**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL: LEARNING AND NEXT STEPS**

## Purpose of the Report

1. To summarise learning from outbreaks in other areas that can be used to inform local outbreak control arrangements in Nottinghamshire.

2. To identify learning and next steps from a Local Resilience Forum outbreak control exercise on Wednesday 29 July 2020.

## Information

Overview

3. A fundamental part of the current response to COVID-19 involves the early identification of clusters of new cases and quickly containing outbreaks as they arise. It is in this context that upper tier local authorities were notified by HM Government that they should prepare a Local Outbreak Control Plan, to complement the nationally delivered NHS Test & Trace arrangements.

4. The Nottinghamshire County Local Outbreak Control Plan is available online. This describes how Nottinghamshire County Council will work with the NHS, district / borough councils, neighbouring local authorities and other partners to keep people safe and protected, and to ensure the rate of COVID-19 transmission in Nottinghamshire is kept under control.

Learning from outbreaks

5. As part of local outbreak control arrangements, an Outbreak Control Cell meets daily to review information about new COVID-19 cases and identify where further investigation or action is required. If necessary, a multi-agency Incident Management Team will be established to oversee the response.

6. The response to an outbreak can vary depending on the situation and the setting(s) involved, but examples include targeted local communications, provision of additional testing, and working closely with care homes, schools, and businesses to offer support and guidance.

7. Those involved in the Outbreak Control Cell and / or Incident Management Team(s) review the response to each outbreak to consider which arrangements worked particularly well, and those that did not work well. This includes identifying changes that could be made to improve the response to future incidents.

8. Directors of Public Health have access to a variety of learning through national, regional and local channels. As similar arrangements for outbreak control are in place across the country, this provides an opportunity to identify common themes and share good practice.

9. Appendix 1 provides a summary of observations and recommendations based on learning from outbreaks that have occurred elsewhere in England. These have been grouped into the themes of multi-agency co-ordination, co-ordination between local and central government, resources, communication, data and information, and humanitarian assistance.

10. Many of the recommendations build on work already undertaken by organisations, either internally or through multi-agency arrangements such as the Local Resilience Forum.

Learning from a Local Resilience Forum outbreak control exercise

11. A Local Resilience Forum exercise took place on Wednesday 29 July 2020 to test the response principles of the local outbreak control plans for Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City.

12. Objectives of the exercise included:

- Raising awareness of the local outbreak control plans, and their links with incident management plans for specific settings
- Increasing understanding of the roles and responsibilities of organisations (in the context of outbreak management) and the Local Resilience Forum's COVID-19 groups / cells
- Testing the local outbreak control procedures as detailed in the local outbreak control plans, including the cycle of health protection actions, the local outbreak response structure, triggers and notification, information and data flows, communications management, and cross-boundary working
- Identifying lessons / gaps for informing future versions of the plans and to aid the drafting of incident management plans for specific settings.

13. Over 100 people participated in the exercise, with representation from:

- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Ashfield District Council
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Mansfield District Council
- Newark & Sherwood District Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council
- Nottinghamshire Police

- NHS Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group
- Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust
- Nottingham CityCare Partnership
- Public Health England
- NHS England & NHS Improvement
- The Department of Health & Social Care
- The Cabinet Office
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
- The Ministry of Defence
- The University of Nottingham
- Nottingham Trent University.

14. Observers from the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum and Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service also attended.

15. An overview of the local outbreak control plans was provided by the Directors of Public Health for Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City. Participants subsequently split into seven syndicate groups to discuss a three-part scenario.

16. Feedback from the exercise was recorded by the facilitator of each group during the scenario discussions, during a collective feedback session held after the scenario discussions, and through an online form sent to all participants after the exercise.

17. An exercise report will be submitted to a future meeting of the COVID-19 Health Protection Board. This will include a series of recommendations for organisations / services to undertake.

18. Many of these recommendations can be grouped into themes (e.g. multi-agency co-ordination, resources, training, legislation, learning). These themes, and example recommendations for each, are included in Appendix 2.

**Other Options Considered**

19. None.

**Reason/s for Recommendations**

20. Member organisations of the Health & Wellbeing Board have significant roles in local outbreak control planning. Learning from exercises and outbreaks should improve the efficacy of local outbreak control arrangements.

## Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and

the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

**Financial Implications**

22. None.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1) To identify specific actions that Health & Wellbeing Board members can take to strengthen the implementation of local outbreak control arrangements.

2) To highlight any additional considerations for future versions of the local outbreak control plan, and how Health & Wellbeing Board partners can contribute to that.

**Jonathan Gribbin**
**Director of Public Health**
**Nottinghamshire County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Edward Shaw
Public Health & Commissioning Manager | Nottinghamshire County Council
Telephone: 0115 977 4095 | Email: edward.shaw@nottscc.gov.uk

**Constitutional Comments (AK 13/08/2020)**

23. This report falls within the remit of Health and Wellbeing Board by virtue by virtue of its terms of reference.

**Financial Comments (DG 17/08/2020)**

24. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Health & Wellbeing Board Report: COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan (24 July 2020)
- Nottinghamshire County Local Outbreak Control Plan (June 2020)
- Nottinghamshire County COVID-19 Weekly Surveillance Reports (July – September 2020)
- COVID-19 contain framework (17 July 2020)

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All

## Appendix 1: Learning from outbreaks

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| **Multi-agency co-ordination** | | | |
| 1. | The multi-agency structure(s) used in response and recovery should aim to reduce duplication and any burdens on key individuals. A 'battle rhythm' (i.e. an agreed schedule of meetings) should be used to enable timely decision-making at strategic, tactical and operational meetings. | The existing Local Resilience Forum response & recovery structure follows an agreed schedule of meetings. | The Local Resilience Forum response & recovery structure should continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. Any additional meetings convened in response to local outbreaks (e.g. Incident Management Team(s), COVID-19 Health Protection Board, COVID-19 Outbreak Control Engagement Board) should aim to follow an agreed pattern. |
| **Co-ordination between local and central government** | | | |
| 2. | Failure to foster effective communication, co-ordination and co-operation between local and central government may result in little or no warning of national announcements that can have significant local impacts. This can require local plans / actions having to be modified at short notice and cause a lack of public confidence in the response. There is a need to brief HM Government personnel about local arrangements, including local democratic accountability. | The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government host teleconferences with the chair and secretariat of the Local Resilience Forum.

Ministry of Defence employees have been involved in supporting the multi-agency response in Nottingham & Nottinghamshire. These staff have been assisted or hosted by specific organisations. | Representatives of HM Government departments / organisations involved in local outbreak control arrangements should be fully briefed on the local multi-agency structure, and given access to the Local Resilience Forum COVID-19 pages on ResilienceDirect. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 3. | Offers of support from HM Government can be instrumental in facilitating accelerated access to resources such as Mobile Testing Units and other specialist assistance. However, this support can also require additional workload and potentially burdensome reporting to multiple regional and national channels. It is not always possible for the national offer to be modified for local purposes. The expectations / requirements of HM Government should therefore be clarified when considering an offer of support. | Not applicable. | References to support from HM Government should be included within the Nottinghamshire County Outbreak Control Plan. |
| 4. | Upon receiving support from HM Government, there is a need to ensure its continued availability or provide alternative arrangements in advance of it being withdrawn. | Not applicable. | References to support from HM Government should be included within the Nottinghamshire County Outbreak Control Plan.<br><br>In the event of significant intervention being received from the government, a sustainability plan would be required prior to its withdrawal. |
| **Resources** | | | |
| 5. | Significant resources are required to respond effectively to widespread community transmission. | To date, existing local governance, partnership arrangements and resources have been utilised to develop and implement Local Outbreak Control Plans. Employees of Nottinghamshire County Council and partner organisations involved in the Outbreak Control Cell / Incident Management Teams have been redeployed from their normal roles without backfill. | A report will be submitted to Nottinghamshire County Council's Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee on Monday 14 September to seek approval for part of Nottinghamshire County Council's £3.8m allocation of the Government's Local Authority Test & Trace Grant to be used to fund a number of additional posts. This will aim to ensure a sustainable level of capacity and resource to respond swiftly and comprehensively to emerging concerns or outbreaks in the medium-term. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communications** | | | |
| 6. | It can be difficult to ensure people understand local guidance / restrictions as the long-term focus of the national media will be on national arrangements. The effectiveness of local arrangements will be dependent on the clarity of local communications. | The Local Resilience Forum's Communication Cell meets frequently to plan for the implementation of local outbreak control arrangements. | Multi-agency co-ordination should continue through the Local Resilience Forum's Communication Cell.<br><br>Incident Management Plans for various settings should include specific communication arrangements where required.<br><br>Customer-facing services of public-sector organisations and other appropriate partners (e.g. voluntary organisations) should be kept informed of the latest guidance and be appropriately briefed in order to respond to queries from the public and businesses. |
| 7. | Key messages need to be made available in a variety of languages and formats (e.g. British Sign Language, Easyread).<br><br>Weekly engagement sessions with faith and community leaders are a useful means of communicating at a local level. | A communication & engagement strategy has been approved by the COVID-19 Outbreak Control Engagement Board on Tuesday 28 July. | Arrangements for translation and interpretation should be checked and reviewed if necessary.<br><br>The communication & engagement strategy should be submitted to a future Health & Wellbeing Board meeting. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8. | Effective engagement with businesses will need to take place upon implementing additional local outbreak control measures. | Engagement with businesses has taken place through the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership. The Economy Cell and the Public Realm Subgroup (within the Local Resilience Forum structure) are also related to this work.<br><br>More recently, there has been direct engagement with businesses in the Newark area including Bakkavor Desserts, Newark Showground, and a range of smaller businesses. This has received strong support from Local Resilience Forum partners, including Newark & Sherwood District Council in particular. | Multi-agency co-ordination should continue through the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, and the Local Resilience Forum's Economy Cell and Public Realm Subgroup. |
| **Data and information** | | | |
| 9. | Access to national data is required seven days per week to respond to an outbreak as effectively as possible. | On weekdays, Public Health England produce reports which provide analysis on recent numbers / rates and breakdown of cases for lower tier local authority areas. These are used by the Outbreak Control Cell and Incident Management Team(s) to inform decision-making. They also provide a consistent basis on which to brief local political leaders about the situation within Nottinghamshire. | A request has been made through the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government for Public Health England reports to be received at the weekend. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 10. | Agreement should be sought on an appropriate flow of relevant data / Key Performance Indicators that can be used to support communications activity during a significant outbreak, especially media briefings. It should be determined what will be provided and how often. This may include data about activity (e.g. volume of testing) and outcomes (e.g. case numbers, positivity rates). | A weekly COVID-19 surveillance report is published on Nottinghamshire County Council's website every Thursday.<br><br>The Director of Public Health has commissioned a review of this reporting with a view to refocussing it more clearly on what is currently happening across Nottinghamshire. | Consideration should be given to development of an online 'dashboard' which automatically shows the most recent data available. |
| **Humanitarian assistance** | | | |
| 11. | An extension of restrictions will have significant implications for much of society, particularly for those who are more vulnerable (e.g. families with disabled children being put under significant pressure due to a lack of respite opportunities). A number of risks or unintended consequences could also arise (e.g. impacts on community cohesion in areas with higher rates of transmission). | Support is available to people through the Nottinghamshire Coronavirus Community Support Hub (co-ordinated through the Local Resilience Forum's Humanitarian Assistance Group). This brings together the many local volunteer groups offering help.<br><br>An Equality Impact Assessment will be considered prior to implementing any significant restrictions and Nottinghamshire County Council will have regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty during the decision-making process. | Multi-agency co-ordination should continue through the Local Resilience Forum's Humanitarian Assistance Group.<br><br>An Equality Impact Assessment template should be created in advance of any restrictions being implemented. |

## Appendix 2: Learning from a Local Resilience Forum outbreak control exercise (Wednesday 29 July 2020)

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Notification / triggers** | | | |
| 12. | Greater clarity is required as to which communication channels will be used to notify organisations of an outbreak, particularly outside normal working hours. | The Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum notification cascade is used to alert organisations (predominantly category 1 and category 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act) to an emergency. | Include a section in the Local Outbreak Control Plan on notification and triggers to clarify the process, including:<br>a. What triggers lead to the activation of the plan and overarching local outbreak response, and who makes this decision<br>b. Who needs to be notified of an outbreak / activation of the plan and how this will take place (e.g. via the Local Resilience Forum incident notification process), including arrangements for during and outside normal working hours).<br>c. Linkage with Incident Management Plans for specific settings. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Cross-boundary working** | | | |
| 13. | Local outbreaks will often require a cross-border response and liaison with neighbouring local authorities. Nottinghamshire County Council shares a border with Nottingham City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Leicestershire County Council, Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council, Doncaster Council, and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. | As Category 1 Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council are fully involved in the Local Resilience Forum structure. Amongst other groups, this includes representation at the Outbreak Control Cell, COVID-19 Health Protection Board, Tactical Co-ordinating Group, and Strategic Co-ordinating Group. A Joint City & County Local Outbreak Control Planning Meeting also takes place weekly.<br><br>The Director of Public Health maintains regular contact with counterparts in the East Midlands. Individual contact is made with the relevant Directors of Public Health in Yorkshire & The Humber as required. | Include further detail in the Local Outbreak Control Plan on working cross-boundary with neighbouring Local Resilience Forums.<br><br>Links to neighbouring Local Outbreak Control Plans should be stored on ResilienceDirect (a Government extranet designed to enable the sharing of information for emergency planning and response purposes).<br><br>The Director of Public Health should continue regular contact with neighbouring local authorities within the East Midlands and Yorkshire & The Humber. |
| **Resources** | | | |
| 14. | Widespread community transmission of COVID-19, or an unrelated major incident, have the potential to significantly disrupt services. | Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Category 1 Responders are required to maintain plans to ensure the continuity of services during an emergency or business interruption. | Organisations should satisfy themselves that their business continuity plans and processes are robust, especially for services which may be involved in responding to local outbreaks. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 15. | The transmission of COVID-19 can vary significantly by area. Some organisations may be heavily involved in responding to a local outbreak, whilst others remain largely unaffected. | The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 presumes Category 1 Responders will use mutual aid as a means of addressing problems of insufficient capacity or resources in the event of a major emergency. The 'Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Authority Mutual Aid Statement of Intent' was agreed by Chief Executives in 2008 and an updated version was approved in September 2019. A regional mutual aid agreement also exists between county councils and unitary councils in the East Midlands. | Local authorities should ensure that relevant services are aware of the arrangements in place for making and receiving requests for mutual aid. |
| **Training** | | | |
| 16. | A significant number of organisations / services are involved in outbreak control arrangements and the associated incident management plans for specific settings. Many other colleagues may also have some involvement in the wider work of the Local Resilience Forum or specific settings that could potentially be subject to an outbreak. | Many representatives involved in outbreak control have previously attended strategic / tactical / operational training held by the Local Resilience Forum. The Local Resilience Forum exercise (Wednesday 29 July 2020) provided an overview of the Local Outbreak Control Plan(s). | A further training / awareness raising session is required for Local Resilience Forum partners to provide an overview of local outbreak response arrangements, particularly the response structure, roles and responsibilities of organisations / cells / groups, and relevant legislation. |
| **Legislation** | | | |
| 17. | Organisations noted that further distinction between the powers available to upper tier local authorities and lower tier local authorities would be beneficial. | Local authorities have a number of powers to impose restrictions on settings and members of the public. A summary of public health functions, general powers in relation to disease control, and specific COVID-19 powers is included in the Local Outbreak Control Plan. | A summary of the various legal powers of local authorities should be made available, categorised by upper tier local authorities, lower tier local authorities and unitary authorities. |

| Ref' | Observation(s) | Current arrangements | Example recommendation(s) |
|------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| **Learning** | | | |
| 18. | There is a need to define how lessons identified locally, regionally and nationally will be monitored, reviewed and incorporated into local planning. | The Outbreak Control Cell and / or Incident Management Team(s) review the response to each outbreak to consider which arrangements worked particularly well, did not work well, and what changes could be made to improve the response to future incidents. | Lessons from incidents should continue to be monitored by the Outbreak Control Cell, Incident Management Team(s) and Health Protection Board, with learning incorporated into the local outbreak control plan and Incident Management Plans as appropriate.<br><br>Future tests / exercise to include:<br>• A walkthrough of setting Incident Management Plans<br>• A scenario featuring multiple concurrent outbreaks in different settings to ensure resources are sufficient. |