



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.

This report provides an update of recent changes.

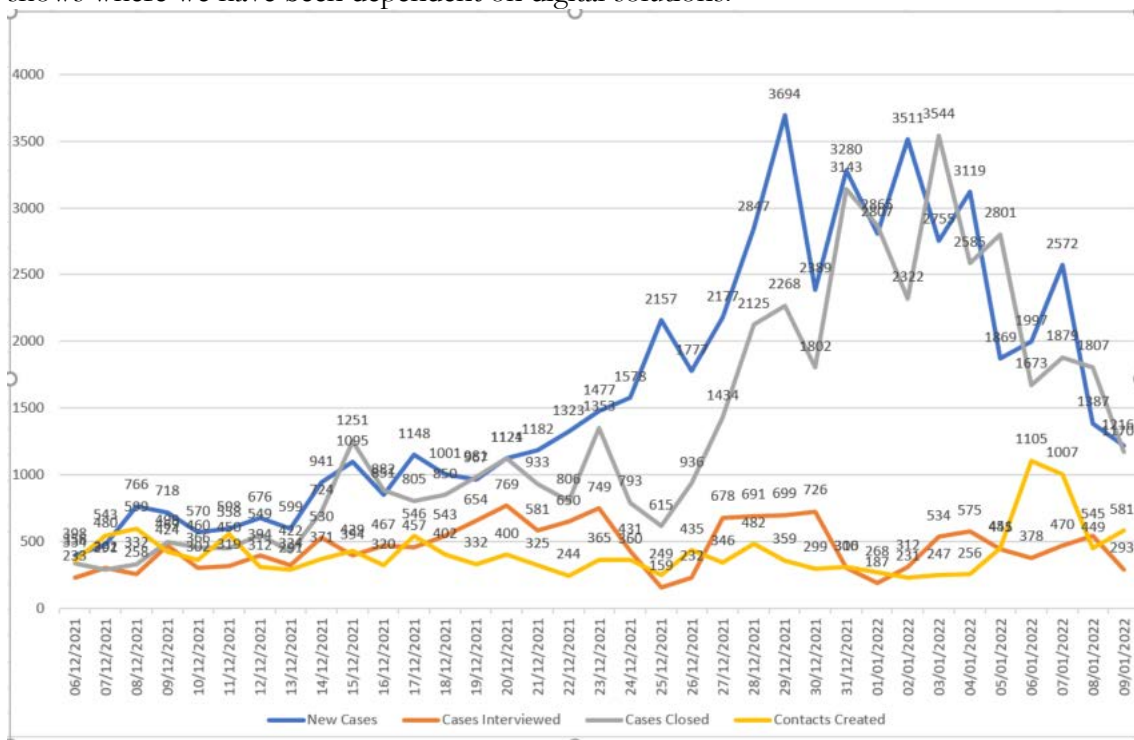
SITUATION

NHS Lanarkshire Test and Protect (Covid 19 contact tracing) Service continues to provide service 8am-8pm 365 days per year. Since 15th June 2020, 178,938 Covid 19 cases have been recorded on our case management system (CMS). This past month has seen our highest case numbers since the start of the pandemic, peaking between 28/12/2021-04/01/2022 averaging **3050** new cases daily with the highest being **3694** on 29/12/2021. Daily case numbers have remained exceedingly high but have stayed below 3000 since 05/01/2022

Test and Protect Contact Tracing works on a “Once for Scotland” approach where health boards have their own recruited staff, and the national team (National Contact Centre) deal with all overflow and surge capacity. They co-ordinate our nationally agreed Mutual Aid arrangement to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland in the standard of service provided to the public.

Positive cases (past month)

The graph below shows the distribution of new NHS Lanarkshire positive cases and their contacts for the past month from 06/12/2021 until 09/01/2022. The gap between cases interviewed and cases closed shows where we have been dependent on digital solutions.



BACKGROUND

Since the start of the pandemic we have seen rises in cases (surging) then plateauing on a continuing basis. After each surge, the resulting plateau has left us with higher case numbers than the one before which is consistent with easing of restrictions.

Case Interview and Case Completion Rates have been measured in Lanarkshire since September 2020. Case interview and completion rates are lower than previous months due to the exceedingly high number of positive cases recently.

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 06/12/21 to 09/01/22 the average case interview rate has been 40.6%

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 often still have to be investigated after the initial case interview. From 06/12/21 to 09/01/22 the average case closure rate was 36.7%.

Staffing

Test and Protect Contact Tracing service has 53 Contact Tracers (36.72 wte), 35 Contact Tracing Practitioners (30.4 wte), 12 CT Team Leads (10.9 WTE), Test and Protect nurses, Service Management, and Clinical Lead (Nurse Consultant). The Service is further augmented by 14 wte National Contact Centre Contact Tracers.

Although this has slowed with contracts being extended to 30th September 2022, 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, especially as the business world returns to normal. We have trained and developed a highly skilled team who are an asset to NHS Lanarkshire.

NHS Lanarkshire (like most other health boards) have a Service Level Agreement with NCC (endorsed by Scot. Gov.) whereby NCC currently provide us with 14 wte staff members (10 NCC staff members daily 7 days per week). Service managers are meeting with NCC later this month to discuss increasing this provision. This allows our Contact Tracing Practitioners to spend part of their time investigating outbreaks and clusters in premises throughout Lanarkshire.

On 14/01/2022 Test and Protect were asked by Gold Command if we had capacity to release staff to help in our acute sites if the National Contact Centre could step in and provide us with resource to cover this. We were under extreme pressure ourselves and unfortunately NCC have been unable to provide us with enough resource to enable us to accommodate this request.

Staff Wellbeing

The high number of cases daily can have a detrimental effect on staff morale. As in other areas of NHS Lanarkshire, staff have worked extremely hard and have worked extra hours to help to meet the demand on the service and they are tired.

We have shared our wellbeing (Microsoft team) Tracespace with the wider Public Health team. This is a Microsoft Teams area where staff can find information and links to wellbeing support.

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. We also now have a 4 week rolling rota in place until September which allows staff to plan ahead easier.

ASSESSMENT

Test and Protect has a critical role in the pandemic as a pillar of the public health response to Covid, in particularly the more transmissible Omicron variant which now accounts for 92% of all cases in Lanarkshire. It works alongside vaccination as key in preventing further overwhelm of the wider health service.

The National Case Management Framework (green, amber, red) has had two further stages added due to high case numbers; Pink and Focus. The 'Focus Stage' which we are currently operating in involves focusing on clusters and outbreaks, making rapid triage calls and is more dependent on digital solutions to give information to cases and contacts. This allows greatest effort to be targeted to cases who have attended high risk settings (mostly health care), over 70 year olds and symptomatic essential workers. Lower risk cases who have not been called within 48 hours are being completed as self-trace only, provided they have been sent the SMS informing them of their requirement to self-isolate and the link to the CO3 (self-tracing) form advising them to complete this online. Information from the T&P system notes that the average CO3 (self-completion online form) completion rate in Lanarkshire is only 14.6%. Cases which are still open after 72 hours are now auto closed.

In Lanarkshire we also prioritise calling over 60s and also those who may be clinically vulnerable due to having a number of health conditions. These individuals are called halfway through their isolation by our T&P specialist nurses to check on their wellbeing and ensure they are able to access primary care and specialist care as required. The aim of this piece of work is to avoid condition worsening and potential acute admissions.

T&P is also taking part in the programme to identify covid positive individuals who may be eligible for antivirals (the nMAB programme).

Workplace premises with multiple cases continue to be a challenge for T&P staff. With high community transmission and workplaces operating at normal capacity, support is required to maintain infection prevention and control in these settings

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 the NHS as Omicron continues to have a higher transmission rate than that of other strains.

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, staff have concerns about their financial stability after September.

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.

