

WRS Board: 11th February 2021

Information Report – COVID Advisors

Recommendation | **Members are asked to note the report.**

Background

On 22nd September the Prime Minister announced £60 million would be made available to local authorities and the police to support additional compliance and enforcement activities. The Worcestershire district councils received a letter on 8th October setting out their grant allocation to fund compliance and enforcement work for a four month period commencing November 2020. WRS put a proposal together to deliver COVID Advisors and Enforcement Officers to operate across the six Worcestershire district council areas that would be intelligence led and deployed where there was greatest priority. The district Chief Executives approved the proposal on 20th October.

The proposal set out the deployment of COVID Advisors to provide guidance to businesses and encourage appropriate behaviour by the public. They were to be supported by a smaller enforcement team focusing tackling businesses identified as failing to comply with the restrictions.

Report

Recruitment

The proposal initially set out to deliver 20 COVID Advisors as soon as they could be put into post for four months. The team started with 12 individuals who were able to demonstrate the level of communication skills that would be required. You will also be aware, there were significant changes that occurred during that time with the new Tier restrictions introduced on 14th October and 'Lockdown 2' between 5th November and 2nd December which meant many businesses were forced to close.

During Lockdown 2 preparations were made for reopening of the Night Time Economy by attempts to recruit Security trained personal (bouncer types) through recruitment agencies. It was envisaged that they would be able to provide support to the existing COVID Advisors employed for their communication skills by providing people management experience. As well as being more expensive due to agency fees, the supply and quality was generally not good and only one of the seven recruited lasted more than 3 shifts and that individual has shown to be a competent and valuable member of the team. The night time economy has continued to be largely closed and the need for SIA accreditation is largely no longer considered necessary.

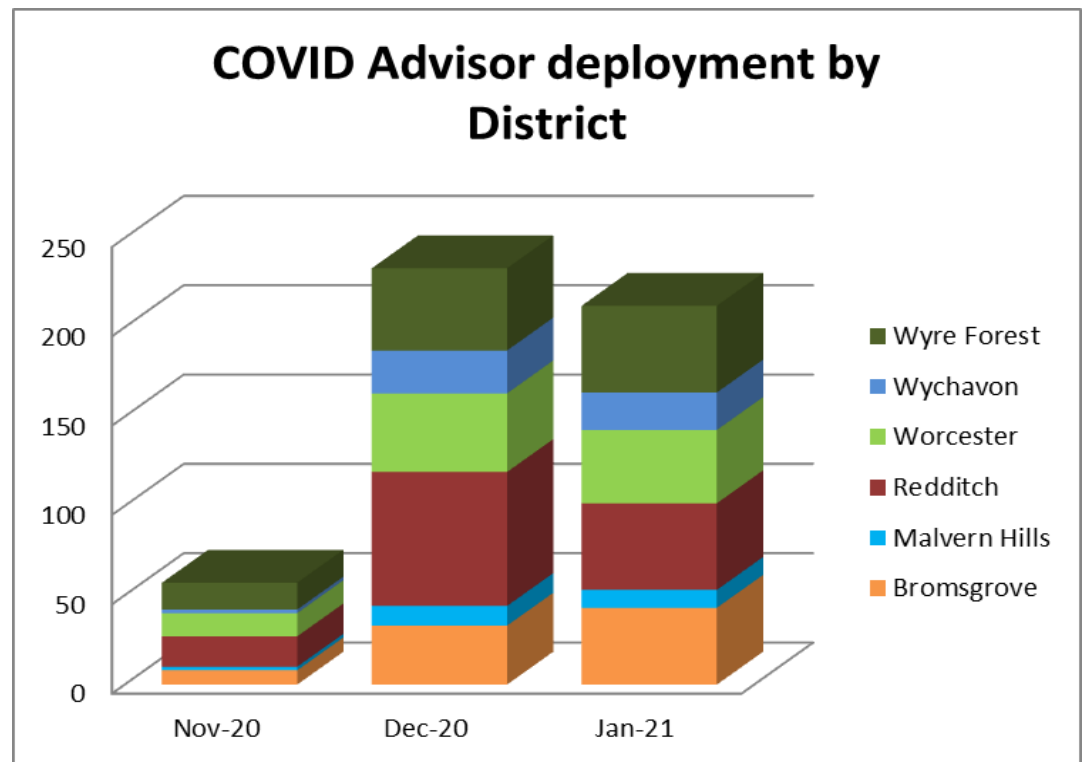
A second recruitment campaign commenced in December to fill vacancies and incorporate specific needs identified in the Redditch/Bromsgrove and Worcester City Incident

Management Teams for specific resource. The initial grant was for 4 months, however an extended period of enhanced COVID Advisor deployment has been possible and the current contracts are in place until the end of April 2021.

Deployment

As set out in the proposal document, WRS have and continue to deploy COVID Advisors based on priority following review of PHE infection rate data, LORT (Local Outbreak Response Team) feedback on employment setting outbreaks, concerns raised by Incident Management Teams, reports of compliance concerns, Police reports of COVID related issues or others (such as youth congregations) and requests for assistance from partners (for example assisting schools that struggled to maintain social distancing amongst parents at school gates). The priority issues at any one time are referred to on the weekly deployment report provided to all Board Members.

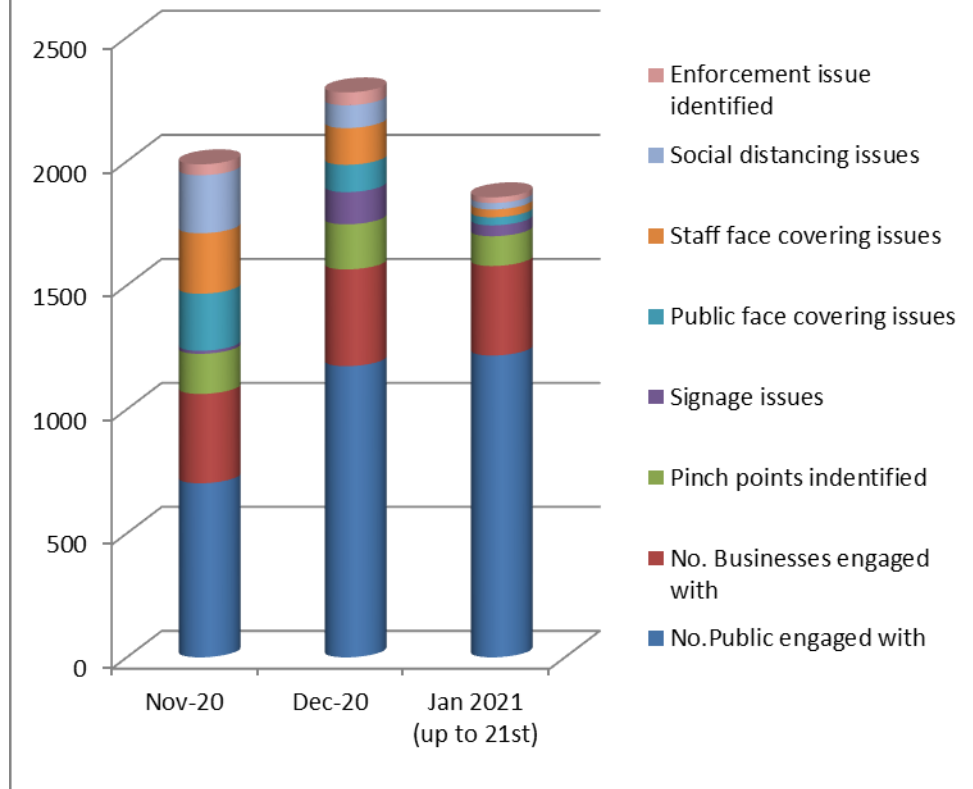
The following table shows the number of COVID Advisor deployments per District per month.



Observations

COVID advisors maintain records of their engagements and issues identified. The graph below shows the number of interactions with the public and businesses they have had by month. Also shown are the numbers of the main issue types we have identified during our visits. Please note January’s data is only up to 21st of the month and the visits and action undertaken by the Enforcement Officers are in addition to these records.

COVID Advisor engagement



Mark Cox
 Technical Services Manager
 Email: mark.cox@worcsregservices.gov.uk
 Tel: 01562 738023

Contact Point