

MKC Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee: COVID-19 UPDATE

The COVID-19 situation is constantly changing – this information is correct as the 15 September a verbal update will be given to the Committee

Cases

The number of cases of COVID-19 has increased since July. In July, Milton Keynes typically saw less than 10 cases a week, in August 20 to 30 cases a week, and there were 38 cases in the first week of September (the last week for which we have complete data).

Overall, this gives an incidence of 15 cases per 100,000 people per week, which is below the current national average 20 cases per 100,000 people per week.

Cases are widely distributed across Milton Keynes. Whilst there tend to be more cases in young people, we are seeing cases in people of all ages. Whilst, in recent weeks between a third to half of cases have been in ethnic minorities, all communities and ethnic groups are affected.

The rise in cases, the higher number of cases in young people, and relative concentration in ethnic minority communities mirrors the pattern seen nationally.

Outbreaks

Currently there are two outbreaks: one in care home (affecting both residents and staff, with no new cases since early September) and one in a school (only affecting staff). In the past four weeks, five other care homes have had single confirmed cases amongst staff; and in the past week we have had four other schools reporting single cases in either staff or pupils.

Testing

Locally people continue to find it difficult to book a test. As has been widely reported, demand has increased significantly in early September and the UK currently lacks sufficient laboratory testing capacity to meet demand. Locally the number of tests performed on Milton Keynes varies day to day and has held relatively constant at between 200 and 450 tests per day through out August and September.

Local Health Protection Service

Like all local authorities, Milton Keynes Council, is increasingly taking on health protection function (e.g. contact tracing, outbreak management, public health advice, disease surveillance) for COVID-19 that Public Health England might be expected to do. We have established a Public Health Acute Response Cell. This gives the council more ability to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic, to integrate this response within the council's existing work, and make use of local knowledge. The service is currently staffed by members of the public health team and is starting to recruit to bring in additional capacity. The service is planned to run for 18 months and will be funded out of the Local Authority Test & Trace grant.

Other Actions

Local guidance and telephone support is being provided jointly by Education and Public Health to help schools safely and effectively manage cases and outbreaks. A simple means to report concerns about workplaces or other locations where social distancing is important has been established. Advice and enforcement action continue with MK Council reaching 1,000 contacts as a result of enquiries or complaints related predominantly to food premises and restaurants. We are preparing

to launch a 'Covid Champions' network in mid-September. MK Council's September residents' magazine is focused on COVID-19. We have established a 'faith leaders group' to communicate messages and understand local concerns amongst our communities.