

INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	15 JUNE 2021	13
TEST AND TRACE UPDATE			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

This report provides Members with an update on the Test and Trace program in Fylde.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Richard Hurt, Health Protection Practitioner

WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

The corporate response to the Covid-19 pandemic falls within the remit of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Kathy Winstanley tel: 01253 658634 email: <mailto:Kathy.winstanley@fylde.gov.uk>
Kathy.winstanley@fylde.gov.uk

Update – Test and Trace Scheme

The NHS Test and Trace scheme ensures that anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 can quickly be tested to find out if they have the virus, and also includes targeted asymptomatic testing of NHS and social care staff and care home residents. It helps trace close recent contacts of anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and, if necessary, notifies them that they must self-isolate at home to help stop the spread of the virus

The service has been introduced to help return life more to normal, in a way that is safe and protects the NHS and social care. The service traces the spread of the virus and isolate new infections and play a vital role in providing an early warning if the virus is increasing again, locally or nationally.

NHS Test and Trace will help to control the rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of the infection and save lives. Following the actions set out below will directly help to contain the virus by reducing its spread, allowing lockdown measures to ease safely.:

Playing your part (England):

- *if you develop symptoms, you must continue to follow the rules to self-isolate with other members of your household*
- *you can leave self-isolation to [get a test](#) to find out if you have COVID-19, or to take a home test to a [priority post box](#)*

- *if you test positive for COVID-19, you must share information promptly and accurately about your recent contacts through NHS Test and Trace to help us alert other people who may need to self-isolate*
- *if you have had close recent contact with someone who has COVID-19, you must self-isolate if NHS Test and Trace advises you to do so*
- *if you are returning from travel abroad it is important to check whether you need to self-isolate*

'Self-isolation if you have symptoms' means you and all household members must remain at home. Do not go outside your home for any reason, that is to work, school or public areas, and do not use public transport or taxis. The [guidance for households with possible COVID-19 infection page](#) has more information on self-isolation.

'Contact' means a person who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and who may or may not live with them.

It is a legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive for COVID-19 or if you are identified as a contact and told to self-isolate by Test and Trace. Failure to self-isolate for the full time-period can result in a fine, starting from £1,000.

The Fylde T and T Scheme

The Test and Trace (national) scheme was set up at the beginning of the initial lockdown (March 2020) with the aim of making phone contact with everyone who provided a positive Covid 19 test and identify all close contacts they may have interacted with during the previous 5 days – this includes home, workplaces, shops, friends etc. This scheme had some limited success nationally, with minimal demand initially in Fylde as infection rates were low.

One of the challenges identified nationally was the reluctance of Covid 19 positive people to answer T&T calls on the grounds that the calls were made from either an unknown or national number. This led to long delays and unsuccessful attempts to trace contacts, possibly contributing to the spread of the virus. Local Authorities were subsequently asked to introduce a local service based within their own area, where contact would be made via a local telephone number, taking over the responsibility for contacting after 3 days of unsuccessful attempts by the national team.

There were many logistical issues to address in setting up a local scheme as it was unclear how many calls would be needed, how long the calls would take and the timeframe for ongoing delivery of the service – predicting staffing levels and operational times were therefore difficult. There were also back office systems to set up, IT equipment requirements and staff training needs - initial set up costs for a dedicated scheme in Fylde were estimated in excess of £6,500. The rapidly increasing infection rate in November 2020 placed greater pressure to set up a local scheme in Fylde. After some discussions, it was agreed to 'piggyback' on the established scheme already operational in Blackpool. This scheme had sound operational governance and trained staff, thus reducing set up costs and time delays. Initial estimates were for 1 dedicated member of staff to process the Fylde workload, providing coverage over 7 day to minimise delays/backlogs, at a total cost of £1,160 per week. The agreement was subject to further charges being passed on if additional resources were required to meet rising infection rates. Since Blackpool also uses the 01253 local dialling code, Covid 19 positive residents in Fylde were more inclined to answer a call from a 'legitimate' number, resulting in a greater degree of success in identifying contacts for tracing. Where it was not possible to make telephone contact with positive cases, the details were passed over to the Fylde Covid Marshalls to attempt door knocking/face to face interventions and delivery of support information. This scheme has resulted in the majority of cases being contacted within 24 hours of a positive result.

The arrangement has been dealt with via the informal procedure under contract procedure rules on a rolling three months basis at £15,080 (£1160 per week). Clearly this is a specialist role, and this council has been able to benefit from expertise already in existence within another neighbouring council. Its difficult to predict how long the arrangement will be required due to the ever-changing nature of the pandemic. Both the Director of Resources together with the buying officer for this arrangement (Richard Hurt, Health Protection Practitioner) are satisfied that the arrangement secures the best possible terms to the council.

To date, the system and service provided by Blackpool has been excellent and at times additional staff have been drafted into the T and T team to accommodate the number of cases in Fylde, without additional funding being requested. Blackpool have recently taken over ALL contact at hour 1 in lieu of the national call centre, (called Local Zero) and continue to provide a quality service to Fylde. The current scheme is budgeted for until end June and funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.