

Manchester City Council Health and Wellbeing Board

Report for Information

Operation Eagle – Response to Variants of Concern

Board Date 24th March 2021

Introduction (1 of 2)

On 8th February 2021 Manchester's first surge testing under Operation Eagle began (Area 1), predominantly covering Moss Side plus parts of Hulme, Whalley Range and Fallowfield. PCR testing sites were set up throughout the area via partnership work between multiple teams, Directorates and agencies and local enhanced contact tracing was carried out

The following week a second area within Manchester had been identified (Area 2), predominantly covering Moston plus an area of Harpurhey, and surge testing commenced shortly afterwards

In both areas, residents were encouraged to come forward for COVID-19 testing to help us understand if there were more people in those areas with a Variant of Concern (VOC)

Manchester's Operation Eagle response has been nationally recognised, and we continue to work with national and regional colleagues to shape processes and responses to VOCs

Responding to Variants of Concern is a key part of the government's four tests for moving through the Roadmap out of the pandemic.

Introduction (2 of 2)

This presentation lays out in brief the work that was undertaken to set up, manage and monitor Operation Eagle in each area, key outcomes and learning. Specifically, it will cover:

- Background
- Our approach and key messages
- What we did: Boundaries, testing, adult social care support, community engagement, communications, contact tracing
- Outcomes
- Key learning and future approach

Background

- On Friday 5th February, the Director of Public Health was notified of four Variant of Concern (VOC) COVID-19 cases in Manchester
- The cases all had VOC 202102/02, B.1.1.7 with E484K. This is the UK Kent variant (associated with increased transmission) plus the E484K mutation
- Our cases in Manchester had the same genomic sequence as a cluster of cases in Bristol
- Public Health England (PHE) completed enhanced contact tracing on the four Manchester cases and there were no established links to the Bristol cluster
- PHE need to investigate thoroughly all mutations of the variant to see whether they are more transmissible or whether vaccines will be less effective
- Operation Eagle is the national framework for overseeing and responding to VOCs
- At the start of Operation Eagle, areas were asked to carry out surge testing over a short period of time to identify other VOC cases quickly and carry out enhanced contact tracing.

Our approach

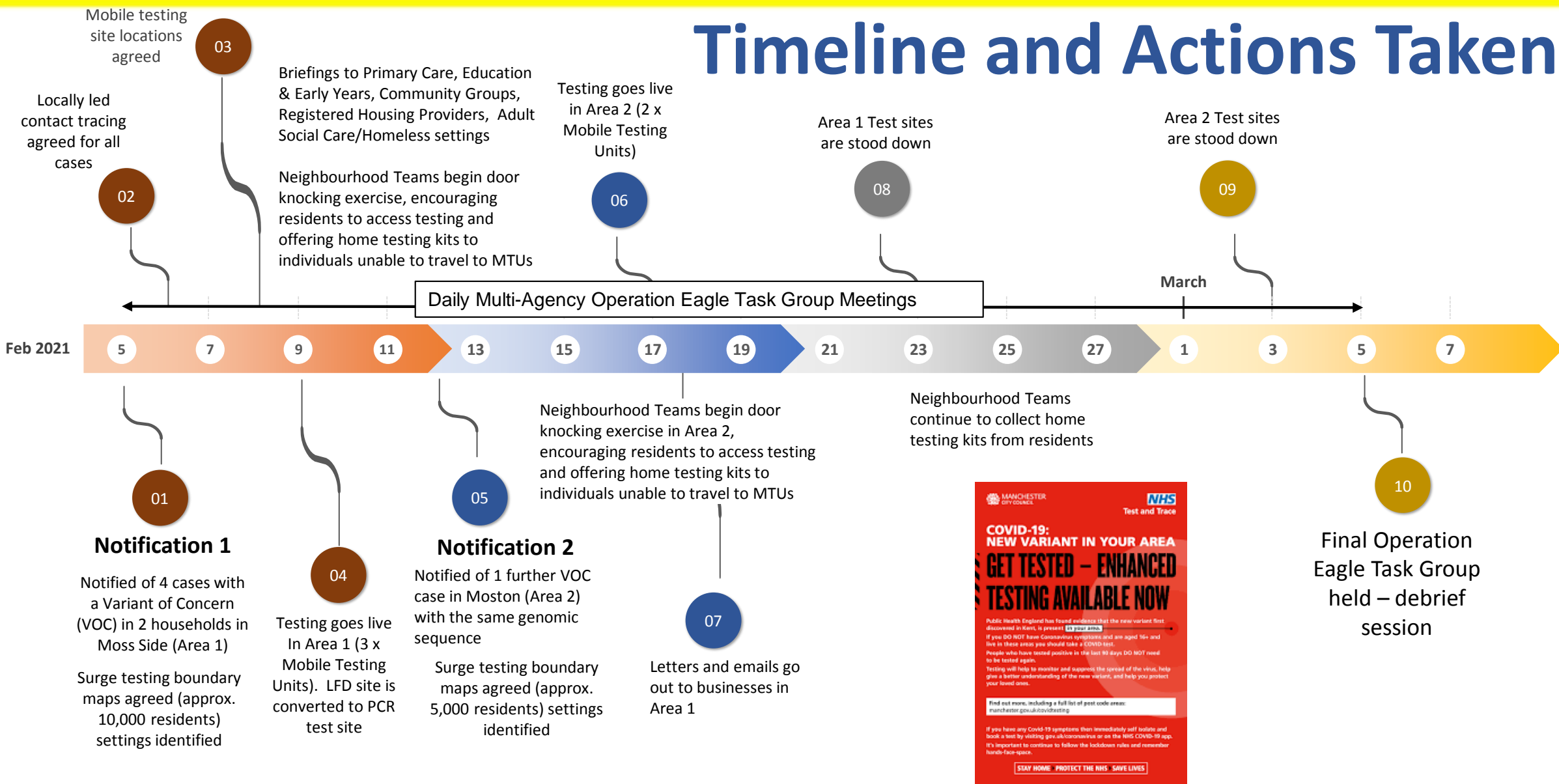
- The approach taken reflected the diverse community makeup of the areas affected. For example, there are many different languages spoken in area 1 and letters to residents were translated into 19 languages
- Our approach also needed to reflect our understanding of our residents and the communities in the areas identified, including existing socio-economic factors such as health inequalities, poverty, and digital exclusion.
- Delivery of Operation Eagle relied on a multi agency collaboration and co-production across key agencies and teams drawing on different skills and disciplines

Key messages

A set of key messages for those living and working in Op Eagle areas was developed:

- Everyone in this together
- All infection prevention control measures stay the same – hands, face, space
- No change in restrictions – continue under current lockdown restrictions
- Continue to attend health and vaccination appointments unless self-isolating
- No enhanced PPE needed

Timeline and Actions Taken



Boundaries

- Surge testing boundary were identified for each area
- Natural boundaries and housing stock considered
- Population estimated
- Settings agreed
- Postcodes and Lower Super Output Area details submitted to national Test and Trace to enable local enhanced contact tracing to be turned on

Area 1 Boundary

Approx 7,300 Homes. Pop. Est 17,500 population.

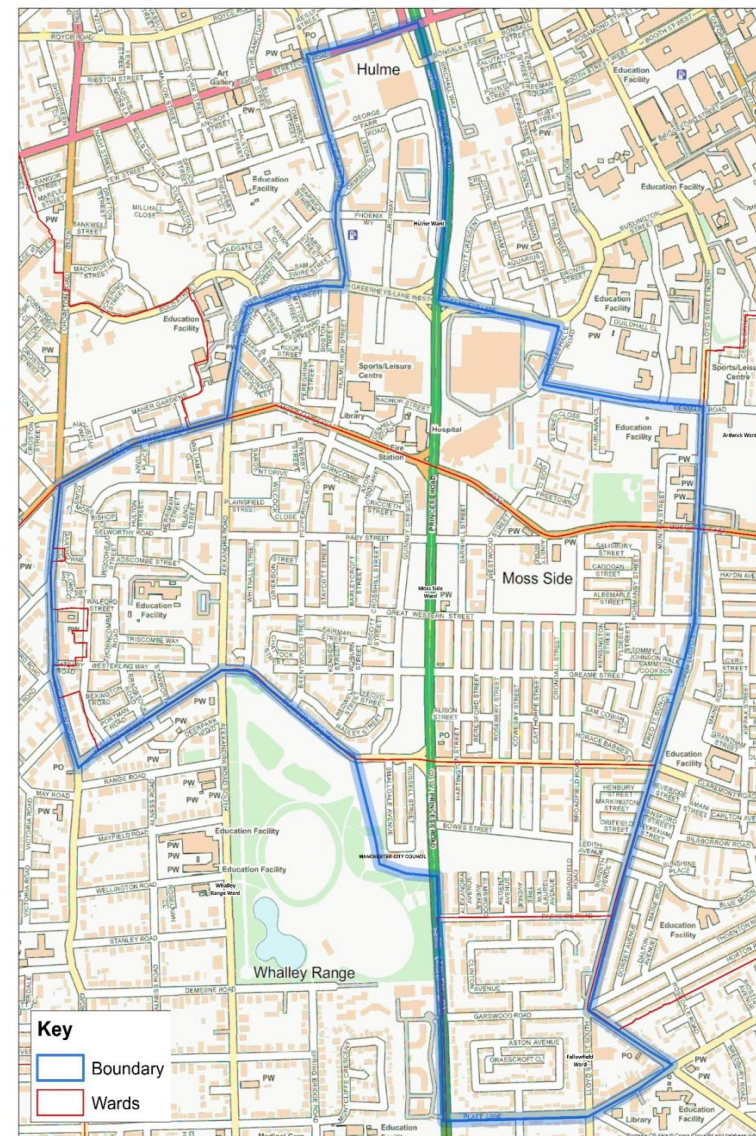
Approx 400 Commercial addresses, retail, business and other buildings.
Includes Hulme Precinct, Birley Fields Campus, ASDA & Aldi superstores.

3,000 homes owned by Housing Providers – majority of stock owned by
Mosscare SV, One Manchester and Adactus.

680 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable persons
Hulme c. 3% over 70
Moss Side c. 7% over 70

Area lies within Hulme and Moss Side Wards. Also includes small part of
Whalley Range between Claremont Road and Parkside Road and part of
Fallowfield to incorporate Fallowfield Triangle including the Aldi Supermarket.

The main part of the area is captured within two MSOA Areas – Manchester
019 (Hulme/University) and Manchester 024 Most Side West for statistical
purposes.



Area 2 Boundary

3,549 Homes.

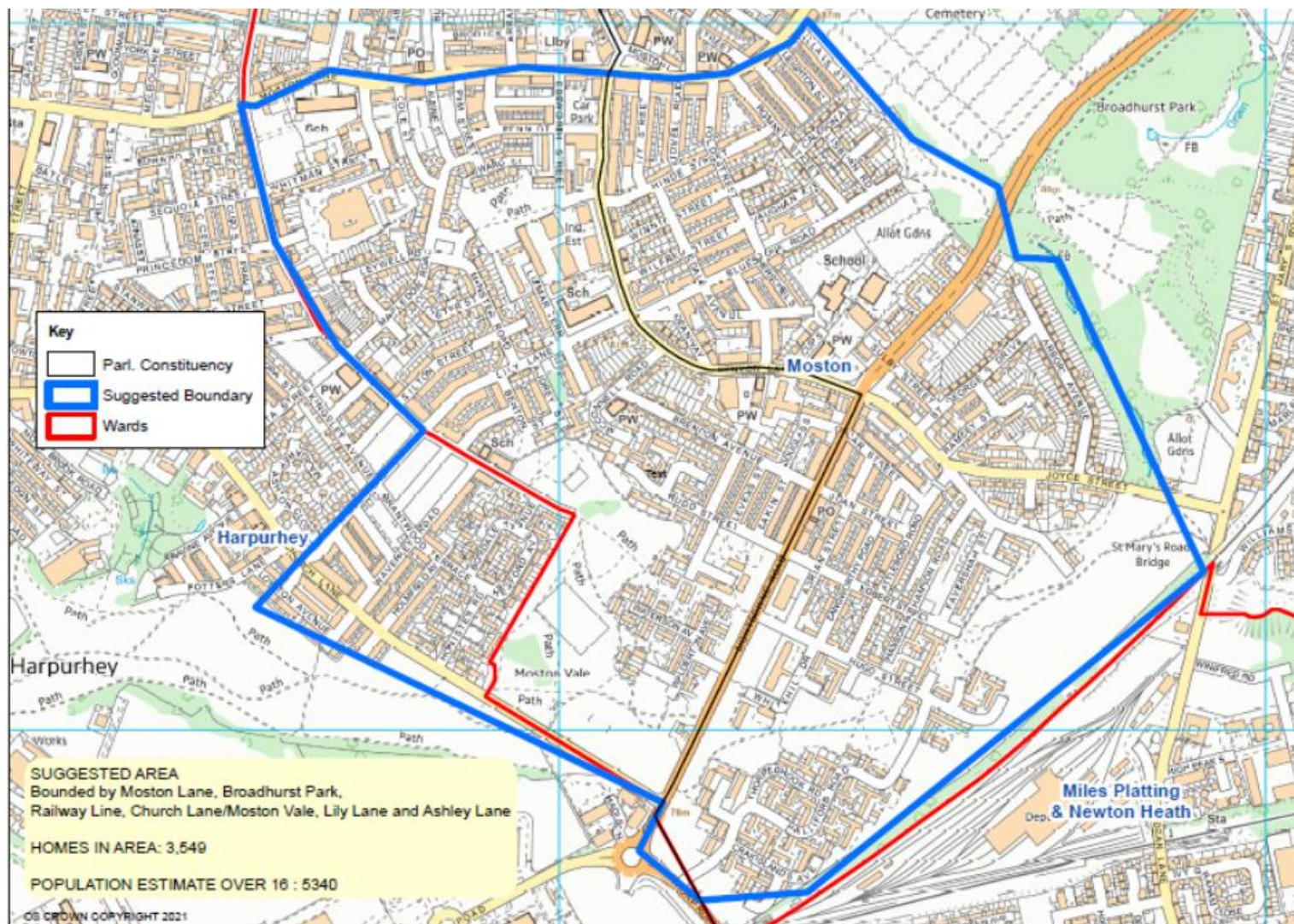
Population estimate 5,340.

Includes commercial properties including small shops.

Mixture of property tenure, many owned by Housing Providers.

868 Households identified as including Clinically Extremely Vulnerable persons, Housebound persons, and any who requested assistance to administer and/or register the tests from door knocking staff and volunteers.

Area lies within Moston, with a western corner of Harpurhey included.



Testing

- Testing offered to all people 16 years and over living or working in the boundary area who are asymptomatic
- People with symptoms to get tested at existing PCR testing sites
- Excluded people who have tested positive on PCR test in the past 90 days
- People who have tested Lateral Flow Device (LFD) positive in the past 90 days were asked to take part in this Surge Testing (LFD tests are not screened for the variant)
- Test results for COVID back usual time (approx 24-48 hours)
- Test results for the variants to take longer due to the need for genomic sequencing

Summary of testing offer

Area 1

3 Mobile Testing Units



- Our Lady's R C Church, Raby St
- The Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurdwara, Sikh Temple, Monton Street
- Arrahman Islamic Cultural Association, Bedwell Street



- 1 additional testing site at Moss Side Leisure Centre (temporary conversion of LFD testing Centre)



- Drop and collect facility for businesses, schools and other settings at Moss Side Leisure Centre



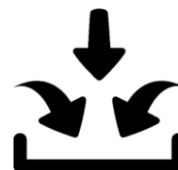
- Home testing kits (and assisted swabbing if required) for clinically vulnerable and housebound residents and contacts of positive cases

Area 2

2 Mobile Testing Units



- Car Park Ebsworth Street
- Car park Thorp Road



- Drop and collect facility for businesses, schools and other settings at St Dunstan's Church Hall



- Home testing kits (and assisted swabbing if required) for clinically vulnerable and housebound residents and contacts of positive cases

Adults Social Care support

- Home care providers already working with people in the area assisted them to take and/or register their tests
- Programme-specific Standard Operating Procedure created for each Area
- Care Navigators visiting people (identified by door knocking) who cannot access testing sites but do not have home care etc in place, to support with test administering and registration
- Significant staff hours required to manage this effectively, resulting in overtime costs
- Partnership working between Manchester City Council, Manchester Local Care Organisation, local religious groups, GP practices, children's centres, VCSE organisations, social housing providers and local community groups.

Community Engagement and neighbourhood support

- Areas split into zones for ease of management/monitoring
- Door knocking exercise carried out across the entire boundary areas to encourage residents to get tested, answer questions and identify residents who may need further help to get tested
- Teams of experienced Neighbourhood staff working with partner organisations and volunteers including community leaders, elected members and local residents
- Support given to Mobile Testing Units to assist with marshalling and registration of tests
- Translated materials were available and where possible teams were multi lingual.

Communications

Communications strategy developed that included:

- Community briefing note
- Regular updates throughout testing period
- Education - Letter shared with schools and youth settings, briefing to headteachers. Letter of reassurance for parents
- Letter shared with all local businesses and follow up visits carried out
- Media
- Social Media
- Outdoor Media
- Exit comms
- Briefings given to elected members, Registered Housing Providers, GPs and Primary Care, Early Years Settings, Schools, Adult Social Care/Homeless settings

Contact Tracing (1 of 2)

All positive cases identified through Operation Eagle were managed by the local Manchester Test and Trace Contact Tracing Team rather than NHS Test and Trace

Key benefits:

- Cases came 24 hours earlier than usual
- Can reach "non digital" residents (can tell them their result and do index case work at same time – or they call 119 for result)
- Allowed identification of any links between cases and management of any clusters or outbreaks quickly

Other benefits include that the local team:

- Are based in and know the area/s
- Could answer questions residents had on the Operation Eagle work
- Could support residents to isolate, link to supermarket slots, food banks etc
- Speak variety of languages

Contact Tracing (2 of 2)

- Additional questions asked about any symptoms that are presenting in different way beyond standard 3 symptoms
- 14 day backward contact tracing carried out to identify where people had been and who they had contact with while they were incubating the virus
- The Greater Manchester Integrated Contact Tracing Hub picked up some of our business as usual work
- Enhanced Contact Tracing carried out by PHE for those who test positive with a variant of concern, with support from our local team if needed

Outcomes

data, learning, future approach

Outcomes

Area 1: Moss Side, Hulme, Whalley Range & Fallowfield



Local teams knocked on **6,130** properties
2,065 received a second visit



3,609 tests completed in Mobile Testing Units

64 positive tests



1,084 completed home testing kits

26 positive tests



72% positive cases successfully traced



120 contacts identified

97% contacted and supported to self-isolate

Area 2: Moston & Harpurhey



Local teams knocked on **2,750** properties



2,067 tests completed in Mobile Testing Units

37 positive tests



546 completed home testing kits

18 positive tests



96% positive cases successfully traced



42 contacts identified

95% contacted and supported to self-isolate

Genome Sequencing

- For a test specimen to be properly sequenced to identify the presence of a variant of COVID-19, the genetic material within that specimen must be of sufficient quality
- If the quality of the genetic material within the test specimen is poor, it is not possible to carry out the genetic sequencing process
- There may also be time delays in the sequencing process itself
- The Director of Public Health will provide a verbal update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on the current position in terms of the number of positive tests that have been successfully sequenced

Feedback from Contact Tracers

<p>Younger people are often keen to complete the online tracing questionnaire but then fail to do so</p>	<p>Many people were feeling anxious and uncertain about the situation going on in their neighbourhood</p>	<p>People who are symptomatic often want to rest and be left alone and are therefore less inclined to answer questions.</p>	<p>Older residents have said how pleased they are to speak to the Team as it may be the only call they receive that day</p>
<p>On the whole, people testing positive through Operation Eagle have been more engaged with the tracing process – many were expecting the call from us</p>	<p>We guided a person through the Test & Trace Support Payment online application</p>	<p>Some people say they are unable to go back 14 days and remember what they were doing.</p>	<p>Five people required the use of translator services to complete contact tracing</p>

Key Learning

Detailed lessons learnt sessions have taken place involving all partners and these will inform future operational and strategic approaches. Key learning points are:

- In both areas, households were largely welcoming to the teams, and happy to engage verbally.
- Conversations on the doorsteps resulted in feedback that there was a lack of awareness of the need to be tested even if you have been vaccinated
- Limited availability of suitable sites for mobile testing units in an area mean we may not be able to be as accessible to sections of the community as we would like
- The delivery of Operation Eagle was resource intensive across a number of agencies and partners

Future approach

Our revised approach to Surge Testing and Variants of Concern:

- Opportunity costs and actual costs from repeat surge testing are considerable
- Preference is to "switch on" automatic genomic sequencing for positive tests in designated areas, alongside enhanced contact tracing led by the Manchester team in collaboration with PHE
- Consideration will also be given to wastewater sampling, building on the approach taken in other parts of Greater Manchester

We are working with national colleagues to improve processes for responding to Variants of Concern, sharing our experiences and findings from our work