

Primary care commissioning committee (PCCC) meeting Questions received from the public with responses from the CCG

MEETING DATE: 10/09/2020

This question was received prior to the meeting taking place, with the response document then published on the CCG's website and also emailed to the individual who submitted the question. Where a question was raised on behalf of a group, the person's name is listed below; where the person did so as an individual, then their name has not been published.

Question 1

Context

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Public

As Covid-19 infection rates begin to rise again concern is mounting about the need for a radical strengthening of the testing, tracing and isolating system. While regional PHE and local authority teams have been successful in dealing with complex situations and outbreaks, NHS Test and Trace (NHS T&T) which is responsible for the population at large has a poor record in dealing with the non-complex cases who make up the majority (around 90%) of the total number testing positive through their system¹.

Recently, in some areas of high infection, locally supported contact tracing has been set up "plug the gaps" in NHS T&T. Local authorities have been given access to the central data system and asked to find the contact details of those who T&T has failed to reach. If successful they then update the data system and pass on the contact details to the T&T call handlers who then follow them up as per their normal operating procedures. While a step in the right direction, this constitutes only a relatively minor modification of the existing system and falls well short of the fully localised system based on proven public health principles and expertise that many are calling for.

The Director for Public Health for London is working with the Association of Directors of Public Health and London local authority Directors of Public Health to consider options for taking this forward. Meanwhile the Mayor of Greater Manchester reports that Manchester is in talks with the Government over plans for the country's first locally controlled test, trace and isolate system operating across an entire city region, able to put teams on the ground in communities, going door to door and testing and tracing face to face. (Guardian 5th September)

¹In the week ending 19th August 73% of those tested positive were passed to NHS T&T and in turn 76% of those were reached by the contact tracers. Only 62% of the contacts provided by the non-complex cases were reached. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace>

Question:

To what extent and in what ways is testing, tracing and isolating a matter for the primary care systems in South East London? Does this Committee have a view on the best way forward for strengthening testing, tracing and isolating in the event of a second wave of the virus?

Response

The NHS Test and Trace service is managed by Public Health England and supported by each local authority's public health teams. The main role of primary care is to encourage patients to follow Covid-19 national guidance, i.e. to self-isolate if they develop symptoms of Covid-19 and get tested – please see the link below

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

In terms of strengthening the areas mentioned above; the CCG continues to work with Local Authorities and others to support in planning, messaging related to testing, and in some cases provides support for testing (although this is predominantly focused on the groups in scope for NHS testing).

Local authorities (and the CCG) are monitoring cases carefully and using 'early warning indicators', can react quickly to spikes in locations; this will also support effective action alongside test and trace