

Oxfordshire Local System Plans for COVID-19

A Briefing of the Oxfordshire COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan

Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic has been the biggest public health event in a century which had created an unprecedented impact on the world. The first wave of the pandemic is beginning to pass, and we are observing a National decline in the number of new cases of Coronavirus infection. Plans to reduce the spread of infection and prepare for a response to local outbreaks in Oxfordshire are being put in place to help return life to as normal as possible for as many people as possible, in a way that is safe, protects our health and care systems and releases our economy.

Achieving a successful plan to reduce spread of infection will require a co-ordinated effort, with local government, NHS, PHE and other relevant organisations at the centre of outbreak response.

Overview of Oxfordshire

Over 687,000 people live in Oxfordshire, which is comprised of 4 Districts and a City Council and is the most rural county in the South-east of England. All districts except Oxford City have seen a significant increase in the population of people aged over 65, with relatively little change in the number of young people aged 10-15.



Figure 1. Map of Oxfordshire County, Districts and Towns

The health of people in Oxfordshire is generally better than the England average. There are, however, small areas within Oxfordshire that have significantly worse health outcomes than Oxfordshire or England overall.

Oxfordshire Health and Care System

The health and social care landscape in Oxfordshire is evolving and currently includes:

- One County Council, one City and four District Councils
- One Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Part of an Integrated Care System (ICS)
- One Integrated Care Partnership (ICP)
- 68 GP practices based in 19 Primary Care Networks (PCN)
- One acute Hospital Trust and one Mental Health & Community Trust
- 129 CQC registered care homes.

The Oxfordshire COVID-19 Health Protection Board

In response to the Government devolution of certain testing, tracing and outbreak response to local authorities, the Oxfordshire COVID-19 Health Protection Board has been formed. The Board has oversight of the development and delivery of the Oxfordshire COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan. The Board reports to and works in collaboration with the Oxfordshire system wide recovery co-ordination group. This is linked to the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum and Oxfordshire System Leadership Group to ensure political oversight and public accountability. The Board is Chaired by the Director of Public Health who acts on behalf of the County Council in overseeing the protection of the health of the Oxfordshire population, both in terms of planning to prevent threats arising, and ensuring appropriate responses.

Membership of the board reflects the collaborative working of different organisations needed to provide a response to any future outbreaks and is comprised of

- Director of Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council (Chair)
- Consultants in Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council
- A senior Representative from each of the City and District Councils
- Lead for Adult Social Care
- Lead for Children and Education
- Senior Representative Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group – Infection Prevention and Quality
- Senior Representative Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Senior Representative (Director of Infection Prevention Control), Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, Public Health England
- Systems communications lead
- TV Police
- Primary care rep

A diagram of the reporting arrangements and whole system for response is detailed below in figure 2.

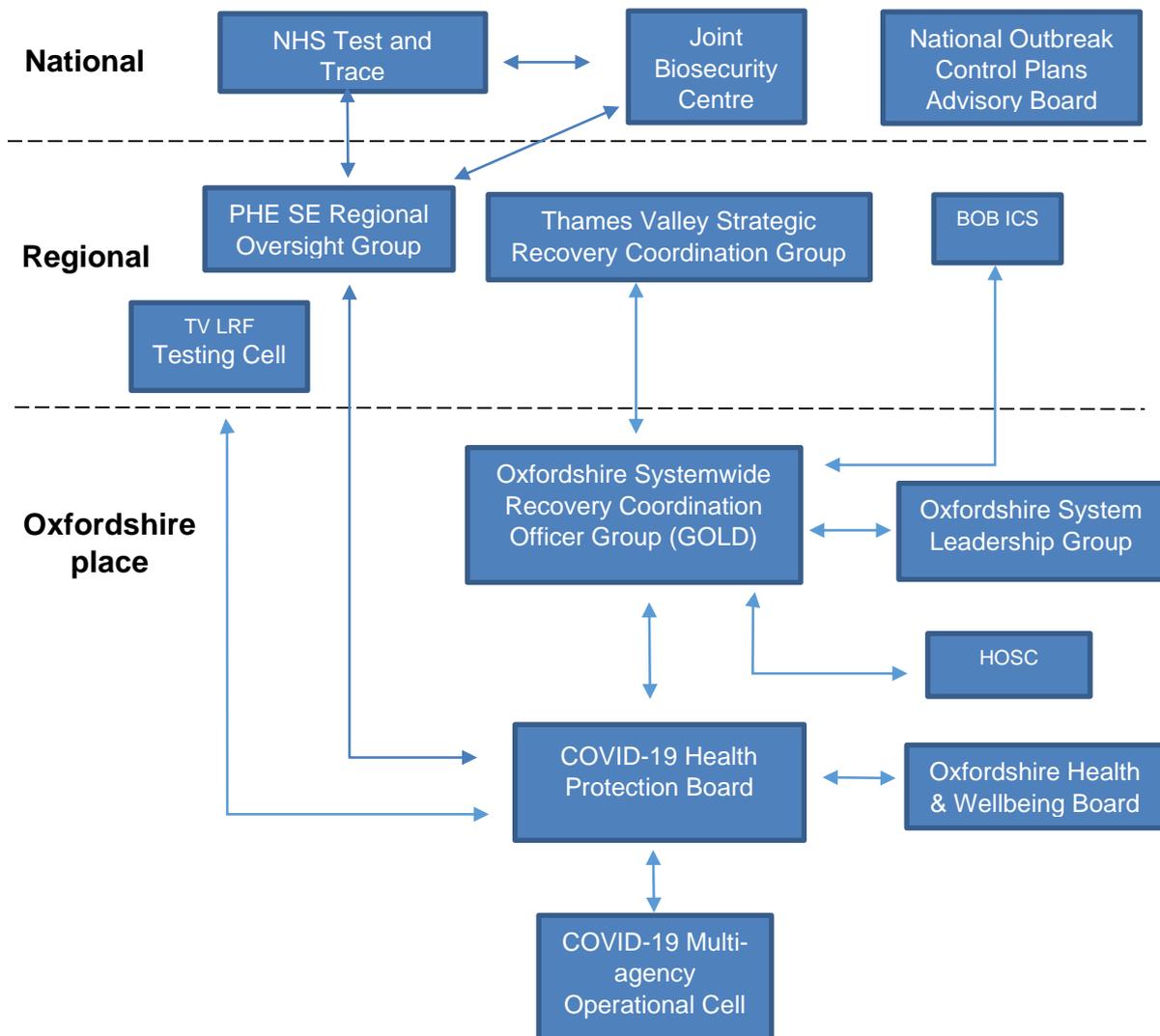


Figure 2. Reporting arrangements of the COVID-19 Health Protection Board

Oxfordshire Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP)

As part of the government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, the NHS Test and Trace service was launched on 28th May 2020 with the primary objectives to control the COVID-19 rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of infection, and save lives. The local COVID-19 Health Protection Board have a role in developing the LOCP to locally deliver the national strategy.

The aims of the LOCP are to;

- Prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Establish surveillance to enable early identification of Coronavirus
- Proactive management of local outbreaks
- Co-ordinate response and capability across local agencies

- Provide assurance that the management of local health protection systems to counteract COVID-19 are being effectively delivered.

The Objectives of the plan are:

- To have joint collaborative and co-ordinated approach to supporting settings including care homes, extra care housing and supported living, workplaces, schools, nurseries, universities, homeless hostels, faith settings etc in managing COVID-19 outbreaks
- Protecting the vulnerable and prevent increased demand on healthcare services.
- To streamline the follow up of care settings by the LA, CCG and PHE SE Health Protection Team.
- Developing and providing consistent advice to all settings.
- Establishing a single point of contact in PHE and each LA to facilitate communication and follow up between organisations.
- Provide a joint response for outbreak management, providing infection control advice and support for operational issues.
- Develop and maintain a surveillance and monitoring system for outbreaks for COVID-19, aligning with existing databases held by local and national partners.
- Share outbreak information between partner agencies to facilitate appropriate and timely intervention measure.

Outbreak Control Plan Themes

Oxfordshire has had a robust system for monitoring and responding to outbreaks for many years. During the first wave of the pandemic, local authorities have already been working with partners to respond to the threat of spread of Coronavirus. In the next phase of the pandemic, the COVID-19 LOCP is centred around seven themes:

1. Planning for local outbreaks in care home and schools (e.g. defining monitoring arrangements, identifying potential scenarios and planning the required response).
2. Identifying and planning how to manage other high-risk places, locations and communities of interest including sheltered housing, dormitories for migrant workers, transport access point (e.g. ports, airports, detained settings, rough sleepers etc (e.g. defining preventative measures and outbreak management strategies).
3. Identifying methods for local testing to ensure a swift response that is accessible to the entire population. This could include delivering tests to isolated individuals, establishing local pop-up sites or housing mobile testing units at high-risk locations (e.g. defining how to prioritise and manage deployment).
4. Assessing local and regional contact tracing and infection control capability in complex communities of interest and settings, developing assumptions to estimated demand developing options to spare capacity if needed).
5. Integrating national and local data and scenario planning through the Joint Biosecurity Centre Playbook (e.g. data management planning including data security, data requirements including NHS linkages).

6. Supporting vulnerable local people to get help to self-isolate (e.g. encouraging neighbours to offer support, identifying relevant community groups, planning how to co-ordinate and deploy) and ensuring services meet the needs of diverse communities.
7. Establishing governance structures led by existing COVID-19 Health Protection Boards and supported by existing Gold command forums and a new member-led Board to communicate with the public.

Prevention Measures

In the absence of a viable vaccine, prevention of transmission of coronavirus is only through the continued implementation of prevention measures. Effective measures that have been implemented and need to continue include:

- Regular handwashing
- Maintaining strict cleaning protocols of regularly touched surfaces
- Wearing of face coverings
- Implementation of social distancing measures
- Use of appropriate PPE
- Robust infection control in care homes and health care settings
- Working from home where possible

The simple prevention measures are effective, but it is essential that the public recognise the continued vigilance and practice of implementing them. There will be consistent messages, local businesses and employers about how to reduce the risk of transmission through using prevention measures. Local businesses and settings will include consideration of preventive interventions as part of planning development in line with the latest government guidance.

Supporting Vulnerable People

It is anticipated that most people will be able to self-isolate for the maximum two-week period without any additional support.

PHE have confirmed that three questions have been included in the NHS Test and Trace questionnaires for people to self-identify as vulnerable or that they, or someone they care for, may need support. This information will be provided to NHS Business Services Authority (BSA) who will text people with the relevant local authority helpline details and provide links to websites that allow them to find the numbers of their local support helplines. Where people cannot be contacted by phone or email then contact tracers will contact them.

A mechanism for including people who have requested support via the helpline which they self-isolate as a result of Test and Trace, will be included in the food and medicines support scheme, where it is identified that they have no other means to get help. As people will be self-isolating for a short period of time (either 7 or 14 days), this support will need to be timely, and flexible to support local residents as the need arises.

Response for Specific Settings and Communities

Oxfordshire is a vibrant and diverse County with a range of settings and communities. It is acknowledged that a one size fits all approach to response would not be a realistic approach to planning to respond to future outbreaks. Plans are being developed for differing locations and communities to ensure that all relevant partners are clear on their roles and responsibilities and actions needed, especially for outbreak management. These plans will assist in determining appropriate responses for specific settings and communities at risk. Examples of settings and communities include care homes, schools, BAME communities, homeless communities etc.

The existing health protection arrangements are proven in responding to local outbreaks and have safeguarded the residents of Oxfordshire from communicable disease for many years. The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan further develops and strengthens these existing arrangements to ensure that future outbreaks of COVID-19 will be identified early and responded to promptly to keep the R rate in Oxfordshire low and keep residents of Oxfordshire safe. All the local partners in Oxfordshire are committed to working together with the public to deliver the plan as the County exits the restrictions of the lockdown and the work on life after lockdown begins.