

## **Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Date:** 22 March 2022

Agenda item:

Wards: All

## **Subject: 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

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### **Recommendations:**

Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are asked:

- A. To note the agreed recommendation of the Health and Wellbeing Board Community Subgroup that the subgroup be stood down.
  - B. That the Health and Wellbeing Board retain oversight of vaccination equity, Long COVID and support for fair access to COVID-19 therapeutics.
  - C. That members of the Subgroup remain ready to be reinstated as a task and finish group, if and when it is considered necessary and requested by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to set out the agreed recommendation for the HWBB Community Subgroup to be stood down in light of the current status of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report provides a short overview of the work taken forward by the Subgroup since August 2020. It also recommends that the core Health and Wellbeing Board retain oversight of the key areas of work of the Subgroup and that Subgroup members remain ready to be reinstated as a task and finish group where seen as needed and 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 Long COVID.

### **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) - 165 active Champions including councillors, front-line workers, clinicians and residents. YACCs work, including production of videos and posters targeting under-18s, brought to the Subgroup by the 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 40 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 Long COVID

- Roll out of the service and support model for Post COVID Syndrome/Long COVID, with a focus on equity. Recognising that some of those who suffered most through the pandemic, and are now suffering from Long COVID and developing access to appropriate clinical services, as well as community and self-management advice to support, recovery and rehabilitation. Pro-active promotion around Long COVID 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

4.1 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 published its Living with COVID plan in February, revoking 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.

4.2 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. 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was the final scheduled meeting of the Subgroup and it made the recommendation at that meeting that:

*'The HWBB Community Subgroup stand down with its final meeting 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The core Health and Wellbeing Board then takes on specific oversight of vaccination equity, Long COVID 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 Board in future.'*

4.3 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 and Local Health and Care Plan. This work will also contribute to the recently launched priorities of **#Merton2030** community led plan 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 were considered by the Community Subgroup, with the recommendation (see 4.2) agreed.

## 6. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Members of the Community Subgroup were consulted and agreed the recommendation to stand down at this stage.

## **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 Health and Wellbeing Board remains on those more vulnerable in our community 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 \(LOMP\)](#),