

Wolverhampton Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan

Living safely with Covid

Autumn 2022

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**COVID-19
VACCINATIONS
AVAILABLE
HERE TODAY**

**PLEASE
WAIT HERE**

COVID-19
VACCINATIONS
AVAILABLE
TODAY

Contents

Foreword	3
Aims and objectives	4
Our Plan	5
Living with Covid-19 – encouraging safe behaviours	6
Protecting the most vulnerable – vaccinations and testing	8
Maintaining resilience – ongoing surveillance, outbreak management and contingency planning	9
Securing innovations and opportunities – building on lessons learnt	11
Governance	13

Foreword

Partners in Wolverhampton have been working to prevent and manage Covid-19 outbreaks since the pandemic began. The approaches taken have been adapted through the different phases of the pandemic dependant on level of risk. The current focus is on living safely with Covid-19. This is in line with present Government guidance¹.

The Wolverhampton Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan is the key document that outlines how we work together and our current priorities. It is by necessity an agile and responsive plan, which has been kept under review and updated as required throughout the pandemic. The aim of this latest version is to support the continuation of on-going monitoring and prevention activity, alongside city preparedness, so that city partners can respond collectively and at pace to what-ever future scenarios the city is faced with by having the ability to scale up an appropriate response as required.

Our plan sets out our high-level commitments focussed on prevention and outbreak management and accompanied by accessible and timely information to support residents to protect themselves, their family and wider community.

As we learn to live with Covid-19 vaccines remain our best defence by providing good protection against hospitalisation and death. They also reduce the risk of long-term symptoms. We remain committed to re-engaging those who have not yet had a Covid-19 vaccine and providing every opportunity possible for people to access their first or subsequent vaccinations.

By planning for the future and working together we can ensure that we are best placed to respond to winter pressures and any new challenges. Keeping local people well and protected is at the heart of our response.

Cllr Ian Brookfield
Leader, City of
Wolverhampton
Council

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Cabinet Member
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Chair of the Health &
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Board

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Commissioning Board,
Black Country ICB

Richard Fisher
Chief Superintendent,
West Midlands Police

¹www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19

Aims and objectives

Every Local Authority has an ongoing statutory responsibility to have a plan in place to respond to emergencies to safeguard and protect the health of our local population.

The Covid-19 Outbreak Control plan sets out our collective commitment to preparedness, outlining how we will work together to prevent, contain and manage outbreaks of Covid-19. Recent changes in Government guidance related to the gradual abolition of Covid regulations have emphasised the importance of updating our plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

The aim of the Wolverhampton Outbreak Control Plan continues to be to provide the framework to help as many people as possible return to normal life, in a way that is safe, protects our health and care system and supports our economy to recover.

The Government's Living with Covid Plan structures the national ongoing response around four principles:

- a. Living with Covid-19:** removing domestic restrictions while encouraging safer behaviours through public health advice, in common with longstanding ways of managing most other respiratory illnesses;
- b. Protecting people most vulnerable to Covid-19:** vaccination guided by Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice, and deploying targeted testing;
- c. Maintaining resilience:** ongoing surveillance, contingency planning and the ability to reintroduce key capabilities such as mass vaccination and testing in an emergency; and
- d. Securing innovations and opportunities from the Covid-19 response,** including investment in life sciences.

Vaccines underpin all of these principles and form the basis of the Government's strategy for living with Covid-19.

Our updated Outbreak Control Plan is aligned to these principals and sets them within the local context.

This document does not sit in isolation and sits alongside ongoing partnership activity that is focussed on building back a healthier city in the wake of the pandemic.

Our Plan

- Living with Covid-19 – encouraging safe behaviours p6
- Protecting the most vulnerable – vaccinations and testing p8
- Maintaining resilience – ongoing surveillance, outbreak management and contingency planning p9
- Securing innovations and opportunities – building on lessons learnt p11



Local business owner receives a Community Champions Covid-19 Safety Pack

Living with Covid-19 – encouraging safe behaviours

Behaviours are key to preventing and reducing infections and supporting wider outcomes as we start living with Covid-19. Encouraging safe behaviours is driven by our capability to enact, the opportunity to enable and our motivation to perform the behaviour.

We remain committed to the development of a communication strategy underpinned by behavioural science and informed by evidence and insights to maximise the outcomes of preventive actions. Working with partners, including using co-production methods as appropriate, we are focused on the development of accessible and timely education, advice and communication of key public health messages.

To reflect this, we have ensured our communication strategy reminds residents that Covid-19 is not over and we should still adopt safe behaviours to protect ourselves and others. For example, we continue to promote the importance of people getting vaccinated as soon as they can – whether that is to protect themselves, protect others or for practical reasons such as being able to travel internationally. We highlight the availability of clinics throughout the city and use trusted voices to counter misinformation. We also continue to promote other simple steps that people can take to protect themselves and their community, including testing, maintaining good hand hygiene and meeting others outside or letting fresh air in.



Image taken from the HM Government website – COVID guidance



The Great Get Together

We understand that a full range of communication methods and tools needs to be utilised from door knocking to social media channels and that key public health messages may need to be targeted or tailored to be fully accessible to different communities within the city.

Through the creation of a Community Vaccine Fund, we have trained our community to understand the influences of getting vaccinated along with the importance of vaccines so as to provide residents with the skills and knowledge to make an informed decision on getting vaccinated. This has acted as a 'train the trainer' model to ensure key messages around living with Covid-19 can be cascaded across communities, including translated in various languages.

Going forward we remain committed to:

- Maintaining and building on our collaborative approach underpinned by behavioural science evidence
- Continuing to work with our city partners including the NHS and West Midlands Police to produce consistent messages under a joint brand as appropriate
- Working with our diverse communities and the voluntary sector to ensure public health information remains timely, relevant and accessible, and opportunities for co-production are fully realised
- Building trust and participation across all communities in the city.

Protecting the most vulnerable – vaccinations and testing

Vaccines remain our best defence against Covid-19 and other respiratory infections such as flu. They provide good protection against hospitalisations and death and help to reduce the risk of long-term symptoms.

We will contribute to this NHS programme by working in partnership with Primary Care and community pharmacies to target provision for high risk and health inclusion groups.

We will continue to engage with residents and break down barriers, listening to and addressing concerns about accepting a vaccine and co-producing solutions to increase take up of the vaccine across the city. This includes, for example, working jointly with our partners in the voluntary sector, utilising a full range of tools and building on our learning from our Community Vaccine Fund.

We will remain flexible and make accessible provision for delivery within the community for example, via community sites to target areas with low uptake of the vaccination. There will be a continued focus on monitoring vaccination uptake by groups of people and where they live, with emphasis on reducing health inequalities by providing a suitable offer to all. This includes for example, ensuring an appropriate vaccination offer is available for residents new to the city and country who are currently living in temporary accommodation as well as groups such as the homeless population.

Supporting our most vulnerable settings such as care homes will remain a key priority ensuring care settings are closely supported during outbreaks, which include testing, and working with partners so care home residents receive their vaccinations swiftly.

We will continue to work with our businesses to offer support and incentives to deliver the workplace public health principle ‘encourage and enable vaccinations’.

We will ensure we have the capacity to stand up targeted testing either by setting or geography as part of our on-going contingency planning in the event of an emergency such as a new variant of concern.

To support this approach we will:

- Continue to monitor the disparities in vaccine uptake
- Maintain our focus on working with partners to proactively explore all opportunities to maximise vaccine uptake in certain geographical areas, communities or among groups with low coverage



Image taken by City of Wolverhampton Council – Molineux pop up vaccine clinic

To achieve this, we will:

- Maintain a core Incident Management Team (IMT) which will have the capacity to monitor and respond to notifications of outbreaks and take action as necessary. This includes for example, conducting initial risk assessments, advising on mitigations including infection prevention and control, escalating issues to UKHSA and attending IMT meetings. The IMT team will receive regular training to ensure that they maintain competencies during periods where the outbreak threat is lower and additional resource will be directed towards the IMT function where the threat is higher.
- Maintain an active surveillance system enabling swift response to notifications of incidents and outbreaks
- Continue to commission an Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) service to provide proactive audit, education and training to social care settings as well as respond to incidents and outbreaks of infectious disease including Covid-19, influenza, and norovirus in these settings. The aim of this service is to protect the most vulnerable people by reducing the incidence and risk of infectious diseases on our aging population. The service will work in close partnership with both the Local Authority and UKHSA to ensure incidents, clusters and outbreaks are risk assessed and managed in accordance with latest guidance and best practice.



- Refresh our winter infections toolkits, which include advice, guidance and tools to prevent and support the management of outbreaks of common winter infections including influenza, Covid-19 and norovirus in high transmission settings (education, social care etc.). We will communicate any updates / changes to national guidance which impacts upon outbreak management in these settings via established channels and engagement sessions.

Securing innovations and opportunities – building on lessons learnt

The pandemic strengthened partnership working. It provided new and innovative ways for health and social care partners, education settings, the voluntary sector, faith groups, grass roots organisations and communities to work together. Going forward we are in a unique position to build on these strong foundations and utilise this learning to best effect as we seek to learn to live with Covid-19.

New ways of working

The pandemic saw the need for everyone to adapt during lock down periods, in everyday life, such as working, socialising and family life. The use of digital platforms helped to changed how we work, and these new ways of working have stayed longer term beyond lockdowns, also helping to future proof the way we work and communicate. While meeting in person continues to be an important way to build trust and relationships, new online ways of working are supporting enhanced collaboration enabling partners across the Black Country and wider region to work more closely together and efficiently.

New commissioning arrangements

Infection Preventions Control (IPC) was essential in protecting the most vulnerable in care settings during the pandemic. Continued investment in this area is key to protect those most at risk from potential future waves of Covid-19, and other infectious disease. Infection prevention education, monitoring, surveillance and outbreak management are important principles for future commissioning arrangements for IPC.

Care Homes

The pandemic has facilitated a growth in strengthened partnership working between organisations that support the adult social care sector, including care homes. Vast learning has taken place in how care homes need support, the challenges they face and how health and social care partners can work together to ease these pressures. Partners will build on this learning to ensure care homes receive timely and succinct information on complex guidance, new ways of delivering education and training will be explored ensuring maximisation of digital technology and opportunities presented through the new Health and Care Act 2022, such as workforce development, will be optimised for the city.

Health inequalities

The pandemic has shone a light on the stark inequalities that exist in our city in the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. Covid-19 has further exacerbated these existing health inequalities with negative impacts falling disproportionately on more deprived, disadvantaged and excluded groups and individuals. We are also aware that there are many people who continue to experience long term physical and mental impacts of the pandemic.

Our Health and Wellbeing Board, known locally as Health and Wellbeing Together published a Health Inequalities Strategy² for the city during the pandemic. This sets out a set of guiding principles and shared priorities that board partners have signed up to.

Alongside this strategic architecture to support efforts to address health inequalities, current activity facilitated via Better Mental Health funding will provide evidence to enable us to better understand the different groups most likely to have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. Any protective factors communities and individuals employed to support each other during the pandemic and the factors people feel are important now in enabling them to feel good and function well in the city. Learning will combine with wider mental health needs assessment findings to provide future priority areas of focus.



Image from Express & Star Wolverhampton – Faith settings pop up clinic March 21

Taken together, this focus on understanding people's experiences and putting in place a shared approach to health inequalities, will inform how we respond to future stages of the pandemic enabling us to embed a pro-active approach to tackling health inequalities in the city.

²<http://wellbeingwolves.co.uk/document/Wolverhampton%20Health%20Inequalities%20Strategy%202021-2023.pdf>

Governance

Our Outbreak Control Plan is jointly owned, supported and driven by the City of Wolverhampton Council, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Black Country & West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Wolverhampton Place Team and West Midlands Police.

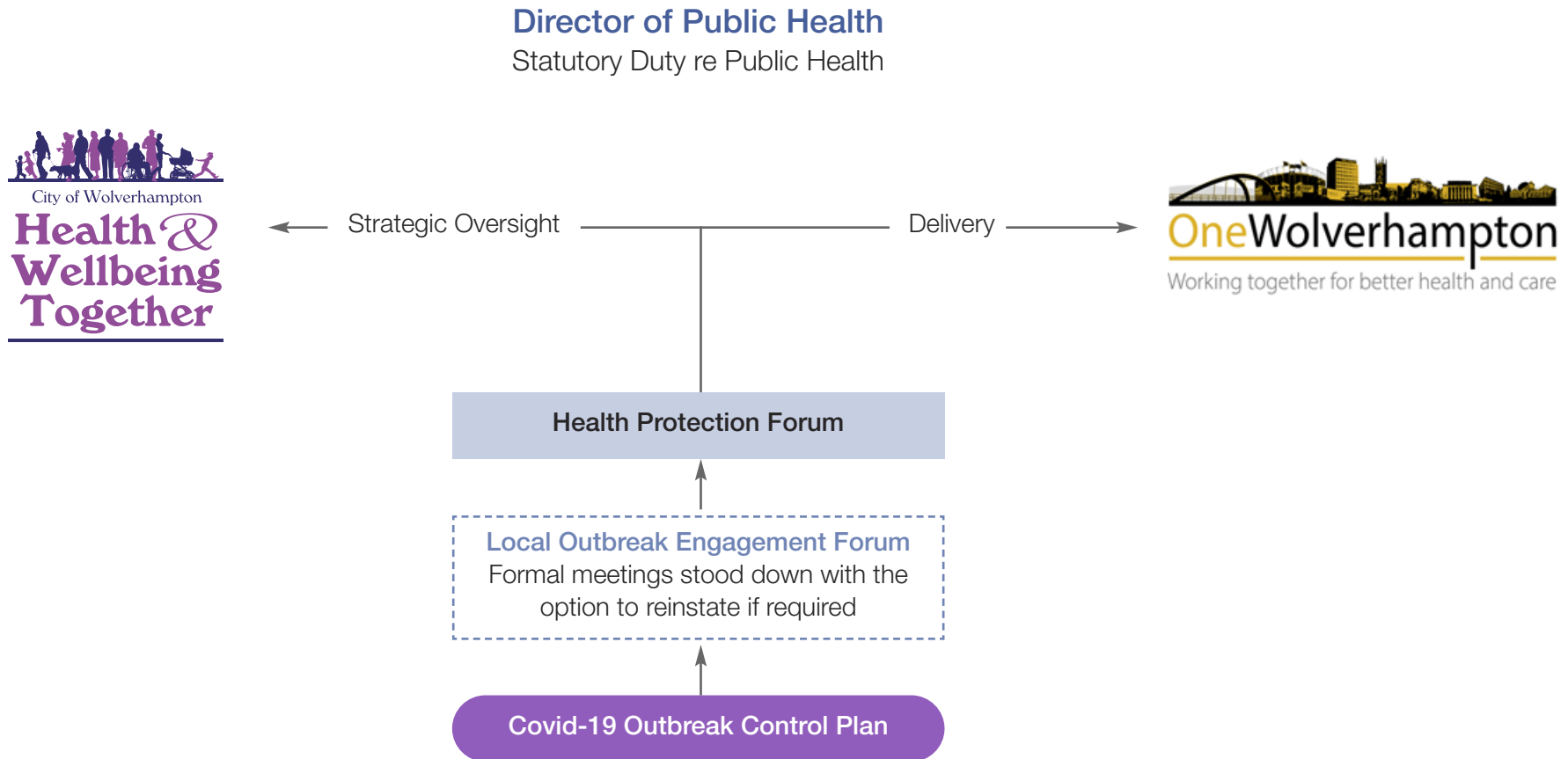
At the height of the pandemic strategic leadership was provided by the Local Outbreak Engagement Board chaired by the Leader of the Council with oversight provided by Health and Wellbeing Together, Wolverhampton's Health and Wellbeing Board.

Given the recent changes to national guidance and the success of the vaccination programme formal meeting of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board have been stepped down, however there remains a commitment to reinstate them should the situation change.

Operational oversight is now provided by the Wolverhampton Health Protection Forum, with strategic oversight provided by the Health and Wellbeing Together Board and the power to escalate any concerns to One Wolverhampton.



High-level governance map



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wolverhampton.gov.uk 01902 551155

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