

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24th June 2020**

Report Subject: **Test, Trace and Protect**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member
Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	11.06.20	16.06.20				24.06.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to confirm the arrangements put in place to establish Contact Tracing in Blaenau Gwent, as part of the regional response to the Welsh Government's Test, Trace and Protect Plan (TTP).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Welsh Government published its Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) Plan on 13th May which is supported by the Public Health Wales (PHW) Public Health Protection Response Plan. TTP is a critical part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and will support the transition out of full lockdown, supporting the prevention of further widespread community transmission of the virus (keeping the R number below 1.0) and allowing our communities to gradually return to work, school and other social activities. This enables options for Smart lockdown in particular locations should the R number rise rather than the need to impose total lockdown arrangements
- 2.2 The TTP Plan sets out a structure which is national, regional and local, with roles and responsibilities set out for Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Local Health Boards and Local Authorities. Local Health Boards and Local Authorities are required to work in partnership to establish Contact Tracing Teams that will cover all local authority areas.
- 2.3 In the Gwent Region the Gwent Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) has been responsible for establishing local arrangements and has agreed an Operational Delivery Plan for TTP with a regional Contact Tracing and Testing Group established. (The SCG is responsible for the response to the Covid-19 Emergency in the region and comprises the Local Health Board, five Local Authorities, Emergency Services and Welsh Government).

2.4 The Contract Tracing Service in Gwent has been operational from the 1st June, with teams now established in each local authority area.

3. TTP – Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The TTP Plan sets out the Roles and Responsibilities at national, regional and local levels:

3.2 Welsh Government – provide strategic direction, oversight, determine priorities and provide resources to enable test, trace, protect;

3.3 Public Health Wales (PHW) – National Public Health body providing leadership and specialist advice on public health approaches. Responsible for coordinating contact tracing, advising on sampling and testing, laboratory analysis of tests, health surveillance and providing expert health protection advice and analysis of the spread of the virus in our communities through a range of health surveillance indicators;

3.4 Local Health Boards and Local Authorities – working in collaboration to deliver regionally coordinated local contact tracing teams – a mix of clinical and non-clinical staff who can support those who are symptomatic or have tested positive and their close contacts to stay safe. This will sit alongside their existing role to provide testing facilities and environmental and public health responses to local outbreaks and clusters or preventative action in areas regarded as high risk e.g. care homes.

3.5 Crucially everyone in Wales needs to know and understand the symptoms to look out for and all residents have a responsibility in making TTP work. Everyone will be required to continue to follow public health advice, hand washing, social distancing, reporting symptoms and self-isolating when necessary.

3.6 The commitment from local authorities and local health board has been to get the service operational at pace in order to support the relaxation of lockdown. This then allows a more permanent regional service to be established which will be led by the Local Health Board, and will need to be operational from the end of the Summer. This limits the Council's commitment to the end of the Summer with the expectation that staff will need to return to their substantive roles as services restart.

3.7 Appendix One details how TTP will work in Wales.

4. TTP in Blaenau Gwent

4.1 The Operational Delivery Plan identified a need for a team of c.30 staff in Blaenau Gwent, to support a service for our population. The team comprises 6 Contact Tracers and 24 Contact Advisers. Staff have been redeployed into these roles from the Council (i.e. Business Support, OD, Social Services, Regeneration, Public Protection) and Tai Calon, and a project manager has also been seconded to manage the transition to the regional service.

- 4.2 The Council has committed to set up a virtual Contact Tracing Team which will operate a 7 day a week service over 2 shifts (8am-2pm & 2pm-8pm), as required and it is expected that the capacity will build up over the first few weeks as the level of testing increases. There may be a need to supplement the workforce with agency or temporary appointments at some point. The Team will utilise the National Data Management System which is due to go live w/c 8th June 2020.
- 4.3 There is also a Regional Hub established which is health led and includes an Environmental Health Manager/Senior Officer from each Council, this hub will provide the clinical governance and leadership for the contact tracing in Gwent.
- 4.4 The initial work will focus on Care Homes where testing of both staff and residents is now taking place. As Community Testing increases and expands in Wales then work will also involve contacting individuals who have had contact with those tested as positive for the virus.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Option One

Executive notes and endorses the establishment of Contact Tracing in Blaenau Gwent, as part of the regional approach in Gwent and in support of the national Test, Trace and Protect Plan.

5.2 Option Two

Executive notes the establishment of Contact Tracing in Blaenau Gwent, as part of the regional approach in Gwent and in support of the national Test, Trace and Protect Plan.

6. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

- 6.1 The establishment of Contact Tracing in the Borough fulfils the Council's statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act to take action to respond to the pandemic emergency and put in place arrangements to support the eventual recovery of the community.

7. Implications Against Each Option

- 7.1 Financial – the initial response to the requirement to establish a Contact Tracing Team has been fulfilled by redeploying staff into the roles of Contact Tracers and Contact Advisers and the appointment of a Project Manager. This means that, initially at least, there will be no additional staff costs. There will be costs associated with ensuring staff all have the necessary equipment to operate a virtual call centre.
- 7.2 The Welsh Government has given a commitment to meet the costs of Contact Tracing and Ministers and Senior Officials have confirmed that funding is available.

It is therefore assumed that there will be no additional costs to the Council, however it is the case that Councils are effectively operating 'at risk' at present.

- 7.3 There may be a requirement to make some appointments to fixed term posts in order to enable the Council to release staff back to service delivery. It is assumed that these costs will be met from Welsh Government funding and that these staff would move across to the regional service at the end of the Summer.
- 7.4 Risk including Mitigating Actions
- Financial – the Council is currently meeting any costs of equipment required to establish the Service on the assumption that these will be met by Welsh Government funding. Assurances have been given to Leaders, Chief Executives and Chief Finance Officers that this funding will be made available.
 - Non Delivery of Contact Tracing – the risk remains that if Contact Tracing is not successfully deployed then we will not be able to manage the risk of an increase in the R Number and rate of infection, which could result in a further surge in the virus and a return to lockdown measures. The work undertaken, and detailed in this report, to establish Contact Tracing will mitigate this risk.
 - Resources – there is a risk that the Council is not able to meet the capacity needed to run both this new service, our on-going response to the pandemic and the return of staff to their service delivery roles. This will be mitigated by treating Contact Tracing as a Critical Service and, where necessary, recruiting additional staff who will then transfer to the regional service. Consideration will also have to be given to our capacity within Public Protection to fulfil this obligation along with other statutory responsibilities including enforcement of the Coronavirus Legislation.
- 7.5 Legal – the Council has statutory responsibilities as a Category One Responder, under the Civil Contingency Act, to put in place the necessary arrangements and resources to respond to the pandemic emergency and the recovery of the community. Contact Tracing is one of the actions being taken to fulfil this obligation.
- 7.6 The decisions regarding Contact Tracing in Blaenau Gwent have been taken under delegated authority afforded to the Managing Director a result of the Emergency Response (Civil Contingency Act) and the Emergency Governance Arrangements agreed by the Council on 2 April 2020. The trade unions have been consulted on the establishment of the service and are supportive of the approach being taken by the Council.
- 7.6 Human Resources – the risk that the Council will not have sufficient staff is identified in Section 7.4.

8. Supporting Evidence

- 8.1 Expected outcome for the public
The Contact Tracing Service is a critical part of the response to ensure that proper measures are in place to protect the community of Blaenau Gwent against a further increase in community transmission of the pandemic.

- 8.2 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)
Not applicable.
- 8.3 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)
The Contact Tracing Service is a critical part of the planning across Wales to deal with the pandemic and to prevent a resurgence in the future.
- 8.4 Collaboration / partnership working
The report details the strong collaboration and partnership working taking place across the region to put this Service in place in a very short timescale. This includes the support of Tai Calon to redeploy some staff into the team.
- 8.5 Integration (across service areas)
The response to the requirement to establish this Service has been approached on a one council basis with staff being redeployed from a number of services.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix One