

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care) – 7 September 2021		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Moncur	Health and Wellbeing	June - Aug 21

COVID-19 Update

This report covers the period June through July 2021. The statistics used in this report can be viewed on the Government's open-access data tracker <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/> . During this time Sefton transitioned into the fourth and final step of the national roadmap on 19th July. This move followed a one-month postponement to enable more younger people to be vaccinated as cases increased due to the newly dominant, more infectious Delta variant. Other significant national policy developments included:

- Emphasis on encouraging people to act responsibly, instead of relying on legal measures to influence behaviour under step 4
- Exemption from self-isolation for fully vaccinated critical worker contacts under specific circumstances
- Announcement that from 16th August contacts aged under 18 and anyone who has had their second dose of vaccine more than two weeks previously will no longer need to self-isolate but should take a PCR test. (Anyone who tests positive with a PCR test is still required to self-isolate by law).
- B.1.621 (VUI-21JUL-01) was designated a new Variant Under Investigation on 21 July due to concerns from international spread, mutations linked to reduced vaccine effectiveness and presence of a small number of cases in UK.
- Updated 'COVID-19 Contain Framework: a guide for local decision-makers' published. This guidance describes the Government's plan to manage Coronavirus and how organisations should work together from local up to national levels. This update emphasises the role of the Local Authority, including on management of non-COVID outbreaks, with advice and support coming from the new UK Health Security Agency, which will comprise NHS Test and Trace, health protection function of PHE and the Joint Biosecurity Agency and will launch in October 2021.
- New vaccination target: to offer one dose of vaccine to all those aged 18+ by 19th July and two doses by mid-September. Eligible age groups extended to include offer of first dose to 16 and 17 year olds, and two doses for children age 12 to 15 with specified risk factors. Plans to begin third dose booster vaccination in September for groups at highest risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19, who received their first doses in early 2021.

Epidemic trends in June to August

Following surge testing during May in the Formby area, daily incidence reached a 2021 low point of 5 cases per day in the third week of May. By early June, almost all infections were caused by the more transmissible Delta variant and a steadily increasing trend had re-established. At the start of June, the number of new cases of

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Coronavirus in Sefton averaged around 17 per day. The number of new cases in Sefton was doubling every 12 days on 21 June when the move to step 4 was originally expected to take place. Incidence levelled off at the start of July at around 180 cases per day, and contrary to expectations, the end of legal requirements on social distancing, mask-wearing and mass gatherings from 19th July coincided with a steady fall in new cases, levelling off at 120 cases per day in the last week of July.

The impact of Euro 2021, changes in testing behaviour linked to the end of the school year, holidays, and socialising in step 4 and sunny weather are all thought to have contributed to the reducing then stable trend in positive cases. The shape of Sefton's epidemic in the autumn and winter months will be influenced by the amount of infection circulating in the community; the level of vaccine coverage; how quickly people return to pre-pandemic patterns of contact, mixing and behaviours; when people switch to mixing much more indoors; and the main variant/s being transmitted.

Age Groups

As previously, the most socially active age groups had the highest diagnosed burden of infection, with weekly incidence reaching over 1200/100 000 in 18-24s in early July. The incidence rate in 10-14 year olds remained around 750-800/100 000 from the end of June to mid-July, and was over 500/100 000 for 5-9 year olds during this phase. Routine testing in secondary schools, and linked to family clusters helped to detect cases. The number of cases in school-age individuals reflects the prevalence of infection in the community. Many children experienced disruption to classroom learning towards the end of the school year. Cases in health and care settings and other workplaces also increased rapidly in July and created pressures on business continuity.

In the most vulnerable 60+ age group, daily incidence peaked and levelled off at around 20 cases per day in mid-July. This compares to approximately 100 cases per day in January 2021, and clearly shows the effectiveness of two doses of vaccine against the Delta variant.

Hospitalisation

In keeping with the protective effect from high vaccine uptake, the hospital admission rate has remained under half of the rates seen in late January and February 2021 when Sefton's incidence rate was similar to this summer's wave.

Deaths

Deaths associated with Coronavirus (i.e. it is mentioned on the death certificate) ranged from 0 to 1 in June but rose in July in response to the protracted peak in incidence, with 10 deaths registered in the week ending 23rd July.

Testing

Demand for PCR testing (for people with symptoms or a positive Lateral Flow test) rose as the more transmissible Delta variant spread in June and July. PCR testing

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peaked at around 1850 tests per day in early July, when around 1 in 10 PCR tests returned a positive result. PCR test demand has reduced a little and is now at around 1500 tests per day in early August, with around 1 in 12 PCR tests giving a positive result.

Lateral flow test use increased gradually in June, peaking at around 3500 tests per day in early July, before falling back to around 2100 tests per day in early August. This reducing trend reflects the impact of school holidays and possibly also the impact of large-scale isolation in July, changes in test behaviour linked to time out of work on holiday, and testing fatigue in step 4. The same trend is seen in North West England and England.

Vaccination

At time of writing 19% of adults aged 18 and over are unvaccinated, 81.7% have had one dose, and 71.4% have had two doses. This compares with national figures of 12% unvaccinated 88.8% with one dose and 74.2% with two doses.

In phase two of the vaccine programme (ages 18 to 49), dose one vaccination uptake peaked on 21 June at around 740 vaccinations per day but declined steadily to around 100 vaccinations per day in early August. Daily second dose vaccinations continued to fall in June from around 1500 per day at the beginning of the month to around 400-450 per day into July as more middle-aged adults completed their vaccinations. Second dose uptake is now starting to rise again, as young adults who had their first doses in late May/June come forward for their second dose. Approximately 40% of 18-34-year-olds have not yet had their first dose of vaccine. Social inequality in vaccine uptake is a concern because reduced immunity at a community level favours continuing spread of infection where barriers to testing and isolating, and increased risk from other health inequalities are also present.

Response

The response of the Sefton Health Protection Team and wider Council and external partners in June and July 2021 has centred on:

- Communication to public and key stakeholders on the continued importance of testing, contact tracing and self-isolation
- Targeted testing for vulnerable people and settings
- Contact tracing (pause on contact zero, the local service, when rates would have overwhelmed the service)
- Support for vaccine uptake

Outlook

The reducing trend in infections seen at the start of August is welcome, but still warrants a considered and careful approach, especially as health and care services, and wider society are expected to experience a larger than average winter increase in infectious illnesses including influenza and other respiratory infections. Therefore, providing tailored support for testing, isolation and encouraging vaccination and maintaining Covid safe behaviours in the workplace and elsewhere is very important

to help prevent severe illness and Long Covid, reduce the risk of new variants of concern taking hold, and to support the delivery of essential services.

There is some uncertainty about the scale and type of demands Sefton's Health Protection Team will experience in coming months. Additional winter pressures and disruption in health, social care and beyond are likely. This underlines the vital importance of non-Covid population health work focusing on emotional and physical health and wellbeing.

Adult Weight Management

Sefton Council have been allocated £262,000 for tier 2 adult weight management as part of the governments funding for adult healthier weight programme. This is 1-year funding will be used to expand existing weight management services and commission new services with Liverpool John Moores University and Sefton CVS.

The grant has been accepted by Margaret Jones as Director of Public Health, the Contract Procedure Rules required my authorisation of a Cabinet Member to allocate £132k to Active Sefton to deliver weight management services, £90,000 to Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) for delivery of the Elevate programme and £40k to Sefton CVS for the LWS partners to deliver innovative community engagement opportunities.

The rationale for allocating the funding across the 3 organisations enables a joined-up approach at developing a flexible adult weight management programme. Active Sefton are the current specialist provider of weight management services as part of the LWS and will support and provide connectivity across all partners on this project. Sefton CVS will manage the community providers to deliver the community element and have chosen organisations with previous experience and established links as part of the LWS commissioned services. Identified centres are, May Logan Centre, Brighter Living Centre and Feel Good Factory. LJMU have run a very successful exercise 12-week intervention utilised during the pandemic which has had a high success rate at behaviour change and also compliments the Active Sefton weight management offer.

The proposed project is in keeping with guidance and conditions included in the healthier weight grant documentation utilising a localised model. The proposed model enables additional elements to the current existing tier 2 adult weight management programme in Sefton, utilising this additional funding to have a bigger impact on behaviour change and more positive outcomes for participants in maintaining a healthier weight. Activity is to take place locally, with agreed activity and identified performance measures which will be reported to Public Health England on a quarterly basis as per grant conditions.

Allocation of National Drugs Funding for Additional Drug Treatment Crime & Harm Reduction Activity in 21/22

The Council have been successful in securing £489k grant funding from central government. The funding will be used to deliver a range of interventions aimed at

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reducing drug related crime and preventing drug related deaths. The Grant expenditure must be incurred over a maximum period of 12 months and delivery of outcomes will be monitored nationally.

The Contract Procedure Rules required the authorisation of a Cabinet Member to allocate £407k to the current provider of Substance Use: Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Services (Ambition Sefton) Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust for delivery of the interventions approved within the funded application. There is provision for this allocation via a contract variation under Regulation 72 of the Public Contract Regulations. The Funding will be split between Sefton Council (£82k) and Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust (£407k).

Sefton's proposal has been developed in collaboration with people from across the local substance use treatment pathway and reflects identified gaps and areas of need. The allocation of £407k is to support a range of Treatment, Assessment and Recovery interventions for the local substance use population, building on and improving access to existing evidence-based activities such as needle exchange, naloxone provision and community outreach and scaling up existing interventions provided by the service; pharmacology interventions for clients already engaged in the service; post detoxification rehab for clients who have been assessed and are known to the service. Recovery interventions for clients who are engaged in or exiting treatment from the service.

The current service provider has well established Treatment, Assessment & Recovery pathways in place across the system and are best placed to successfully deliver the interventions within the limited 12-month time period.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed between Sefton Council and Public Health England. A contract variation will be agreed by both parties and added to the existing sealed contract with Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.

NHS Health Checks

An update was provided on plans for restarting the Sefton NHS Health Checks Service in Summer 2021. Changes have been made to the way in which the NHS Health Check is delivered to reduce the risks of COVID transmission, with some elements conducted via a phone call before the face-to-face appointment. Partners have been updated about the restart of the programme. (The programme has now restarted). A further update on progress is due to in September.

Seasonal Influenza

Within Sefton Council, Public Health commissions the staff flu vaccination programme, which is open to all staff within the Council. The model for the 2020 staff vaccination programme was redesigned to ensure safe delivery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was accessed via a voucher scheme and vouchers were redeemable at any of the participating community pharmacies across the borough. On site clinics were coordinated where it was safe to do so and requested by managers, for example Hawthorne Road Depot, to support access to the programme

Between 2015 and 2019 uptake in the staff flu vaccination programme had continued to increase, however, uptake of the 2020 programme saw a significant decrease. The 2020 programme saw a 45% reduction in uptake from the previous year. There are a

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number of influencing factors to be considered that will have impacted the 2020 vaccination uptake.

From 1 December 2020 the eligibility criteria for the NHS flu vaccination programme was extended to include those who were 50 years and over. This change meant that 48% of Sefton Council's workforce (including schools) were eligible for the NHS vaccination programme from December 2020, with 2,866 members of the workforce being aged 50-59 and 1,661 aged over 60.

2020 saw a large-scale move to agile working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Informal feedback suggests that where people live out of borough and working from home, the preference was to pay privately for the vaccine instead of travelling to Sefton.

In addition to this, we saw an initial and unprecedented surge in demand for the flu vaccine which impacted the availability of stock and appointments at times during the programme, which may have impacted on uptake.

The staff flu vaccination programme was open to all employees of Sefton Council and the Family Wellbeing Centres. Schools were offered the opportunity to access the programme on a subsidised basis. As in previous years, the programme was also accessed by South Sefton CCG and Southport and Formby CCG workforce.

The largest number of staff vaccinated were from schools in, with 162 school staff being vaccinated in 2020 compared with 329 in 2019. The number of adult social care staff being vaccinated has fallen from 80 in 2019 to 48 in 2020 and there has been only a small increase in the number of children's social care staff being vaccinated.

This highlights that key groups of staff working with vulnerable groups, have low uptake rates. The reasons for low uptake in these staff groups will be explored prior to planning for next year's staff flu vaccination schedule. As discussed above, barriers may exist in terms of access as a result of changes that were implemented to ensure COVID-19 safe delivery or dissemination of the flu vaccination programme information.

An exploration of options available to support vaccine uptake and access to an effective flu vaccination programme for staff in the ongoing context of COVID-19 and the expanded eligibility under the NHS flu vaccination programme is planned.

Dunes SplashWorld

The contract to carry out remedial works to defective steelwork and tiles was awarded and began on 5th July 2021. The estimated length of the contract is around 48 weeks. The legal claim for compensation against the former contractor is progressing, albeit slowly. It is likely that the claim will end up in independent arbitration.

Leisure Update

The 6 Leisure Centres reopened in line with Step 3 of the Covid roadmap in May 2021. Swim, gym and fitness classes were available albeit with strict capacity restrictions. Innovative and creative half term holiday sessions were provided in June in order to remain compliant with Covid regulations. Despite reaching step 4 of the Covid roadmap on 19 July when all restriction ceased, a decision to remain at step 3 was taken in order to protect our staff and customers.

The wider leisure development offer is also being delivered in a different way to ensure Covid compliance. Park Nights are back as diversionary activities to prevent ASB and our Summer Be Active programme looks different too. We are running a targeted camp with LFC Foundation at Netherton Activity Centre to target children in most need and maybe open to Early help or Children's Social Care. This camp is in addition to the normal open access camps being run at NAC and at Dunes. LFC Foundation also delivered a U16/U17 football tournament in Formby on Sunday 1st August with the focus to raise awareness around knife crime, with a workshop taking place delivered by the Real Men Don't Carry Knives initiative before the tournament starts, also working in partnership with Merseyside Police and Community Safety.

The Active Workforce offer remains varied and important offer for our staff with a range of activities promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

Leisure Annual Report

The Annual report gave an overview of the last 12 months activity. The main issue was of course the response to Covid. Leisure centres whilst closed have provided venues for Covid testing and Leisure staff have been redeployed to support a range of critical services.

We have lost around 39% of members during Covid lockdown and whilst a number have returned following reopening, we have a long way to go to get back to the position we were in around March 2020.

Litherland Sports Pitch

The contract to renew the astro turf pitch and replace the lighting around the pitch and running track with energy efficient LED lighting started in June 2021 and is due to last for 8 weeks. Unfortunately, there will be a 3 week delay due to the astro turf grass being held up in Holland.

Communities Risk Register

The Communities Risk register was presented to provide assurance that risk was being managed. The risk register is a key tool in risk management as they identify the risk, the nature and level of the risk, who owns the risk and the mitigation measures in place to respond to it. Each service within Communities has a service specific risk register. These feed into the Communities departmental risk register which in turn identifies any key risks that need to be escalated to the Council wide corporate risk register. The risk register is updated on a monthly basis. There are no risks within Communities that feature on the Corporate risk register.