

Dear Councillors,

This briefing note will be shared later today with the news media and – at the request of some of the Members – directly with all the community councils, but I invite you, as community leaders, to share it with your own community networks and constituents; particularly the message about the new variant being predominant and the consequent need for extreme vigilance until the vaccination programme can take effect.

DATA ON THE VIRUS

Please find attached:

Table 1 - the summary of the weekly data for the county borough as a whole compared to other councils in North Wales.

Table 2 - the summary of daily data for the 18 'MSOA' statistical sub-areas of Wrexham

NB - last week's data are tentative and will only be finalised next week. However, the 'Christmas effect' on the reliability of the data has now passed, so the data for past weeks in the tables are a true reflection of recent trends.

The County Borough as a Whole (Table 1)

In a matter of a few weeks, the much more transmissible 'UK' variant of Covid-19 has become predominant in North Wales, accounting for approximately 70% of new cases and driving the rise in infection. The infection rate is doubling every 6 days in North Wales, compared to every 10.6 days in the rest of Wales. There are no known cases of the 'South African' variant, yet and this is a reducing risk given international travel restrictions.

Wrexham has risen to 1st in Wales for our rate per 100,00 population (**904.7** today) and remains 2nd in Wales for positivity (**30.9%** today) and has seen its highest number of new cases since the pandemic began. All three statistics have more than doubled over the last three weeks. The number of hospital admissions (95) has now exceeded the peak of last year (91, in May). While deaths have not risen as steeply, there is always a month's lag between new cases and these data, so, sadly, we must expect numbers to rise.

The Sub-Areas (Table 2)

Almost all of the 18 'MSOA' sub-areas of Wrexham have seen worsening figures since my last report to you only 4 days ago (4th January).

- **9** have recorded their worst figures since 20th October (shown in bold on the table), when PHW first started reporting these data, compared to 11 on 4th January.
- **16** have greater than **550/100k**, compared to 13 on the 4th.
- **11** have greater than **800/100k**, compared to 6 on the 4th.
- **11** are in the worst centile in Wales, compared to 6 on the 4th:
 - **Gwersyllt West & Summerhill has 1722/100k** - compared to 928 on the 4th
 - **Hermitage & Whitegate has 1417** - compared to 1154 on the 4th
 - **Johnstown North & Rhostyllen has 1223** - compared to 1141 on the 4th
 - **New Broughton & Bryn Cefn has 1108** - compared to 1031 on the 4th
 - **Coedpoeth & Brymbo has 1074** - compared to 658 on the 4th

- **Llay South & Gwersyllt East has 1034** the 4th - compared to 1022 on
- **Wrexham West has 960** 4th - compared to 948 on the
- **Ruabon & Marchwiel has 936** 4th - compared to 604 on the
- **Borras & Rhosnensi has 868** the 4th - compared to 537 on
- **Caia Park has 840** 4th - compared to 714 on the
- **Acton & Maes-y-dre has 791** 4th - compared to 633 on the
- **0** have less than 300/100k, compared to 0 on 28th December. In fact, the lowest is 421/100k

Settings

The virus is very widespread with the principal locations remaining households followed, some way below, by outbreaks in care/nursing homes (including, sadly a number of hospitalisations and deaths), the Maelor Hospital and the prison. There are no official outbreaks elsewhere, but several clusters in workplaces, such as the large employers. As the hospitality sector and most of the retail sector are closed. there are few, if any, cases in such premises.

MANAGING THE VIRUS

General

The Level 4 Alert lockdown, which came into force on 20th December, should soon begin to have an effect, as the October 'firebreak' did, but the predominance of the 'UK' variant and the easing of the restrictions over Christmas have acted against this. Welsh Government (WG) has extended the lockdown for at least a further 3 weeks, and strengthened it to include showrooms, such as for cars and kitchens. WG will review the position again on 29th January.

Multi-agency teams are trying to manage the specific local occurrences, but it is a very difficult battle given that they are so widespread and the principal setting is households. The response is being managed by a multi-agency IMT (Incident Management Team) which meets each Tuesday, together with teams focussed on particular outbreaks, such as in individual care homes. Public Protection officers are working with NWP to enforce the lockdown regulations (especially in the 'hot-spot' sub-areas) with NWP having issued a number of fixed penalty fines for non-compliance in recent weeks. Colleagues from several Council departments are supporting the TTP system which is seeing a peak in demand. The Council is working with AVOW and other partners to support vulnerable people in local communities.

Education

The college and university have now reopened. Those students returning to the university halls of residence have been, and will continue to be, tested on arrival. Many students in both the university and the college have not returned to the campuses at all, but are accessing their courses on-line. It is a credit to both organisations that the campuses have not been a major source of infection in themselves or in their communities.

The First Minister announced this morning that schools will continue to provide education to pupils via remote learning. On-site provision will continue for those children who are vulnerable and for the children of key workers. Unless there is a significant reduction in

cases of Covid-19 before 29 January these arrangements will continue until the February half term (week beginning 15th February).

Other Council Services

The Council is continuing to provide critical services as publicised on our website, while both critical and non-critical services are also being provided by colleagues working from home.

Mass Testing

Mass testing is taking place in particular care homes, but PHW and BCUHB do not plan to undertake wider community mass testing. This was undertaken in the summer to determine whether there was community transmission in particular parts of Wrexham town, but we now know that there is widespread community transmission so it will not tell us more than we already know. Also, as we are in a lockdown, there are no additional tools available to us or Welsh Government to tackle the virus – other than communicating the severity of the new variant (see below). Testing of student ‘bubbles’ in contact with cases will take place in schools when they eventually reopen for face-to-face teaching.

Mass Vaccination

The Health Board have confirmed that North Wales is receiving, and in future will continue to receive, 22% of all vaccines made available in Wales based on population size.

Vaccination in care homes

- Care home staff continue to be vaccinated at the Mass Vaccination Centres (MVCs) primarily, with slots being increased from 3 to 5 days per week to accommodate more appointments
- Residents in those care homes where there are no positive cases will be receiving the vaccination in the coming days, which is likely to lead to over 300 of them being vaccinated before the end of the weekend. The primary care team in local areas is managing this supported by District Nurses. The homes have been contacted by the team and asked to gain consent prior to the vaccination team arriving, in order to speed up the process. A short guide has been put together by one of the local GPs to support these conversations in the care homes.
- A risk assessment tool is being agreed with partners to help determine at what point it is appropriate to vaccinate in care homes which have recently had positive cases.
- The vaccination supply will be sufficient to vaccinate all the residents in the care homes, but should there be any spare vaccines they will be used for staff who have yet to be vaccinated at the Deeside or Llandudno MVCs.

Vaccination of other health and social care staff

- Domiciliary Care and other Social Care staff are not being invited at this stage, but will be progressed as supplies ramp up in the next few weeks.

Vaccination in the community

- There is expected to be a step-wise increase in the supply of the vaccine in the next few weeks.
- As these stocks become available priority groups in the wider population in Wrexham will be targeted to receive the vaccine through the MVC in Enfys Hospital, Deeside (which became operational before Christmas), two local centres in Wrexham (Plas Madoc and Glyndwr University which are expected to be up and running by 18th January) and local GP practices, pharmacies etc.
- This week, vaccinations for the over-80's have been piloted in some GP practices in Wrexham and this will increase over the next few weeks. The Health Board consider that they will be in a strong position to have offered all over-80's in Wrexham a vaccination by the end of January.

More information can be obtained via the following link:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/covid-19-vaccination-information/about-the-vaccine>

Communications

The Council's communications team is continuing to signpost people to the correct information – including current restrictions in Wales, and any impact on local services. We continue to remind people that, under the current Alert Level 4 restrictions, they should:

- Only mix with people in their own household (both indoors and outdoors)
- Only travel for essential purposes, such as work, health reasons or caring duties

We'll reinforce these key messages this week, but anything Members can do to share these messages in your communities would be helpful. You can signpost people to the [Welsh Government website](#) for more information on the current restrictions. The [Welsh Government](#) and [Wrexham Council](#) Twitter accounts also contain useful information that you can share with your communities on social media.

It is crucial that we encourage people to limit the number of contacts they have at the moment and not to mix with other households, for their sake and for the sake of their families, friends and wider communities.

If you have any queries about this note please let me know and I will do my best to answer them.

Lawrence Isted

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