

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board Community Subgroup

Date: 1 March 2022

Agenda item: 5

Wards: All

Subject: Future of the Health and Wellbeing Board Community Subgroup

Lead officer: Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health

Lead member: Councillor Rebecca Lanning, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Clarissa Larsen, Health and Wellbeing Board Partnership Manager

Recommendations:

Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board Community Subgroup are asked:

- A. To consider the future Options set out in point 4, and agree Option 3, for 1st March to be our final meeting and to stand down the Subgroup.
 - B. That members of the Subgroup remain ready to be reinstated as a task and finish group, if and when considered necessary and requested by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report proposes that the HWBB Community Subgroup be stood down in light of the current status of the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a short overview of the work taken forward by the Subgroup since August 2020. It also sets out options recommending that the Subgroup remain ready to be reinstated as a task and finish group where requested by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2. BACKGROUND

The HWBB Community Subgroup was established in August 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Always intended as a time limited group, it was originally planned to meet for nine months. The Subgroup was initially designed to support the implementation of Merton's Outbreak Control Plan, having oversight of communication, with a particular focus on protecting vulnerable communities.

As the pandemic developed, and the disproportionate impacts on communities became apparent, the Subgroup increasingly focused on tackling inequalities highlighted and exacerbated by COVID-19. It provided oversight of engagement work exploring the experience of COVID-19 by different communities; to understand their lived experience and act on those insights. The Subgroup has specifically targeted vaccination equity and developing awareness of, and support for, those experiencing Post COVID Syndrome.

3. DETAILS

Since it was established in August 2020 the Community Subgroup has overseen a proactive programme of work including:

3.1 Engagement, Insight and Communications

- Commissioning voluntary and community organisations, including Merton Mencap and BAME Voice, to engage with their networks to gain insight into the lived experience of COVID-19. Partners presented their findings to the Community Subgroup contributing to a greater understanding of COVID's disproportionate impact on some communities. Subsequent actions include a Phase 2 programme valued at over £200k for VCS organisations to deliver community led projects, co-create and share COVID-19 messaging and increase capacity for BAME organisations to be at the decision making table.
- A comprehensive communications programme including webinars, virtual meetings and community fora - led by trusted clinicians and aimed at groups, including BAME communities, young people, parents, pregnant women and their partners, enabling an ongoing dialogue with communities.
- Continuing development of the network of Community Champions and Young Adult Community Champions (YACCs) - 166 active Champions including councillors, front-line workers, clinicians and residents. YACCs work, including production of videos and posters targeting under-18s, was brought to the Subgroup by our Young Inspector member.
- Most recently £485k of funding has been successfully secured to develop a further programme of COVID-19 Vaccination Community Champions.

3.2 Vaccination Equity

- Merton's vaccination programme has continually evolved, learning and developing from experience to date. In May 2021, the HWBB Community Subgroup agreed the [Vaccination Equity Plan](#), informed by insight work with communities. The plan is aimed at reducing barriers to access, promoting targeted communication and engagement, partnerships and governance and making best use of data and emerging information to ensure a strong focus on making sure no one is left behind.
- Analysis of intelligence to monitor vaccination progress and develop greater understanding of those with less confidence in the vaccine, shaping our response including active promotion of the 'evergreen' vaccination offer.
- Roll out of the vaccination programme to key sites across the borough, supported by over 35 pop-up vaccination clinics in areas of low vaccine uptake and other settings including the Civic Centre, sports clubs, places of worship, local community centres, food banks and transport venues.

3.3 Post COVID Syndrome

- Roll out of the service and support model for Post COVID Syndrome, with a focus on equity. Recognising that some of those who suffered most through the

pandemic, and are now suffering from Post COVID Syndrome and developing access to appropriate clinical services, as well as community and self-management advice to support, recovery and rehabilitation. Pro-active promotion around Post COVID Syndrome in the community is also taking place, complementing the NHS approach to case finding, with new learning and iteration of the support offer all the time.

3.4 Local Outbreak Management Plan

- Published in April 2021, [Merton's Local Outbreak Management Plan \(LOMP\)](#), provides an overarching plan for our response to COVID-19 setting out how we work with our partners at a local, regional and national level. Oversight has been led by the Community Subgroup, again with a particular focus on equity

4. PROPOSALS

Though COVID is still with us, Omicron is causing milder infection and now $R < 1$ meaning the pandemic is shrinking and infections and outbreaks are reducing. The Government will publish its Living with COVID plan 21 February, due to revoke the mandate for self-isolation from 24 February, a month earlier than originally planned. However, as we move to a time of recovery, the impact and inequality being experienced by some of our communities remains pressing.

It was always intended that the HWBB Community Subgroup be time limited. Initially planned to meet to March 2021, it was subsequently extended to September 2021 and more recently to March 2022. 1st March 2022 is the final scheduled meeting of the Subgroup and three options are set out below:

Option 1	In line with relaxation of national restrictions and current levels of infection that the HWBB Community Subgroup's final meeting is 1 st March 2022 and it henceforth comes to a permanent close.
Option 2	The HWBB Community Subgroup continues to meet and maintain oversight for a further six months and review the position again in September 2022.
Option 3	The HWBB Community Subgroup stand down with its final meeting 1 st March 2022. The core Health and Wellbeing Board then takes on specific oversight of vaccination equity, Post COVID syndrome and support for fair access to COVID-19 therapeutics, with Subgroup members retaining readiness to stand up as a task and finish group, as considered necessary and requested by the core HWBB in future.

It is recommended that **members agree Option 3** which ends meetings of the Subgroup but retains capacity to respond to developments quickly with an established and committed group.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will continue to focus on addressing health inequalities and promoting health equity as one of the key principles of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This work will also contribute to the recently launched priorities of **#Merton2030** which include: Supporting and caring for residents who are most in need, and promoting the safety and wellbeing of our communities; and, Making Merton a fairer, more equal place and supporting those on low incomes by tackling poverty and fighting for affordable housing.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Alternative options are set out under the proposals above.

6. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Members of the Community Subgroup are being consulted in this report and, if agreed, a similar report and recommendation will be made to the March meeting of the core Health and Wellbeing Board.

7. TIMETABLE

The Community Subgroup was proposed to be time limited and meet for a fixed period.

8. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

9. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

Merton Health and Wellbeing Board is a statutory committee of the Council

10. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

The focus of the Community Subgroup and that of the Health and Wellbeing Board is on those vulnerable community groups and promoting health equity.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

N/A

12. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix I – [Vaccination Equity Plan](#)

Appendix II – [Merton's Local Outbreak Management Plan \(LOMP\)](#),