



# **Dorset Council Local Outbreak Control Plan**



**Dorset**  
Council

# Introduction



**Cllr Spencer Flower**  
**Dorset Council Leader**

I am pleased that this plan has been developed in close consultation with our partners in health, looking at the different levels of intervention that we will need to keep our communities safe and healthy.

This plan gives us the ability to work with our communities to manage future outbreaks of Covid-19, whether that be an outbreak which is located in a specific building or location, one that involves active transmission in a community, or is more widespread, potentially affecting residents across a wider area.

We have the ability, through this plan, to manage any future outbreak to ensure the best possible protection for our communities.

At the heart of our planning is communication with our communities, engaging with residents and businesses to control the virus if it occurs again within our communities.

I am pleased that government has recognised the opportunity for elected representatives to play their role in leading this work.

Cllr Spencer Flower  
Leader of Dorset Council





# Working together

As we move into the government's next phase in tackling COVID-19 it's really important we have a local plan that sets out how we will respond to and manage any potential outbreaks. That's where local outbreak control plans come in.

Plans will look at how we identify and contain any potential outbreaks and what this might mean for residents, businesses, communities and visitors.

Our plan sets out how we will prevent potential outbreaks, and where this is not possible, minimise the spread of COVID-19 infection across the Dorset Council area. Working in partnership is crucial to help prevent the spread of the virus and respond quickly.

While the response to outbreaks will be led by the local Director of Public Health, success will require a co-ordinated partnership response. This will involve numerous agencies working together.

Managing outbreaks in workplaces, specific settings such as schools and care homes and within the community is not new and is a core function of public health and environmental health.

It's important that the creation of any new arrangements to manage local COVID-19 outbreaks build on our existing plans.

This evolving local outbreak management plan will cover COVID specific issues and how, working with communities and partners, we will respond to them.

## **Key objectives include:**

- using NHS Test and Trace information to support people to self-isolate quickly
- supporting higher risk settings if they have an outbreak
- providing local data and surveillance so we can take quick action to control the spread of the virus
- providing assurance and information to our communities about how we are preventing outbreaks, working with them on any local actions that may be needed
- protecting our health and care system and promoting the recovery of our local economy



# Working principles

The South West Regional Directors of Public Health have agreed to the following working principles:

1. We will work together as a public health system, building on and making use of the existing close working relationships we have between the local authority public health teams and Public Health England (PHE). We will try to ensure we make the best use of the capacity and capability of the regional public health workforce.

2. While recognising local sovereignty, we will use a common language to describe the local governance arrangements:

- COVID-19 Health Protection Board
- Local Outbreak Management Plans
- Local Outbreak Engagement Board

3. We will work to an agreed common set of quality standards and approaches in the management of local outbreaks making use of and building upon already agreed approaches such as those defined within the Core Health Protection Functions MoU.

4. We will take a continuous learning approach to the planning and response to COVID-19 outbreaks, sharing and learning from one another to ensure we provide the most effective response we can.

5. We will ensure that there is an integrated data and surveillance system established, which alongside a strong evidence-base, will enable us to respond effectively to outbreaks. It's proposed that a COVID-19 Regional Data and Intelligence Framework is developed which will enable directors of public health (DsPH) to have access to the necessary information to lead the COVID-19 Health Protection Board.

6. We will commit to openness and transparency, communicating the most up-to-date science, evidence and data to colleagues, wider partners and the public.

7. We will ensure that within our planning and response to COVID-19 we will take the necessary actions to mitigate and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on those most vulnerable, including black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

8. We recognise that DsPH have a system leadership role in chairing the COVID-19 Local Health Protection Board. We commit to engaging with key partners, including all levels of government (upper, lower-tier local authorities, towns and parishes and wider partners and communities), key stakeholders including the community and voluntary sector to ensure a whole system approach.

9. We accept that we are currently working in a fast-changing, complex environment. DsPH are having to respond to changing evidence, national guidance, demands and expectations. We will commit to working proactively and always to public health first principles.

10. We will make sure that our LOMP includes a strong focus on prevention and early intervention to ensure the most important settings, for example, care homes and schools, as well as high-risk locations and communities, identify and prioritise preventative measures to reduce the risk of outbreaks.



# Governance

Local outbreak control plans will be overseen by our Health and Wellbeing Board. The board has representatives from all local public sector agencies and the voluntary and community sector.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is chaired by Dorset Council Cllr Rebecca Knox. The responsibilities of the board include;

- Political oversight of the local delivery of plan and response
- Communicating and engaging with residents and communities

We will also have a Dorset COVID-19 Health Protection Board chaired by the Director of Public Health Sam Crowe.

Membership of the board will include:

- Public Health England
- NHS England
- local NHS partners
- the police
- local authorities (environmental health officers/housing)
- the fire and rescue service
- public protection
- social care
- school and colleges
- higher education economy, enterprise and skills
- business and tourism
- military liaison
- prisons
- communities

We will also be supported by the Dorset Local Resilience Forum providing a multi-agency response and co-ordinating any work needed should a large-scale outbreak occur.





# Decisions based on data

The need for local, timely and high-quality data and surveillance is a critical factor in helping the COVID-19 Health Protection Board to make informed decisions.

We are lucky that the number of cases of COVID-19 has been and still is a lot lower across the Dorset Council area than in other parts of the country.

We really appreciate the hard work and commitment that our residents have shown in response to the “stay at home” guidance and social distancing advice.

The government uses the R rate to set the alert level for the country, but the R rate is not accurate with low numbers like ours. Instead of just focusing on R, we’re looking at early warning signs like the number of people contacting 111 or their GP because of symptoms, a surge or significant increase in our local number of cases, and the number of contacts that are being identified through the NHS Test and Trace service.

Surveillance and monitoring are overseen by a local Epidemiology Cell (EpiCell) which meets weekly, bringing together local intelligence and expertise from key settings/groups.

We will use this data along with other local, regional and national insights to monitor, react and respond to any changes.

Data is constantly changing, and new information is being added all the time. Our plans will be developed to take account of these changes and allow us to adapt as information about the virus evolves.

The sorts of questions we are using data to respond to in this plan includes:

- How many local cases and who are their contacts, by area, age and where they might work
- Understanding where the biggest risks of transmission are and how to prevent this in people who work in settings where there is high frequency contact with the public, or in caring settings
- How we might know when we need to move from managing small outbreaks confined to single settings, to a higher alert level. This might be because of increasing numbers of cases in our community, requiring us to tell the public what we know, and advising them on additional actions to stay safe.



# Test and Trace

Access to testing is one of the key tools which we need to be able to rapidly and effectively respond to any outbreak of COVID19 in our area.

The government's testing strategy includes:

- NHS swab testing which tests NHS staff and priority patients in NHS settings
- Public swab testing using drive through and mobile testing units
- Antibody testing - a blood test to detect if people have had the virus. This is focused on NHS staff in the first instance then will be rolled out to wider groups
- Surveillance testing looking at the proportion of the population who have had the virus to inform decisions

We have rapid testing facilities to test very urgent critical keyworkers (or their household members). We also test patients for COVID19 prior to their discharge from hospital if they are returning to a care home or prison setting.

Through the regional testing centre and mobile testing unit all Dorset residents should have access to a testing site within a 30 minute journey from their home. There is also the option of postal testing kits. All tests are booked via [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://gov.uk/coronavirus) or calling 119.

The static drive through testing facility at Creekmoor Park and Ride in Poole has capacity for 1,400 tests per day. There are two mobile testing facilities which move between Weymouth, West Bay, Dorchester and Blandford each have capacity for 200-300 tests per day.

We have special arrangements to test staff and residents in care homes. There is also a 'whole care home' testing option for homes with residents over the age of 65 and those with dementia so staff and residents can be tested whether they have symptoms or not.

For our numbers of cases to remain low it is vital that people use the NHS Test and Trace service. If you have symptoms of coronavirus you must get tested immediately and speak to the NHS tracing team so they can follow up on contacts. If you are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace team you must follow the advice to self isolate for 14 days.

The results from the test and trace service is also key data to help build our understanding out the picture of COVID19 infections locally and will allow us to rapidly identify any increase in cases in any particular place or context.



# Helping communities

We know from the number of local people identified within the 'shielding' category as a response to COVID-19 that there are many people and families who need support during this pandemic.

We know that some people and families who are instructed to self-isolate as a result of having symptoms or being identified as a close contact of a confirmed case will find this difficult and may require additional support in order to self-isolate.

There are other vulnerable groups within our communities. These include people with long-term health conditions and those from black and minority ethnic groups.

Dorset Council, working with partners and the voluntary and community sector, will make sure that these people are able to find appropriate help and support.

If someone needs support then please contact our COVID-19 community response helpline 01305 221000 or our website [dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/community-response](https://dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/community-response)

We have also identified a range of high-risk places where it is harder to be socially distant and where there is a higher number of vulnerable people. The risk of transmission of COVID-19 is likely to be higher in these areas so we need to have specific plans to address them.

These places include:

- Hospitals
- Care homes
- Community health care settings
- Prisons
- Houses of multiple occupancy
- Gypsy and Traveller sites
- Schools and early years settings
- Public transport
- Higher education settings
- Military camps
- Manufacturing plants
- Hospitality sector (hotels/holiday parks)
- Cafes/restaurants/pubs
- Places of worship
- Indoor leisure facilities

Hospitality settings including beaches is an area we know residents are concerned about so we will be looking at how we can support the hospitality sector to stay safe.





# Action cards

For each area we have a set of action cards for pro-active prevention as well as actions if an outbreak should occur.

Measures for prevention include making sure areas have adequate personal protective equipment, training, access to testing and help with implementing government guidance.

The action cards provide details of how and who they should contact in the event they suspect they have a COVID-19 outbreak in their setting.

The action cards also provide clear guidance on how individual settings can help prevent the infection by applying existing guidance on:

- social distancing
- sticking to the risk-assessed safe working advice
- cleaning hands regularly
- disinfecting objects, surfaces and common touch points
- cohorting the workforce and minimising contacts outside of the household

The action cards will be available on our website and will be produced, updated and promoted for individuals, businesses and organisations to download and use.



# Staying safe

Most outbreaks should be able to be managed using our existing teams, and working closely with partners like Public Health England, and local health and care services.

However, should we start to see an increase in new cases of COVID-19 in our communities that is different to a usual pattern, we will move to quickly tell the public what we know, who is affected, and what we will need people to do to stay safe and break the ongoing transmission of COVID-19.

This will involve working through the Health and Wellbeing Board to communicate quickly and clearly, supported by our health protection board.

Our local response might involve rapid testing, advice to stay home more and limit social contact, or other measures depending on the situation. We will work with you and be clear on any actions we need to take.

We will only be able to have an impact and reduce the risk of transmission if we all play our part.

Everyone has a role to play in the prevention of COVID-19. There are simple steps we can all take which will make a big difference.

- Regularly washing your hands with soap and hot water for 20 seconds
- Using hand sanitiser where hand washing isn't available
- Wearing a face covering on public transport, in hospital settings and in enclosed spaces like shops where social distancing isn't possible
- If you have symptoms of coronavirus self-isolate and book a test straight away
- If you are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service play your part and self-isolate as instructed

If we all play our part we can make sure cases in Dorset remain low.



# Communications and engagement

Providing up-to-date guidance, information and advice to the general public and stakeholders is a vital element of the plan.

While much of the guidance and messaging currently comes from central government and Public Health England (PHE) the interpretation and the localisation of the main messaging has often been needed.

There are existing communication protocols and material in place between PHE and local authorities to ensure clarity and consistency of messages in response to an outbreak, such as letters to parents following a confirmed case in a school.

Making sure we have consistent messages from local organisations is vital to avoid confusion and to build trust and confidence.

Our public messaging will focus on:

- Re-enforcing the importance of social distancing and other control measures
- Reminding people of the importance of hand washing as our first line of defence
- Requesting adherence to isolating when required, to stop the spread of infection
- Setting out the support available locally to support people required to isolate

We already have established close working arrangements with key partners in agreeing and communicating proactive, timely COVID-19 messages within the Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group.

Engaging and involving stakeholders and individuals in the development and delivery of messages will continue to be a crucial part of the plan.

Channels we will use for communicating include:

- Dedicated pages on the Dorset Council website
- Regular e-newsletter
- Regular updates from the council leader
- Video from the Director for Public Health
- Social media content

A communications and engagement strategy will be developed as part of this plan to build trust and confidence within the general public and partners.