

Leeds outbreak plan

The city's plan for living with COVID-19 from March 2022

Updated 7 March 2022

Since the first COVID-19 cases were identified in our city, Leeds has managed the pandemic through a broad range of measures to prevent transmission, rapidly respond to outbreaks, and support people and businesses to practice good public health behaviours, including following restrictions when these were in place. As set out in our Response & Recovery Plan, our focus has been on supporting those most vulnerable to COVID-19, tackling health inequalities, and responding to the complex socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic on people, communities, public services and the economy.

In late February 2022 the government lifted all remaining COVID-related restrictions, including the legal requirement to self-isolate, signalling a shift towards a new way of living with the virus. In this new context our priority for Leeds is to continue to keep people safe from COVID-19, particularly those at higher risk, while supporting social, economic, health and public service recovery.

Our Local Outbreak Management Plan for Leeds was first published in June 2020 and has been periodically updated to reflect the changing local and national context. This current version of the plan sets out how we will continue to minimise and manage the impact of COVID-19, drawing on extensive expertise in managing infectious disease in a large city. Throughout the pandemic, all activity has driven by a consistent set of principles, while our approach has been improved and refined through learning and sharing best practice.

Aims:

- To reduce the prevalence of COVID-19 in Leeds as far as is possible and reduce the risk of COVID-19 variants emerging
- To support people to stay healthy and well, particularly supporting those at highest risk
- To tackle health inequalities with targeted approaches in priority neighbourhoods and for people and communities facing the greatest barriers to good health
- To support the health and care system
- To support social, economic and service recovery from the pandemic

Our principles for managing COVID-19 in Leeds are:

- being proactive, preventative and positive, emphasising what people can do to keep themselves and others safe, while building public trust and confidence
- being guided by the data, intelligence, surveillance, evidence, epidemiology and good practice to control outbreaks
- strengthening our approach to working with communities, building community resilience and targeting work that prioritises the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged

- communicating openly, promoting good public health behaviours and persuading people to make choices that will keep themselves and others safe
- coproducing solutions with people, communities, community leaders, and partners to build the confidence and trust of the public
- using agile and flexible approaches to partnership working to make the most of the resources available, manage risk and meet changing circumstances
- sharing good practice, embedding evaluation and learning to drive continual improvement

The actions we will take from March 2022 to manage COVID-19 in Leeds are:

- Promoting good public health behaviours including getting vaccinated, hand washing, ventilating spaces, wearing a face covering in higher-risk settings, and avoiding contact with others if you have Covid-19 or other respiratory illness.
- Continually reviewing the latest local and national data available to understand transmission patterns.
- Undertaking wastewater analysis to monitor for any variants of concern.
- Working with partners including the UK Health Security Agency to respond to significant outbreaks in settings, and providing support and guidance to settings to self-manage smaller outbreaks.
- Supporting people to access vaccination as the primary means of individual and collective immunity from COVID-19, including through:
 - ensuring vaccination sites are available and accessible to communities, in terms of location, setting, transport, language, confidence and other barriers.
 - supporting and promoting the evergreen vaccination offer (never too late to get vaccinated).
 - implementing a vaccine health inequalities plan that prioritises those at highest risk, working closely with influential community organisations and leaders and Community Champions to tackle barriers and build confidence.
- Implementing and supporting the future vaccination programme arrangements, in line with national guidance.
- Supporting all settings (such as education, care homes, workplaces, prisons, and hostels) to embed infection prevention and controls measures to prevent transmission of Covid-19 and other respiratory illnesses.
- Supporting education settings to implement contingency plans to minimise disruption to children and young people's education.
- Making best use of the national targeted testing offer to support high risk settings.
- Encouraging people to access asymptomatic (lateral flow device) testing before spending time in crowded or enclosed spaces or with people at higher risk from COVID-19.
- Delivering our over 60s harm minimisation plan to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on older and vulnerable people, and to increase the resilience of this cohort.
- Supporting those at higher risk to access COVID-19 antiviral treatment if they test positive.
- Providing emergency support through our Local Welfare Support Service (0113 376 0330).
- Communicating openly with the public using all communication routes, signposting to key data sources, and tackling myths and false information. Ensuring that communications are proactive and up to date with the latest advice and guidance, reflecting the latest developments.
- Having resilient and well-supported public health, environmental health and infection prevention and control teams, and additional 'surge' capacity available for deployment at short notice, including community and communications capacity.

- Working with other local authorities, the health system, the UK Health Security Agency, Association of Directors of Public Health, West Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum and the Core Cities network to influence national policy.

Implementation and governance:

The Leeds multiagency COVID-19 response and recovery arrangements oversee and deliver the implementation of our COVID-19 management plan, with the Director of Public Health at its heart, and reporting to the council's Executive Board.

Progress is monitored regularly through a range of measures from daily checking of infection rates through national dashboards, through to regular Incident Management Team (IMT) meetings to track community transmission or outbreaks in specific settings.

Councillors, MPs and partners receive regular written updates covering the current position, actions and key messages to share. Regular bulletins are sent to partners, staff and the public to report on progress and issues, as well as calls with specific sectors.

More detailed plans are in place for specific areas, for example increasing vaccine uptake and tackling health inequalities, which are reported to the council's Executive Board.

The following key metrics are used to monitor progress:

- infection rate, particularly in the over 60s
- number of vaccinations given, and vaccine uptake in key groups
- patients in hospital and critical care
- mortality