



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER

2 September 2021

Report of the Director of Public Health

**Community Testing in Derbyshire
(Health and Communities)**

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County wide.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is not a Key Decision.

3. Purpose

3.1 This report provides the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities with an update on the progress of the Community Testing Programme for Covid-19 which commenced in Derbyshire on 21 December 2021.

3.2 The Cabinet Member is asked to:

a) Note the progress to date of the programme.

b) Note the change in approach due to new Government guidance and next steps as outlined in the report.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 A decision was taken by Corporate Management Team utilising an Urgent Officer Decision on 18 December 2020 to introduce targeted community testing to identify asymptomatic Covid-19 cases in a phased

approach across Derbyshire. Delivering a community testing programme supports the Council's overall goals to reduce the spread of the virus, protect the most vulnerable and drive down the infection rate across the county area of Derbyshire (excluding Derby City). It was agreed within the Officer Decision Record that the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, alongside any appropriate partnership meetings would be kept updated on the progress and learning from the programme.

- 4.2 The community testing programme was initially required to focus activity on defined geographies and populations where there was a higher case rate for a six-week period. Shortly after the January lockdown announcement, the Government re-focused the community testing programme and asked local authorities to focus on individuals who could not work from home throughout the lockdown period. Then, in line with the national roadmap, asymptomatic testing was to be focused on the whole population and the approach expanded to include options for home-testing as well as at fixed asymptomatic testing sites.
- 4.3 From 21 December to 30 June 115,000 people took part in community testing and 668 were positive tests.
- 4.4 Since 1 July the programme has evolved again, with local authorities being asked by the Department of Health and Social Care to lead an agile targeted testing programme, whereby local priority groups are engaged in asymptomatic testing. Local priority groups are those citizens who are those at greatest risk of infection, serious illness, and transmission. Priority groups are often less likely to take-up the vaccine or to engage with national testing programmes and tend to live in areas of higher and enduring transmission.
- 4.5 The agile targeted testing programme is in place from 1 July 2021 until 30 September 2021, subject to further review of a business case by HM Treasury. The local authority is anticipating that some form of asymptomatic testing programme will be required until March 2022.
- 4.6 The new approach provides more freedoms locally to innovate and provide appropriate resources via asymptomatic testing to maximise the impact of testing at a community level. However, the approach requires the County Council to deliver testing against a rate card cost model, with an upper limit on costs that can be reclaimed back from the Government.

- 4.7 All of the fixed community testing sites, which were not being utilised to optimum capacity closed at the end of June so that resources could transfer to the agile targeted testing model.
- 4.8 To ensure the approach responds to need, yet demonstrates value for money, the Council has increased the number of mobile vans from which to deliver agile testing so different communities across the county from 1 July onwards are targeted. There are now five agile testing units operating across the county. These are split so there are two covering the north of the county, two covering the south of the county and one is operating across venues within the Chesterfield area. The units operate on a fixed schedule visiting the same communities every week for a month, but in the event of a major outbreak or incident one or more of the units may change location at short notice. The vans are open seven days a week.
- 4.9 Between 1 July and 8 August 2,362 tests have been completed via the agile testing units.
- 4.10 As well as offering supervised swabbing, Derbyshire County Council has supported the Community Collect initiative whereby individuals can pick up packs of lateral flow home test kits Community testing has successfully enabled representatives from organisations working with the homeless population and those impacted by domestic violence to access home test kits. The emerging national policy position encourages pop-up testing options and linking with community partners to distribute home test kits to priority groups. Public Health is working alongside partners to further expand this option across the county.
- 4.11 We have been able to undertake testing in more isolated communities and also deployed resources where there were issues of concern or a local outbreak, such as in Gamesley and Glossop in late June.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 Public Health have considered a number of different testing models that included a mix of mobile and fixed sites but considered the above approach to demonstrate the most affordable model within the financial requirements outlined by the Department of Health and Social Care.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Cabinet Decision – Urgent Officer Decision- Implementation of Community Testing in Derbyshire (11 March 2021)
- 7.2 Cabinet Member Health and Communities – Update on Implementation of Community Testing in Derbyshire (25 March 2021)

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1- Implications.
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of Community Testing Performance Data

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 That Cabinet:
 - a) Note the progress to date of the programme
 - b) Note the change in approach due to new Government guidance and next steps as outlined in the report
 - c) Agree to receive a further update report in December 2021.

10. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 10.1 To detail on the implementation of the programme to date and consider implications for Derbyshire.
- 10.2 To outline the next steps for the delivery of the programme in Derbyshire.
- 10.3 To note the date of the next planned update on the programme.

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Appendix 1**Implications****a) Financial**

Up to 30 June 2021, the community testing programme was supported by funding of £14 per head for each test completed and local authorities could reclaim all reasonable costs incurred from the Department of Health and Social Care.

From 1 July onwards the funding mechanism changed, and the Department of Health and Social Care will not reimburse the authority for all reasonable costs incurred. Instead, the agile testing model is subject to a rate card with a funding cap of £62.13 per hour per activity (e.g. supervised swabbing or community collect) run from an agile testing unit. Further rate card caps are in place for Community Collect and other forms of testing in local communities, which Public Health will consider as and when required.

As a contingency, a proportion of the additional Contain Outbreak Management funding the Council has received, has been earmarked to provide further financial support if community testing produces unexpected financial risk. This was £2.5m for all testing and contact tracing activity and was agreed by Cabinet on 14 January 2021.

b) Legal

An Officer Decision Record was approved by Corporate Management Team on 16 December 2020 regarding the roll out and commencement of the programme.

The collaboration agreement from the Department of Health and Social Care sets out the terms and conditions for the delivery of the service, including how the authority will be able to claim back costs incurred against the rate cap. In addition, there is a letter of comfort in place to cover clinical negligence and risk.

Clinical governance and oversight is provided by Derbyshire Health United who provide assurance that testing takes place to the required standards and processes.

c) Human Resources

Derbyshire County Council has undertaken an extensive recruitment process to appoint a workforce that is supporting the delivery of community testing. A

mix of staff on temporary contracts and relief posts have been appointed to support Agile Community Testing activity across Derbyshire

d) Equalities Impact

An EIA has been completed for the testing programme and will be refreshed to reflect the revised approach.

e) Corporate objectives and priorities for change

The Community Testing Programme supports the Council Plan priority on 'effective early help for individuals and communities' by supporting the following deliverable: 'Undertaken local Covid-19 testing and contact tracing activity and provided advice to schools, care homes, businesses and communities to help manage the spread and outbreaks of coronavirus.'