

SBAR on Test & Protect Programme

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

SITUATION

The NHS Lanarkshire Test & Protect (Covid 19 contact tracing) service continues to provide the service 8am-8pm, 365 days per year.

The service has approximately 43200 case records contact traced on the case management system (CMS) from 15th July 2020 until 16th May 2021.

After reporting the recent trend in case numbers to be plateauing last month, there has more recently however, been a significant increase in cases. Increased travel into Scotland and easing of restrictions may well be contributing to this. This rise in cases has continued to a point where all our current staff are working to full capacity. Those who were on loan to other departments have been brought back to Test and Protect and some part time staff are working extra hours to ensure we contact everyone we need to.

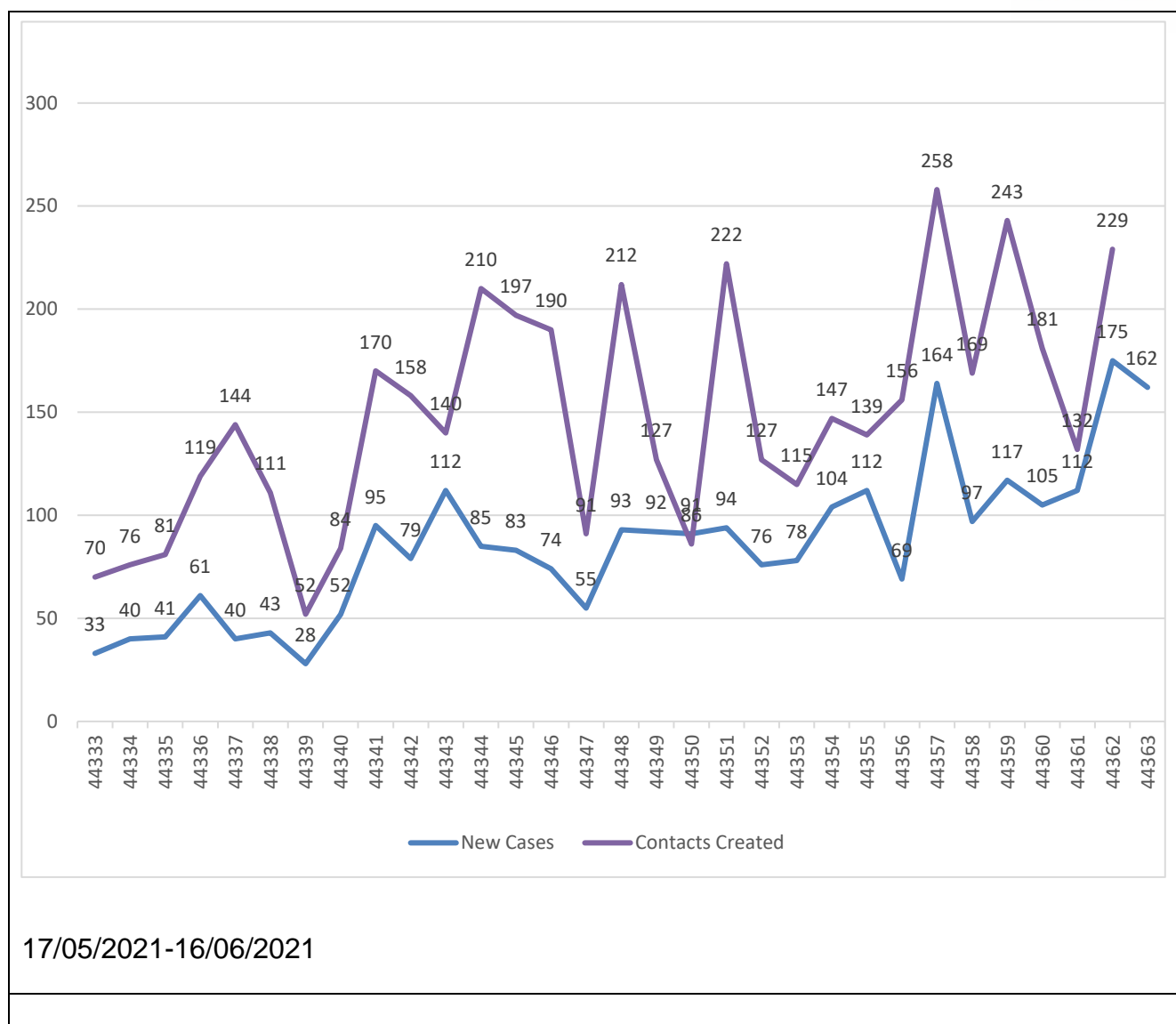
Positive Cases (last month)

The chart below shows the distribution of new NHS Lanarkshire positive cases and their contacts for the past month from 17/05/21 until 16/06/21. The dramatic increase in positive cases in a large neighbouring health board, as expected, has had a knock on effect on our positive case rates which have steadily risen, as have case rates throughout Scotland.

Current daily case rate in Scotland is 1,129 (16/06/2021) with a 7-day average of 967. Projections indicate Scotland may be at 2,500 daily cases by early to mid July.

To address this, most health boards are recruiting to band 5 Contact Tracing Practitioner posts for all contact tracing, including a large neighbouring board. Our Contact Tracers are band 3 as we recruited to band 3 national CT job description.

NHS Lanarkshire Board meeting - June 2021



BACKGROUND

While we have had steady attrition of contact tracing staff to permanent posts in their pre Covid roles, we have not experienced significant loss since April's staffing report, but at the end of June, our local authority colleagues return to their substantive posts as their services resume, which will reduce our contact tracing workforce by 11.4wte (15 headcount). Lower case numbers in previous recent months had not indicated this to be a problem but with the unexpected rise in cases recently, we are now looking at how we address this. We have had staff on loan to Vaccinations, HR, and Salus while cases were low which not only helped other departments, but kept staff motivation at a good level.

However, Covid has now delivered a new challenge, a more transmissible Delta variant in our communities, which now accounts for up to 75% of positive cases in some localities.

NHS Lanarkshire Board meeting - June 2021

Case Interview and Case Completion Rates

The average case interview completion rate inside 24 hours of notification on CMS is a measure of how quickly a contact tracer manages to interview the case, identify contacts and any events/settings of interest. Monthly average rates are listed in the table below

September	74.0%
October	71.8%
November	91.2%
December	91.4%
January	95.2%
February	96.3%
Last 28 days, to March 18th	96.7%
March 19 th until April 18 th inclusive	95.9%
April 19 th until May 18 th inclusive	95.5%
May 19 th until June 16 th inclusive	88.5%

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 off. See below.

September	53.4%
October	56.3%
November	84.4%
December	86.0%
January	91.7%
February (to 18/02)	92.0%
Last 28 days, to March 18th	92.7%
March 19 th until April 18 th inclusive	75.9%*
May 19 th until June 16 th inclusive	71.5%*

*artificially low due to cases being open for investigation of workplaces and premises in Lanarkshire and in other health boards

ASSESSMENT

Future of the Test & Protect Workforce

The T&P team continue to strive to prepare for the immediate future and to improve effectiveness as well as the progressing transition from the current scripted case interview process to the more robust case investigation approach; the well proven approach used by the health protection team. Our Contact Tracers are continuing to explore with cases, the 7-day period before they become infectious as distinct from the standard protocol of asking questions about 2 days from onset of symptoms or sample collection. We had trialled a more detailed scripted case questionnaire but due to the current demand on the service, are not using this. There is a pressing need to move to the tried and tested Health Protection case investigation approach to allow us to better target and break the chains of other routes of transmission but current numbers have temporarily slightly slowed our progress on this.

There remain risks ahead:

Imminent high risk – As neighbouring health boards are recruiting Contact Tracing Practitioner (band 5) posts for all Contact Tracing calls to cases, there is a significant risk that we will lose staff we have invested time in training and upskilling to these posts.

Also, as services and businesses reopen, staff are leaving to take up permanent posts in pre Covid roles.

Increased International and Domestic travel - As domestic and international travel increases there is an increased risk of Variants Of Concern (VOCs) and different mutations taking hold and becoming more prevalent in our communities. Delta variant already accounts for up to 75% of cases.

School Summer Break – School cases are high but collaborative working with our Education colleagues have ensured that contact is made with those who need to isolate. However, summer brings it's own challenges with summer activities planned in both education and private facilities. Because of how these are structured, we may be faced with an increased amount of contact tracing.

Easing of lockdown – Because of this, people are mixing more freely without taking social distancing measures. This results in an increase in case numbers and complexity of these cases with more contacts and routes of onward transmission as businesses return to normal.

Age and Rate of Infection

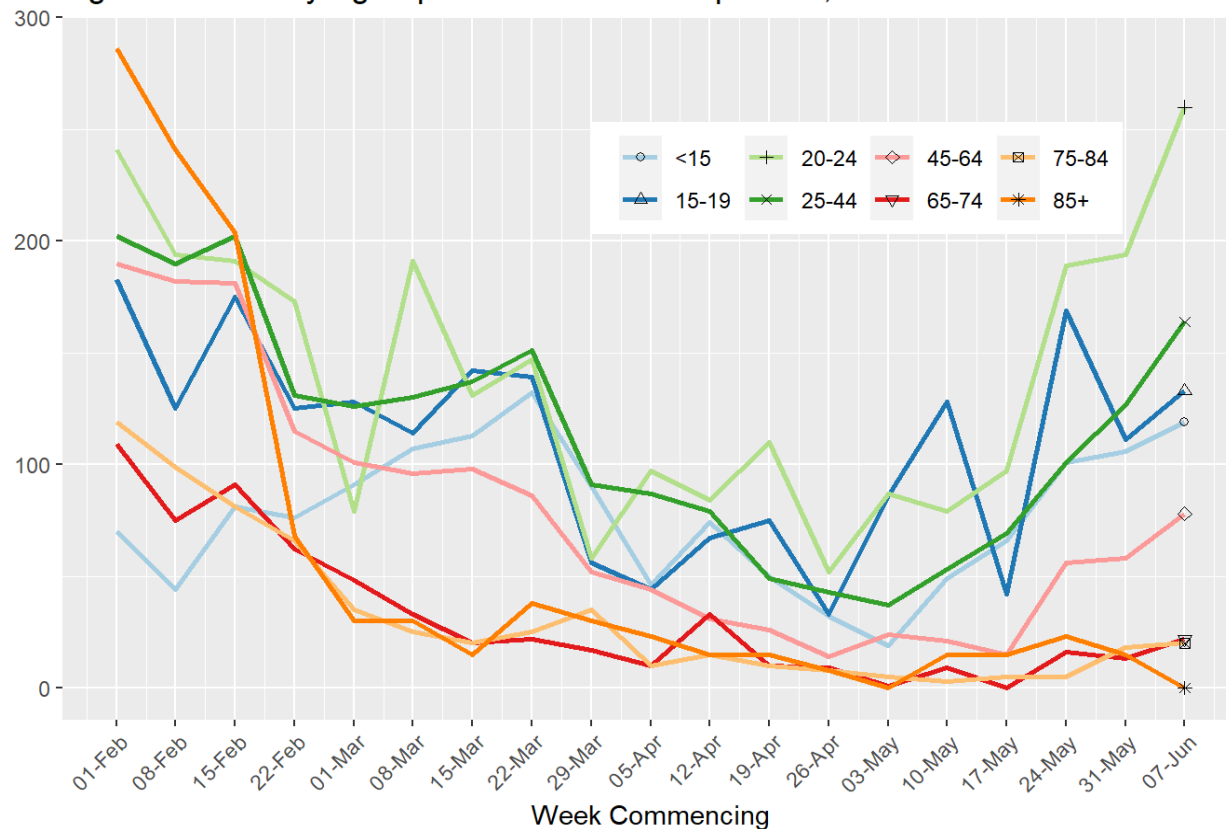
Early May showed continuing increasing infection rates in under 15 year olds, 15-19 year olds, 25-44 year olds, and 65-74 year olds, the most marked being 15-19 year olds. We are now seeing an increase in all age groups except over 85's, albeit a small increase in 65-74 year olds and 75-84 year olds. (fig 14)

It is imperative we maintain a robustly recruited, well-resourced Test & Protect Service

NHS Lanarkshire Board meeting - June 2021

capable of investigating and mitigating transmission.

Figure 14: Weekly Age Specific Covid Rates per 100,000



NHS Lanarkshire Board meeting - June 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- Note significant risk of further staff attrition due to recruitment processes in neighbouring health boards.
- Note, not only the highly fluctuating nature of demand on the service, but also the pace of that fluctuation
- note the information provided which provides an overview of service delivery during the past month and a summary of the risks ahead
- continue supporting the resourcing of the T&P service to maintain adequate capacity to deliver effective contact tracing across Lanarkshire

Sharon Falconer
Test & Protect Service Manager
17th June 2021