

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Tuesday, 18th May, 2021.

Present:- Councillors Pantelic (Chair from 5.17pm), Anderson, Bains, Carter (in the chair until 5.17pm), Hulme and Mann

SBC Officers: Joe Carter (Director of Transformation), Suzanne Foley (Public Health Representative) and Kate Pratt (Group Manager, Communications).

Partner Agencies: Tracey Faraday-Drake (ICS Place Lead), Ramesh Kukar (Slough CVS) and Supt Wong (TVP)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Swindlehurst and Akram. Josie Wragg, Alan Sinclair and Michael Jarrett.

PART 1

75. Chair of the Meeting

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair at the outset of the meeting, the Board agreed that Councillor Carter would chair the meeting.

(Councillor Carter in the chair)

76. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

77. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 15th April 2021

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th April 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

78. Public Questions

No questions from the public had been received.

79. Communications Update

The Group Manager for Communications gave an update on the key communications activities and messages since the last meeting.

Recent activity had focused on:

- Promotion of the vaccination programme, particularly communications to seek to overcome vaccine hesitancy.
- Key messages regarding the move to Stage 3 on the Government's 'Roadmap' on 17th May.

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board - 18.05.21

- Communications of the testing programmes and involvement in pre-testing as part of the major events pilots.

Members asked whether there had been questions from the public around the variant of concern originally identified in India. It was responded that there had been queries made on social media and other channels about the plans in place for surge testing and actions to be taken in the event that cases of the variant in Slough were notified. Clusters of cases had been identified in some neighbouring boroughs in London but not yet in Slough. In Bolton and other areas with a high number of cases of the variant one of the impacts appeared to be that it helped overcome vaccine hesitancy. The Board therefore highlighted the need to prepare for this scenario in Slough and to communicate the importance of vaccine take up, including second doses, as soon as possible. Members commented that the concerns about the variants and the tragic scale of the outbreak in India meant that targeted messages to overcome vaccine hesitancy were particularly important over the coming weeks.

(Councillor Pantelic joined the meeting and was in the chair for the remainder of the meeting)

An update was provided on the vaccine programme in Slough. It was felt that the messages were getting through and take up was high. The programme was being stepped up with an increase in available doses expected from next week and extended opening hours of the vaccination centre from 8am to 8pm. Second doses were being brought forward from approximately 12 to 8 weeks and the CCG was working closely with the public health team and the voluntary and community sector on the 100-day plan.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the communications update was noted.

Resolved – That the communications update be noted.

80. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The Service Lead, Public Health gave a presentation that summarised Slough's current Covid-19 status:

The following points were noted:

- The Covid-19 case rate had fallen to 27.4 weekly cases per 100,000 population. This was a fall from circa 60-80 reported at the previous meeting.
- The case rate in the 60+ age group was 9.3.
- The percentage of tests that were positive was 1% compared to 3% reported at the last meeting.
- There had been 2 Covid-19 deaths reported in the week ending 7th May.
- The number of outbreaks remained low.

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board - 18.05.21

The Board noted the work done on the enduring transmission project which aimed to understand the factors contributing to the Slough's consistently above average case rates during the pandemic and put in place an action plan to reduce the gap in the rates of transmission. Some of the key findings included the fact that Slough's population, employment and social profile contributed to relative high case rates. The action plan sought to increase vaccine take up in Slough's diverse communities; renew the focus on universal measures such as 'hands, face, space'; target the LFT testing programme on schools, care homes and workplaces; establish an enhanced contact tracing programme; and work with PHE on an enhanced surveillance programme for variants.

The community testing programme continued. People were reminded of the need to register the results of all Lateral Flow Tests done, even if they were negative. In the event of a positive LFT result residents should take a confirmatory PCR test and act accordingly.

The Board welcomed the continued fall in the number of cases and discussed the further measures to further reduce them. It was noted that the majority of current cases was in the 17-25 age group and the communications needed to be tailored and targeted accordingly. A member asked whether bringing forward second doses of the vaccine would cause any future supply issues given the fact Slough's young population meant a relatively large proportion of the population were not yet eligible for vaccination. Assurance as provided that no issues with vaccine supply were anticipated as the roll out continued and the programme would be accelerated in the coming weeks with more capacity being made available. It was recognised that supply for younger age groups was an important issue given the Government's commitment to offer an alternative to AZ to the under 30s. The current timescale was to offer a first dose to all adults by mid-July. The Board asked that the CCG take the issue of vaccine supply for younger age groups away to ensure there was sufficient supply to meet the needs of Slough's population.

A question was asked about how we reached people who were not registered with a GP. It was noted the partners had worked proactively to try to reach vulnerable groups such as the homeless and asylum seekers to ensure people could be vaccinated whatever their status.

Councillors offered to use their links into communities and faith groups to raise awareness of key messages and information, such as the locations of mobile testing locations etc.

Resolved – That the Covid-19 Status Update be noted.

81. Vaccination Programme Update

Resolved – That the updates on the vaccination programme provided throughout the meeting be noted.

82. National and Local Key Messages

The key national and local messages were summarised as:

- Residents needed to be aware of new variants which may be more transmissible and had been identified in neighbouring boroughs. People should remain vigilant and follow the rules and guidance.
- 'Hands, face, space and fresh air' remained a basic and key message.
- People should take up the offer of vaccines as soon as they were invited to do so.

Members commented that as restrictions were gradually eased it was important that people continued to be responsible and comply with the rules in place during each stage of the 'roadmap'.

Resolved – That the key messages be noted.

83. Members' Attendance Record

Resolved – That the attendance record be noted.

84. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 9th June 2021 at 5pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.05 pm and closed at 5.42 pm)