

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Wednesday, 4th August, 2021.

Present:- Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Swindlehurst (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Bains, Carter, Hulme and Mann

Tracey Faraday-Drake	ICS Place Lead
Ramesh Kukar	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Dr Sohail Bhatti	Interim Service Lead Public Health
Stuart Lines	Director of Public Health for Berkshire East

Apologies for Absence:-

Kate Pratt	Group Manager, Communications
Alan Sinclair	Executive Director of People (Adults)
Richard West	Executive Director Customer & Community
Josie Wragg	Chief Executive of the Council

PART 1

16. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

17. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 7 July 2021

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

18. Public Questions

No questions from the public had been received.

19. Communications Update

The Slough Borough Council (SBC) Communications officer provided a brief update regarding key communications activities and messages since the last meeting of the Board. She advised that the Communications team were:

- Continuing to promote the drop-in vaccine sessions on social media three times a week. The vaccine bus had not been out since 20 July, however, vaccinations continued to be offered at Salt Hill and Langley health centres.
- Promoting 'staying safe' and had shared the video by Dr Khan from Public Health England about reducing the spread of covid following the lifting of

restrictions. Advice included meeting outside, allowing fresh air indoors and the continued use of masks in crowded places.

- Messaging about the importance of twice weekly lateral flow test for senior students by targeting their parents.
- Sharing information about the latest changes in Covid regulations, the importance of self isolation and regular PCR testing.

Resolved - That the Communications Update be noted.

20. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The Slough Borough Council (SBC) Interim Service Lead Public Health provided a slide presentation regarding the interim plans for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in Slough in the autumn of 2021. He advised that:

- Overall, case numbers, case rates in the over 60's and the PCR positivity rate were all in decline.
- Frimley Health figures showed a slight increase in the Covid hospitalisation figures. It was important to bear in mind the 4-6 week time lag between becoming infected, showing symptoms and requiring hospitalisation.
- Mortality in Slough was below the five year average, though this could be due to reasons other than Covid rates.
- There would be a new quarantine hotel in Slough to deal with the increase in the number of red list countries and the anticipated influx of overseas students to local universities.
- Efforts should continue to enhance vaccine uptake. It was important to encourage a mind set of self actualisation with residents, rather than one of dependency.
- With the lifting of restrictions, a surge in case rates was anticipated in the autumn and winter.
- SBC needed to be able to anticipate National guidance, which was not always immediately available.
- The government's Contain Framework set out how national, regional and local partners should continue to work with each other, the public, businesses, institutions and other local system partners in their communities, to prevent, manage and contain outbreaks of COVID-19.
- It was therefore important to maintain the response infrastructure and current levels of capacity as well as improve vaccine take up, overcome vaccine hesitancy and support those self-isolating at home.
- Special attention should be given to the vulnerable, e.g. children and those in high risk settings.
- NHS was undertaking detailed winter planning.
- The best way to block the chains of transmission would be to limit social interactions.
- SBC should encourage staff to be vaccinated though this may give further rise to the debate around individual freedom vs community responsibility.

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- The CDC provided detailed guidance regarding ventilation in educational and other settings. SBC could build on this work and on best practice elsewhere and tailor these to local needs.
- Elected members and community leaders had a vital role in spreading the message about vaccination uptake.

Resolved – That the Local Covid-19 Status report be noted.

21. Interim Plan for the Autumn of 2021

The SBC Interim Service Lead Public Health and the SBC ICS Place Lead provided a brief outline regarding preparation for the autumn and winter of 2021. They advised that:

- Autumn and winter plans were evolving and draft plans would be presented at the next meeting of the Board.
- SBC was maintaining partnership efforts, and continued to promote the second jab at 8 weeks for maximum protection.
- Langley & Salt Hill continued offer 1st and 2nd doses of the vaccine. The roving mobile unit was paused for now and may come back into use later in the year. There was concern regarding low vaccine take up rates amongst pregnant women. The Royal College of Midwifery provided many resources to help them make an informed decision. Following the lifting of restrictions, healthcare settings would continue to require mask wearing at vaccination sites. Booster vaccines may go ahead with the autumn flu vaccine rollout, officers were awaiting confirmation from the JCBI. There were additional funds to support those with learning disabilities and autism to have their first jabs.

The Chair stated that data showed that a very large proportion of women in hospital had not been vaccinated – what could be done to encourage more women to come forward?

A Member asked what evidence there was to indicate that the booster vaccine was the next step for those who had been double jabbed?

The SBC Director of Public Health responded that the booster was considered to be the likely next step in the vaccination process and could provide additional protection as the duration of immunity following being vaccinated was not yet known. The incidence of seasonal flu was expected to be widespread during the autumn and winter months. He added that typically up to twenty thousand people could die of flu during an epidemic. The overall aim should be to suppress the transmission of all respiratory viruses in the coming winter.

A Member stated that the vaccine uptake figures were of concern. Slough had not reached 70% for the first dose, and uptake had been very low in some Wards. For example, Chalvey's uptake rate was one of the lowest in the country. Now that a 4th wave of covid was anticipated, what plans had been put in place to deal with this?

The SBC ICS Place Lead stated that there was a difference in the age ranges of those who had been vaccinated. In Slough, the majority of those considered to be vulnerable, e.g. the elderly had been vaccinated. However, it was important that SBC maintain the current pace of its Communications and was innovative in its messaging.

The Chair requested that a Communications plan for tackling these issues be submitted to the September meeting of the Board.

The Director of Public Health advised that with regard to schools and CDC guidance - data showed that covid case numbers reduced when schools were on vacation.

The SBC Interim Service Lead Public Health advised that SBC should look at best practice in other areas and balance this against available resources and work collaboratively with schools and educational establishments. It was predicted that uptake of the booster would likely be lower than that of the vaccine. Therefore, innovative responses were required to overcome these challenges. Responsibility and control should be given back to the community. The voluntary sector and community settings such as places of worship and trusted local leaders should be used to spread the message.

Chair requested that the Communications plan seek input from the Chalvey Can Work initiative as well as from Colnbrook and Britwell.

A Member expressed concern about low vaccine uptake rates in her Ward. She asked what data available about uptake rates in each Ward and whether this information could be cross referenced against the electoral register. She added that messaging should be done in different languages, be more focussed with a more targeted approach for those yet to be vaccinated. The Mobile unit should be deployed to local shopping parades in places like Chalvey. She asked whether the Council had any data regarding uptake of the vaccine by its staff and suggested enlisting the help of the Human Resources Department, senior managers to encourage staff to take the vaccine. The same approach should be taken with partner organisations and those working in the care sector.

The Chair advised that the mobile unit had been stationed at the Asda in Cippenham Meadows and that this could be done in other areas. She made the point that Ward Councillors were a valuable resource, and that they should be fully briefed and brought on board to spearhead messaging in the Wards.

The SBC ICS Place Lead stated that Ward Councillors and local GPs could come together to lead this initiative. The Chair asked that the primary care network leads also be included. She proposed that the initiative begin with Chalvey and with a view to extending it out to other Wards. She suggested that the SBC Interim Service Lead Public Health meet with local leaders in Chalvey.

The SBC Interim Service Lead Public Health advised that the vaccine take up rate was significantly lower in some BAME communities and therefore efforts should be focussed on trusted local leaders and places of worship. Currently there was no significant data regarding vaccine uptake in BAME and other communities.

The SBC ICS Place Lead stated that NHS England figures showed that the BAME population in Slough had done best across the South East of England in terms of vaccine take up.

The SBC Director of Public Health advised that 2000 extra testing sites were proposed by the government. Key workers were encouraged to be tested twice a week.

NHSs winter plans and winter surge plans would be in place by the end of August. Efforts would be focussed on supporting acute hospital partners with young people with mental health admissions. RSV, which was a respiratory virus affecting young babies. Winter plans would be linked to Covid plans, flu jabs and encouraging parents to get their children immunised.

The SBC Director of Public Health stated that the Board could not afford to ignore the challenges posed by seasonal flu. Key workers working with the most vulnerable should be encouraged to take the flu vaccine. He confirmed that the Outbreak management fund would be available until the end of April 2022.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

22. National & Local Key Messages

The national and local key messages were summarised as:

- Following the lifting of restrictions, the self isolation grant was still available to claim. Information relating to the grant would be publicised on social media.
- All residents should aim to be double jabbed.
- 16/17 year olds should be targeted.

Resolved – That the National & Local Key Messages be noted.

23. Date of Next Meeting - 14 September 2021

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 14 September 2021 at 5pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.01 pm)

