

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Community and Children's Services	22 May 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Covid-19 testing and contact tracing	Public
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community & Children's Services	For Decision
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## Summary

Management of the COVID-19 pandemic has required a number of public health, NHS and wider societal measures, including hygiene advice, social distancing, capacity building and the 'Stay at Home'/'Stay Alert' lockdown policies.

Once conditions allow, social distancing measures will be further relaxed. At this point, continued wide-scale testing and enhanced contact tracing are crucial to help prevent a rapid rise in community transmission of COVID-19.

## Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- To support the current approach to planning for contact tracing in City and Hackney.
- To receive an update on progress (including in relation to responding to any national announcements) from the working group at the next meeting.

## Main Report

### Background

1. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally.
2. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

3. At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments.
4. Management of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK has required a number of public health, NHS and wider societal measures, including hygiene advice, social distancing, capacity building and 'Stay at Home' / 'Stay Alert' lockdown policies.
5. Following the peak in hospital admissions, the Government has started to relax social distancing measures, as per the [UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#). At this point, continued wide-scale testing and enhanced contact tracing are crucial to help prevent a rapid rise in community transmission of COVID-19.

### **Current Position**

6. The UK government has developed plans for a national COVID-19 contact tracing service as part of a strategy to partially relax social distancing measures and release the country from lockdown.
7. The national programme will combine digital and phone-based contact tracing approaches to identify cases and their close contacts so they can rapidly self-isolate to maintain a steady state of low level or no transmission in the community.
8. The digital approach has 2 components:
  - a. An NHS CV19 app which is an automated system for rapid symptom reporting, ordering of swab tests and sending tailored and targeted alerts to other app users who have been in close contact with a symptomatic and/or lab confirmed COVID-19 app user.
  - b. A web-based tool, the Coronavirus Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to contact trace those not identified through the app. This will receive details of lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19. Cases will be categorised into automatic follow-up (have provided email details/can use web-based tool) or phone-based follow-up. Cases following the automated pathway upload details of contacts into CTAS which are then followed up either automatically or by phone.
9. A dedicated phone-based contact tracing service (PBCT) is being established for individuals who cannot use the app or CTAS.
  - a. This phone-based contact tracing will be carried out by 3,000 health professionals who will be recruited and employed by NHS Professionals (Tier 2). The expectation is that most of this workforce will be sourced from NHS returners.
  - b. An additional 15,000 call handlers (Tier 3) will communicate with and give advice to contacts according to Standard Operating Procedures and scripts, which are being developed by PHE. Recruitment to this service will be via a commercial contract.

- c. Tier 1 of the contact tracing service will comprise Health Protection Teams and PHE Field Service who will manage complex outbreaks and situations (as they currently do). There will also be a regional and local authority component to this service tier:
- d. A regionalised network will have an overview of the programme, review regional performance and assess wider impacts across the region. It will link into the national programme and LRFs and local authorities.
- e. A local authority response which will address issues such as shielding, supporting vulnerable individuals/households to self-isolate and impacts on inequalities, the local economy, essential services and workforce.

10. Whilst awaiting further clarification of a regional/local COVID-19 contact tracing service model, PHE London has initiated work to develop a London-wide contact tracing programme plan, to include:

#### **Operational Process Mapping**

- a. Work is underway to map the 'user' journey through the contact tracing service, identifying touch points for a local response (specialist Health Protection, testing and local authority support).
- b. Additional Tier 1 specialist Health Protection workforce capacity and capability requirements are being modelled based on high, medium and low outbreaks assumptions.
- c. Local authority and regional level data and information needs are being assessed and mapped to data flows and reporting requirements.

#### **Establishment of a multi-agency external Contact Tracing group**

- d. This is a sub-group of the London Testing Co-ordination Group with membership drawn from PHE, Health Protection, DsPH, environmental health, NHS and GLA.
- e. The group will oversee the development of London plans to deliver the local elements of the national contact tracing service and provide assurance on the implementation and delivery of these plans to the Regional Oversight Group.

#### **Local Authority response planning**

- f. A London Local Authorities Test, Track and Trace Task and Finish Group, chaired by the London Borough of Newham chief executive, was established on 5 May 2020 to collaborate with PHE and support local authority preparation for the national roll-out of contact tracing.
- g. This group has identified the regional and local actions needed to support implementation of contact tracing, with a six-point plan covering

the support and protection of vulnerable groups, understanding and mitigating wider community impact, leading the local partnership response, connecting and engaging local communities and building London regional resilience and mutual aid.

11. As more details on the national operating model emerge, PHE London will consider how to integrate mass testing in London with a regional contact tracing service, including the need to mobilise testing for surge capacity and integration of data systems to allow for seamless reporting. This will be built into the programme plan.
12. Further work is being done to establish links with COVID-19 community engagement groups/work to ensure that contact tracing messaging is consistent and culturally sensitive.

### **Action taken by the City of London Corporation**

13. The requirement for a robust testing and contact tracing system has been highlighted at Member, strategic and departmental / operational levels. This has included:
  - a. Discussion at Community & Children's Services Committee on 24 April 2020;
  - b. Briefing of Town Clerk, Chief Officers via Covid-19 Gold;
  - c. Discussion with Markets & Consumer Protection in order to ascertain current specialist contact tracing capacity;
  - d. Cooperation with Public Health England and other resilience colleagues at national and London levels;
  - e. Full participation in a City & Hackney contact tracing working group, which is focussing on scoping out the local implications, in terms of capacity and resources required to participate fully in a local contact tracing arm, linked to the national system. In addition, Local Authorities are likely to be asked to initiate a local response and DsPH will have a leadership role in local implementation of the national programme.
14. Throughout this engagement, consideration has been given to the specific role of the City Corporation in developing and implementing these systems. Whilst understanding the desire to proactively develop a local function and exploring the possibility of this, it has become clear that it is impractical to do without the following:
  - a. The resources necessary to provide contact tracing information systems, staff, training and communications materials;
  - b. Access to accredited, quality-assured testing capacity for residents and workers through a number of routes (hospital, care home, mobile, satellite, drive through and home testing), as currently provided through DHSC and PHE;
  - c. Access to national IT systems and information flows on test results, etc., which are crucial infrastructure in order to enable effective and efficient system operations;

- d. Rapid progress in the resourcing, development and implementation of the national systems;
- e. Understanding of the national standard operating procedure, to ensure alignment with this and compliance with standards;
- f. Clear identification of local authority roles within these systems;
- g. Redeployment and training of City staff with relevant backgrounds (e.g. environmental health officers) and where necessary, backfill of their substantive roles by redeploying others;
- h. Support from PHE for complex cases or contexts that might emerge through contact tracing in the City.

15. The director of public health, who chairs the local working group, is in regular communication with PHE and receiving updates on progress of the national and regional contact tracing and testing systems. The group is planning to ensure that the Corporation (and the wider City and Hackney system) is prepared to participate fully and effectively in contact tracing, as soon as the national process is rolled out later this month.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

16. There are no direct legal or financial implications.

### **Implications**

17. The financial, legal and equalities impacts of contact tracing are not fully understood yet. These are being worked through by the working group for evaluation at the next iteration of this paper.

### **Conclusion**

18. City of London Corporation will ensure that robust testing and contacting tracing systems are in place for residents and others working within the City, through proactive engagement with the national and regional COVID-19 response. As far as capacity and competing demands allow, Public health specialists, environmental health officers and others with appropriate backgrounds will be recruited to this work and provided with protocols and training by PHE.

19. Members are asked to support the current approach to planning for contact tracing during the next phase and receive a report back from the working group at the next Committee meeting.

### **Appendices**

- None

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