

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 and provide assurance that the service is operating effectively.

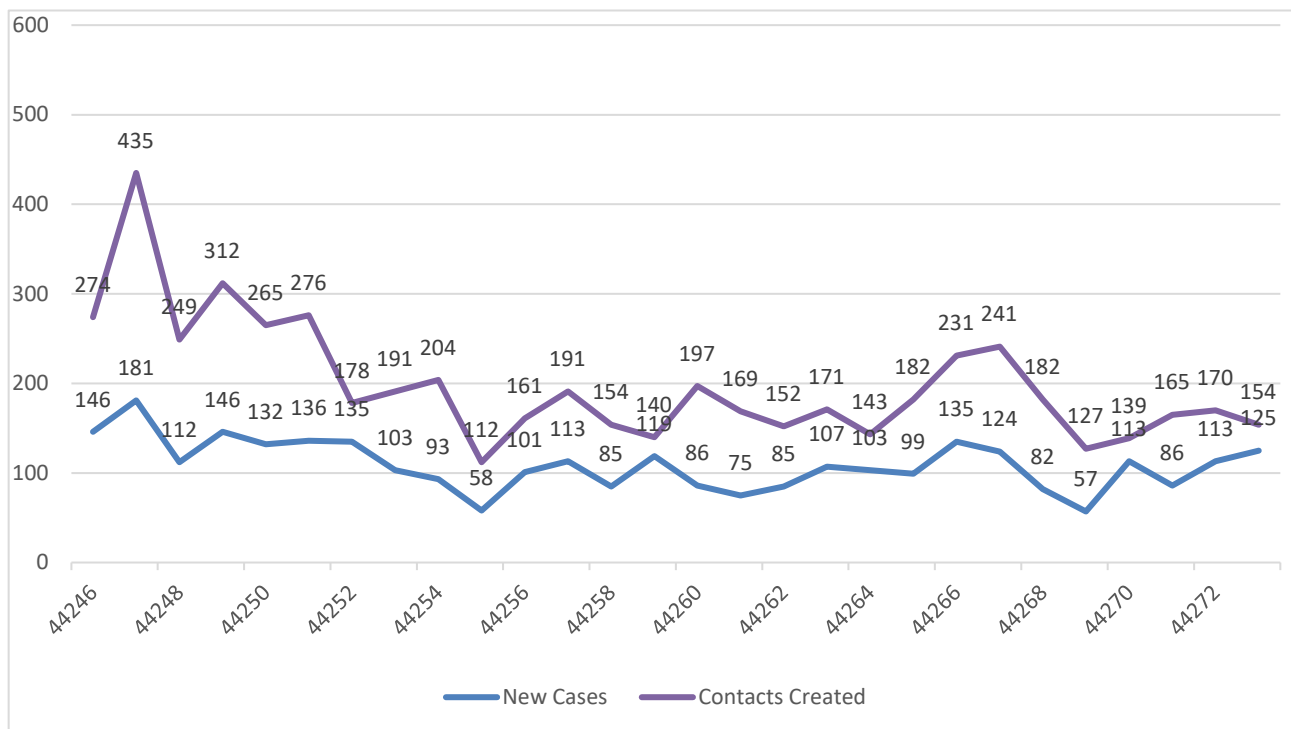
Situation

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

To date the service has approximately 38,000 case records contact traced on the case management system (CMS). Overall the trend of cases has been steadily falling, but recent evidence shows a levelling off of this deceleration of case numbers. The consensus is that this levelling off is likely due to increased efforts for case finding through expanding testing capacity and access – PCR and LFD test kits.

Positive Cases (last 28 days)

The chart below shows the distribution of new NHS Lanarkshire positive cases and their contacts for the 28-day period from 19/02/21 to 18/03/21.



Regardless of the levelling off of the deceleration of case numbers, the expectation is that case numbers would reach a manageable level that would allow much more detailed and deeper investigation of each case and their contacts; this would require a change in balance of the skill mix for the T&P Service. Discussions are at an advanced stage on what that skills mix balance should look like with the view to ensuring the service continues to remain highly effective in reducing person-to-person transmission in the community.

Background

NHSL has undertaken a substantial recruitment programme in order to meet its workforce requirements. The following table describes the current staffing position.

| Post | (Number) & WTE in post | Comment |
|--|------------------------|--|
| B3 Contact Tracer | (115) 83.12 | Contracted until March 2022 |
| B3 Contact Tracer (Council) | (19) 15.2 | Secondment extended from 31/03/2021 to 30/06/2021 |
| Contact Tracer (borrowed from other NHSL services) | (7) 5.83 | |
| B5 Team Leader | (14) 12.9 | 1 of who is covering maternity leave of 1 B7 Service Manager |
| B5 Data Analyst | (1) 1 | Contracted until March 2022 |
| B6 Investigating Officers | (11) 9.2 | Recruitment to strengthen staff group in progress. 2 will be moving to HP team but 5 new staff members will be in post by end May 2021 |
| B7 Service Manager | (2) 2 | Contracted until March 2022 |
| B3 Admin Assistant | (1) 1 | Contracted until March 2022 |
| Band 3 admin assistant | (3) 1.2 | Contracted until June 2021 to support National Notification Service |

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 Table 2.

Table 2

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| September | 74.0% |
| October | 71.8% |
| November | 91.2% |
| December | 91.4% |
| January | 95.2% |

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| February | 96.3% |
| Last 28 days, to March18th | 96.7% |

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 Table 3.

Table 3

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| 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 March18th | 92.7% |

From mid-November to mid-December positive case numbers dropped well below the peak seen in October and remained consistent throughout this period. This allowed us to further develop our service to ensure it is well prepared for more challenging periods. We used this time to introduce record audits, review operating procedures, carry out one-to-ones and complete the Healthcare Support Worker Standards. Our primary focus has been improving the skills and knowledge of our contact tracers to improve the service.

On the 1st February the service returned to calling all identified contacts of positive cases. Over the period of the winter pressures we were routinely using SMS messages to communicate with contacts.

ASSESSMENT

Future of the Test & Protect Workforce

The return to calling all contacts has reduced the number of cases a contact tracer can complete in a shift because of additional call time (approx. 40 minutes per call to each close contact). With current staffing levels and infection rates, service capacity is sufficient to meet current demand. Our Contact Tracers are currently exploring up to 9 days, infectious and pre-infectious period with cases to collect intelligence on where transmission of infection may have occurred; this was not possible during busier periods.

However, there are risks ahead:

Community Asymptomatic testing – Whilst this is now underway, there is still some uncertainty to the extent of asymptomatic positive cases

Testing of close contacts – We are now asking close asymptomatic contacts to seek a PCR test to actively pursue potential cases and mitigate further transmission. This enables us to find more positive cases quicker and isolate their contacts.

Expansion of LFD tests to schools and workplaces – in addition to the case finding outlined in the previous point, contact tracing LFD cases results in a higher workload for Test & Protect. LFD tests with positive/negative PCR tests need to be risk assessed and isolation advice to the cases and contacts amended as required.

School-age cases are rising. The phased reopening of schools has slowed any decline in overall positive cases and indeed the past week has shown some increase at an average of 100 cases per day from 86 cases per day the previous week.

We are already seeing limited compliance with restrictions on the lead up to restrictions lessening with the number of contacts per case rising over past weekend. In January and February, the average number of contacts per case was 2. In the past week alone, that has risen. One case this weekend had 51 contacts. Another had a house party. Behaviour is changing.

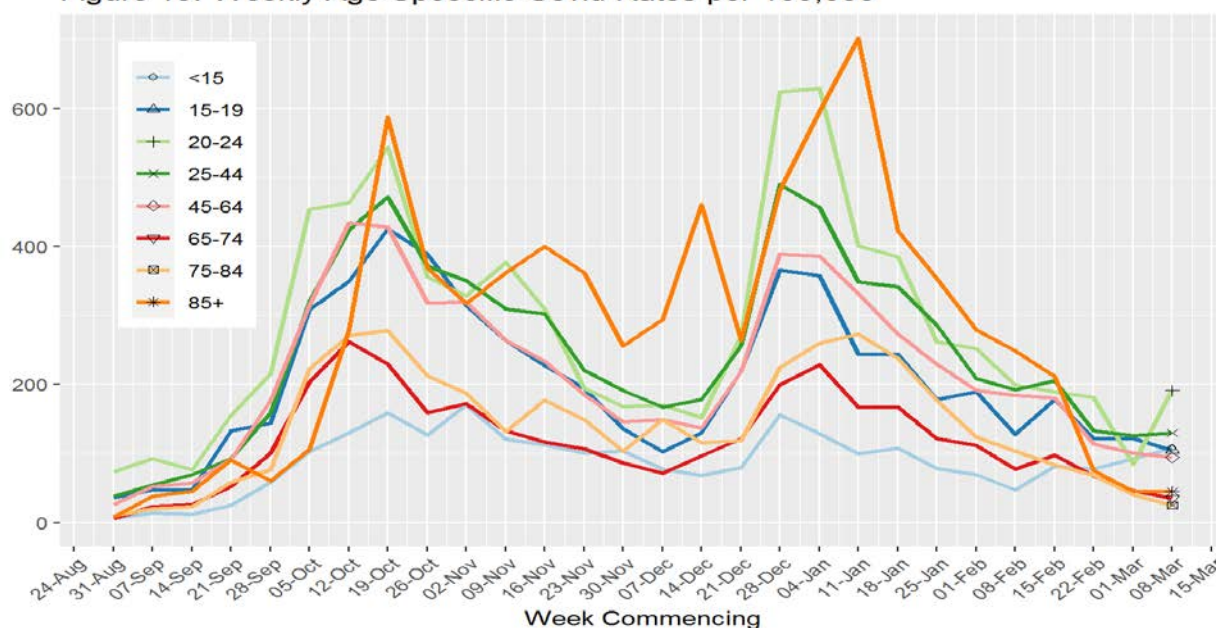
Easing of restrictions- cases will have more contacts.

Age and Rate of Infection

Last month we reported a decline in infection rates in all age groups. This month, we are seeing a different picture.

While infection rates in other age groups have either plateaued or continued to decline, this month there has been a significant rise in the infection rate in under 15 year olds and a very steep rise in 20-24 year olds as shown on the graph below.

Figure 15: Weekly Age Specific Covid Rates per 100,000



For these reasons, it is imperative we maintain a recruited, well-resourced Test & Protect Service

| Scenarios with relatively low volume of cases and contacts | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Cases per day | Contacts per case | Total number of contacts | Contact Tracing hours | Minimum amount of CTs |
| 80 | 5 | 400 | 347 | 52 |
| 80 | 6 | 480 | 400 | 59 |
| 100 | 5 | 500 | 433 | 65 |
| 100 | 6 | 600 | 500 | 73 |

This is best case scenario and does not take into account re-interviews, debriefs or complex cases which add a considerable amount of time (Figures above are based on 7.5 hours contact tracing per CT per shift).

Two of our current Contact Tracing staff are on loan to the Human Resources Department and we are identifying a further three to help.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

- note the fluctuating nature of demand on the service
- note the information provided which provides an overview of service delivery during the past month and a summary of the risks ahead
- continuing support for the resourcing of T&P service to maintain adequate capacity to deliver effective contact tracing across Lanarkshire

Sharon Falconer
 Test & Protect Manager
 23rd March 2021