

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Covid-19 Control Plan – Summary

Updated September 2020

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

This plan sets out how we work together with other organisations and with the local community, to limit Covid-19 being passed on to other people and to help people in our Borough to live their lives as normally as possible. This document is a plain-English summary of the full technical Plan.

Objectives – what we set out to achieve

We aim to work closely together with other organisations to:

- Use data to give us a picture of how and where Covid-19 is being passed between people in our local communities; and to help us plan how we to stop people passing on Covid-19 to each other, and what to do when it is passed on
- Understand which groups of people are most likely to become very ill if they get Covid-19, and where the virus is most likely to spread, so we can plan how to stop it spreading and what to do if we get large numbers of cases in one place
- Talk with and work with our local communities to reduce the spread of the virus in our communities and particularly in the types of places it is most likely to spread. Take specific actions and give clear messages about where the virus is spreading and what people can do to help reduce the spread and keep themselves and others as safe as possible
- Test people in places where we have large numbers of people who have the virus, or where people are more likely to become seriously ill with the virus
- Understand and make best use of the people, skills and money we have across all organisations to help stop the spread of the virus and in instances when the virus is spreading, step in to provide help and support to tackle and reduce this.
- Work closely together with other organisations partners and local authorities, to protect the health and wellbeing of our local communities, because viruses are easily passed between different populations and places

What we must do

National guidance

The Government is continuously developing instructions on how to stop spread of the virus and what to do when it does spread. We are using these instructions to help us prepare and take action. This Plan is changing in line with new information and as we learn more about where and how the virus is spreading in our communities and what effects it has. We are working together with other local authorities to develop and update our plans. The Government has said our Plan must include:

- Care homes and schools
- Places and communities where the virus is likely to cause the most harm
- How we test people for the virus in our community
- Understanding who has been in contact with someone who has the virus, particularly in places and communities where the virus is likely to cause the most harm
- Sharing and using the data all the main health and social care organisations have
- Understanding who in our communities are most likely to be seriously ill if they have Covid-19, so we can help to keep them healthy and help them if they do get Covid-19

- Arrange meetings of groups of people who have the most appropriate skills and knowledge to keep working on this Plan; focus and direct our actions; and monitor how well we are preventing spread of the virus and what we are doing when it does spread

As we develop and implement this Plan, the Government is making changes to what the population can and cannot do – for example how close we can be to other people outside our own household or how many people we can meet. These measures will be crucial in reducing the spread of Covid-19.

Working together

We already work together well with other organisations to stop infectious diseases from spreading and to act when they do. This Plan uses the good work we have in place and builds on it to help us prepare to tackle outbreaks of Covid-19. The Plan will continue to evolve, and the views of partners and communities are important in its further development.

What we must do legally

The law says there are many things the Local Authority can do and must do to protect the health of the local community, including to stop and act on the spread of infectious diseases.

Public Health England has a specialist team (the Health Protection Team or ‘HPT’) which has expert knowledge and skills in infectious diseases. The HPT is working closely with the Local Authority to stop and act on the spread of Covid-19. The Director of Public Health leads the actions of the Local Authority, for Covid-19, working with the HPT.

Recovery – planning our next steps

The pandemic has meant we have needed to learn to live and work in different ways. Some of these differences will need to remain for now, to continue to protect the wellbeing of the population. We are also keen to keep many of the new ways of working we have developed as they have shown benefits to helping our population stay healthy. An important part of this planning work focuses on addressing inequality – how different communities are impacted in different ways by the effects of Covid-19. This focus will be an important part of our Council Plan and the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

How we will run our work on Covid-19

We will have a set of groups that work together and to help stop the spread of Covid-19 and to do the right thing when the disease does spread. This Plan belongs to the Local Authority.

In Stockton-on-Tees, the groups working on Covid-19 report to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board is a Committee of the Council which was established in 2013 to improve and protect the Borough’s health and ensures a joined up approach to the planning and delivery of services and work around health and wellbeing. The Health and Wellbeing Board looks at whether we are achieving the things we set out to do in this Plan and ask the groups that have been set up, to show how they are doing this. One of the new groups that has been set up is the Covid-19 Control Group, which will use this Plan to inform the action they take to help stop the spread of the virus and act when the disease does spread. The other key main group is the Local Outbreak Engagement Group, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council.

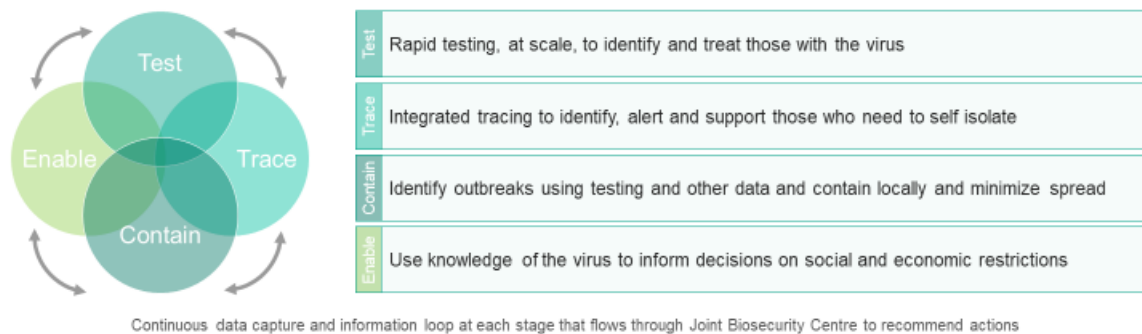
This group helps and questions the Covid-19 Control Group on its work and its main task is to lead on how we work with communities on Covid-19 and how we communicate with our local population about Covid-19. The Covid-19 Control Group and the Local Outbreak Engagement Group work closely together.

Making decisions

The Covid-19 Control Group and the Local Outbreak Engagement Group make recommendations on what action we need to take, based on this Plan. The responsibility for final decisions sits with the Local Authority – the Director of Public Health will lead this, working closely with the Local Authority’s Leader and Cabinet Members.

How we will prevent and act on the spread of Covid-19

National guidance sets out the approach to Covid-19 control through the Test and Trace system as follows. Local action sits as a key element of the ‘Contain’ element of this approach.



Our approach is based on both **preventing** the spread of Covid-19 and on **response** (acting when it does spread). We use a number of things to help us, which are described below.

Preventing spread

We work to stop the disease spreading, particularly to stop large numbers of people catching the disease in a particular area or type of place e.g. schools, care homes. We do this by focusing on the types of place where the disease is most likely to cause the greatest harm, by:

- Developing and using messages for the communities and places where most harm could be caused
- Working to prevent spread in the types of place where the most harm could be caused, before these places have any people with Covid-19

- Providing extra specialist teams of people who can help with health, safety and good hygiene in the places where the most harm could be caused. These teams focus on the places where we know one person has Covid-19 or has the symptoms of Covid-19.

Policy

We are working with Public Health England to agree ways of working that describe how we will stop and act on the spread of Covid-19 in the following types of place, where harm is most likely to be caused:

- Care homes
- Healthcare settings
- Hostels
- Schools
- Workplaces

Using data

The way that data is used to help stop and act on the spread of the disease is developing, along with the national systems and instructions. Data includes things such as the number of people who have been tested and have Covid-19 in our local population, which area of the Borough they live in and how many people have been in close contact with those who have the disease. Some of the data includes personal information which is used and stored carefully and complying with national laws on data. Access to this data is restricted to Public Health and Local Authority professionals to be used only for preventing and managing the spread of Covid-19 in the ways described in this document and the full technical Plan. There will be strict agreements in place about how and when the information can be shared, to make sure people are protected and that the information is used legally and correctly, to control the infection in the community.

The Local Authority is working with Public Health England on ways of recording, understanding and sharing this data. The data is very important in helping us to understand where and how the disease is spreading, so we can work together to stop the spread and stop any more infections as much as we can. It is particularly important to the work of the Covid-19 Control Group.

We are receiving more data in useful ways from national teams, to recognise and respond to the spread of the virus and to outbreaks.

Communications, messages and working with the community

To stop and act on the spread of Covid-19, it is important to develop and use clear messages that are developed by working with communities and using the evidence of what works and the information we know about particular communities and types of place in our Borough. The national framework for communications to support outbreak prevention and control is centred on three pillars and this is used in our local approach to communications:



We also work closely with Public Health England on these messages. Some important messages for everyone in the Borough include:

- Wash your hands well and often, 'Catch it, bin it, kill it', cough into a tissue or the elbow of your sleeve and wash your hands
- How to know if you might have Covid-19 and that you must stay at home and get tested
- When NHS Test and Trace contacts you, it is important to let them know who you have been in close contact with so we can stop further spread of the disease
- If you are asked to 'self-isolate', this means staying at home for 10 days if you have Covid-19 or 14 days if you have been in contact with someone with Covid-19. You should not take daily exercise or go to the shops, or meet with anyone outside your household; and you should stay in your house or garden for that whole period of time
- The main reason we are trying to stop spread is to stop the numbers of people infected in the population increasing, and to protect vulnerable people (older people and those with health problems) who are more likely to be seriously ill with Covid-19. If we do this, we are also more likely to avoid returning to 'lockdown' either nationally or in our area
- It is important to stick to social distancing advice – and explaining what this means
- Wearing face coverings on public transport and in public places where you cannot be socially distant from other people. We also explain the difference between face coverings and face masks
- There is help available for people who are self-isolating, who do not have any help from neighbours, family or friends
- You should still get advice from your Doctor if you are unwell (not just with Covid-19) and always get help in an emergency. It is also very important to still go to your appointments for immunisations and screening such as breast screening and cervical screening

We also work with specific communities, local Councillors, voluntary organisations and places where Covid-19 is likely to cause the most harm on messages that help stop and act on the spread of Covid-19 in their area or community. This includes messages for different types of place such as schools and particular workplaces. We also work with local communities to ask for their help in preventing the spread of Covid-19 by sticking to advice and by getting the right messages out in the right ways to their friends and neighbours. We work with them to understand why people may not be following advice and to consider what we can do to change this. The Local Outbreak Engagement Group leads this work and also make sure that we share updates on our work with communities and other organisations.

People most at risk of harm

We work with Public Health England to understand which are the places where people are likely to get infected more easily with Covid-19 or groups of people who become very ill if they have Covid-19. This could be because they already suffer from poor health or live in a place where the spread of the disease is more likely. These places and groups are:

1. Places where people may be in poorer health or where spread may be more likely:

- Care homes, people who have home care
- Homeless hostels, asylum seeker accommodation, refuges
- Prisons

Places where spread may be more likely but people are less likely to be in poor health:

- Schools, nurseries, childminders
- Workplaces
- Sports clubs, gyms
- Shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants
- Close contact services such as hairdressers, beauticians and barbers

2. Vulnerable groups

- People aged 70 and over and groups who are being 'shielded' because of their health
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups; and other 'inclusion' groups that reflect the diversity of our population
- Rough sleepers, people who misuse drugs and / or alcohol
- Unemployed, low income families and vulnerable children
- People with learning disability, disabilities, mental illness or long term conditions

3. In need of temporary support following contact tracing

- households who are self-isolating
- people who are shielding (shielding is due to end at the end of July 2020)

Work is going on to put extra protection in place for many of the groups at most risk of harm and to act quickly and thoroughly if Covid-19 spread in the place where they live or work. The Covid-19 Control Group is making sure there are no gaps in these plans. Small groups with relevant knowledge and expertise will consider each of the particular groups or places outlined above and some of our other services such as our 0-19 service for families will also help with this. If there is an outbreak in a particular geographical area, we will use the same approach to act on spread of the disease. If the outbreak crosses or is close to a local authority border, we will work with our neighbouring local authorities too. The NHS is leading the work on places where healthcare takes place, linking with other organisations.

Testing and Contact Tracing

Testing for Covid-19 is available at the following places:

For people with symptoms of Covid 19:

- Mobile testing unit at the Hampton by Hilton Hotel Car Park (former Dairy Car Park), Bishop Street, Stockton on Tees, TS18 1TE
- Other testing sites across Tees as advised by the online booking system
- Home testing kits

Testing can be arranged at: at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-an-antigen-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/. You can also order a home testing kit by following the same link.

Health and social care staff can be tested in the same way or through a booked appointment with North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.

We are working with colleagues across the North East to make sure we can place mobile testing facilities near to locations where there is spread of Covid-19, as part of our plans to stop further spread. We are also working with care homes to test staff and residents in care homes who do not have symptoms, on a routine basis. It is important for test results to come back quickly, to help us to act to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and national work is going on to improve this.

Although testing of large numbers of people in a workplace may identify a number of people with the virus, it cannot rule out infection in those whose test results are negative. Therefore, mass testing will not be a deciding factor in asking people in the workplace to self-isolate or to stop self-isolating (contacts need to complete the 14 days of self-isolation regardless of their test result). Decisions on mass testing will be taken by the Director of Public Health or their deputy, working together with Public Health England and the workplace in question.

NHS Test and Trace is the national 'contact tracing' system to understand who has been in close contact with someone who has had a test which confirms they have Covid-19. The national contact tracing process is set out here: www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works. The national team does the first contact tracing and sends information on more complex cases or places where there is spread, to the regional Public Health England Health Protection Team for further investigation. These details are passed to the Local Authority as needed, for more investigation, ongoing support and action to prevent further spread. The national, regional and Local Authority teams are available 7 days a week, 8am-8pm.

Some businesses and services are finding it difficult to continue functioning if large numbers of staff need to self-isolate for 14 days. All businesses should therefore have Business Continuity Plans in place which consider this risk and could be implemented at short notice to keep their businesses running.

Outbreak response and management

An outbreak is defined as two or more cases that are linked in time and place. The Public Health England Health Protection team and the Outbreak Response Team in the Local Authority work together to handle the outbreak.

For outbreaks of any infectious disease there are clear, agreed ways of working and good relationships between Public Health England and the Local Authority. These are being built on to be used for Covid-19. There are 8 steps:

1. Identifying and declaring an outbreak
2. Notifying the outbreak to the Local Authority
3. Starting outbreak control
4. Using public health actions to control the spread
5. Calling an emergency or major incident
6. Health and social care support
7. Communication and media
8. Data and reporting

Details of these steps can be found in the full technical document.

Closure and lockdown measures

The Local Authority has legal powers to close all or part of a building or business to protect the public's health, although local authorities always work together with the place in question first to reach agreement before we need to think about using these powers. Fully closing a premises is far less likely to be needed than closing just part of it. Larger outbreaks of Covid-19 may happen in a geographical area or across the whole region. In such a case Directors of Public Health and Local Authority Chief Executives work jointly across Local Authority boundaries. National and local government agree about 'lockdown' measures across local areas, or across regions.

Covid-19 Outbreak Response Team

The Outbreak Response Team is made up of staff from the Public Health team, supported by other staff from across the Local Authority as needed. If an outbreak happens, the Team manages the outbreak. This involves working with the place / community where the outbreak is, using the data and making sure everything is being done to stop further spread. A system for informing the Local Authority or Public Health England of outbreaks is very important:

- Any outbreak should be reported to the Public Health England Health Protection Team by calling 0300 303 8596 and to the Local Authority Public Health team by emailing COVIDoutbreak@stockton.gov.uk
- The test results for anyone who has Covid-19 is reported to the NHS Test and Trace service

- The Local Authority Public Health team should be contacted by emailing COVIDoutbreak@stockton.gov.uk if any place where the virus is more likely to spread or where people are in poor health:
 - Think they have an outbreak
 - Have someone who has had a test and has Covid-19
 - Have someone who has not yet had a test but has symptoms (if the type of place is one where people are in poor health)

Communication

The Outbreak Response Team works closely with Local Authority Communications team to coordinate appropriate communications with the public in the case of smaller outbreaks which may include working with the local media, sharing information and advice on social media and producing printed communications materials such as leaflets and posters targeting the people living or working in the place where the outbreak is. In the case of larger outbreaks, the Local Outbreak Engagement Group meets to agree how to work most effectively with the community and to agree and develop the messages that need to be communicated to them. The Outbreak Response Team helps with carrying out the work on this if needed.

Our approach to communications is open and honest and we work closely with other organisations on our communications approach and messages. We also aim to continue to learn as we work further on Covid-19 and to use our learning as we further develop and use our plans.

All our work and communications take place by working closely together with the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet, local ward Councillors and the Local Authority Senior Management/ Strategic command. Strategic Command is the Corporate Management Team of the Local Authority and is responsible for the Local Authority's response to major incidents such as a pandemic. Strategic Command is made up of the Managing Director of the Local Authority, their team of Directors and the Director of Public Health.

Escalation to an Emergency Situation or Major Incident

Outbreak planning and response is locally managed by the Local Authority through the Director of Public Health (DPH) and the Outbreak Response Team, in partnership with the Public Health England Health Protection Team. If needed, the local authority will consider whether to declare an emergency or major incident (for example where there is a large-scale outbreak) and will consider starting the Emergency Response Process. These are all covered by the Local Authority's Major Incident Plan and the Local Authority's legal responsibilities for emergencies and major incidents. The Local Authority will also work closely with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) when this happens. The LRF coordinates all main organisations across the Cleveland area in an emergency.

Support for people self-isolating

People who have Covid-19 and people who have been close contact with them, are identified by NHS Test and Trace and some of these people may need additional help while they are self-isolating, because they do not have support from family, friends or neighbours or because of their health.

Where NHS Test and Trace identifies people who are unwilling or unable to self-isolate, or do not give details of the people they have been in close contact with, this will be passed to the Public Health England regional Health Protection Team and the Local Authority for follow-up (via the COVIDoutbreak@stockton.gov.uk email address).

Social Support

Stockton-on-Tees residents in need of help during the pandemic can contact the Covid Community Support helpline led by Catalyst. Opening hours are Monday to Friday, 9am-2.30pm and the telephone number is 01642 524500.

Catalyst and the Local Authority provide a range of support, in partnership with local voluntary and community sector organisations including:

- Shopping
- Providing essential food supplies
- Picking up prescriptions
- Walking or taking care of pets
- Listening on the phone and giving emotional support
- Signposting to places that can provide advice and guidance
- Other practical help as required

The helpline works closely with adults' and children's social care, housing and welfare support if needed.

Health Care Support

Stockton-on-Tees residents in need of further medical help at home or the place where they live or work, will be referred by the Outbreak Response Team to their GP for referral to a specialist Covid clinic, 111 (out of hours) or 999.

Financial Resources

In addition to the people and skills described above, the government has made a £300 million grant available nationally to support local authorities in their work to prevent and act on the spread of Covid-19. The money is used to help with the following five areas:

- Data monitoring across the Borough
- More staff and training to provide Infection, Prevention and Control advice and support

- Knowledge and skills to help local leaders in different types of locations and places, to take action to prevent spread of Covid-19
- Communication and community engagement activities
- Support for those who need to isolate

Risk register

As our understanding of Covid-19 and the actions we need to take grows nationally and locally, there may be some risks associated with acting on this Plan. The Covid-19 Control Group keeps an overview of these risks and raise these with the Regional Liaison Group, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Local Authority Strategic Command and national bodies as needed.