographic areas subject to variants of concern.

- We have developed local plans outlining how we would enable surge responses related to enhanced contact tracing, and testing within a specific geographical area, or targeted at specific common exposures for a select time period, including door-to-door testing and face-to-face contact tracing as required. Local plans also include a clear communication strategy.

What We Will Do Now

- Hold training and awareness raising sessions with key officers who will form a Variant of Concern Response Team.
- We will continue to monitor presence of variants of concern through cases and wastewater analysis.
- We will continue to review local plans to ensure they are fit for purpose through the winter period.



PRIORITY AREA 10: COMPLIANCE, ENFORCEMENT AND LIVING WITH COVID-19

Work collaboratively to inform best practice and enable a safe return to living with COVID-19. Guide, inform and support local compliance with regulations and restrictions including taking enforcement action where appropriate.

What We Have Done

- Actively participated in joint working across the Liverpool City Region, through the multi-agency Co-operation, Compliance and Regulations cell and sub-groups, to ensure consistency in approach to supporting local compliance and enforcement across Merseyside, sharing best practice and learning, for continuous improvement.
- Developed effective processes and systems to managing compliance and enforcement. Knowsley Single Point of Contact for COVID-19 support and intervention is based within Environmental Health ensuring work is joined up.
- Provided proactive advice and guidance to range of businesses to support understanding and implementation of measures following changes to legislation and regulations, with clear communication routes for COVID-19 related queries.
- Extended Knowsley's Working Well Programme to include grants for businesses to improve COVID-19 safety measures in line with the Governments roadmap.
- Recruited additional Officers through pro-guard to support businesses to be COVID-19 safe, providing advice and guidance. This service worked closely with Environmental Health to escalate issues as required.
- Provided a workplace toolkit with sector specific guidance and resources to support businesses to comply with COVID-secure requirements.
- Monitored the operations and compliance of local businesses including responding to reports of non-compliance, conducting visits to local businesses, across hospitality, close contact services, supermarkets, retail and other premises.
- Worked closely alongside Merseyside Police and other enforcement agencies, ensuring consistent non-compliance was appropriately addressed, through issuing of fixed penalty notices, improvement notices and prohibition notices.
- Established Knowsley compliance and guidance review panel to process queries and ensure a joined up and consistent response taking into account latest guidance, policy and legal position.
- Proactively engage and provide advice and guidance across wide range of sectors, in preparation for re-opening, working with local partners and stakeholders.

What We Will Do Now

- Undertake proactive visits and closely monitor compliance with regulations, investigating reports and complaints and taking enforcement actions, when necessary.
- Continue to support businesses to implement COVID-19 safe measures and provide advice. Continue to highlight the importance of sustaining measures such as ventilation, hand hygiene and safer behaviours, in preventing transmission of COVID-19.
- Continue to review all events to ensure they are run safely including the application of appropriate COVID-19 measures such as having appropriate ventilation, hand sanitiser points and recommending testing.
- Lead local discussions and decisions on approach to learning to live and operate safely during COVID-19, the importance of close surveillance and modelling, and being prepared to adjust plans if necessary.

CASE STUDY: Supporting a Local Business to be COVID-19 secure through the provision of a Working Well Covid-19 Grant July 2021

- St. Aloysius in Huyton successfully applied for a grant to improve measures to help reduce spread of COVID-19. This included:
 - Perspex sneeze guards – these have helped to in-still confidence amongst employees and customers when being served at the bar.
 - Hand Sanitising stations – these have been installed in both the washrooms and public spaces, such as bars and lounges. They are also available for staff to use.
 - Paper towel dispenser – these have been installed to reduce the spread of germs caused by hand dryers.

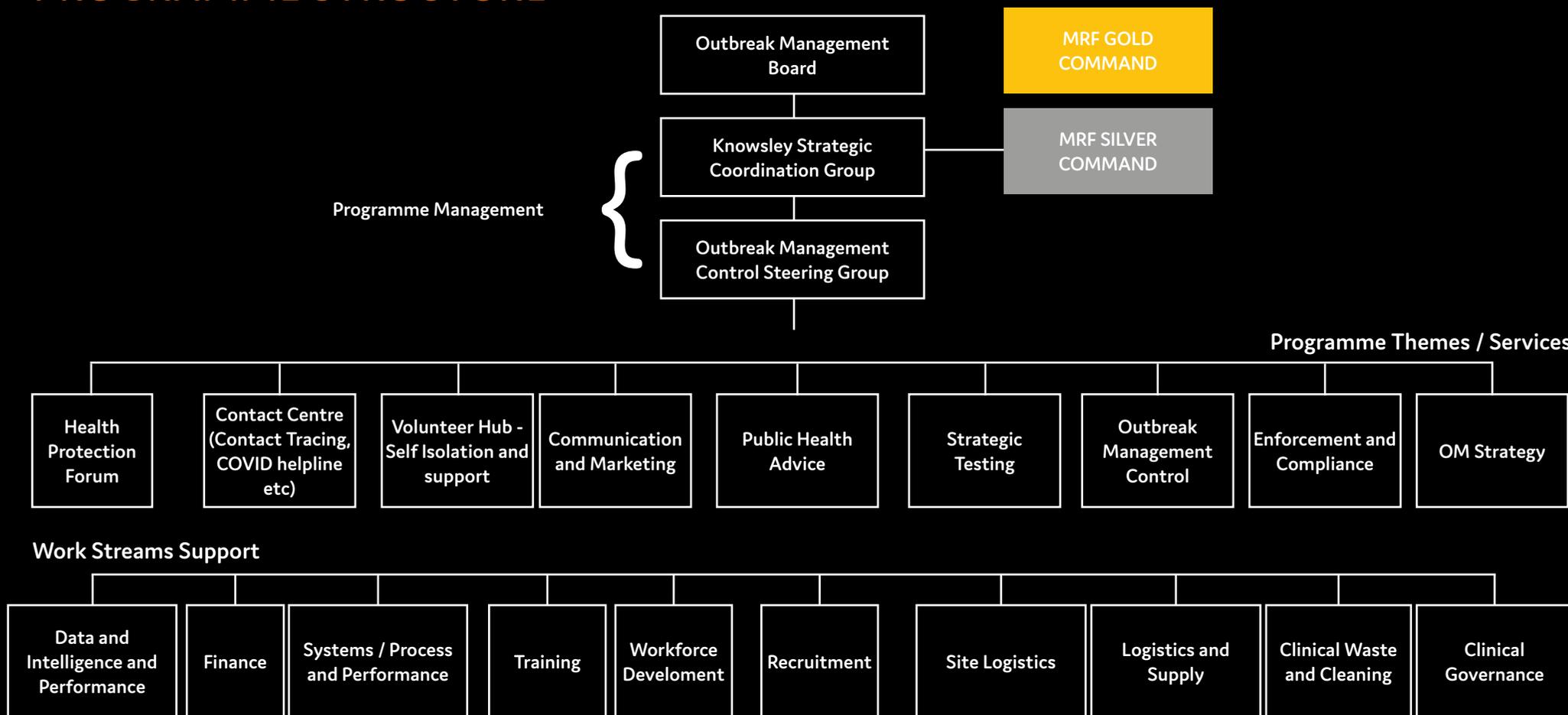
GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESOURCING

We have robust governance structures for decision making with clear accountability and effective resource use

A dedicated COVID-19 Outbreak Management Board is in place to provide strategic leadership and review COVID-19 activity within the borough. This includes assurance that COVID-19 outbreaks and clusters are being managed effectively, vulnerable residents are receiving support, vaccine provision and uptake is high across all cohorts and geographies and there is effective and timely communication with residents and partners.

Knowsley Strategic Coordinating Group scrutinises interventions and policy with a two-way link to the Merseyside Local Resilience Forum response structures. Sitting underneath strategic leadership is a COVID-19 Steering group which brings together different services and thematic areas which form the COVID-19 programme.

OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME STRUCTURE



KNOWSLEY COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

The response to COVID-19 has been provided through a wide range of community groups and partner organisations.

- Knowsley Council
- Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector Knowsley Chamber
- Local Residents
- NHS Knowsley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Knowsley Primary Care Network
- Local Businesses
- Mersey Care Infection and Protection
- Knowsley Health Protection Forum
- Public Health England
- Cheshire and Merseyside Partnership
- Local Schools
- Local Social Care Partners
- NHS Test and Trace
- Liverpool City Region Partnership
- Department of Health and Social Care
- Local Housing Associations

KNOWSLEY COVID-19 ACTIVITY

Much has been achieved over the past 16 months through partnership and collaboration to help tackle COVID-19. Below is a snapshot of the range of activity, support and interventions that has been provided during COVID-19.

- 63.2% eligible residents have had their first dose and 74.7% of residents have had two doses of the vaccine (figures to the end of July 2021, based on eligibility criteria at that time).
- 556 Self Isolation Grants issued to support residents to isolate.
- 54 Business Grants issued to support improvements to infrastructure and Mental Health Recovery activities
- 2,211 business enquiries received and responded to with advice and preventative guidance by Knowsley Chamber of Commerce
- In 2021 over 100 workplaces have had dedicated support from Knowsley's COVID-19 Officers to investigate and manage cases, outbreaks or clusters
- Weekly case management support for large employers including support for outbreak, testing and vaccination with these employers
- 126,628 asymptomatic assisted tests undertaken by residents since December 2020
- 11,281 home test kits issued to residents since April 2021
- 66 Knowsley schools supported with advice and preventative advice and guidance including support with cases, outbreaks or clusters
- 1,000 school COVID-19 enquiries dealt with since March 2021
- 53 outbreaks or clusters managed in Care Homes
- All care homes, extra care settings and supported housing have been issued with advice and guidance and regular feedback sessions.
- 12,951 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents supported
- 200 Community Groups supported and issued with advice and guidance
- 127 Volunteers recruited to support residents isolating and or shielding.
- 2,244 Volunteer Referrals for support during lockdown(s)
- 18,599 people supported through Knowsley's foodbanks during lockdown(s)
- 3,015 residents successfully contacted following a positive PCR test by Knowsley's Local Contact Tracing Team since October 2020
- 2,392 residents successfully contacted following an LFT test by Knowsley's Local Contact Tracing Team since October 2020
- 6,104 residents supported with welfare advice from the Knowsley Local Contact Tracing Team
- 2,692 enquiries taken regarding vaccinations by Knowsley Contact Centre
- Over 60 grants have been allocated to enable community groups to deliver Mental Health and Wellbeing activities for residents helping to support COVID-19 recovery.
- From Mar 2020 to Mar 2021 we shared approximately 4500 individual social media posts with COVID-19 related information.
- For the same period, unique visits to www.knowsleynews.co.uk have increased by 118% (compared to the previous year) – from 167,988 to 366,010 visits.

For information and advice on COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Management in Knowsley please contact:

COVID-19 Volunteer Hub Helpline: **0800 073 0043**

Visit: **www.knowsley.gov.uk/community-hub**

For media enquiries please contact: **0151 443 3536**

Knowsley Council acknowledges and thanks Wirral Council for the use of their outbreak management plan template which this plan draws on.



This plan will be reviewed January 2022.

