

Date: 15 July 2021

Report of: Councillor Tim Mitchell

Portfolio: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health

Report Author and Contact Details: Alexandra Severino (adseverino@westminster.gov.uk)

1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – Adult Social Care & Public Health Priorities

1.1 Vibrant Communities

1.1.1 Addressing the Impacts of COVID-19 on Residents

Work is progressing to address the impacts of COVID-19 on residents. Initial analysis shows that overall, there has been a higher rate of death among people from a BAME background as compared to those who are from a white ethnic background. We continue to work with NHS colleagues to reduce the risk of COVID-19 by pressing to identify cardiovascular risk factors and rapidly responding to unmet health needs that have exacerbated over the course of several lockdowns. We continue to work with colleagues to help other impacted groups such as children and young adults unable to go to school or socialize with their peers, unpaid care leavers, and those with frontline occupations who are unable to work from home.

1.1.2 Supporting People Living with Dementia and Autism

The formal launch of the Dementia Plan took place during Dementia Action Week (w/c 17th May 2021) and can now be found online. Internal council dementia training for staff has continued during the pandemic and the training made accessible online. A partnership group is driving implementation of the all-age Autism Strategy across the Bi-Borough led jointly with the NHS and co-chaired by an autistic resident. Further development and implementation of the strategy will focus on support for independent living in appropriate housing and enhancing support for those autistic adults without a co-occurring learning disability.

1.2 Smart City

1.2.1 Trialling Smart City Assistive Technologies

This project is progressing well, and two pilots to test smart speakers and an automatic calling system are underway. A 'Leadership Squad' has been created to bring together a multidisciplinary team to oversee and implement cross cutting digital projects in Adult Social Care & Public Health. The service continues to work with Service Leads and IT colleagues to identify further areas to pilot projects.

2. Cabinet Member Decisions (May – June 2021)

Since my last report to the Committee, I have approved the following major decisions:

- Granted a direct award of a care contract and a lease extension to the 17 June 2022 (with provision for 3+3-month extensions) to GCH (Alan Morkill) LTD in relation to the Beachcroft House Care Home. This decision is now subject to a call-in by this Committee.

3. Areas of Focus – COVID 19

3.1 Current Epidemiology – Cases & Vaccines

Cases nationally and locally have been increasing due to the phased approach of reopening combined with spread of variants of concern. As of the week ending June 26th, positive cases in Westminster are averaging 151.9 per 100,000 compared to the London average of 131.6. Testing continues to be provided across the borough with an average testing rate of 1906 per day and a positivity rate of 3.0%.

On Friday June 18th vaccine bookings opened to all adults aged 18+. As of July 1st 92%, of residents in our care homes and 81.6% of staff have received both doses of their vaccines. The largest 7 day increase of vaccinations is occurring in priority group 9 (those aged 18-49). At the time of writing data suggests that 53.1% of the Westminster population have received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine and 34.4% have received two. This compares to 62.3% and 40.8% respectively for London as a whole.

The lowest vaccination uptake is in Queensway, Bayswater East, Knightsbridge, Belgravia, and Hyde Park. To increase local access and uptake of vaccines teams across Westminster, we have worked with the NHS on delivering community pop-up clinics, the NHS is pursuing 5 applications for pharmacy rollout of vaccinations across Westminster and, following phone calls to all unvaccinated residents over age 50 by Westminster Connects, letters were sent by the NHS in the week ending June 13th to follow up those not reached by phone. Door knocking will commence this month.

3.2 Outbreak Management / Local Testing Strategy

Westminster City Council revised its Outbreak Management Plan in April 2021 in line with the revised Contain Framework from Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). It has also more recently engaged with DHSC and Public Health England on an enhancement plan for surge testing activity required as case numbers of new variants rise throughout London. The actions for Westminster focus mainly on enhanced vaccination uptake and enhanced PCR testing.

Public Health with Adult Social Care Commissioners have worked intensively with adult social care providers to ensure rigorous testing regimes of staff and residents are in place in line with national guidance. Furthermore, they have supported vaccination uptake in staff via webinars, provision of advice and by working with CCG colleagues on provision of vaccinations.

Universities and Higher Education providers are being supported with advice and guidance to prevent outbreaks through briefings that occur every two weeks, as well as in the management of any outbreaks or situations.

Public Health is working with the Events and Filming Teams to ensure that mass events in the borough are planned in a COVID secure manner, examples include the Euro 2020 Fan Zone in Trafalgar Square, Taste of London, Vitality London and the London Landmarks Half Marathon.

3.3 Supporting the CCG with the Rollout of Vaccinations

The importance of prioritising second vaccinations rates has been raised, as there is clear evidence that this reduces the severity of infection as well as transmission. Multi-agency meetings have been held to coordinate the local authority support of the NHS vaccination programme.

A significant proportion of those unvaccinated have been uncontactable. Efforts are underway to confirm the status of these individuals and to ensure follow up or where appropriate their removal from the denominator of individuals eligible for vaccination in the borough.

Explorations are underway to understand the potential for collaboration to use council and NHS data to support residents. In partnership with leading software provider, Palantir, the department have been exploring the potential for matching NHS data, wider council data and open-source data sets to better understand our population, it's needs and to provide targeted intervention. This pilot is in the scoping phase and further progress will depend on appropriate data sharing agreements being in place.

3.4 Response to Variants of Concern

We continue to enhance efforts to protect vulnerable residents. Our key objectives are to protect our residents by increasing vaccine coverage, testing and infection control. We are working to reduce community spread particularly in school age children and those in higher education. We aim to increase compliance with self-isolation and infection prevention by providing support to hospitality and workplaces and increase communications and community engagement with residents, so they are informed and support public health guidance.

3.5 Vaccine Bus Pilot

The Vaccine Bus Pilot is running in conjunction with The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has been well received since the start of the launch of the project on May 27th. This service travels to several locations across both boroughs' multiple times a week. It initially offered the AstraZeneca vaccine to those aged 40+ but from July has also offered the Pfizer vaccine.

3.6 Communicating with Residents

The Public Health Community Resilience Team continues to work with local communities to address vaccine hesitancy and encourage take-up. To date several initiatives are ongoing including vaccine Q&A workshops with service users in the local voluntary community and faith sectors, working with our communications team to share regular information and updates with 90 community champions, delivering community-based vaccine pop-ups (i.e. the Vaccine Bus), delivering online community conversations with several local GPs, and issuing small grant funding to local voluntary sector programs.

3.7 GP Performance

Since the start of the pandemic GP practices and other primary care services have remained open with a majority of consultations being held digitally over the phone. Residents have reported that they have found it difficult to arrange appointments, and some have felt that phone consultations are not appropriate to meet their needs. There are concerns that GPs are missing signs of ill health as appointments are taking place virtually.

As we move into the next phase of Government guidelines on COVID-19 restrictions we will be working with practices to ensure they are offering more than 50% of consultations face-to-face. On average GP practices in North West London were offering 61% face-to-face consultation in March 2021, the last available figure.