



SBAR on Test & Protect Programme

The purpose of this SBAR is to update the NHS Lanarkshire Board of the progress being made in the Test & Protect Service in line with the requirements set out by Scottish Government.

SITUATION

NHS Lanarkshire Test and Protect (Covid 19 contact tracing) Service continues to provide service 8am-8pm 365 days per year.

In total, there have been **114,697** confirmed COVID-19 cases in NHS Lanarkshire as at 07:00 on **07 December 2021**. In Lanarkshire, to date there have been **1,949** Covid related deaths.

This report provides an update of recent changes.

There has been a recent rise in cases across Lanarkshire. As Covid cases remain high, it would appear we are transitioning from the acute to the endemic phase of the Covid 19 pandemic. Nationally, reflective of this, the intent is to move to a steady state of Contact Tracing where a “one for Scotland” approach will be taken and boards can add to this as they see fit. Predictions are that there will continue to be surges in cases that we have to be prepared for, e.g. recent rise in cases in Lanarkshire.

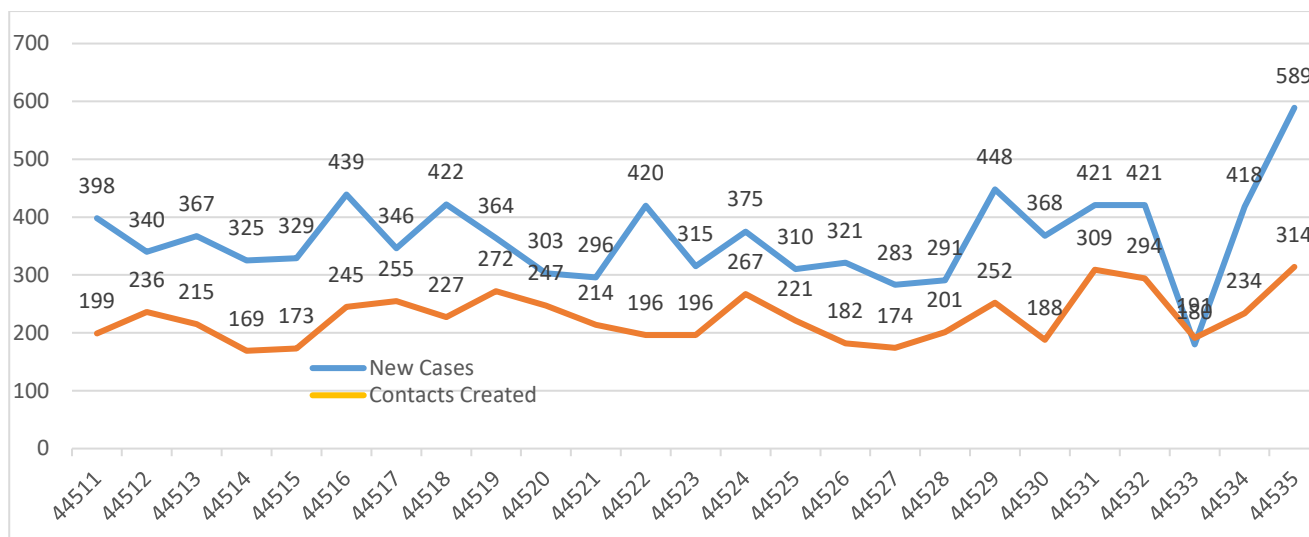
Once again, the unpredictability of Covid has come to the fore with the Variant of Concern, Omicron. There is still little known about the severity of this variant but it does appear to be highly transmissible. Locally and nationally, we are taking a measured approach to reduce the transmission as much as possible; trying to balance the unknown risks with reducing disruption to a minimum. We are working closely with education and unfortunately have already had to isolate whole school classes. We are being precautionary and asking all close contacts of confirmed Omicron or suspected Omicron cases to self-isolate for 10 days from exposure date. This has implications for education, healthcare and the wider workforce.

As of 10am on 07/12/21 Lanarkshire has 24 confirmed Omicron cases, 25 highly probable (has epi link) and 86 possible/highly likely cases.

Our contact Tracers and Contact Tracing Practitioners are working hard to telephone every positive Omicron case and contact whether case is confirmed, highly probable or possible

Positive cases (past month)

The graph below shows the distribution of new NHS Lanarkshire positive cases and their contacts for the past month from 11/11/21 until 05/12/21



Age and Rate of infection

Cases in all age groups under 65 have increased this week. Cases are more prevalent in the North locality and East Kilbride

Staff Wellbeing

Nationally, contact tracing staff wellbeing support is actively encouraged. There is a National wellbeing network with representation from most health boards (including NHS Lanarkshire) where ideas and best practices are shared. We have implemented Tracespace (a Microsoft Teams channel) in Test and Protect with Contact Tracers and Contact Tracing Practitioners and although early days, has had a good bit of interest. We are expanding this and sharing with the wider Public Health team.

We continue to encourage activities which help staff relax e.g. - remote team tea breaks. Each team start their shift with a team call which clearly marks the start of the working day and end with a team debrief to “shut off” and mark the difference between work time and personal time. All staff are encouraged to take appropriate breaks throughout their shift.

Healthy work-life balance

Staff continue to enjoy our shift patterns put in place after a scoping exercise where we looked at staff shift preferences to help improve their work life balance while providing consistent service cover.

BACKGROUND

Case Interview and Case Completion Rates have been measured in Lanarkshire since September 2020. Case interview and completion rates remain high.

The average case interview completion rate inside 24 hours of notification on CMS is a measure of how quickly the team manage to interview the case, identify contacts and any events/settings of interest. From 11/11/21 to 05/12/21 the average case interview rate has been 92%.

The average case completion rate inside 24 hours of notification on CMS is a measure of how quickly the wider team manage to complete all other investigative activity associated

with a case before it can be closed. This can be lower than the case interview rate as complexities still have to be investigated after the initial case interview. From 11/11/21 to 05/12/21 the average case closure rate was 86.4%.

Staff Attrition

Test and Protect Contact Tracing service has Contact Tracers, Contact Tracing Practitioners, Test and Protect nurses, Service Management, and clinical Lead (Nurse Consultant).

There is still steady staff attrition since initial recruitment in September 2020, some leaving to take up Test and Protect posts in neighbouring health boards at higher bands but more recently to permanent posts out with T&P. We have trained and developed a highly skilled team who are an asset to NHS Lanarkshire.

Recent assurance of Scottish Government funding for extension of temporary contracts until 30 September 2022 should slow this process. We have 7 recruited staff members (management and Team Leads) who are on secondments from elsewhere in NHS Lanarkshire. We acknowledge the fact that their line management may not want to release them from their substantive posts for longer than initially intended. If this were to be the case, it would be of significant detriment to the Test and Protect Service.

We have been working collaboratively with the National Contact Centre, which has been both encouraged and endorsed by Scottish Government. We have agreement where up to 10 daily NCC basic Contact Tracers (14wte) from a dedicated pool of NCC trained staff work with us to help us meet government staffing recommendations. This has been in place for six weeks now and is working well.

ASSESSMENT

Future of Contact Tracing

There is a national SLWG Future of Contact Tracing looking at how the function might need to change throughout winter, spring and beyond using both human interaction and digital engagement expending the most effort on cases who are at higher risk of severe illness and those who are at higher risk of transmitting the virus through direct human interaction, by our contact tracers in the service; and conversely, expending less effort on those at lower risk of severe illness and those who are at low risk of transmitting the virus by less direct human and mostly digital interaction (Co3 self-contact tracing). Engagement with Co3 is currently low across all boards as this platform is not as user friendly as it could be, but work is currently underway to improve this and the updated version is hoped to be live imminently. Planned improvements include condensed GDPR and simplified language. While heightened user engagement is expected, this will not be able to be measured until in use. We are currently working towards defining criteria to identify those who may be clinically at high risk of severe illness who would benefit from additional support by way of a welfare phone call midway through their isolation. We can check that they have support in place and signpost appropriately.

Contact Tracing and COP26

There has been a number of positive cases of Covid 19 related to COP 26 although no health boards appear to have been significantly adversely affected. The UK and Scottish

Government agreed approach to contact tracing during this time is likely to have had good effect in mitigating transmission of the virus.

There remain risks ahead as we learn to live with Covid 19 as safely as we can:

Imminent high risk - The unknown effect of the Omicron variant on the population of Lanarkshire and further afield

Imminent risk

Transmission in education - We continue to work collaboratively with our education colleagues to mitigate risk of transmission.

Staff Attrition/ Retention - The T&P team continue to strive to improve effectiveness. Although the imminent risk of staff attrition has been delayed due to funding from Scottish Government, there is still a risk as staff have concerns about their financial stability after September.

As we approach the festive season, parties and social gatherings will increase close contact amongst the population of Lanarkshire and beyond giving Covid 19 the opportunity to transmit freely.

It is imperative we maintain a well-resourced service capable of quickly adapting as needed throughout this pandemic and look to the future as we transition to the endemic phase of the pandemic. There is a risk that substantive post line management may not support extension to contracts of seconded staff.

Festive Season - As we approach the festive season, parties and social gatherings will increase close contact amongst the population of Lanarkshire and beyond giving Covid 19 the opportunity to transmit freely.

These are likely to result in increased transmission of Covid 19. Although we will operate throughout the festive period, we will have a reduced service on the main holiday dates to allow most staff to spend time with their families. SG requirements for staffing over the festive period are less than last year. This is largely due to the new digital options for low risk contact tracing and the effect of vaccines on transmission of the virus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- Consider the ongoing requirement for a skilled Contact Tracing workforce as Covid 19 becomes endemic in our population
- Recognise and support resourcing of the T&P service to maintain adequate capacity to deliver effective contact tracing and case investigation across Lanarkshire throughout winter and beyond.
- Support extensions to current T&P recruited staff who are on secondment from other NHS Lanarkshire services and note the risk of further staff attrition
- Note, not only the highly fluctuating nature of demand on the service, but also the pace of that fluctuation and unpredictability of Covid 19

Sharon Falconer, Test and Protect Service Manager ,7th December 2021