

Agenda Item 3

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD - COMMUNITY SUB-GROUP
3 NOVEMBER 2020
(5.00 pm - 6.00 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Stephen Alambritis (in the Chair), Rob Clarke, Mark Creelman, Abi Fafolu, Dr Vasa Gnanapragam, Councillor Rebecca Lanning, Martin Miranda, Councillor Oonagh Moulton, Kalu Obuka, Dr Mohan Sekeram Councillor Eleanor Stringer and Dr Dagmar Zeuner

IN ATTENDANCE: Barry Causer (Public Health Commissioning Manager), Louise Fleming (Democracy Services Manager), Farzana Karamat-Mughal (Democratic Services Officer) and Clarissa Larsen (Health and Wellbeing Board Partnership Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

An apology for absence was received from Dave Curtis (Healthwatch Merton).

2 DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

4 COVID-19 UPDATE - VERBAL PRESENTATION (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Public Health provided a presentation and an update in respect of Covid-19 in Merton, outlining the latest weekly Situational Awareness Report which was circulated to all Sub- Group Members.

She reported that the very steep increase in infections that had been experiencing appeared to be levelling off slightly, but that there was an increase among the over 60s which was a concern. Testing capacity had improved and there was a new walk-in testing site, though turnaround time of tests was still an issue.

Infection levels across London varied significantly and it was reported that currently Hammersmith had reached over 200 infections per hundred thousand over the seven day period, representing very high sustained community transmission.

Members had been made aware of the Government's announcement of a second national lockdown for England from the 5th November to 2nd December, 2020 and the new restrictions were outlined.

Following the presentation Members' discussed a number of points in detail:

- in regard to transmission within schools, it was suggested that the majority of outbreaks involved staff, and that this was mirrored in other work places, including care homes;
- it was considered that the harm of not having children in school potentially outweighs the harm of infection; it was also recognised that schools and head teachers had been excellent in responding to guidance and carrying out necessary risk assessments;
- it was asked whether any breakdown of data on the impact on Merton's BAME population was available and the Director of Public Health stated that she would investigate and add this to the next update if possible;
- it was emphasised that everyone had a duty of care in following guidelines; keeping their distance and wearing face masks in order to reduce the spread of infection.

The Chair thanked the Director of Public Health for the presentation and the continued weekly Covid-19 Situational Awareness Report.

5 ENGAGEMENT AND INSIGHT WORK WITH COMMUNITIES (Agenda Item 5)

The Head of Strategic Commissioning of Public Health, LBM, and the Head of Patient and Public Involvement and Equalities, SWL CCG, provided an overview of the engagement and insight work with communities, specifically:

- the impact Covid-19 was having on communities' mental health and well-being;
- the response of Adults Mental Health Services, Children's Mental Health Services, staff and volunteers.

Members were provided with an update on 'Thrive London' that had developed a number of activities to address immediate areas of concern. Further work included, creating wellbeing guidance in 27 languages; funding the Youth Mental Health First Aid programme (a digital version that supports young people education staff and parents); and the Suicide Prevention programme.

Engagement had been undertaken with local communities. A key message from this was that there were significant stresses on communities, as the impacts of pandemic on livelihoods created hardships, including loss of employment, education and financial pressures.

It was important to ensure that services had clear messaging and a mix of communication methods were being used to reach a wide range of people and build relationships, both formal and informal, with community leaders.

The Adult Mental Health Services in Merton commissioned by the CCG had opened up the Orchard Suite for mental health support and also provided a 24 hour support line for residents.

London's Digital Wellbeing Service was providing support for conditions including, anxiety low mood, sleeping difficulties and stress and a high level of people were accessing this.

Children and Young People's Mental Health Services initially saw a drop in referrals but had now returned to usual levels, with a particular increase of the number of referrals for eating disorders. Young people were also reporting concerns relating to bereavement, education and family - including worries about debt and employment of their parents.

Following the presentation Members' discussed a number of points in detail:

- There was a discussion about how to communicate most effectively with those communities that were harder to reach (and may struggle themselves to reach the service), and agreed that it was important we listen to local people and community leaders including, for example, faith leaders;
- The pandemic and lockdown had exacerbated isolation and highlights importance of connectivity which our Social Prescribing link workers, the Voluntary Hub and other voluntary and community organisations could help support. Specific anxieties of young people were discussed and the opportunity to recruit some younger Covid Champions to help share information with their peer group;
- These networks and this Subgroup could have a positive role in sharing accurate information and signposting, helping to tackle any misinformation that was circulating – having 'myth busting' conversations;
- There was acknowledgement that mental health and emotional wellbeing could be difficult issues for people to discuss. Covid Champions could help with this and had interpreters to support conversations. A small grants programme with Merton Giving was also now available that could support wider reach into communities.

6 LATEST COVID-19 - TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS OPPORTUNITIES (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Strategic Commissioning for Public Health asked Members' what training or communication support they need to be able to help to identify and support vulnerable people during the lockdown and how partners can help:

- establish on-going dialogue with the community to better understand the lived experience, help prevent outbreaks and mitigate social and health harm;

- deliver pro-active communications e.g. videos of trusted local leaders and residents to support key messages; and
- increase the reach and effectiveness of the Community Champions.

Subgroup Members' agreed to consider this request and to let officers know of any needs or opportunities. To contact Clarissa Larsen clarissa.larsen@merton.gov.uk or Barry Causer, barry.causer@merton.gov.uk