



**ST HELENS**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# St Helens Borough Council Outbreak Management Plan for COVID-19

Summary

June 2020

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the response to a COVID-19 outbreak in St Helens. Having an outbreak management plan is important to help create conditions for social and economic restrictions to be safely relaxed, prevent transmission, manage outbreaks and provide advice and reassurance.

With COVID-19 circulating and with no current vaccine, no effective treatments and unknown immunity in our communities, outbreaks of COVID-19 in St Helens could have a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of our population. Having an effective system is imperative to ensure we manage local outbreaks and reduce the risk to our wider population.

The primary objectives of the national Test and Trace service and the local outbreak management arrangements is to control the COVID-19 infection rate, reduce the spread of infection and thus save lives. In doing so this will help to 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, protects the most vulnerable and releases our economy. Ideally, these actions should prevent any return to lockdown in a geographical area or setting, however, if needed local actions will be put in place to manage the spread of COVID-19. To ensure that we do this effectively, we will need to work with our residents and communities in St Helens.

### 1.1. Aim

The aim of the outbreak management plan is to ensure an effective and coordinated approach for the prevention and management of COVID-19 outbreaks in St Helens, from outbreak prevention measures, the initial detection of the outbreak, the risk assessment, control measures and actions to manage the outbreak, through to the formal declaration that the outbreak has ended and the identification of lessons learned through a review process.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Plan

1. To provide advice and support to key settings to help prevent outbreaks occurring
2. To outline the key tasks/activities involved in responding to COVID-19 outbreaks
3. To identify the source of the COVID-19 outbreak and implement necessary control measures to prevent further spread
4. To take proactive measures to protect those who are at highest risk of severe illness should they become infected with COVID-19
5. To provide additional support as required to those who need to self-isolate
6. To outline roles and responsibilities at a local operational level
7. To give key considerations and outline some specific requirements needed for key settings where COVID-19 outbreaks may occur

### 1.3. Scope

- This plan will be used for the investigation, management and control of community outbreaks of COVID-19 in St Helens unless another locally agreed disease-specific plan exists.
- Outbreaks within care homes will be managed according to the North West Care Home pack outbreak control policy in line with national guidance. Public Health England (PHE) staff should be involved in the care home-based outbreak control teams in an advisory capacity.

- Outbreaks within schools will be managed according to the PHE schools outbreak pack and in line with national guidance. PHE staff should be involved in the schools-based outbreak control teams in an advisory capacity.
- PHE will declare an outbreak and provide advice and guidance to the Outbreak Control Team (OCT); the responsibility for managing and leading the response to a local outbreak in a complex setting would be the local authority.
- The response to outbreaks confined to specific NHS trust premises, whether acute or community or mental health trust, will usually be led by the relevant NHS Trust in accordance with their operational plans. These outbreaks should be reported to PHE who will support the management of the outbreak.
- The majority of outbreaks are dealt with as part of normal service provision and may not impact greatly on routine services or require an Outbreak Control Team (OCT) to be convened. In some cases, if there is significant local or media interest or the threat from the outbreak is severe, because the impacts on partners or communities are disruptive or need formal multi-agency coordination, a major incident can be declared and the formal input of Local Resilience Forum partners will be required. Under these circumstances the command and control structures described in the respective MRF (Merseyside Resilience Forum) plans, or equivalent will be evoked. It is suggested that in this instance, the Outbreak Control Team (OCT) will undertake the Science and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) role.

## **2. Local arrangements and governance for outbreak management (COVID-19)**

### **2.1. Current arrangements for health protection**

Under the current local arrangements, outbreaks are managed locally with the necessary specialist, for example, the Director of Public Health (Local Authority), Consultant in Communicable Disease (PHE), Environmental Health Officers (Local Authority), GUM and Sexual Health Doctors and Nurses (St Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust), Infection Prevention and Control Nurses (CCG), Chief Nurse (CCG), Emergency Planning (Local Authority) and Medicines Management (CCG).

Depending on the type of outbreak, specialists will develop plans and actions to prevent further spread and implement control measures as necessary. The management of these outbreaks are reported to the Health Protection Forum, which reports to the St Helens People's Board. An example of this was in the winter of 2019, when St Helens had a number of outbreaks in both schools and care homes with both winter vomiting virus and influenza. Infection Prevention and Control, Consultant in Public Health, Medicines Management, the Chief Nurse and Accountable Officer of the CCG worked together to manage these outbreaks engaging with schools and care homes with additional support from GPs.

### **2.2. Proposed new arrangements for the management of health protection and outbreaks**

Recommendations from the Department of Health and Social Care on local outbreak plans recommends that local areas should have outbreak management plans that focus on seven key areas:

- Care homes and schools

- High risk places, locations and communities
- Local testing capacity
- Contact tracing in complex settings
- Data integration
- Vulnerable people
- Local boards

The governance recommended at a local area is:

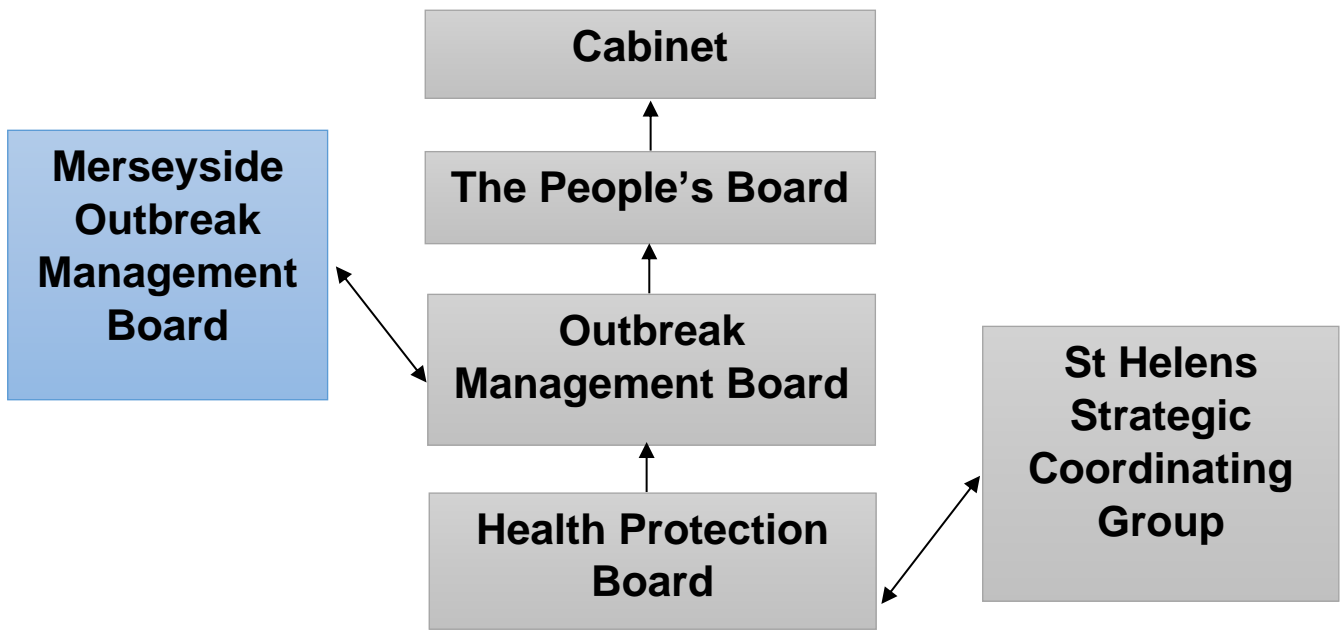
- COVID-19 Health Protection Board – responsible for the development of local outbreak plans by the Director of Public Health
- Strategic Coordinating Group – to support delivery of local outbreak plans
- Local Engagement Board – to provide political ownership and public facing engagement and communication for outbreak response

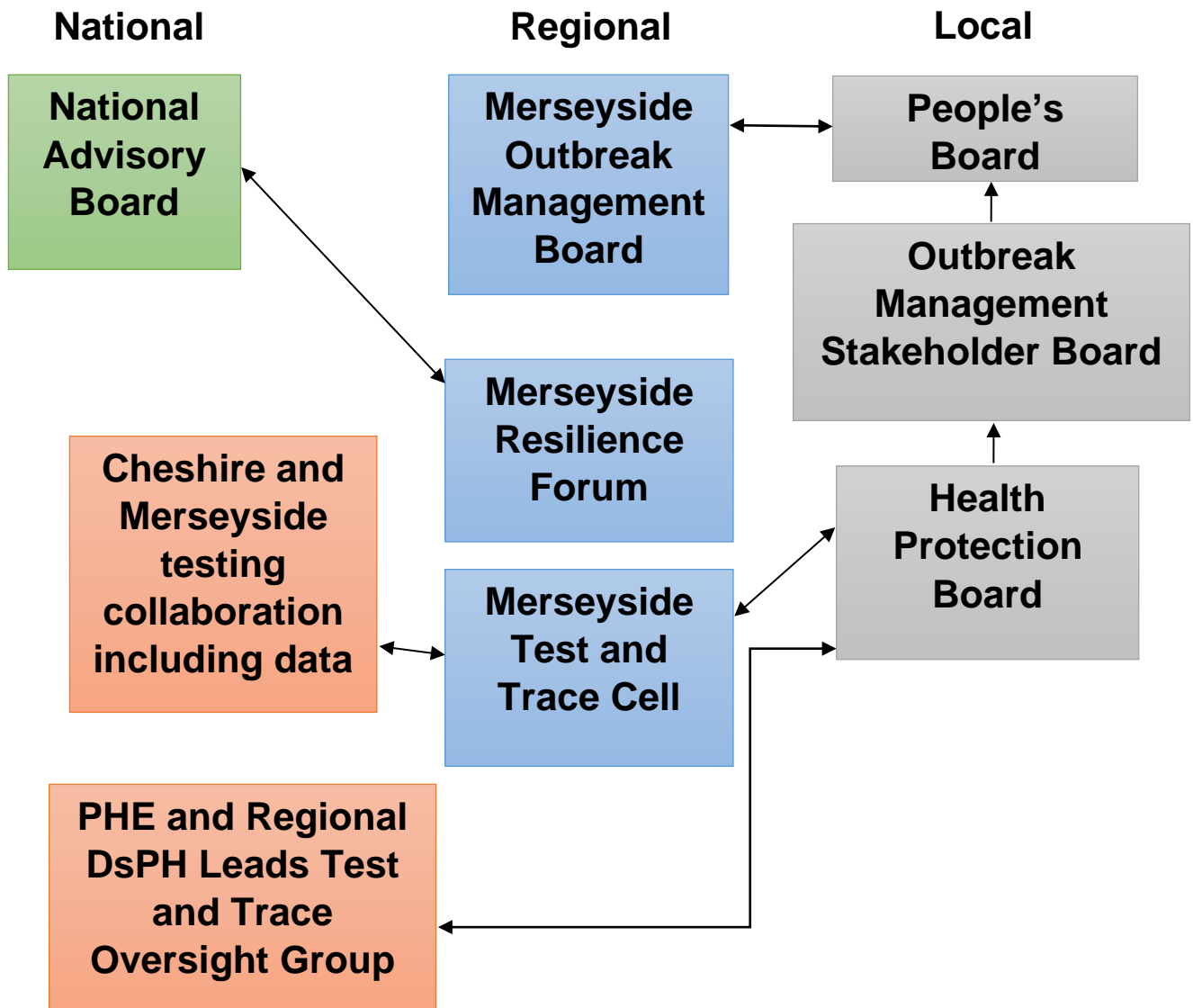
The current Health Protection Forum has been reconstituted to a COVID-19 Health Protection Board.

An Outbreak Management Board has been established under the leadership of the Leader of St Helens Council and comprising appropriate senior officers and cabinet members. The Outbreak management Board .....

These boards will present information and recommendations to both The People’s Board and Cabinet as appropriate for council related decisions. Boards will need to be responsive to outbreaks and changes in infection rates and make quick recommendations and/or decisions on prevention and protection measures for the local population of St Helens.

The following diagrams show the relationship of the boards with local governance and the relationship with the Merseyside Resilience Forum.





### 3. Data and intelligence

Effective and timely data is essential for the effective management of outbreaks. Ongoing surveillance of the data is a key requirement. The Director of Public Health in St Helens Borough Council is currently receiving surveillance reports on the number of people infected in St Helens; these reports benchmark against previous trends. The reports are available daily to ensure timely action if needed. This allows us to understand if numbers of cases are starting to increase. Postcode intelligence is being made available to allow us to map infections to geographical areas and settings. Intelligence from the national bio-security service will be made available for local Directors of Public Health that will also indicate any flags that would require the local area to take action. Additionally, St Helens has the Integrated Care Record with data from health and social care systems which will allow an interactive dashboard for COVID-19 to aid planning and necessary actions.

#### **4. Contact tracing model**

The majority of contact tracing will be managed by the national NHS contact tracing service through phone and web. However, more complex cases are referred to Public Health England who will work with local areas on the management of complex cases. These cases could be linked to schools, care homes, hostels, workplaces and vulnerable people. In order that we have an effective and safe service, St Helens Borough Council Public Health Team have worked alongside teams across Cheshire and Merseyside to design an operating model that will manage these complex cases seven days a week. On the following page is a diagram of the model. St Helens Borough Council will ensure the local management of all outbreaks.

## Proposed Test & Trace Operational Delivery

### Local Outbreak and Consequence Management Team

(1 per Local Authority)

Consequence Management for complex settings and communities  
Collaboration with PHE on outbreak management  
Operational Governance  
Local Infection Control Nurses  
Environmental Support  
Supporting vulnerable people to get help and self isolate

Political Leadership and Engagement  
Local Communications  
Preparing for Outbreaks  
Mutual Aid where necessary  
Data management, document storage and data sharing agreements

Escalation to LAs for  
Consequence Management

Cheshire COVID-19 Test and Trace Team

Merseyside COVID-19 Test and Trace Team

Functions required in both teams covering 9am – 5pm, 7 days a week, PHE to cover out of hours

Contract Tracing & Outbreak Management (Including On call Cover)  
Health Protection Specialist support and direct relationships  
Data management, document storage and data sharing agreements  
Collaboration with PHE

Admin, Business Support & HR  
Links to LRF priorities  
Preparing for and supporting Outbreaks  
Mutual Aid where necessary

### Champs COVID-19 Test and Trace Collaboration (Shared Function across Cheshire and Merseyside)

Clinical Governance  
Ensuring consistency in pathways & SOPs  
Training & workforce development  
Collaboration with PHE  
Oversight of the Hubs and Service Delivery

Alignment with C&M Testing strategy  
Alignment with data and case management system  
Single data / case management IT solution  
Ensuring efficient communication  
Mutual Aid where necessary



## 5. Local consequence management

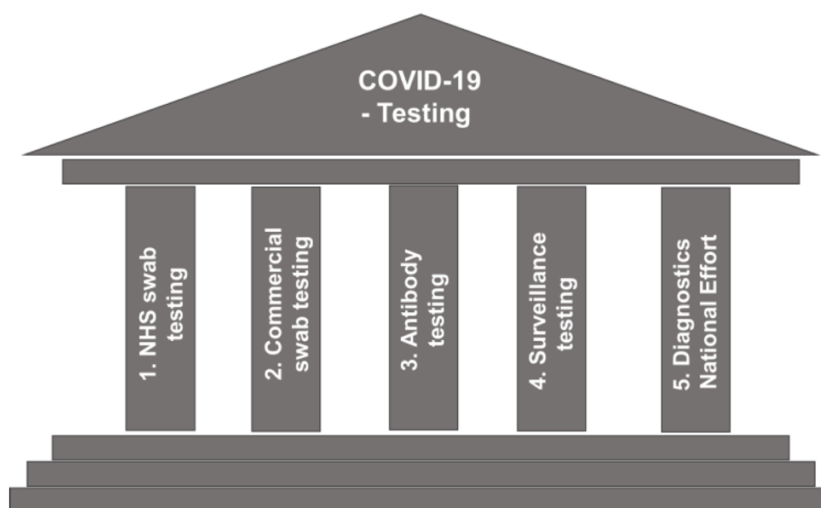
The model to support the delivery of consequence management in St Helens is working through enhanced capacity within Environmental Health Services to work proactively with workplaces to be COVID secure.

Enhanced infection control within the commissioned Infection Control Team will support infection control and outbreak management in social care settings, schools and the community. Enhanced support within St Helens Contact Cares will be in place to support those that are vulnerable and need support to self-isolate. This is alongside a core Public Health Team and Sexual Health Service providing day to day support for the residents of St Helens Borough.

The outbreak management plan includes specific guidance and support for settings including education, care homes and other residential settings, complex environments e.g. hostels, workplaces and under-served populations.

## 6. Local testing

The ideal timeframe for testing symptomatic residents of the borough is less than three days and no more than five days. The national strategy outlines five pillars to testing:



The national system for testing and swabbing includes:

- Everyone in the UK with symptoms can now be tested for coronavirus
- All patients discharged from hospital before going into care homes
- Testing of every staff member and resident in every care home in England, whether symptomatic or not
- Testing of social care and frontline NHS workers whether they are symptomatic or not

Where people of all ages can access the national testing portal, they will be encouraged to do so, so that we can prioritise those who can't access testing via the portal, for example, those who are frail and housebound. For when we have an outbreak on occasion, we may need to increase testing as part of our case finding.

Accessing testing:

- We will encourage people to self-refer for testing through the national portal and request a drive-through appointment. Postal test kits for home testing are also

available, however we encourage drive-through testing above home testing to try and reduce 'user error'. The nearest drive-through site to St Helens is at Haydock Racecourse and a new drive-through site at Liverpool John Lennon Airport is also now live.

- Other available sites are highlighted when booking through nhs.uk (for the general public) or gov.uk (for key workers). Mobile sites travel across Cheshire and Merseyside and are available to book through the nhs.uk and gov.uk portals.
- North West Boroughs NHS team can also offer testing to health and care staff who are unable to attend a regional testing site.
- North West Boroughs NHS team will also offer testing to vulnerable people who are unable to attend a regional testing site, such as care home symptomatic patients, those waiting for care home admission or transfer, people living at home with a care package, carers and potential outbreaks in complex settings such as schools or hostels for example.
- Staff in care homes have been trained and are able to swab themselves and their care home residents.

The Government will increasingly augment swab-based antigen testing, which determines whether a person currently has the virus, with antibody testing, which shows whether a person has previously had it.

## 7. Conclusion

This summary document provides a summary of the outbreak management plan(s) for St Helens, the system of governance, the data requirements and the local system.