

Committee:	Health and Wellbeing Board			
Date of Meeting:	18 November 2020			
Subject:	Update on Covid-19 in Luton & Update on Health Protection Board - To Follow			
Report Author:	Lucy Hubber - Interim Director of Public Health			
Contact Officer:	Lucy Hubber - Interim Director of Public Health			
Implications:	Legal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Equalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Financial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consultations	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staffing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wards Affected:	All			

Purpose

1. To update the Committee on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health of the population of Luton

Recommendations

2. To note the report

Background

3. This report will provide some context to the local COVID-19 response and consider how the health and wellbeing of the population of Luton has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to pay respects to the families who have lost loved ones and to recognise the personal impact that this infection has had.
4. This report will focus directly on health and wellbeing services, and not consider the wider economic or social impacts of COVID-19 on the population, including benefits and rough sleepers.

Report

5. COVID-19 is a pandemic caused by a novel coronavirus, first identified in the Wuhan region of China in December 2019. As a new infection, the whole population are susceptible and there remains further research to identify the duration of any immunity or the development of effective treatments or vaccines.

6. The infection can cause serious illness or death and particularly affects people of older age or with underlying health conditions. According to WHO, approximately 80% of infections are mild or asymptomatic, 15% are severe infection, requiring oxygen and 5% are critical infections, requiring ventilation. Approximately 3-4% of cases will die from COVID-19.
7. As outlined above, some people will have no or very mild symptoms. The case definition is currently:
 - new continuous cough or
 - high temperature or
 - a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)
8. The UK government instituted 'lockdown' measures on 23 March 2020, which included 'stay at home', avoiding non-essential travel, closing of all non-essential businesses. The easing of the lockdown commenced from 15 May, when the government felt that the five tests had been met (see figure 1).

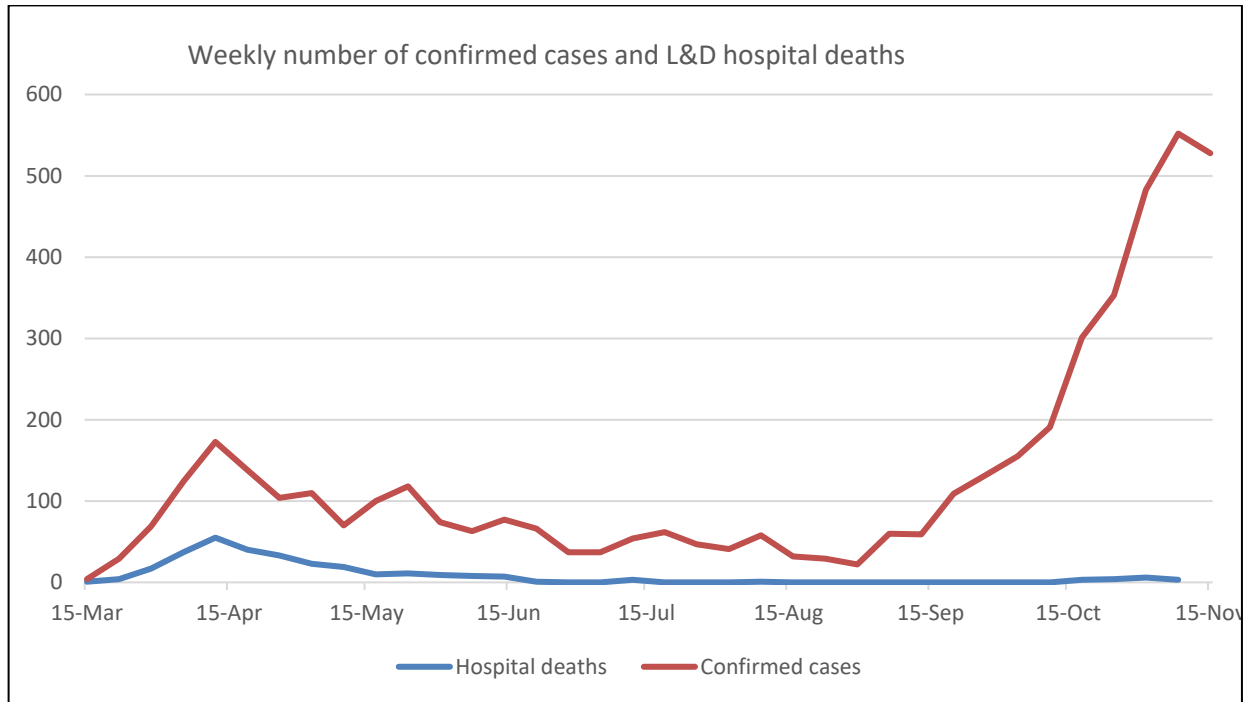
Figure 1: UK government five tests for adjusting the Lockdown

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|----------|---|--|
| 1 | ➤ | The NHS has sufficient capacity to provide critical care and specialist treatment right across the UK |
| 2 | ➤ | A sustained and consistent fall in daily deaths from Coronavirus |
| 3 | ➤ | Reliable data to show that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels across the board |
| 4 | ➤ | Operational challenges including testing and PPE are in hand with supply able to meet future demand |
| 5 | ➤ | Confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelms the NHS |

Local Response

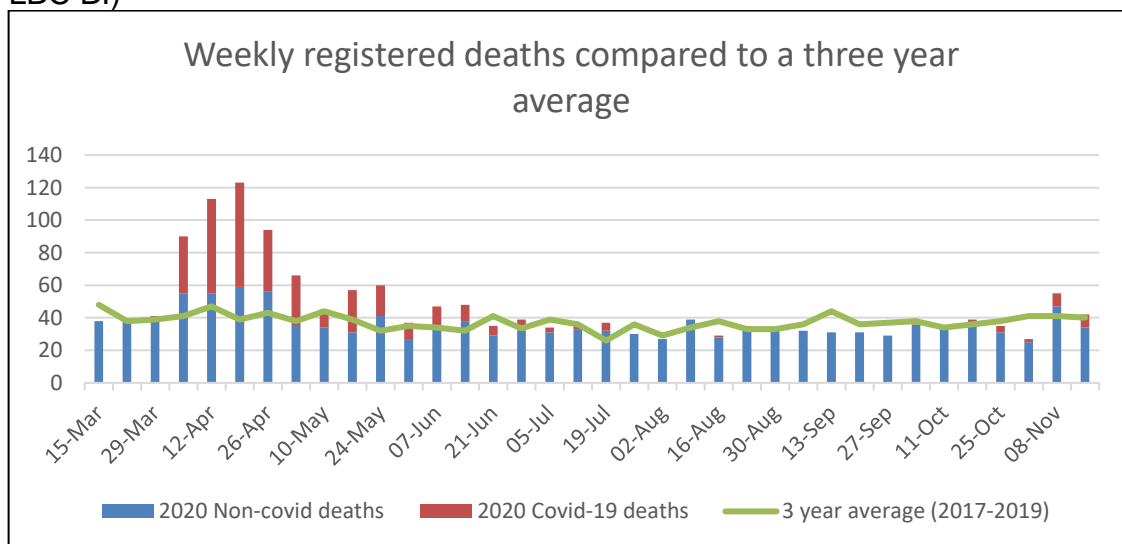
9. Luton experienced a peak in cases in mid-April (figure 2), with a subsequent decline in weekly cases until a small spike in numbers in late May. In total, there have been 4,727 cases in Luton (as at 17/11/20), giving a cumulative rate of 2,218.7 per 100,000 which is the highest rate in the East of England region.

Figure 2: Weekly COVID-19 cases and deaths (source: LBC BI)



10. Figure 2 also shows that deaths directly attributable to COVID-19 initially follow a similar pattern to cases, with a peak in mid-April and a subsequent decline. When all deaths registered at considered (figure 3), there was a 200% increase against the three-year average at the highest point. The total deaths registered has now returned to normal levels.

Figure 3: Registered weekly deaths compared to a three year average (source: LBC BI)



11. Luton was placed into Tier 2 restrictions in early November but this was rapidly superseded by the national lockdown that commenced on 5 November. It is not yet clear on what terms lockdown will be lifted and how tiers will be subsequently applied.
12. As part of the national Contain framework, Local Authorities are required to develop local outbreak control plans to support the national test, trace, contain and enable approach. The plan for Luton was agreed by the HWB on 26 June 2020 and published on the council website on 30 June 2020. Luton have taken a 'prevent, respond, recover' approach, focusing resources on supporting the community to take every measure to prevent transmission of COVID-19 and therefore prevent outbreaks. An outbreak management process has been established to identify, track and control outbreaks and clusters of cases. Support is available to both individuals and businesses to support recovery. Luton Council has received £1.4m to support this activity.
13. A key element of the outbreak control plan is community engagement and a communication and engagement plan has been developed, building on the strong engagement approach taken to date. The council has worked closely with the community to provide updates and tailor communications. The Public Health team have hosted a regular briefing for community and faith groups, developed localised advice guides (some of which have been co-produced with the community) and provided expert health protection advice to community facilities, including schools. Public Health supported the community-initiated extraordinary Health & Wellbeing Board and the production of responses to the questions asked by the community.
14. Luton Council have introduced COVID-19 Community Champions, where community members are able to sign up to receive updates and resources to support us in getting key messages out and hear about community priorities that we should be addressing. Once signed up as a champion, they will receive:
 - regular updates from the council on the latest situation with coronavirus in Luton
 - key messages and updates that need to be communicated through Luton's communities
 - FAQs to help with myth-busting about COVID-19
 - Suggested templates, video scripts, photo suggestions, social media post and other tools to assist with the dissemination of key messages
 - frequent zoom calls where all champions can share ideas and provide feedback from the community to the council to help us improve our communication and messaging
 - a single point of contact to discuss ideas, offer suggestions and ask questions

Outbreak Management Response

15. As part of the Local Outbreak Control Plan, Luton Council hosts a weekly Outbreak Management Cell, with participation from NHS partners, PHE and the police. This group meets weekly to review current data trends and notified outbreaks and agree and implement mitigating actions.
16. Currently, Luton has a weekly case rate (276.0 per 100,000), coupled with an increasing positive test rate (9.8%) (17/10/2020). 7-day average testing of individuals tested per day per 100,000 population rates are at 459.4.
17. Currently, Luton has a range of testing options (see box 1). National policy means that our ability to test the population asymptotically using PCR tests has ceased. Last week, the government announced that Luton would be in the next phase of rollout for asymptomatic testing, using innovative technology called lateral flow tests (LFTs). These test can provide a result within 90 minutes and can be used for mass testing.
18. Planning for the local implementation of LFTs has commenced, with two initial streams of work planned: community testing stations; roving testing teams offering outreach testing in-situ. A further 'train the trainer' model will be developed to enable other providers to operate LFT testing programmes. It is intended to commence LFT testing for the population from the end of lockdown.

Box 1: Testing options in Luton (18/11/2020)



19. The contact tracing team commenced in early August. Luton is the third LA nationally to undertake following up index cases from NHS Test & Trace after 24 hours. We are also using this model to support outbreak management, reaching contacts in a timely and effective way.
20. When we started contact tracing, the completion rate for cases by the national team was 70%, below the 80% level when contact tracing is considered effective. Overall (the cumulative rate) is now at 86.5% and, through the work of the team, we are achieving 100% completion in many weeks. We have the highest completion rates in the East of England for cases.
21. The reaching of close contacts remains the responsibility of NHS Test and Trace, and this completion figure is very low (and decreasing) at 47.6%. Luton has the lowest completion rates for close contacts in the East of England. We would like to take responsibility for all cases and contacts and are making a case for resources to be diverted from the national programme to support this work in Luton. As our team are also able to provide assessments and signposting for financial and wellbeing support when speaking to residents, we think that this is the best option for our population. We have been successful in being awarded a 'quick win' pilot (first in the country); however, current resources are directed at introducing LFT testing.
22. Education settings have now fully reopened for the autumn term. We have seen a number of single cases in schools and at the University, which have led to bubbles being asked to self-isolate. LBC Public Health and Education services have been providing local expertise and guidance to schools and are currently providing an outbreak management service, to ensure that consistent, effective and timely advice is provided to schools. As case rate increase in the community, we are seeing increased cases in schools, which places pressure on schools to manage the challenges of increasing numbers of children and staff self-isolating.

Implications

23. The Local Outbreak Control Plan sets out the clear approach that the local system will support to reduce and control the impact of COVID-19 on the population. The support and commitment of the local communities is critical in the achievement of this.

Consultations

24. No new consultations have been undertaken.

Appendices

25. None

List of Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972, Section 100D

- COVID-19 bulletin no 4: community focus
- Presentation to HWBB 2 June 2020
- Answer summaries from HWBB 2 June 2020
- Contain Framework: [Link here](#)