

# Member Briefing

Number: 1489

**Title:** Council's role in Test and Trace Service

**Summary:** Outbreak Management Plan is being developed.

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## Background

Cheshire West and Chester Council was chosen as one of eleven areas across England to be beacons of local action in the Government's COVID-19 Test and Trace recovery strategy.

The Test and Trace Service centres around the implementation of four key actions: Test, Trace, Contain and Enable.

The Council is developing its local outbreak control plan and will engage with neighbouring authorities and public health partners to share planning and learning.

This will be underpinned by a public engagement exercise involving the Council working with public health partners to build trust and participation of residents.

## What is happening

### How the NHS Test and Trace Service works:

It is designed to control the rate of reproduction of COVID-19 by reducing the spread of the infection. This will allow greater easing of the social distancing measures that have been in place since the lockdown was introduced in a way that is safe and will protect lives.

The core of the system relies on self-reporting by the public.

When they experience symptoms, they are required to self-isolate for seven days, but will be able to order a test online or by calling 119.

If they test positive they will be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace Service, which will ask about their symptoms, ask if they have family or others living with them, ask if they need support in self-isolating, ask for the name and contact details of anyone outside their household they have been in close contact with in the two days before their symptoms started, and if they work in or have recently visited a setting with other people.

The NHS Test and Trace Service will then trace close recent contacts of anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and, if necessary, notify them that they must self-isolate. The Service will ask if they are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms and provide advice on what the close contact must now do as they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

When it is launched, the NHS COVID-19 app is designed to supplement the core elements of the Test and Trace service by increasing its speed and reach, especially for those in close contact with someone who has tested positive but are not known to them.

It is anticipated that most people will be able to self-isolate for the maximum two-week period without any support. However, where someone who has been advised to self-isolate needs practical or social support for themselves or someone they care for, they will be directed to the Council for help with food or medicine deliveries. In many instances, this may be the extent of Council's role in supporting people who use the NHS Test and Trace Service.

### **Local role in NHS Test and Trace service:**

Where the contact tracing process identifies a complex case or one involving a high-risk location, such as where a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 has worked in or recently visited a health or care setting, a prison or a school, then the case will be referred to Public Health England's regional teams and the Council's Public Health teams. These teams have worked this way for years and have tried and tested ways to deal with complex cases.

### **Local Outbreak Control Plans:**

We are developing a Local Outbreak Control Plan. This will clarify how we work with the NHS Test and Trace service, so that the whole local system is geared up to contain the virus. There are three important elements of governance:

- Leading the public health response locally at an Upper Tier Local Authority level through the Director of Public Health and a Health Protection Board, working closely with Public Health England. Ian Ashworth, Director of Public Health, will produce the plan as the holder of statutory responsibility for public health;
- Managing the deployment of broader resources and local testing capacity to swiftly test local people in the event of an outbreak and liaising with the Joint Biosecurity Centre. This will be done by the Chief Executive working through local emergency planning structures and the Cheshire Local Resilience Forum;
- Providing political oversight of the local delivery of plans and engaging with residents and communities through a board by Councillor Gittins.

The plans are now being developed and the ambition is to have this in place by the end of June. There is flexibility in the above arrangements to allow us to collaborate on different geographic footprints to bring this work together.

The local public health response will build on existing health protection good practice, with a C-19 Health Protection Board put in place appropriate for this pandemic. Working in partnership with the full range of partners, such as PHE, NHS and the voluntary sector, the plan will set out how vulnerable people are being supported to self-isolate, as well as plans to manage complex cases in high-risk places, locations and communities.

The Council will also set up a Local Outbreak Engagement Board, led by the Council leader. It will provide political oversight of local delivery of the Test and Trace Service, will lead the

engagement with communities and be the public face of the local response in the event of an outbreak.

**Managing the deployment of broader resourcing and local testing capacity:**

The Council may need to arrange for the rapid deployment of mobile testing units to assist in the management of a local outbreak. This may require activity across a range of partners, and existing Gold command forums will provide the means of coordinating that action.

The Council will also need to work closely with the Joint Biosecurity Centre, which has the role of bringing together data from testing and contact tracing, alongside other NHS and public data, to provide insight into local and national patterns of transmission and potential high-risk locations and to identify early potential outbreaks so action can be taken.

The Joint Biosecurity Centre will shortly be issuing further information about how local movement restrictions may need to be increased if infections increase again.

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**Date:** 4 June 2020