

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th October, 2021.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Anderson, Bains, Carter and Mann
Ramesh Kukar Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Supt Wong Thames Valley Police Representative
Dr Sohail Bhatti Interim Service Lead Public Health
Kate Pratt Group Manager, Communications
Alan Sinclair Executive Director of People (Adults)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Pantelic
Michael Jarrett Associate Director, Children and Families
Stuart Lines Director of Public Health for Berkshire East
Dr Vanita Dutta Public Health Representative
Tracey Faraday-Drake ICS Place Lead

33. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

34. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

35. Public Questions

No questions from the public had been received.

36. Communications Update & Communications Plan

The SBC Communications Manager provided an update on the key Communications activities and messages since the last meeting of the Board and responded to questions as follows:

- The Communications Plan for the autumn/winter 2021/22 was in the process of being finalised and would be presented at the next meeting.
- Current Communications planning continued to focus on vaccine uptake as a large proportion of Slough's population had still not been vaccinated.

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- Her team were supporting the NHS campaign 'Someone like me' which was aimed at encouraging vaccine uptake among 12-15 year olds.
- Her team were supporting the schools' immunisation teams and looking at cohorts who were more vaccine-hesitant. A campaign to tackle this issue across East Berkshire was planned.

Following questions and comments it was advised that:

- The vaccine-hesitant communities had been identified as the Eastern European community, and that this may be due to cultural reasons as there was not a culture of vaccine take up in their countries of origin. Low vaccine take up amongst Eastern Europeans was particularly high in Bracknell, and the communications team were looking at shared messaging using national social media forums with Bracknell. Vaccine hesitancy was also high in the Black Community and in the Pakistani community and among 29-50 year olds generally.
- The annual flu campaign was underway and it would be possible to provide both covid and flu vaccines within the same setting. Langley and Salt Hill were offering both. GP surgeries were undertaking their own campaigns and children would receive the flu vaccine at schools once they had received the Covid vaccine.
- Current data showed that over 75% of covid deaths were among the unvaccinated and this figure was rising. Her team were continuing to focus on promoting the importance being vaccinated in order to prevent the infection spreading into the vaccinated population.

ACTION 1: The Communications Plan for the autumn/winter 2021/22 be presented at the next meeting.

Resolved: That the Communications Update be noted.

37. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead provided a summary of Slough's current Covid-19 status. He advised that:

- There were around 420 cases per week in Slough and this figure was one of the highest in the South East. Most of the infected were school-aged children and their parents. The most recent data showed that the rise was mainly in the 11-21 age range.
- To date six schools (mix of primary & secondary) had reported ten or more cases and four of these met the threshold for an outbreak. The latest Department for Education guidance to schools emphasised that the education of children was paramount. Different schools had different pressures and had taken different approaches to covid safety. It should be noted that children were less likely to be tested than adults and high infection rates among this group could be hidden. He emphasized the importance of monitoring 5-10 year olds.
- The Office National Statistics had published a report regarding infection rates. The report showed that those who were no longer following

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government guidelines regarding social distancing, wearing masks or avoiding extensive social contact were twice as likely to become infected. Those who came into contact with 6-10 year olds were 1.6 times more likely to get covid. Households of three or more and multi-generational households were more likely to become infected.

- Data showed that there were high rates of vaccine hesitancy among Black and South Asian populations as well as among those who described themselves White non-British.
- With regard to vaccine uptake rates – it should be noted that there were potentially sixty thousand people who had not been vaccinated in Slough and the number of those who were yet to receive the second dose was lower in comparison to neighbouring towns.

Following a question about what safety measures schools had chosen to implement, the SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead stated that in his view, most outbreaks were due to community transmission. He stated that Public Health England had not changed its symptom complex following the advent of the delta variant which had different symptoms, which included a blocked nose and headache. Covid was known to cause impaired kidney function in the long term hence the importance of continuing to promote vaccine uptake among school children.

Following a suggestion from a Member, the SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead undertook look into covid safety measures implemented by each school to see if this data could be gathered.

ACTION 2: SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead undertook look into covid safety measures implemented by each school to see if this data could be gathered.

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

38. Vaccine Update

The Interim Public Health Service Lead

- Flu vaccine uptake had been particularly low in 2016/2017. Following the flu campaign in 2020 the uptake had been much higher and was expected be the same this year. More people were coming forward for the flu vaccine as a result of covid.
- Communications messaging was reiterating the safety of the vaccine as it had been a year since its advent and focussing their message on the benefits of being vaccinated, for example being able to take holidays abroad.
- The mobile unit continued to be deployed and was offering both the first and second dose.
- 12-15 year olds were being offered the vaccine at school however, parental consent for this was low in Slough. The vaccine would also be offered to school children at PCN vaccination sites outside school hours where hesitant parents would be offered more information and support.

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- GPs would be providing both the flu and covid vaccines in Care homes and the covid booster and flu vaccines would shortly be rolled out to those who were housebound.
- Five new Community pharmacies would be offering covid and flu vaccinations.
- Work with partners and local faith leaders would continue and local social and cultural organisations would also be contacted for support. Leaflet distribution in a locality prior to the mobile unit turning up was expected to improve vaccine uptake.

Following questions, it was advised that:

- There were no hindrances to pregnant women being offered the vaccine, and lack of uptake was mainly due to vaccine scepticism. It was important to note that pregnant women were often one of the largest casualties of flu and covid hospitalisation rates among pregnant women was of concern. The latest advice to pregnant women was that the covid vaccine was safe for them.

The Chair suggested that the Council's autumn publications reiterate the message about vaccinations.

ACTION 3: The Council's autumn publications reiterate the message about vaccinations.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

39. Plan for the Autumn/Winter of 2021/22

The SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead stated that the draft plan was in the process of being finalised. It comprised a new local implementation plan for infection, a new communications plan with vaccination, the latest government guidelines and local contact tracing as key measures as well as promoting testing within institutional settings, for example, in schools.

ACTION 4: The Plan for the Autumn/Winter of 2021/22 be submitted at the next meeting.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted

40. National & Local Key Messages

The national and local key messages were summarised as:

- Continue to encourage vaccination take up for those not yet vaccinated by emphasising that mortality rates were lower for those who had been vaccinated and additional benefits such as the ease of being able to take holidays abroad.

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

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41. Date of Next Meeting -

Tuesday 9 November 2021 at 5.00pm

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.57 pm)

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