

**REPORT TO:** Executive board  
**DATE:** 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Public Health  
**PORTFOLIO:** Health and Wellbeing  
**SUBJECT:** Test, Trace, Contain and Engage: Overview of Covid-19 Outbreak planning, governance, testing and contain framework for Halton.  
**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide the Board with a briefing of Halton's position on Complex Outbreak Management and the associated governance, Halton's Testing strategy and approach to the Contain Framework in Halton.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:

**i) Note Halton's position on Complex Outbreak Management and the associated governance, Halton's Testing strategy and approach to the Contain Framework.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Outbreak Planning

3.1 On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May the Government requested individual Covid-19 Outbreak Plans for complex settings be developed by all councils with funding to be provided; the deadline for these was 30<sup>th</sup> June. These are to be supported by a local Outbreak Office with mutual aid from Cheshire authorities which was stood up on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

3.1.2 What is a complex setting?

A complex setting is a setting outside of the health sector and includes:

- a) Complex and high risk settings such as care homes and schools and workplaces,
- b) Complex cohorts such as those who are rough sleepers, faith communities, asylum seekers,
- c) Complex individuals and households including our defined vulnerable and shielded cohorts Mental Illness; Victims of Domestic Abuse; complex social-economic circumstances.

3.1.3 Complex Outbreak Plans

Halton has developed a number of plans to meet this requirement:

- Outbreak Prevention Plan: Top 10 Ways to Prevent An Outbreak.
- Outbreak Plan for Educational Settings: Early Years Settings, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Further Education establishments.
- Outbreak Plan for Care Homes.
- Outbreak Plan for other complex settings including: workplaces, homeless shelters, prisons.

These plans have been published on the Councils website.

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/health/Covid-19-Preventing-and-Responding-to-Local-Outbreaks.aspx>

A media pack has been developed to sit with these plans.

### 3.1.4 Testing Of Outbreak Plans

To ensure Halton's outbreak plans are robust they were tested via a number emergency planning exercises:

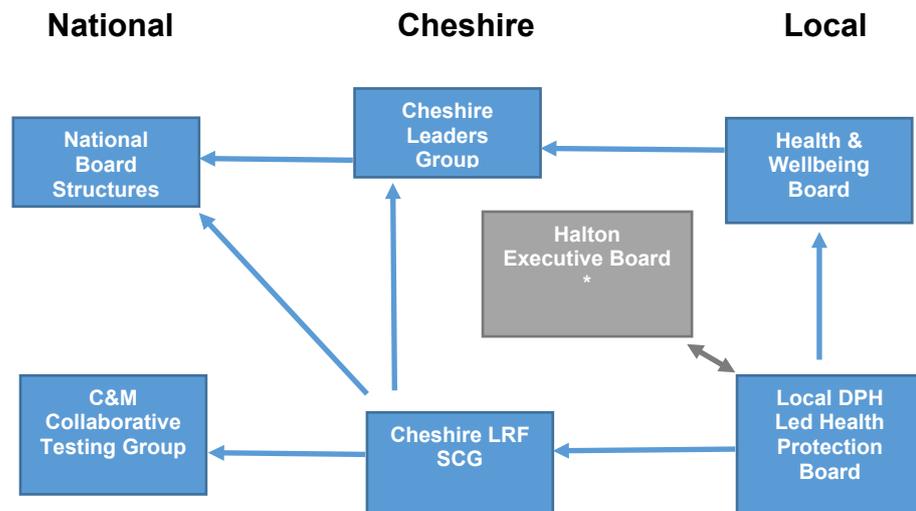
- An Educational setting scenario on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020
- A workplace scenario on July 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2020

Training of staff working in complex settings:

Training programmes will be run so staff in complex settings know how to prevent an outbreak and what to do if one occurs.

### 3.1.5 Governance of Outbreaks.

#### Framework for Governance across Cheshire



\*Decision making authority

Outbreaks in Halton will be overseen by a Local Outbreak Board which will be responsible for communication and engagement with the public and overseeing of any potential or real lockdowns that may be required.

In Halton the role of the Outbreak Board will be undertaken by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Outbreak Board is supported by the Health Protection Board which includes all necessary expertise to advise on outbreak management and is chaired by the Director of Public Health.

Any decisions to effect a local lockdown or to exercise the powers under the Contain framework will be determined by the Executive Board or in matters of urgency by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and members of the Executive Board .

### 3.1.6 Halton Outbreak Office

The Local Outbreak Office for Halton is now up and running and has started to receive complex cases. It is currently staffed in house and these positions will be augmented by external appointments.

The office will co-ordinate the local response and bring together the various teams and functions that will have an important role to play in responding to any outbreak. This will vary depending upon each case, but will include Environmental Health, Infection Control, Health Promotion and Prevention, as well as the specialist leads for each area. e.g. education, social care, care homes and so on.

The office can be contacted on 0151 511 5200 which will be open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Friday and the email address is [public.health@halton.gov.uk](mailto:public.health@halton.gov.uk).

The office will act as a central point of contact to the Cheshire Outbreak Hub and to the National Contact, Test and Trace and Engage facility. Most individuals that are identified as testing positive will be managed by either the national hub or by the Cheshire Hub, but there will be circumstances where a local outbreak needs to be managed locally, or additional support measures will need to be put in place. As soon as we are aware of any potential need for local action, we will call a virtual Multi Discipline Team (MDT) meeting to develop a local action plan.

It is important to be clear that any individual concerned about their own health, or that of a family member or friend should still continue to contact [www.111.nhs](http://www.111.nhs) or their GP for support. Equally, those seeking general information about Coronavirus or its implications should continue to use existing channels of communication such as the websites or national support lines. The purpose of the Halton Outbreak Support Team office is to deal with the consequences of any outbreaks locally.

The office will be supported by constant daily surveillance data which will be provided by PHE and monitored by a team of analysts who will collate it into a local Dashboard. This will include early warning data of an outbreak as part of the “Contain Framework”. The latter will inform local authorities if they are a cause for: Cause, Intervention or Enhanced Support in the event of an increasing or high positivity and infection rate.

The role of the office will evolve and develop as we understand what is needed to support the people of Halton. Over the coming days and weeks we will be in contact with various colleagues, partners and settings to better understand existing systems and processes ensure that as a system everything works as effectively together as possible to prevent, and respond to, any local outbreaks.

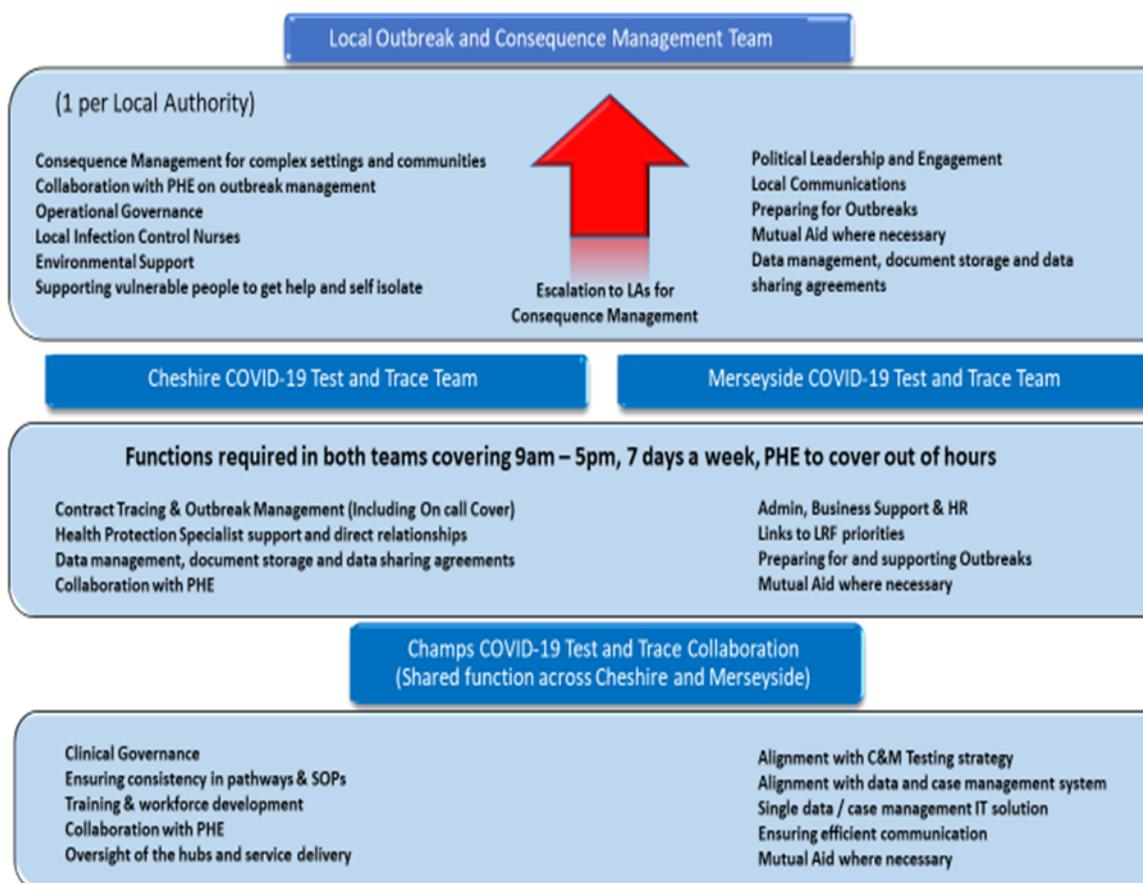
### 3.1.7 Mutual Aid for Outbreaks

To ensure sufficient staff capacity and expertise to manage a large or very complex outbreak Halton will work together with colleagues from other local authorities and Public Health England.

In the first instance this will be the neighbouring authority Warrington, then if required with other Cheshire Authorities and ultimately if needed with other Cheshire and Merseyside Local Authorities.

Halton will also be part of a Cheshire Hub which is all four Cheshire Authorities working together to provide Out of Hours cover, a small team of Contact Tracers, call handlers, data analysis and Public Health England expertise. The Cheshire Hub is supported by underpinning functions which are required by the whole of Cheshire and Merseyside. These are clinical governance, training for outbreaks, Standard Operating Procedures, communication templates and other expertise.

## Cheshire & Merseyside Test & Trace Operational Delivery



### 3.2 Testing

The Halton and Warrington Strategy for COVID-19 swab testing was agreed at the Systems Assurance Meeting on 28 May 202. This update provides updates since this date. Local areas have recently been requested to produce a Place Based Testing Strategy, which will be based on our existing strategy and finalised by the end of July, through a small task and finish group. Available data on testing activity is reported separately in the Halton and Warrington briefing note.

#### 3.2.1 Universal offer

Everyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 is strongly encouraged to get testing to inform responses of themselves, their household, their contacts and the public health teams.

Halton residents booking a test via the national portal can now, in addition to sites across Cheshire and Merseyside, access testing via

- Home delivery of a self-swabbing kit
- Liverpool John Lennon Airport

- A mobile testing unit (MTU) that rotates between Halton (alternating Widnes and Runcorn) and Warrington. The Halton/Warrington MTU typically spends 3 days at each site.

### 3.2.2 Local control and capacity

Work locally and regionally is underway to increase local control over testing capacity to make testing more accessible to local residents and to create capacity to roll out mass testing at short notice for local outbreaks.

- Local areas are producing a place based testing plan, which will increase local control over deployment of some of the pillar 2 testing capacity.
- There are now 7 MTUs for Cheshire and Merseyside. Scheduled deployments are released for a month at a time. Currently, 1 MTU rotates between Halton and Warrington (see above). A process for urgent and non-urgent unscheduled deployment has been developed (see Outbreaks). New scheduled sites can also be requested.
- No new satellite testing centres (STC) will be authorised, including our application for a Widnes and virtual STC. Local testing sites (see below) are the new option for development.
- At present some Pillar 1 (NHS lab) capacity in Warrington is available locally to the community swabbing service for local outbreaks (see vulnerable groups)

### 3.2.3 Local testing sites

Local testing sites (LTS) are a new offer. The National Testing Programme will provide the set-up and ongoing operations, but the aim of these sites are to devolve more control to Local Authorities. LTSs will be smaller, localised testing sites for walk-through self-swab testing open 8am-8pm 7 days a week.

### 3.2.4 Outbreaks

- If urgent mass testing is needed in an outbreak scenario, an urgent unscheduled deployment of an MTU can be requested. We have a form and process to request this from the DHSC via the Cheshire & Merseyside Health & Care Partnership Testing Team. The MTU site can be an already approved site or a new site, subject to urgent approval.
- Regional work is underway on a process for releasing swabs urgently that could be used by a swab squad for mass testing in an outbreak scenario without needing deployment of an MTU.

- The Bridgewater swab squad (see vulnerable groups) offers a local option for assisted swabbing in an outbreak scenario.

### 3.2.5 Vulnerable groups

For those who can't access the national testing offer, an interim offer via the Infection Control team and the Bridgewater swabbing service for those who can't access the national offer is in place.

Since the 22 June the community swabbing service has had access to tests from Warrington Hospital, whose laboratory are expanding COVID-19 testing capacity. Results from these tests takes 24 hours and will be used by the swabbing service for vulnerable groups, or any settings with outbreaks requiring additional testing.

The Cheshire and Merseyside Testing Task and Finish Group is working regionally on strategies for delivering testing to groups who may have additional needs in terms of access to testing as follows:

1. Cared for in own home, including: Domiciliary Care, Re-ablement, Intermediate Care at Home, Carers, Learning Disability, Mental Health Support at Home.
2. Vulnerable groups, including: Homeless, asylum seekers, 65+, Shielding Cohorts, Deprived Regions. A one of testing of all homeless people in Cheshire and Merseyside is currently being organised.
3. Children and Young Person, including: Looked after Children, Under 5's, 5-18 year olds.

### 3.2.6 Children

Symptomatic children under 2 years of age who live in key worker households across Cheshire and Merseyside can now be tested at Alder Hey Hospital. Testing is accessed via an online booking form for employer coordinators. In Halton, this is via [public.health@halton.gov.uk](mailto:public.health@halton.gov.uk). Children 2 years and over with symptoms are tested via the national route, with swabs performed by a parent or guardian in all children aged 11 and under. The options for testing children under 2 via the universal offer are unclear.

### 3.2.7 Schools

In the press it has been announced that schools will have direct access to tests, in the event of a suspected case or outbreak in their school from September. Further details on the implementation of this are not yet available.

### 3.2.8 Key workers

Health and social care staff can access testing at Haydock Park and at

mobile testing units (MTUs) without a pre-booked appointment provided they bring appropriate credentials (eg. NHS ID).

Satellite testing centres, which have mainly been accessed by key workers, but below their capacity locally, are being discontinued. Key worker testing options will be the same as the general public, but via a separate portal for prioritisation.

### 3.2.9 Care homes

From 5 June 2020, all CQC-registered adult care homes in England could apply for whole-home testing, which aims to prevent asymptomatic transmission to help with outbreak management. In Halton, homes are prioritised for testing by the Infection Control team. Most recent data on whole-home testing in Halton and Warrington is in the most recent Data Briefing.

A new outbreak management protocol started in care homes from 13<sup>th</sup> July. If a new case is confirmed in the care home, then the health protection team must be notified and a public health risk assessment conducted. If an outbreak is suspected then the care home will order a batch of rapid tests to test the whole home (residents and staff) as quickly as possible. This will be repeated on day 4 and 7 (using pillar 1 rapid tests). Re-testing of the whole home will take place on day 28 from the last suspected case (using pillar 2 tests). Local arrangements for implementation of this change are being finalised.

From 6<sup>th</sup> July onwards staff in care homes will be routinely tested weekly and residents will be tested every 28 days. This includes bank, agency and visiting staff. Care homes for those over 65 and for those with dementia will be prioritised, in the first wave, extending to all the homes over time. This approach will be reviewed at a national level in September.

### 3.2.10 Extra care and supported living

Other types of adult social care settings will be risk assessed and if they meet a risk-based criteria they will also be part of an initial round of testing. Work is underway to determine which setting in Halton would benefit from this offer. Further details are awaited.

### 3.2.11 Domiciliary care

Results from a PHE prevalence study are awaited, to inform if routine asymptomatic testing of domiciliary workers will be put in place.

Antibody testing – have I ever had the infection?

Antibody testing is a blood test for previous (not current) infection. It is only currently available to NHS staff and some patients, and participants of vaccine trials. Results are useful for scientists studying COVID, but do

not currently have implications for individuals (outside vaccine trials) because we do not know whether having antibodies provides immunity to future infection. Because a positive result does not indicate current infection it does not require the individual testing positive to self-isolate.

Regionally discussions are underway to expand the antibody testing to include care home staff.

### 3.3 Containment Framework

On 17<sup>th</sup> July the Prime Minister announced new powers devolved to Local Government for the administration and enforcement of a Local Lockdown: Directions under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020. The regulations expire at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

These regulations include powers for local authorities to:

- restrict access to, or close, individual premises
- prohibit certain events (or types of event) from taking place
- restrict access to, or close, public outdoor places (or types of outdoor public places)

Before giving a direction the Council must have regard to the need to ensure that members of the public have access to essential public services and goods.

Further information regarding the regulations can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-powers-to-impose-restrictions-under-coronavirus-regulations/local-authority-powers-to-impose-restrictions-health-protection-coronavirus-restrictions-england-no3-regulations-2020>

The statutory Instrument is attached to this report. At the time of production of this report, the guidance has just been received and we are seeking to examine what the implications for implementation are and understanding how this would link into the existing outbreak planning and governance structures. A verbal update on progress will be given at the meeting.



Coronavirus%20Restrictions%20Regulation:

## 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Halton is in line with Government requirements to address COVID 19.

## 5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There is ring fenced allocated funding for outbreak planning and staff.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

These plans will protect the health of children and young people in Halton.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

N/A.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

These plans will protect the health of people in Halton.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

These plans will protect the health of people in Halton.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 These plans will reduce the risk to local people from an outbreak.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues resulting from this report.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 Health Protection Board Terms of Reference and Halton Outbreak Plans.