

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Thursday, 24th February, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Akram, Anderson, Bains, Carter, Hulme and Mann
Ramesh Kukar Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Sangeeta Saran Slough CCG
Dr Sohail Bhatti Interim Service Lead Public Health
Alan Sinclair Executive Director of People (Adults)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Andrew Fraser Interim Executive Director of People (Children)
Kate Pratt Group Manager, Communications
Angela Wakefield
Richard West Executive Director
Supt. Lee Barnham Customer & Community
Neil Bolton-Heaton Thames Valley Police Representative
Healthwatch East Berkshire

PART 1

26. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

27. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 20 January 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

28. Communications Update

No update was received.

29. 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:

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- Although the Government had removed all domestic covid restrictions, clinicians and scientific advisors were emphasising the need to be prepared for any possible future covid variant or surge.
- Lateral flow tests would no longer be readily available other than for the elderly or those working in social care.
- The NHS had expressed concern regarding the vulnerability of its staff and the pressures on secondary care units.
- PCR tests could be purchased at pharmacies, however, not everyone may be able to afford these.
- Further NHS advice was being drafted, which the public should follow.
- The ONS (Office for national statistics) random surveys suggested that the NHS may only be aware of one in four covid infection cases.
- The definition of what constituted a case had changed. Recording case number would change from recording people to the number of episodes.
- The death rate had reduced recently. A total of 401 covid deaths had been recorded in Slough.
- A quarter of Slough's population were still not vaccinated. There was both a gender and age disparity among vaccine hesitant cohorts with older women and younger men identified as being unvaccinated.

Following questions it was advised that:

- There were mixed messages from the Government, however, the Council needed to be explicit with its messaging, which was as before, 'hands, face, space'.
- Slough public health would shortly be launching its 'Ready for Pregnancy' campaign, much of which would be focussed on community outreach work.
- Further community engagement initiatives were planned with partners, and would focus on dialogue with local residents rather than simply handing out written information.
- It was difficult to know the reason for the reduced death rate this winter. It may be due to changes in behaviour in relation to respiratory hygiene. Those who were ill should be encouraged to avoid going into work places.
- Any data and intelligence gained regarding the overall impact on Slough of the pandemic would be shared at the next meeting.
- The future direction of the Board would be an item for discussion at the next meeting.

Action 1: The future direction of the Board would be an item for discussion at the next meeting.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

30. Vaccine Champions and Vaccine Update

The representative from the Community and Voluntary Sector advised that:

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- The vaccine champions project had kick started (twenty micro projects were being undertaken) and a project manager had been appointed. Operational meetings would take place weekly and twelve outreach community engagement specialists were being recruited
- Discussions were ongoing with the NHS and the Council about target groups.
- Applications had been invited from the Community and Voluntary Sector regarding how best to target their communities. For example, targeting young people through social media, churches had been invited to set up a churches forum, experts clinicians and public health were also being consulted.
- A local charity in partnership with the University of Southampton would undertake research into the reasons why people continued to refuse to take the vaccine. This data would be used to amend messaging and future actions.
- Further information regarding implementation of the project would be shared at the next meeting.

It was advised that the Health and Inequalities Board was looking into vaccine hesitancy and would use posters and other non-digital means to disseminate messages.

Some concerns were expressed regarding possible side effects of the vaccine and it was noted that the online reporting system was not user friendly. Some people had refused to have the second vaccine or the booster following experiencing side effects.

The Interim Slough Place Locality Director advised that there were processes in place to report side effects, and these would be recorded and reported on by the MHRA. She undertook to look into the matter and report back at the next meeting.

There were no plans to close any of the vaccine centres. The NHS would continue to provide vaccines and GPs would continue to reach out to vaccine hesitant cohorts. The ethnicity of these vaccine hesitant cohorts was broken down as follows: 7,200 'Other White' and 6,500 of Pakistani origin and 4,000 of Indian origin, 1,200 'other Asian'.

Action 2: The ready for pregnancy campaign material to be circulated to the Board.

Action 3: The Chair would encourage Members to discuss vaccinations with residents when door knocking as part of the forthcoming local election campaign.

Resolved: That the update be noted

31. National & Local Key Messages

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The SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead emphasised the importance of following clinical advice, having all three doses of the vaccine and maintaining covid safety measures such as hand washing, wearing a face covering and social distancing.

Resolved: That the key messages be noted.

32. Date of Next Meeting

24 March 2022 at 5.00 pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.58 pm)