

**Minutes of the COVID19 Oversight and Engagement Board Meeting  
held at 9.00 am on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2021  
held virtually via Zoom**

**Present:**

Cllr Matt Golby – Chair	Cabinet member for Adults and Public Health, West Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Helen Harrison – Vice Chair	Portfolio Holder for Adults and Public Health, North Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Jean Addison	North Northamptonshire Council
Simon Blatchly	Assistant Chief Constable, Northamptonshire Police
Cllr Jon-Paul Carr	Chair North Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board, North Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Emma Fedorowycz	North Northamptonshire Council
Kathryn Hall	Communications Lead, Public Health Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire Council
Kate Holt	Chief Executive, Healthwatch Northamptonshire
Cllr Jonathan Nunn	Leader, West Northamptonshire Council
Professor Will Pope	Interim Chair, Healthwatch Northamptonshire
Cllr Emma Roberts	North Northamptonshire Council
Julie Shepherd	Chief Nurse, Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
Lucy Wightman	Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council and Director of Population Health Strategy, NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group

**Minute Taker:**

Cheryl Bird	Health and Wellbeing Board Business Manager, Public Health Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire Council
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**Apologies:**

Cllr Phil Bignell	West Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Gareth Eales	West Northamptonshire Council
Danny Moody	Chief Executive, Northants CALC
Shirley Plenderleith	COVID19 Chief of Staff, North and West Northamptonshire Councils
Toby Sanders	Chief Operating Officer, NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group
Cllr Jason Smithers	Leader, North Northamptonshire Council

**11/21 Welcome**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present.

**12/21 Minutes from the previous meeting 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**RESOLVED that: the minutes from the meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.**

**13/21 Action Log**

- Kath Hall to provide a small briefing on vaccination and testing for Healthwatch Northamptonshire to include in their monthly newsletter. **Completed.**

- The Chair and Vice Chair to circulate the Contact Tracing and Testing Update slides to their respective elected members. **Completed.**
- Danny Moody is to be added into the refreshed membership. **Completed**

#### **14/21 Northamptonshire Police Update**

Assistant Chief Constable Blatchly gave an update from Northamptonshire Police and highlighted the following:

- Nationally Police Forces have been advised to work with their respective Directors of Public Health around how to manage police officers and staff in the work place following the relaxation of COVID19 restrictions.
- In Northamptonshire Police staff maintain wearing face masks in the workplace and custody areas, with maintained numbers of staff present in the workplace.
- Northants police did initially suffer from the pandemic and had to seek special dispensation from central government for front line and firearm officers to be excluded from self isolation in order to maintain services.
- 360k people attended the British Grand Prix at Silverstone this year, which was a success for the county in terms of the health and policing operations that took place
- Large crowds are expected for the Moto Grand Prix later in August.
- Incident levels are now back to pre-pandemic levels. The night time economy has re-opened resulting in more incidents relating to drunken behaviour and public order offences in town centres across the county.
- There are now very few COVID19 related calls being made by the public and very little policing demand from the isolation hotel in Northamptonshire.

The Chair thanked Northamptonshire Police for all their work during the pandemic.

**RESOLVED that: the Board noted the Northants Police update**

#### **15/21 Contain Framework**

The Director of Public Health gave a presentation on the Contain Framework and highlighted the following:

- One of the requirements for local authorities and Public Health Teams is to produce a local Outbreak Management Plan.
- The Northamptonshire plan needs to be updated due central Government publishing a new Contain Framework.
- The Contain Framework outlines the roles and responsibilities of local authorities, local system partners, regional and national teams and the governance that sits between the decision making instruments and response structures. As well as highlighting the support that can be expected from partners particularly at a regional and national level such as the regional convener, Joint Bio Security Centre, Public Health England and Department of Health and Social Care.
- The Contain Framework also updates the core components of the response, including variants of concern, vaccination and how these updates need to be factored into local Outbreak Management Plan. The Framework also includes a narrative to enable the public to make informed decisions, to take individual responsibility for protecting themselves and their wider community. The local authority is tasked with providing up to date and accurate information to enable the population to make these informed decisions.
- The Director of Public Health has a statutory responsibility to manage infectious diseases that pose a risk to the local population, and to have an appropriate contingency plan and resources for any surge capacity.
- The Local Resilience Forum arrangements are still in place and meet on a regular basis.
- Through elected Leaders, local authorities are accountable to their communities for the response, decisions and expenditure.
- The core activities outlined in the Contain Framework are:

- Testing, both PCR and lateral flow, with roving mobile testing units being used in places with high infection rates or hard to reach communities. Lateral flow testing kits can be collected from community pharmacies and asymptomatic testing sites.
- Contact tracing is still a national requirement but is now being delegated to the local teams.
- Support for self isolation. Northamptonshire has a robust contact tracing partnership in place, including provision of a social isolation support pack which is seen as an exemplar of good practice and being adopted by other local authorities across the country.
- Vaccination - vaccination uptake has slowed recently. Vaccination teams are working to engage with hard to reach communities who have a lower level of vaccination, to provide the appropriate information to address any concerns that may arise. Also to support the booster campaign which is expected in the next few weeks with the correct information by the business intelligence teams.
- Key enablers for the Contain Fund are:
  - operational support from national teams if required,
  - funding
  - communications and engagement,
  - maintaining the local Outbreak Management Plan.
- The draft outbreak plan is in the process of being updated and will be presented to the regional convener for review and sign off.
- The UK health security agency becomes operational 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

Following questions from the Board the Director of Public Health added the following:

- There is a weekly East Midlands Directors of Public Health meeting, where Directors of Public Health can share plans, insights and information around what the challenges are in local areas. There are also links into the national and regional meetings led by regional conveners who meet regularly at a national level.
- There are plans in place to ensure vaccines see utilised as much as possible. Younger age cohorts generally tend to use the vaccination centre rather than being vaccinated at GP practices.
- Clinicians have raised concerns in the new guidance that if a person is 14 days' post second vaccination and a close contact of a case they no longer need to self isolate but get a PCR test. Although double vaccination provides protection against contracting the virus and reducing the severity and duration of symptoms, as well as reducing further onward transmission of the virus. The challenge is symptoms can develop over a 10 day period, and if a PCR test is completed within 24 hours of exposure a high viral load is unlikely, leading to a negative result. If identified as a close contact of a positive case, people are advised to think about the timing of the PCR test and to continue with twice weekly lateral flow tests. For council employees in Northamptonshire who come into contact with vulnerable people they are asked to get a PCR test and isolate until the result of the PCR test is known.
- As a result of the lockdowns and restrictions in place over the past eighteen months, there has been few infectious diseases such as colds, flu and norovirus. Now there are no restrictions in place it is expected over the winter period to see an increase in infectious disease cases due to the population not having built up the natural immunities.
- All NHS services are extremely pressured, but this is not due to COVID19 and there is a need to maintain system flow in order to prepare for any potential spikes of COVID19, or potential surges in other infectious diseases. This includes ensuring the workforce stay well and able to deliver services.

**RESOLVED that:**

- **The updated Local Outbreak Management Plan will be shared with the Board at the next meeting.**
- **Helen Harrison to forward information to Director of Public Health regarding vaccination problems at GP surgeries.**
- **The Chair and Director of Public Health to discuss whether to bring a report back to the Board on the implications of the legalisation of care home workers and domiciliary care workers must be double vaccinated.**
- **Flu communications campaign to be included in the Cllr briefing.**

## 16/21 Weekly Surveillance Report

The Director of Public Health gave an overview of COVID19 data for Northamptonshire up to the 12<sup>th</sup> September and highlighted the following:

- All age case rate for Northamptonshire is 307 per 100000 population on a rolling seven-day average.
- The over 60s case rate has increased,
- There have been 3 outbreaks in last 3 days, the largest being in a work environment with over 20 cases.
- In North Northamptonshire age groups 17-18 has a highest case rate followed by 19-24 years, in West Northamptonshire the 19-24 years are most affected followed by 17 – 18 years.
- Scoping work is taking place on an initiative where specific retail shops more appealing to the younger population could distribute information on lateral flow testing.

**RESOLVED that: the Board noted the COVID19 data update.**

## 17/21 COVID19 Vaccination Update

The Director of Public Health provided an update on the COVID19 vaccination programme and highlighted the following:

- 915874 vaccinations have been administered across the county of these:
  - 659500 are the people who are double vaccinated
  - 494500 had one vaccine dose.
  - 36.85% of 18-29 have had their first dose and 36.5% have had both vaccine doses.
  - 30-39 years approximately 80% have been vaccinated.
- There will be an extended flu vaccination programme for 2021/2022 to include all over 50's and those clinically vulnerable. School age children will also be offered the nasal vaccination.
- Flu vaccination and COVID19 vaccination can be administered at the same time, but there has to be six months between your second COVID19 vaccination and the COVID19 booster vaccination.
- Clarification is awaited from the JVC1 on the population cohorts eligible for the COVID19 booster vaccination.
- Registered carers will be invited this year to receive a free flu vaccine, those who have a caring responsibility need to inform their GP practice of their status as a carer.
- From the 11<sup>th</sup> November it will be mandatory for all staff who attend care homes and provide domiciliary care to have received the COVID19 vaccination. The Directors of Adult Social Care in the West and North of the county are monitoring the situation closely, are aware of the impact this has on a number of staff who have not been vaccinated and working through the implications of this. They have already run a focus group session to provide further information on how and where to access vaccination and myth busting.

**Resolved that:**

- **Chris Pallot to be asked to attend the next meeting to provide and update on operational challenges for the vaccination programme as we move into winter.**
- **The Board noted the vaccination update.**

## 18/21 Contact Tracing

The Director of Public Health provided an update on contact tracing and highlighted the following:

- The National Test and Trace programme are still trying to make the initial contacts, if they are unsuccessful after 24 hours the case is then passed to the local test and trace service.
- The local test and trace system also ensure that those they contact advising to self isolate have access to food, medication, social support and nutrition advice. The support pack

circulated to those who are self isolating by the local team has been adopted by other councils as best practice.

- The local team is managing to contact 90% of contacts from positive cases, this is down from the previous 91% due to the increase in positive cases placing additional pressures on Capacity within the local team.
- Due to IT issues for 2-3 days all contact tracing cases were pushed back to the national team to complete.

**RESOLVED that: the Board noted the Test and Trace update.**

### **19/21 Testing update**

The Director of Public Health provided an update on testing within the county and highlighted the following:

- There are 5 symptomatic PCR local testing sites across the county, located in Corby, Daventry, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough.
- A regional PCR testing site is based at the Kettering Conference Centre.
- There are five mobile PCR testing units located across the county, they stay in one location for a week and then move to the next venue. These mobile testing units are placed where case rates are at their highest or where an outbreak has occurred.
- There are four options for completing a lateral flow test:
  - Attending a lateral flow testing site in Corby, Northampton and Wellingborough.
  - Ordering a postal home test kit
  - Collecting home test kits from local pharmacies, there are over 120 pharmacies in the county who are able to provide these tests.
  - Getting a lateral flow test at work or at school.
- Several wards in the county are visited by door to door teams delivering lateral flow testing kits, these are in areas of high virus transmission within the community.
- As a result of poor utilisation the Department for Health and Social Care have asked local areas to provide fewer static sites and use more mobile options to travel to areas where there are high transmission rates, low rates of testing or vulnerable isolated groups.
- There is lots of capacity within the lateral flow and PCR testing sites in the county.
- Good testing rates are being maintained across the county,

**RESOLVED that: the Board noted the testing update.**

### **20/21 Communications Update**

Kath Hall provided an update on the communications work taking place and highlighted the following:

- As COVID19 restrictions are lifted, a campaign has been launched 'be kind and bear others in mind'. Helping people to understand high risk situations and the measures to take in these situations.
- There are a set of images shared across social media channels and public health channels, showing the different settings, people who might be at risk. There will also be an animation showcasing a family of four and grandparents through the week and the different attitudes towards life returning to normal.
- Feedback from Environmental Health Officers is that small businesses have really suffered during the pandemic, with staff at risk from contracting COVID19 which makes small businesses harder to remain open. A poster has been developed 'just one exposure could lead to closure'. The poster asks people to wear face coverings and socially distance when entering the premises to protect the people running those businesses.
- Caroline Maggs is working with adult social services and care home teams across the county to try and encourage more health and social care workers to take up the vaccine.
- The testing van travels too hard to reach communities, engaging with these communities to educate local people on the testing kits and to encourage people to take up regular testing. The testing van can provide test kits and undertake testing if needed to do so.

- Local assets are being developed in conjunction with national assets around the changes in self isolation, to make it clear how guidance applies to population cohorts. Reinforcing the importance of having a PCR test and people adopting appropriate behaviours during the incubation period of the virus.
- Work is taking place to encourage 16-17 years to get vaccinated.
- The COVID19 Communications Cell is being deescalated and the resources will be split between the North and West communications teams for business as usual.
- The Communications Team have been shortlisted for an IGC award.

**RESOLVED that: the Board noted the communications update**

**Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be at virtually via Zoom at 9.00 am on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021.