

25th September 2020

LOCAL LOCKDOWNS – LEARNING LESSONS

Purpose

1. This report summarises some of the 'lessons learned' identified at a meeting of leaders and chief executives from authorities affected by local outbreaks/lockdowns on Monday. It also includes points raised previously by leaders and chief executives via email and matters discussed during the WLGA Evidence Session to the Senedd Health and Social Services Committee on Wednesday.
2. Leaders from South East Wales met with the First Minister on Tuesday afternoon to consider options for restrictions on either a local or regional approach; a continuation of the local approach was preferred.
3. Concerns have been expressed that lessons need to be learned from early experiences of local lockdowns. 'Learning the lessons' is an ongoing process and WLGA Officials and Chief Executives are meeting with civil servants on Friday afternoon to further discuss lessons around local lockdown. The Welsh Government also convenes weekly meetings of the chairs of SCGs and RCGs where issues are identified on a regular basis.
4. The Welsh Government has also agreed to provide a summary note to local authorities this week on local lockdown processes, local actions, thresholds etc.

SUMMARY

5. Clarity and consistency is needed around the implementation of local lockdowns/restrictions:
 - Process – summary and clarity of who takes what decision/when? What is/should be role of leaders in process?
 - Rationale – what are thresholds? Availability/sharing/timeliness of data
 - Response – what are local actions/what requires Ministerial approval?
 - Communications - between agencies and with public (in particular consistent and timely messaging).
 - Duration/review – clarity of process and exit strategy?

Test, Trace and Protect

6. There has been inevitable pressure on TTP in affected areas:
 - Issues around testing capacity and return rates are well-documented and additional local/Welsh arrangements have been made.

- Importance of local testing facilities for local residents in a lock-down area.
- Redeployment of staff who are or were previously shielding and other trained staff to prioritise TTP.
- May need to request TTP mutual aid or close some services to reallocate staff into contact tracing.

Impact on Services

- Consensus that schools need to remain open (subject to guidance and management of any local cases). More straightforward to keep a school open, even if significant number of pupils are absent/self-isolating.
- General concern about impact of return of universities and increase of students from across the UK/world.
- Some non-essential council services (e.g. libraries, cultural venues) may need to be closed to manage risk and redeploy staff to TTP.

Emergency Planning Process

- Complex emergency planning arrangements and processes are not always agile enough to cope with the acceleration rate of local lockdowns. Several links between IMTs-OCTs-SCGs-HPAG/Ministers (see Annex).
- There has been a request in recent weeks for clarity on thresholds – this has been provided this week, the understanding is that 50 cases per 100,000 is 'red' threshold for local restrictions to be considered and 25 cases per 100,000 is regarded as 'amber'.
- Clarity needed around formal review and exit processes in local lockdown areas.
- Terminology – use of term 'enhanced restrictions' rather than 'lockdown' is preferred – use of 'lockdown' can confuse people as the restrictions are not the same as when the country was in lockdown previously.

Data

- There has been an issue around the consistency and sharing of data – chief executives and leaders have not had consistent access to the most recent 7-day figures on cases and testing used by Welsh Government and, until reported in the media, several were not aware their authority areas were in the 'amber' category.
- Further confusion has arisen with the widespread use of the PHW surveillance data for cases per 100,000 population. Although marked as 'Last 7 days', this data is in the main data for 5 days, as test results for the most recent 48 hours are not yet included. This has resulted in inconsistent information being used and the media reporting mixed and confusing information.

Communications between partners/public

- Some initial frustration at delays in FAQs & guidance from PHW/WG being provided to those authorities who have gone into local lockdown. Welsh Government needs to have FAQs/guidance ready at time of any announcement not afterwards and should ideally be available for residents before restrictions take effect. The council and staff can be caught in middle during the 24 hours between announcements and information being available.

- Local restrictions/lockdown are similar, so FAQs should be readily available.

Businesses and Pubs

- Welsh Government have now announced from Thursday that all pubs and restaurants must stop serving at 10.00pm.
- Leaders have mixed views on complete closure of pubs:
 - some believe they should be closed
 - PHW does not believe pubs are the source of in most areas and mixing and lack of social distancing in peoples' homes is the main source of transmission. '90% of pubs are compliant, need to deal and be seen to be dealing with the 10%'. Strong messaging needed to tackle breaches.
 - PHW concern is that closing pubs (where some control and contact tracing is possible) will lead people to socialise indoors, which impacts on TTP details collected.
- Enforcement capacity and powers – funding for additional capacity is helpful, but need to use powers and be seen to use powers to deal with those businesses who breach regulations.

Scale of Lockdown

- Scope for 'hyper' local lockdown - this has been discussed in some areas already. Public Health Wales confirmed in evidence to the Senedd Health, Social Care and Health Committee that this may be an option in a county where there was a very localised outbreak and concern.
- Scope for regional restrictions/lockdown - this was subject of discussion between First Minister and South East Wales Leaders and whether all authorities in a region (including those not on an 'amber list') should be subject to restrictions. The view was that local restrictions should be implemented rather than a regional approach.

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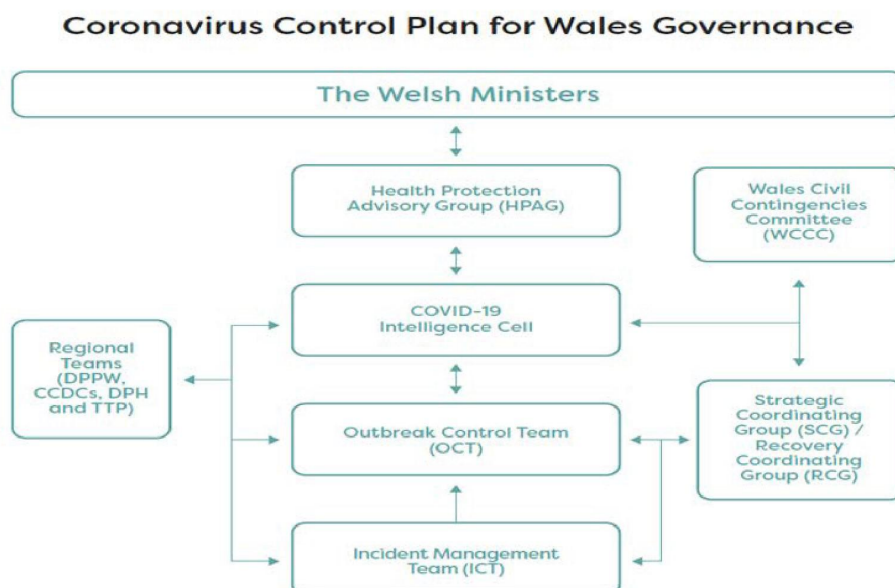
ANNEX

Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales

The Plan is available [here](#) and a 5 page summary available [here](#). In summary, the plan has 5 stages, each involving different actions and coordinated or overseen by different groups:

1. Prevention
2. New cases and clusters
3. Incidents and outbreaks
4. Local or regional measures
5. All-Wales measures

Governance Arrangements & Chain of Command



Summary of Roles:

- **Incident Management Team (IMT)** - multi-agency team responsible for coordinating the local analysis and response to an incident. It will determine whether the incident is under control or whether an outbreak is declared and an Outbreak Control Team established
- **Outbreak Control Team (OCT)** - multi-agency team which shares responsibility for managing outbreaks between all the member organisations. Role to identify the source and/or main determinants of the outbreak and implement necessary measures to prevent further spread or recurrence of the infection. Responses may include increased testing, enhanced enforcement (in consultation with enforcing bodies), public health messages, closure of premises, or other targeted actions.

- **Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)** – overall responsibility for the multi-agency management of an emergency and establishes the policy and strategic framework within which other actors will operate.
- **(Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG)** - oversees the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency.)
- **Regional Teams** - multi-disciplinary regional response teams receive referrals or escalation of cases from local teams that require additional support. Each LHB area will include a Strategic Regional TTP Oversight Group to provide situational awareness on emerging clusters and outbreaks to key partners and the COVID-19 Intelligence Cell.
- **COVID-19 Intelligence Cell** - oversight and understanding of the transmission dynamics of COVID-19 across Wales, through relevant, timely situational awareness, assessment and insight into cases of COVID-19 in Wales. Provides a forum for the Regional Teams to discuss local intelligence acquired through contact tracing and highlight any risks identified. Reports directly to the Chief Medical Officer and to the Health Protection Advisory Group.
- **Health Protection Advisory Group (HPAG)**. National all-Wales level oversight of the Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales. Will advise and update Ministers on the incidence of COVID-19, the scale and nature of any local outbreaks and their management arrangements, including any arrangements to recognise cross-border risks. This could include recommendations for national intervention at a local, regional or an all-Wales basis.
- **Wales Civil Contingencies Committee (WCCC)**. The Wales Civil Contingencies Committee provides a multi-agency response that directly informs recommendations made by the HPAG to Ministers. This ensures that the wider implications of responses are fully considered and various actors are involved in the process and able to respond effectively. This might include, for example, the police who will enforce any restrictions, or local authorities who may need to respond to new demands or restrictions on essential public services.