

Item No. 7	Classification: Open	Date: 4 February 2021	Meeting Name: Health and Wellbeing Board
Report title:		COVID-19 UPDATE Update on Southwark Council's Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan, January 2021	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Jin Lim, Director of Public Health (acting) Kirsten Watters, Deputy Director of Public Health (interim)	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To receive and note the update from the Outbreak Prevention and Control Executive on the actions taken to prevent, identify and control the novel coronavirus pandemic in Southwark, implementing Southwark's Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan (Appendix 1).
2. To consider and note the Southwark vaccination framework and local approach being taken to address vaccine hesitancy and to ensure good uptake across all our communities (Appendix 2) and the associated vaccine communications and engagement action plan (Appendix 3).
3. To agree to establish a member and officer board across the Council and CCG to provide strategic oversight for the development and delivery of the local vaccination framework and associated delivery plan.
4. That the board be established as a sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Community Safety reporting back progress as part of the Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. Southwark Council published its Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan (OPCP) on 30 June 2020. In that document, the governance of Southwark's OPCP is established as being firstly Outbreak Prevention and Control Executive (OPCE) and ultimately both the Health and Wellbeing Board and Cabinet. This report to the Health and Wellbeing Board is the fourth update in reporting subsequent activity and progress relating to the OPCP.

6. Since the previous update presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 21 December 2020 both the epidemic itself and the local response have evolved.
7. Winter 2020/21 has seen a further wave of infection with extremely high levels of community transmission spreading across London and South East England from early December through to January 2021. In Southwark (like the rest of London) the latest wave of infection peaked in the first week of January 2021. Since then, the detected level of infection has sharply declined. However, the prevailing rate remains very high (compared to 2020) and NHS acute services remain under extraordinary levels of strain:
 - Southwark had 1,589 confirmed cases in the week up to 20 January
 - Across London, 10 boroughs still have incidence rates above 600 per 100,000 with all London boroughs having rates above 250 per 100,000

[Source: Southwark Covid19 Monitoring report 25th Jan]

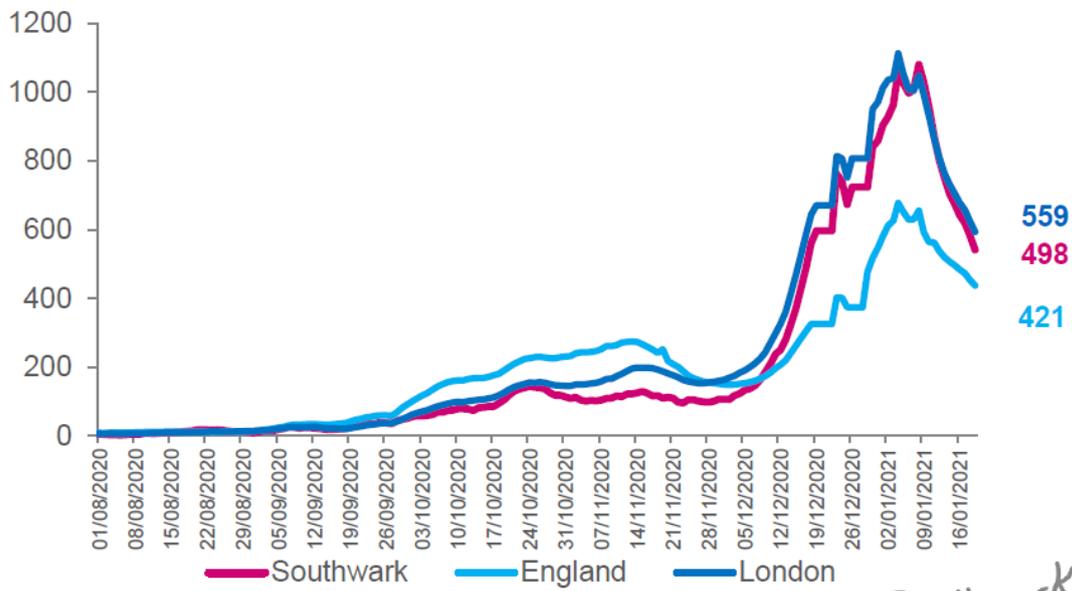


Figure 1 Weekly incidence rate per 100,000 Data to 22nd January
 Source: Southwark Covid19 Monitoring report 25th Jan

8. Identification of the mutated “Kent” variant of concern (VOC, B117) now explains the acceleration of spread observed prior to Christmas 2020. The emergence of this variant has meant that established containment approaches prior to the winter have proven broadly insufficient. While the “Kent” variant appears to be susceptible to the current vaccine regimens, it remains possible that some of the internationally-reported variants may present more significant challenges to current vaccines.

PREVENT STRAND

Communications

9. Since the new national lockdown was announced at the start of 2021, the council has publicised the new restrictions and core safety messaging to residents through all of our channels, including:
 - Letter to all residents;
 - Resident electronic newsletter;
 - Social media;
 - Staff communications;
 - Updated web pages on both symptomatic & asymptomatic testing;
 - New signage and outdoor advertising, particularly in busy areas like parks, playgrounds and markets;
 - Sharing key messaging with key partners including VCS, faith groups and TRAs; and
 - Special edition of Southwark Life to be delivered to every home in the borough from 30 January 2021.
10. The council is developing a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccination communications and engagement strategy with the objective of encouraging all residents to take up the vaccine when it is offered to them. The council is working with the NHS South East London (SEL) Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and partners from across South East London to properly understand the many reasons for hesitancy in some parts of our communities. Work is underway to address these issues through trusted voices including community leaders and healthcare professionals. There is ongoing work to establish improved NHS data flows on take-up of vaccine invitations to help refine our plans over the coming months.
11. Work is underway across Southwark and South East London to address vaccine hesitancy and inequalities in accessing the vaccination. Many resources have been developed to ensure the SEL CCG and council provide culturally appropriate information to different groups who may have concerns about the vaccine, and particularly for engagement with BAME communities. Webinars and briefings have been held, for Councillors, MPs, voluntary groups, faith leaders, care home staff and TRAs, and work has started to ensure processes are in place for those initially declining the vaccine.

12. Appendix 2 sets out our broader approach to vaccination, highlighting the key areas of work taking place to address vaccine hesitancy and to ensure good take up across all communities. Appendix 3 provides more detail on the communication and community engagement work.
13. The council continues to promote the three symptomatic testing sites in the borough, and has implemented a communications plan for the new asymptomatic site at the Damilola Taylor Centre in Peckham, including both borough-wide communications focused on people who have to leave home to go to work, and messages targeted at local employers including construction firms and supermarkets.

Community Health Ambassadors

14. There are currently 116 local residents who have expressed an interest in the Community Health Ambassadors Network and 53 who have completed the induction training and are now registered as Ambassadors in our Southwark network.
15. Ambassadors receive regular updates on COVID-19 prevention and guidance through a weekly newsletter, online ambassador network meetings and the network's WhatsApp group, as well as having access to an online catalogue of COVID-19 resources on different topics and in different languages.
16. Ambassadors have signed up from across all areas of the borough, and have an especially strong presence in the Peckham and Nunhead area. There is a spread of ambassadors across ethnic groups, with 35 (66%) ambassadors identifying themselves from BAME groups. Ongoing recruitment of additional ambassadors is targeted to support priority and underrepresented groups, including the Latin American community.
17. From monthly monitoring reports we can already see that Ambassadors have been sending between 5 and 50 messages each per month, across social media, personal communications, and also using printed information such as posters.

Enforcement

18. The 'prevent' strand of the OPCP has been a key priority for the Council throughout the pandemic. The Authority has been ensuring, through an effective communications strategy, that the public follow government guidelines on social distancing to decrease the impact of local community transmission. At the same time, Council teams have been working with the Police to support a robust approach to local enforcement, including warning and ultimate prosecution of any businesses who continue to operate in breach of government guidance.

19. To safeguard local residents, local authority enforcement officers have taken an active role in enforcing the Coronavirus (Business Restrictions) Regulations throughout their many changes. Regulatory Services are receiving information from Public Health regarding premises where outbreaks are actually, and potentially, occurring. Following the closure of licensed premises, the team is currently focusing on local supermarkets and employers.
20. From the end of March 20 to the end of December 20 officers undertook 7631 business interventions, have served 173 legal orders, including 9 Direction Orders, and awarded 31 businesses with the 'Covid Compliant' accreditation marque. Partnership plans for the disruption of potential gatherings were successful around Halloween/Bonfire Night and on New Year's Eve when 5 Unlicensed Music Events were identified early and stopped by the Police. The Service has also had a very productive partnership arrangement with the Police, Borough Market and the Better Bankside BID to address issues of public overcrowding and street drinking, eating and socialising in SE1.
21. The work of the council's enforcement team has been recognised nationally, with officers speaking at national fora on the lessons learnt from our local enforcement approach.

Other prevention work

22. Eighteen VCS COVID-19 prevention small grants applications were reviewed at the end of December 2020.
23. Seven successful projects have been selected for a grant award and pending a few further clarifications, will be announced shortly. A major focus of the small grants has been on addressing vaccine myth busting.

IDENTIFY STRAND (INCORPORATING INTELLIGENCE)

24. Across London there are indications that levels of infection are beginning to stabilise, evidenced through NHS Test & Trace data and community infection surveys. While this is a positive development, it remains the case that levels of infection remain high, and significantly above rates seen in the autumn and early winter.
25. Of concern is the continued pressure within the NHS, with bed occupancy within both general & acute and critical care continuing to increase across London and within our local hospitals. Although bed occupancy in London appears to be on a downward trajectory pressure within the system remains significant.
26. Test positivity remains very high with approximately a quarter of those testing returning a positive result.

27. The development of testing capacity and infrastructure continues at pace with the introduction of the new rapid lateral flow device (LFD) tests for asymptomatic forming an increasing proportion of all testing undertaken. For symptomatic, in addition to the Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) at Burgess Park and the Local Test Site (LTS) at Peckham Pulse, a further LTS is now operational in the south of the borough at Bel Air Park.
28. Mass rapid asymptomatic testing using LFDs has now been introduced in Southwark to identify those at risk of unwittingly spreading the virus. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) estimate that 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 are asymptomatic. Southwark's Housing & Modernisation team have provided the necessary capacity to underpin the short-notice roll-out of mass testing which has seen the appointment of Trojan as provider.
29. The first community testing site opened on 18 January 2021 at the Damilola Taylor Centre, Peckham, targeting key workers and those unable to work from home. In its first week of operation, the centre has provided 2692 tests, with 20 (0.7%) tests returning a positive result.
30. There are plans to open another mass community testing site in the near future however, we need to balance geographical accessibility with local demand. To complement these larger community testing sites, we are planning to offer a small number of tests through a network of high street pharmacies and other appropriate work settings, opening incrementally. On a national level, there are plans for employers of 250+ staff to offer at-work testing to complement the existing national programmes for NHS staff, care home staff and visitors, domiciliary carers, universities and schools.
31. Appendix 4 sets out diagrammatically an overview of our approach to developing lateral flow rapid testing in Southwark.
32. Test and Trace Southwark (TTS) has been impacted by the extremely high levels of community transmission that have driven a very substantial rise of referrals to local contact tracing. Referral volumes on some days have exceeded 200 cases. A process of prioritization based on vulnerability has been taken forward to mitigate the impact of these additional pressures.
33. Additional capacity for TTS continues to be developed with an increasing cadre of customer service officers (from the Southwark Council call centre) forming the majority of telephone handling capacity.
34. The proportion of cases being successfully followed has remained above the 80% threshold overall for Southwark, although declines are noted in the first two weeks of January due to volume-driven pressure. Work is underway to recover the position back to pre-January levels. The switch back to seven-day service (as of 9 January 2021) will also support this recovery.

35. Home visiting for residents not responding to contact tracing telephone calls began in late December 2020. Analysis is underway to quantify impact.

CONTROL STRAND (INCORPORATING VACCINATION)

36. The Acute Response Team (ART) has operated since February 2020, with a seven-day consultant-led service operating 0900-1700hrs every day. The publichealth@southwark.gov.uk is a monitored group inbox that serves as the single point of contact to all coronavirus-related enquiries. The team meets every weekday at 1600hrs to manage situations and respond to enquiries from across Southwark Council and organisations across the borough.
37. The volume of enquiries has continued to rise to over the month with queries largely emanating from schools, universities, hostels and supported living environments. Despite schools being 'closed', much of the physical infrastructure continues as key worker and vulnerable children continue to attend.
38. The ART continues to provide support internally too for the council. The team is working closely with the Health and Safety team and HR departments to support safe working practices within the organisation. Within this package of work, a monthly briefing is provided to trade unions updating them on the pandemic and the health protection response.
39. The NHS-led vaccination programme has begun in Southwark with local delivery via the Acute Trusts and both Primary Care Networks (PCNs). Roll-out of the programme started in December 2020 and those in the first four JCVI priority groups will be offered vaccination by the 15 February 2021. All staff and residents in CQC older peoples' residential homes have now been offered the vaccine and this is now being rolled out to other residential settings.
40. It is important to note that the vaccination programme is intended to prevent severe disease and is not designed to prevent transmission. The extent to which vaccination will prevent on-going transmission remains unclear and scientists are awaiting real-world data.
41. Appendix 2 describes the strategic framework and approach that we are taking and to tackle vaccine hesitancy and to ensure good uptake across all our communities. The framework sets 6 aims:
- i. Residents understand the risks that COVID-19 poses to themselves, their families and their community.
 - ii. Residents have confidence that the vaccine is safe and effective.
 - iii. Being vaccinated is made as easy as possible for all residents.

- iv. Communities and residents feel empowered by engagement approaches and lead on and have participation in shaping communications about the vaccine.
 - v. Information gaps are filled and misinformation is corrected in an accessible way to all communities.
 - vi. The programme reduces inequalities in vaccine coverage.
42. Key barriers are identified which will be addressed through our action plans and include:
- Population barriers;
 - Lack of trust;
 - Safety concerns and impact on other conditions;
 - Lack of accurate information about the vaccine (from trusted sources and community voices);
 - Belief that vaccination is another form of state control; and
 - Lack of understanding of who is at risk.
43. A member and officer board across the Council and CCG will have strategic oversight for the development and delivery of the local vaccination framework and associated delivery plan. It is proposed that this board will be established as a sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Community Safety and will report back progress as part of the Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

OUTLOOK

44. We do not expect the need for continued OPCP operations to relent before summer 2021. Even with at-scale vaccine roll-out by summer 2021, continued sporadic outbreaks of disease will likely continue into the winter of next year and possibly beyond. It remains unclear from national government what resourcing will be made available for local public health response beyond April 2021.

Community impact statement

45. The OPCP involves close collaboration with a range of VCS partners and explicitly recognises the differential impacts of the pandemic on different groups. An evaluation strategy is in development to anticipate the risks for different communities, and ensure that differential impacts are characterized and mitigated where possible.
46. Specific work as outlined in the vaccine strategic framework sets out our approach to addresses inequalities in vaccine uptake.

Resource implications

47. In the same way that the pandemic has created new resource pressures across the public sector, the work driven by the OPCP has created unprecedented staffing and financial pressures across Public Health, Regulatory Services, Communities and Communications. Additional resource has been made available to these teams using the funding announced by Government to support the implementation of the local Outbreak Prevention Control Plans. There is uncertainty as to what funding will be available in the new financial year.
48. Ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff who have committed above and beyond their duties for more than 9 months is a priority. A sustainable approach that safeguards health and wellbeing is essential as we project the pandemic response into 2021 and beyond.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark Outbreak Prevention Control Plan	Public health First Floor, Hub 1 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	publichealth@southwark.gov.uk
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=365&MId=6771&Ver=4		
Covid 19 and the impact on health inequalities	Public health First Floor, Hub 1 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	publichealth@southwark.gov.uk
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=365&MId=6771&Ver=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Update report from the Outbreak Prevention Control Executive
Appendix 2	Vaccine strategy
Appendix 3	Vaccine communications and community engagement action plan
Appendix 4	Lateral flow test delivery overview

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Caroline Bruce, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	
Report Author	Richard Pinder, Consultant in Public Health Medicine	
Version	Final	
Dated	01 February 2021	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		1 February 2021