London Good Practice Network Insight Report: Executive Summary

Overview

As the London Good Practice Network we came together as Councils delivering place-based responses to this pandemic, wanting to engage and demonstrate to Government the role of Councils as a focal point for funding and capacity to respond to new and emerging Covid challenges. As a Good Practice Network our key objectives within this initial phase have been:

- To reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus in our communities;
- To ensure that those who may contract Covid-19 are able to access testing, advice and support rapidly;
- To reduce the social, personal, economic harm associated with individual, family or community isolation measures;
- To design and deploy services and learning rapidly in response to the national Test and Trace programme and to share best practice within our sub-region, across London and nationally; and
- To build long-term structures for collaboration within our communities around the issues of test and trace and around London.

This high-level summary is for national, regional and local partners to understand our work to date, what we have learnt and delivered and how we plan to continue our collaboration. It is also a request for continued collaboration, with communities and with local authorities to deliver the best coordinated response to a changing and challenging ongoing pandemic. The questions we are currently collectively addressing with Borough sub-regional and London colleagues are:

- Providing collective stress-testing and reassurance to local plans to stand up an emergency response for a second wave;
- Understanding fatigue, capacity and resilience across Borough and sub-regions to respond to different outbreak scenarios (including by undertaking shared scenario exercises);
- Strengthening engagement and communication with relevant stakeholders – including within sub-regional Leaders, Mayors, Chief Executives and Directors of Public Health, ward members, MPs, community groups, public sector partners including health and the Police; and
- Ensuring London governance and reporting structures are able to effectively identify and respond to localised outbreaks and localised risks.

Local outbreak plans for each London Borough were published on 30th June with best practice, critical challenge and stress-testing to plans in development provided by the Good Practice Network. These plans were developed with input from Local Outbreak Engagement Boards bringing together health, care, Police, community and other partners to provide local insight to proposals. These plans continue to develop in response to local context as well as national guidance and plans (such as the Contain Framework being released on the 17th July 2020). The Good Practice Network collaborating with colleagues across London launched the "Keep London Safe" campaign in the week beginning 27th July 2020 with coordinated campaign activity around the capital.

Working as part of the national Good Practice Network we were asked to focus and bring forward work at pace in key areas including communications, diverse communities, those at particular risk of contracting the virus (high-risk communities), data integration and assurance and advice for vulnerable settings (with a particular focus on transport hubs). The Good Practice Network has

shared and published a series of best practice updates and settings guidance around each of these key areas, and a high level summary is included as Appendix A.

The approach to outbreak management at a local, sub-regional and regional level continues to strengthen and develop, with strong collaborative structures being built to share data, insight and service delivery models. We have also provided constructive challenge and feedback to Government, particularly where we believe the best model for managing, addressing and engaging localised risk is at a local level. We are providing a coordinated, collaborative and effective local response to a national and global crisis and will continue to advocate and challenge for the resources, capacity and support we need to do this.

We note the approach in the emerging draft of the London Regional Outbreak Management Plan the discussion of different models of lockdown whether zonal or rolling. Our key ask is that alongside clarity around decision-making and decision-maker for these structures that Government also provide effective support to localities to enable any recurrence of lockdowns. Whilst the intention of local authorities and the work of the Good Practice Network is to prevent and manage infection spread such that localised lockdowns are not needed, we believe that in order to build trust in test and trace being a comprehensive and coherent system, a funded localised lockdown offer is needed – that should include:

- Localised and flexible furlough for those businesses within the "redline" of a lockdown that cannot operate;
- Additional resources for schools required to send pupils and students back home including support for effective home and remote learning and support for vulnerable or at risk children;
- Funding for rapid deployment of food and medicine delivery; and
- Funding for additional accommodation for those needing to self-isolate in unsuitable accommodation, away from vulnerable relatives, who are experiencing domestic violence or who are experiencing homelessness.

Our learning as a Good Practice Network has been grounded in trust being the clearest and strongest asset that local and national government have in seeking to change behaviour and create an effective test and trace system. Our citizens must trust they can access support when they need it, that they will not be stigmatised for identifying symptoms or testing positive, that testing positive will not cause them to lose their jobs, that testing positive will not result in harm to their families if they follow proper advice, that any information they give to agencies, Councils or the Government will only be used for a test and trace purpose, that they will receive the care they need if they fall ill, that they and their families will be able to access food, medicine and education if they have to isolate. Fundamentally our citizens must trust that at the heart of every decision we make is their short and long term wellbeing and that of their communities. Our asks of Government in seeking to build trust with our communities are:

- A clear set of guidelines and principles around the use of data in test and trace so that we can provide clarity and confidence to our communities;
- Clarity about when, how and who will take decisions about the implementation of localised lockdown or social distancing requirements and how these will be communicated;
- Clarity about how localised lockdown and social distancing regulations will be enforced including acknowledgement of concerns about disproportionate policing of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

The four London Good Practice Networks have worked closely as part of the deployment of mobile testing units locally, the creation of walk-in, community-run and hyper-local testing sites in our boroughs. Given the varied (both urban and suburban) nature of our Boroughs there is a need for a range of testing options to enable people to readily access support. Our learning has been that people will readily access testing when they are symptomatic if it is visible, convenient and accessible to them and managed or sponsored by organisations that they trust. Pilots by Newham of testing sites run with voluntary and community groups, in Hackney with faith groups and organisations, have shown that devolving operational control of testing has value in reaching into communities that might otherwise not know how to, or not feel comfortable, accessing Covid-19 testing. Responding to localised outbreaks and being able to quickly deploy testing capacity into communities is an important function of preventing spread and controlling outbreaks. We have welcomed Government being open to an ongoing dialogue about control of testing capacity coming to a sub-regional and localised level and this is a conversation we intend to continue.

We believe that there is a critical role for data transparency and accountability for test and trace in order to build public trust. We also believe that there is a critical role for local government access to data both to direct resources, but also for localised analysis and insight. Alongside Public Health population health and epidemiology expertise, local authorities also benefit from Public Health data analysis capacity and having access to timely testing, tracing and settings data enables Councils to understand, prevent, plan and deploy resources in the most effective way. We are in an ongoing dialogue with Government about the appropriate data for local authorities to have to both enable trust and effective service delivery. We have seen an increasing amount of data flowing to local authorities and we hope to continue a productive collaborative approach with Government and the Joint Biosecurity Centre about local, regional and national data access.

In the longer term, Covid-19 has demonstrated the devastating impact of health inequalities in our communities, and there will be real and lasting trauma amongst communities that have been disproportionately impacted by this virus, both in infections and deaths. We believe there is a need to continue to consider the integrated structures, funding and support for the wider health and care system that centres preventative and long-term interventions. There should also be trauma-informed support for front-line staff who have managed this crisis, and mental health support for those who have cared for, lost and are grieving those who have died, and those who have spent lock-down in prolonged periods of isolation or anxiety. Local government has the capacity and networks to ensure that we do not just recover, but renew our social settlements as a result of this crisis, and that we ensure that those who have borne the biggest burden through this pandemic are recognised by ensuring that our systems and services seek to avoid a crisis of this magnitude in the future.

Pan-London Activity on Outbreak Plans

The London Good Practice Network, working with London Councils in mid-July 2020 held a desktop scenario planning exercise to support Leaders preparedness as boroughs move into the next phase of the pandemic response. The session brought together Leaders, Mayors and Cabinet members, Chief Executives, Directors of Public Health and Communications Directors to consider some of the challenges associated with a local outbreak, including – the roles and responsibilities of local leaders in instigating mitigation measures; effective community engagement; and wider political engagement. At the session it was agreed across the London region that Local Authorities need to strike a balance around when to communicate widely with regards to a local outbreak and ensure that existing channels are utilised to share messages (e.g. GP text messages, school newsletters, ward members etc.). Politicians agreed that a localised outbreak is Business as Usual for Directors of Public Health

however keeping channels of communication open between politicians and across the London region were important. The Good Practice Network is also sharing materials to enable local authorities to conduct their own desktop scenario activities at a local level, and with their Local Outbreak Engagement Boards.

Chief Executives, Leaders/Mayors and Directors of Public Health from the GPN authorities are also attending national test and trace calls to be able to share and disseminate updates and good practice. Camden have been coordinating a weekly update for Leaders/Mayors and Chief Executives.

Localised Activity on Outbreak Plans

Local authorities in London are well placed to support a safe and acceptable re-opening of our city, supported by test and trace activity – one done with our communities (not to them) in a way that is sensitive to disproportionate risk and community anxiety, that has the reach into vulnerable communities and our capacity to meet need whether it is complex or intermittent. We have the relationships to build trust around a national system locally, and to plan for managing coronavirus in our communities in the long-term in a way that protects our citizens and our local economy. We have the experience in drawing together resources from across health, care, public health and communities into a whole system response to a complex challenge.

As the Good Practice Network we have sought to both build on the strong existing foundations for partnership working in our Boroughs and across our Network and across London to learn, share and deploy at pace. We have sought together a deep and broad understanding of need and capacity in our communities so that we can ensure that we are putting our resources and interventions in the right place to make the most impact.

Our key thematic areas of learning outlined in our broader Good Practice Network summary report are:

- **Communications with Communities** – recognising the critical role of local government in disseminating timely and effective information about how people can protect themselves, and how this information can be shared within communities particularly where English is not a first language;
- **Drawing in Capacity at a Local and Regional Level** – the development of best practice and Local Outbreak Plans and approaches to drawing in wider resources into a whole system response, also approaches to collaborating at a Borough, sub-regional and national level;
- **Building Trust and Wraparound Support** – designing services that build trust and enable people to make the best and safest choices.

Local government has a unique ability to sit at the centre of this convergence of care, not as a leader, but as trusted, accountable partner. We can support innovation, and grassroots-led activity that can connect into people lives in safe and boundaried ways. Safe innovation in an emergency requires someone to hold the space, and to understand the scope of activities, responsibilities and resources available to the collective. Local government is better placed than anyone else to do that.

Risks and Challenges

While outbreak plans exist across boroughs, and there are structures, processes and data flows in place on the pandemic in London, there remain challenges that exist in understanding how Boroughs

in collaboration with London would respond to localised outbreaks that had not been immediately effectively managed, with the worst case scenario of a multi-seeded rapid outbreak that escalated quickly over a period of days or weeks across many local authority boundaries. We welcome the opportunity to have a continuing dialogue with sub-regional, regional and national bodies, and some of the risks and challenges we are seeking to answer for ourselves and would wish to continue to collaborate at a sub-regional and London level are:

- **Are surveillance systems robust enough?** We are particularly interested in the extent to which we can collaborate with Borough colleagues and London to obtain an understanding of localised risk (vulnerability, non-compliance, non-engagement, misinformation) alongside understanding incidence and transmission in more detail through our existing datasets;

- How good is the test and trace system at picking up high risk populations and what is the role of local authorities to "pick up" gaps in testing or tracing or where this becomes more complex?

- Are testing and wider prevention strategies successfully targeting and reaching high risk settings, areas and groups? What are the continuing barriers to impact and how can we continue to iterate the "Keep London Safe" campaign to ensure it is reaching those most at risk, or who have the least information about how to keep themselves safe?

- How effective is outreach and engagement at a Borough level to target high risk settings (e.g. Industrial settings, businesses using refrigeration, HMOs) and what is the role of collaborative best practice in undertaking proactive engagement and risk management?

- Are resources sufficient across the system to enable London to respond and how do we build support so that Public Health Teams and LCRC have time to recuperate before a possible second wave? How would we identify a capacity and resource risk and how would we address at a sub-region and London level?

- What programmes and resources are in place to address long-term risk factors? (E.g. obesity)

These questions are being reviewed by DsPH in the peer review of outbreak plans, and will need to be under regular review by both local authorities and regional groups such as the Outbreak Control Strategy Group and TMG. They will also need to be considered in pan London and sub-regional exercises.

Appendix A – Summary of Good Practice Network Activity on Outbreak Plans

As part of the Good Practice Network our four boroughs shared good practice throughout the development of our Local Outbreak Plans, specific examples of this good practice from each borough is highlighted below – some of these are expanded upon in the full Good Practice Network report:

Barnet

- Development of best practice guidance for sharing with local authorities on preventing and managing outbreaks in care settings and in places of worship (see case study in appendix 1)

- Collaboration groups with key local stakeholders – first schools workshop held with over 70 people. The next workshop was with faith communities

- Worked with GPs through the Health and Wellbeing Board to risk assess and quality assure outbreak plans with schools and other key settings

- Developed action cards for specific settings including care homes and places of worship (these can be [here](#))

- Worked with local University to develop Covid prevention/Covid secure site as well as acknowledging that 75% of local students are from BAME communities and therefore encouraging university to promote wider wellbeing aspects e.g. an online wellbeing fair for freshers week

Camden

- Developed a "Beacon" system seeking to have a single view of household need to support self-isolation, but enabling a federated response of support across partners

- Development of Data Charter (see appendix 2)

- Hosted a workshop on Transport Hubs with two key considerations around the effective prevention measures within and outside a transport hub. A practical checklist was developed and is attached at Appendix 3.

- Development of guidance to be shared with all parents, children and staff in our schools and agreed that every school will develop plans ready for September that outline remote working procedures and other outbreak control actions and measures should these need to be drawn on.

Hackney

- Alongside Camden, led the development of local and London test and trace campaign, conducting local focus groups to understand key issues / concerns and priorities – working with community and voluntary partners to translate key communications

- Working with Joint Biosecurity Board and PHE London to develop data dashboard with London and Borough level data

- Development of standard operating procedures for schools and early years settings

- In response to an outbreak in the Stamford Hill area which has a large Jewish community they rapidly implemented a targeted communications campaign (see appendix 3), including :

- o   a letter from the Mayor & DPH to the Rabbinate, with an emphasis on safe worship and social distancing

- o   another letter from the Mayor, DPH & Director of Education to headteachers of schools in the area

- o   a leaflet drop to each home, with a localised version of the "Keep London Safe" campaign

- o   a message to each general practice serving the area

- o   Text messages from the GPs to all their registered patients with mobile phones

- o   articles and ads in the local Jewish newspaper

- o   Engaging the few social media influencers in the community

Newham

- Have over 300 community champions, and growing, who are sharing information and talking to their community, friends and family. Newham has a dedicated website which now has all of the information that has gone out to the champions to date. www.newham.gov.uk/covidhealthchampions. The materials are being translated into Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Chinese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Lithuanian, Portuguese, French, Tamil, Polish and Romanian. They hold drop-in sessions twice a week and information sessions for new champions once a week and send emails, and WhatsApp's approx. every three days and will be adding text as a method of communication to this shortly.

- New hyper-local testing sites opened with VCS with service design prototypes able to be shared on "supported access" testing services (see appendix 4)

- Development of plans for cross-Borough outbreaks and frameworks for information sharing and collaboration

- Hosted a workshop with Bradford, Oldham and Brent to discuss best practice for engaging with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities (notes from this workshop are attached at Appendix 4)

- Several webinars have been held with leaders and other representatives from faith settings. This has given them the opportunity to ask questions about their particular site and relevant to their specific faith.