

**WRS Board: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

**Information Report – COVID related activity**

**Recommendation** | **That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.**

**Report** | Members will recall an information report in November 2021 which explained the role WRS officers have in assisting the NHS in contacting people who have received positive Covid-19 test result (referred to as a 'case'). December saw a significant increase in positive cases which lead to a change in the process that was previously followed. All cases that receive a positive result are now sent emails and SMS messages inviting them to complete an online form. They are given a window of 8 hours to complete what is referred to as the digital journey. In the November report we explained that where a case fails to complete this information online the details are referred to WRS to start the tracing journey.

The need to recruit to the team of Contact Tracers continues, it has been an ongoing task because of the need to expand the team. Whilst it has been relatively successful possibly because of the ability to work remotely in the contact tracer role, we have lost some staff to permanent positions and we have struggled to recruit to the full cohort of 42 FTE contact tracers (currently 26 FTE made up of 38 tracers).

In December the rules around self-isolation were changed allowing any case to come out of isolation early providing they were able to produce a negative test result on day 6 and day 7, with tests being taken a minimum of 24 hours apart. This change has reduced the time available to complete contact tracing at local level.

As a countywide service you will note from the figure below around 90% of cases were successfully completed in the last 7 weeks of the year. The reduction in this rate in the last week (highlighted) reflects the sharp increase in positive cases, delays in results being processed leading to cases coming to the service later in the isolation period, the change in self isolation rules and the impact of the holiday season.

At times of extreme pressure, where an Authority feels that they do not have the capacity to meeting the incoming case numbers, there is a facility in place where the Local Authority is able to flow back cases to the National Team. Worcestershire remains far below the West Midlands average for having to use this last resort, with only 2% of cases being returned in the final week of December against 28% being return regionally. For all other weeks we were able to cope with the demand and had no flow backs

Overall Performance						
W/E date	Total Cases	Cases per 100k people	% International Arrival	Completion Rate	% Completed in 24 Hrs	Median Hrs Case Completion
29/12/2021	7,154	1,196	1%	68%	74%	11
22/12/2021	4,381	733	1%	87%	66%	14
15/12/2021	3,361	562	1%	91%	65%	12
08/12/2021	3,032	507	0%	91%	54%	16
01/12/2021	3,015	504	0%	89%	54%	16
24/11/2021	2,938	491	0%	90%	56%	15
17/11/2021	2,679	448	0%	91%	84%	9

The table below shows the percentage of cases completed by the method used to complete the digital journey. You will see that on average 33% of cases completed were done so at local level (i.e. by WRS), this compares with an average of 11% of cases being completed by National.

Channel Contribution					
Case completion distributed by channel					
W/E date	Self service	Of which Self-service whilst Local	Local	National	Non-completion
29/12/2021	44%	4%	15%	9%	32%
22/12/2021	47%	5%	27%	13%	13%
15/12/2021	39%	4%	32%	19%	9%
08/12/2021	38%	4%	41%	12%	9%
01/12/2021	36%	4%	41%	11%	12%
24/11/2021	35%	4%	43%	12%	10%
17/11/2021	37%	2%	34%	20%	9%
Average	39%	3.8%	33%	11%	13%

In November we reported that we undertook all tracing for Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City and Wychavon areas (known as Local-8 because they are received after the window of 8 hours each case has to complete the digital journey before they are chased to do so), but that we only undertook the local tracing for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District areas after National have undertaken the initial calls for the first 48 hour period. Unfortunately, because of the impact of the Omicron variant and steep rise in cases following the Christmas period we returned to National making the calls for the first 48 hours before they come to WRS for all areas.

Case rates have dropped recently but not sufficiently for us to return to Local-8 tracing for the whole county (mid-January case rates for the county were 7092 requiring approximately 45 tracers on duty every day). Instead we are proposing look to go back to Local-8 for one of the Districts and increase that as we increase our tracing capacity.

#### Contact Details

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