Northumberland County Council

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Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan Communications and Engagement Strategy:

Main Report

Prepared by Stand Associates
on behalf of Northumberland County Council

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Northumberland County Council

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1. Introduction and background

1.1. Background

Tackling our biggest public health concern in 2020, SARS coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2), known as COVID-19, requires a range of strategic national activities including responsive research, accurate monitoring surveillance and timely reporting, as well as locally-based activity through a joined-up, multi-agency local approach.

An ever-changing infection pattern and the many unknowns about the virus mean that an agile, efficient, fit-for-purpose response mechanism with targeting capability for efficient and timely deployment is needed in the event of a local outbreak in Northumberland. How information is communicated - and how people are prepared for and engaged in this - will form a significant part of a successful response to reduce the impact of a COVID-19 outbreak across the county.

The main report and toolkits set out a range of approaches, tools, mechanisms and associated actions that Northumberland County Council and its partners can use to communicate and engage on COVID-19. This includes communicating and connecting internally within its departments and externally with organisations, businesses and the public to mobilise preparedness for multi-agency activity which supports the public health needs of an as yet unknown set of circumstances.

The task was to both curate and create communications information, bringing existing information together and identifying and filling any gaps where possible, in preparation for a potential local outbreak. Based on exploration of the priority areas, interviews with key professionals, including council officers, their partner public and voluntary sector organisations, senior education and clinical staff and businesses and commercial networks, have informed this. Examples from other areas are also considered.

This work was commissioned by NCC communications team and carried out by Stand Associates.

Stand - helping organisations deliver health and care service change projects

Stand Associates bring together an expert community of communications and engagement practitioners and service change leaders with substantial experience in engaging people to inform policy, strategy, service design and transformational change programmes.

Stand's best-practice social marketing, public engagement and consultation approaches bring the voices of the people right to the heart of decision-making helping organisations meet their objectives and obligations.

Stand have been working on some of the most challenging health and care projects in the UK. Find out more at wearestand.co.uk.

Stand's support for Northumberland County Council

Stand were commissioned to provide expert communications and engagement support to the council's in-house teams to develop and deliver a communications and engagement plan for COVID-19 which is specified in the Northumberland Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

This plan sets the outputs to be the production of a communications and engagement strategy around the five priority areas which are:

- Care homes and residential settings
- Educational settings
- High risk/consequence individuals and communities
- High risk/consequence settings
- Workplaces and businesses

Stand's approach incorporates phases on research, intelligence gathering and stakeholder mapping; key messages, assets and targeting of materials and messages; development of communications and engagement strategy and associated actions (this document) as well as recommendations for further activities beyond the scope of this strategy and will require specific support to implement.

The contents of this strategy are a direct result of engagement and conversations with council colleagues and partners, in addition to wide ranging research into tools, resources and approaches relevant to each priority area from across the UK and beyond.

Stand Associates would like to thank all council and partner officers and individuals who made the time to provide input and feedback – their support has been critical to the production of this strategy.

1.2. Purpose of this document and toolkit

The Summary document and toolkits refer to the overarching approach to communications and engagement as well as the specific Priority Areas in the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

They collate resources and tools together in one place, to propose a consistent way of carrying out key activities as part of a co-ordinated response to possible local COVID-19 outbreaks in Northumberland.

The approaches proposed are in direct response to feedback gained from a range of sources which can be broadly described as:

- Council bodies
- Industry bodies
- Community organisations
- Public Health bodies

The information is intended for use within the council communications and engagement team, by public health colleagues and those involved in the delivery of activity and services across the five priority areas in the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

The approach has considered:

- Who are the 'gatekeepers' or access points to wider networks that will be of help in the event of a local outbreak;
- What needs to be said in communications, what is already there or may be needed in addition and making content appropriate for the audiences and groups being engaged;
- *Where* is the need? understanding the intelligence, geographically and by sector to inform communications;
- *When* do we need to act? responding to the public health agenda as it develops;
- *How* the council will communicate about COVID-19: identifying and working with the most appropriate channels and methods available.

2. Context

2.1. The Local Outbreak and Control Plan - Test and Trace

Northumberland County Council (NCC) published a Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan in June 2020. This Northumberland-wide plan was produced in response to and forms part of the government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, working alongside the NHS Test and Trace service.

The NHS test and trace service has the primary objectives to control the COVID-19 rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of infection and save lives, and help return life to as normal as possible for as many as people as possible in a way that is safe, that protects our health and care systems and releases our economy.

NHS Test and Trace brings together four tools to control the virus, focusing on 'Test, Trace, Constrain and Enable[1]:

The NHS Test and Trace service is therefore one strand of an overall approach for the management of COVID-19 outbreaks and the aim of the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan is to protect the health of the population of Northumberland by:

- Prevention of the spread of COVID-19;
- Early identification and proactive management of local outbreaks;
- Coordination of capabilities across agencies and stakeholders; and
- Assuring the public and stakeholders that this is being effectively delivered.

NCC has already set in motion significant activities to deliver this, including:

- Generic national guidance on outbreak control structures and processes;
- Regional outbreak control plans;
- The Local Health Resilience Partnership;
- Local Resilience Forum (LRF) structures for COVID-19; and
- Relationships with the local NHS.

More information about the activities taking place as part of the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan, governance and the current local picture can be found at

[1]Test, Trace, Constrain and Enable **:**

1. **Test**. Increasing the availability and speed of testing.
2. **Trace**. The introduction of the NHS Test and Trace service to identify any close recent contacts of positive cases and alert those most at risk of having the virus who need to self-isolate.
3. **Contain**. A national Joint Biosecurity Centre that will work with local authorities and public health teams in PHE, including local Directors of Public Health, to identify localised outbreaks and support effective local responses, including plans to quickly deploy testing facilities to particular locations.
4. **Enable**. Government learning more about the virus, as the science develops, to explore the further safe easing of infection control measures.

www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/Local-COVID-19-Outbreak-Prevention-and-Control-Pla.aspx

2.2. Priority areas in the Local Plan

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has advised that local authority outbreak control plans are centred on seven themes. Across Northumberland, five priority areas have been identified for further attention under DHSC themes 1 and 2[2]:

The five NCC priority areas are:

1. **Care homes and residential settings**;
2. **Educational settings** – early years, schools, colleges;
3. **Complex (High Risk) individuals and communities** – homeless, drug and alcohol service users, LD;
4. **Complex (High Risk) settings** – hostels, refuges, HMP Northumberland, secure YP unit;
5. **Workplaces and businesses**.

Note: the list is not prioritised, all areas are equally important.

Priority areas are each led by a working group, linked to the Communications and Engagement sub-group of the Health Protection Board, which is facilitated by the NCC Communications team and public health, with Single Point of Contacts (SPOC) identified across sectors (especially in the high risk individuals and settings areas, given their diversity). Each has an identified Director level lead and a public protection lead in a supporting /advisory role. These have different needs and ways of operating, reflecting the different areas they work in; however, a universal Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is currently under development, led by the project manager operating across the five priority areas.

2.3. Communications and engagement

The NCC Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan sets out the priority areas in detail and gives the strategic direction to the Northumberland Local Communications and Engagement plan.

[2] DHSC Theme 1: Planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools (e.g. defining monitoring arrangements, identifying potential scenarios and planning the required response).

DHSC Theme 2: Identifying and planning how to manage other high-risk places, locations and communities of interest including sheltered housing, dormitories for migrant workers, transport access points (e.g., ports, airports), detained settings, rough sleepers etc (e.g. defining preventative measures and outbreak management strategies).

Alongside this, the NHS Test and Trace Local Outbreak and Control Plans Communications Toolkit provides context on the national approach and messaging, including Test and Trace key messaging, behaviours being promoted and the resources available from government, which continue to be updated.

Public Health England's (PHE) Campaign Resource Centre also provides communications assets for COVID-19.

2.4. Toolkit structure

The five priority areas have been considered and the toolkits are structured according to this breakdown. In addition, a section on Community has been included, to reflect the cross-cutting nature of engagement through community groups.

For the purpose of this communications and engagement plan, the priority for exploration was identified in relation to i) current preparedness of NCC in terms of data and information held and ii) timeliness and potential for impact.

The toolkits include general approaches and generic resources as well as those specific to each priority area, broken down separately. Resources are referred to or listed but full documents or data may be held electronically in a separate location - for example, the database of key access contacts and Public Health England campaign assets.

3. Identifying key stakeholders

To assist with communications and engagement, a main objective has been to identify key stakeholders; those individuals or organisations who have access to other audiences.

In each priority area this is slightly different - from residents to customers, from parents of schoolchildren to community and voluntary organisations. The aim was to obtain contacts who would be able and willing to communicate with others in their networks - e.g. through cascading information, or to those on their databases e.g. business network communications, on behalf of Northumberland County Council.

Questions were asked to gather relevant information, including:

- Key stakeholder's contact information
- What sort of data do you hold? (e.g. business name, postal address, mobile telephone number)
- How do you usually communicate with your contacts? (e.g. newsletter, letter, text, WhatsApp).
- Which geographical area does your data cover?
- Do you know any other key people in your field who we could speak to?
- Are you aware of any gaps in your data?

There were several stakeholders who, whilst not having direct access to datasets, can be considered key in cascading information or facilitating communication to groups and individuals.

Stakeholders were also asked about what their communications needs might be in the case of a local outbreak of COVID-19. Given NCC will need to communicate quickly with the groups, businesses and individuals affected, the following information was helpful to understand:

- What have you done/communicated to date around COVID-19 with those in your network/contacts?
- What additional support would you need in order to communicate quickly with these groups, in the case of a local outbreak?
- Are there any gaps in what material is available, what materials/assets would be most useful to you?

An initial database has been developed which details these key stakeholders and the datasets/routes to others they may be able to assist through.

Note that this is an *initial* database and can be developed.

4. Communications and engagement approaches

4.1. Information gathering, methodology and metrics

To develop these toolkits, key stakeholders and partners were engaged.

A full stakeholder mapping was not part of this exercise, however key gatekeepers and those with access to wider networks were engaged, as both i) those with whom the council needs to communicate in the event of an outbreak and ii) the best source of intelligence about the groups, locations, organisations, professions or businesses they link to.

In total, Stand Associates engaged with 80+ key stakeholders in pursuit of the project aims across August and the first week of September 2020.

4.2. Principles

The principles of communication around COVID-19, especially in the event of a local outbreak, might include:

- Communicating in a timely fashion - to **respond quickly** to epidemiological and local changes;
- Ensuring all communication is **clinically accurate** - having a public health lens to what we say;
- Maintaining the key **behavioural messages** - weaving throughout all communication and looking for novel approaches to counter message fatigue;
- Presenting information **simply and with clarity** and impact - reducing jargon and using plain English;
- Highlighting **government guidance** whenever possible - equipping partners and the public with the national view;
- **Rebutting inaccurate** information in the public domain - correcting with clinical and strategically sound facts and actions; and
- **Working consistently** across agencies - to facilitate a consistent approach from all sources.

4.3. Impact of communications

In assessing the focus of our communications and considering behaviour change principles, there are variables in the impact across channels used and in the messages, and message deliverers chosen.

A comprehensive mixed media campaign provides the gold standard, where messages are seen, heard (or 'engaged with') several times in different settings and through different channels. However this may not be possible for the at-pace response required in the case of a local COVID-19 outbreak.

Health and NHS information is received primarily through the media, including local media, but there is a trust issue limiting its potential for reinforcing key messages. Equally, communications messages from NHS/local public bodies corporately are not always widely engaged with and can have lower impact. So, media engagement and direct NHS comms is needed, but we recognise that there are limitations.

It is widely accepted that information delivered through 'trusted sources' can have the most traction. Trusted sources are often health professionals and other frontline staff, though people have infrequent contact with health professionals - and even more so during the pandemic restrictions; the connections are more personal and over time, rather than the fast paced 'at scale' response we might need.

Word of mouth through friends and family provides a trusted source and also the opportunity, though information delivered this way can be open to mis-information and rumour, which can escalate at a pace and often take place within hidden media, especially 'dark social' private groups. Information is triangulated, with word of mouth providing the opportunity for messages to be confirmed or challenged. Community and workforce approaches, recognising that these are places other media may not reach or be listened to and that all staff are also citizens (primarily in Northumberland we assume), offers real potential in challenging this.

Considering wider community deliverers where contact is more frequent - in both health settings such as pharmacies and non-health settings such as hairdressers and barbers - offers the potential to boost this trusted source information transfer.

In this way, trust and impact need to be considered in assessing the mixed communication approach.

4.4. Outbreak Communications Matrix

The generic outbreak communications matrix shows in summary the phases of action in a local outbreak. This replaces a traditional plan referencing time dates and milestones, given the unknowns involved in a potential local COVID-19 outbreak.

The matrix addresses the communications and engagement needs in five possible phases of outbreak, the nature and duration of which will be determined by the local Public Health teams and, if needed, a local Outbreak Control Team (OCT).

Phases in the generic outbreak communications matrix focus on the following scenarios:

Green: Current steady state, low number of cases, widely dispersed in communities.

Yellow: Increasing number of cases - all areas/significant local spikes.

Amber: Heightened level of concern, significant cases and spikes in multiple locations/sectors.

Red: Endemic in all locations/sectors - local lockdown county-wide.

Recovery: Cases start to reduce, monitor and respond (reinforce behavioural messages/emphasise vigilance).

5. Existing campaigns and key messages

There are many campaigns internationally which aim to highlight COVID-19 in some form, be that in terms of public information about regulations, encouraging behaviour change, clinical issues or simply commenting on life in lockdown[3].

Key elements of communication to be considered for Northumberland and the local COVID-19 outbreak prevention and control communications and engagement activities include the below.

5.1. Key messages

The national government key messages are listed as:

1. **Social distance** - the distances have changed over the course of the pandemic. At the time of writing it is generally suggested as 1M+ (one metre or more)
2. **Hand washing** - for 20 seconds or more in soap and water or using hand sanitiser if that is not available
3. **Covering face** - using a face covering when in contact with others or in crowded places. Government advice has also changed on this and developed to require face coverings in certain places such as shops and on public transport.

In addition, national messaging encouraging people to get their flu jab continues, alongside other winter planning activity, i.e.:

4. **Seasonal flu** - get your flu jab
5. **Use of NHS services** - make best use of NHS resources in a time of high demand.

This core messaging (1-3) has remained the same since the initial stages of COVID-19 and message fatigue - people becoming weary of the same messages and not noticing them or acting on them - is emerging. However, the advice remains the same and these three messages are still important in all phases.

5.2. Northumberland-wide

The NCC Northumberland-wide 'Protect' campaign already in circulation builds on the national messaging around COVID-19, bringing the key messages together under the strapline:

Protect yourself. Protect others. Protect Northumberland.

[3] International adverts COVID-19 www.adsoftheworld.com/collection/covid19_ads#

It has been widely used through NCC's in-house assets (Council offices, street lighting, traffic cones etc) as well as via social media and online channels, and is being continually rolled out across the county.

The Northumberland County Council website holds a range of resources, information and signposting to further support. Key pages are at:

- NCC Coronavirus page: https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus.aspx
- Local outbreak prevention and control plans page: https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/Local-COVID-19-Outbreak-Prevention-and-Control-Pla.aspx
- Latest information (updated regularly): https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/Latest-information-and-advice-on-Coronavirus.aspx#questionsaboutcovid-19

5.3. North East-wide

NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Service (NENCICS)

An NHS campaign has been developed North East-wide, including COVID-19, flu immunisation and winter pressures messaging, using the hashtag:

#DoYourBit

This hashtag is being used across the country; a specific campaign has been developed across North Cumbria and North East areas covering four foci, not only COVID-19 key messages but other key areas of winter pressures planning.

Assets for the campaign centre around six different creatives including hand washing, distancing, wearing a face covering and getting a test.

The campaign website is at https://www.doyourbit-nenc.co.uk/

The campaign includes some useful resources around:

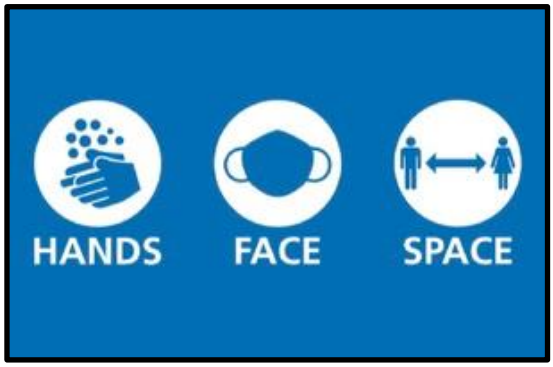
- Handwashing: Correct method video (NHS): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGJNspLRdrc
- Face coverings video:
- https://www.doyourbit-nenc.co.uk/wear-a-mask
- Find out about getting a test (NHS website): https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/

5.4. National

The government has developed resources on COVID-19. The suite of resources can be found on the PHE Campaign Resource Centre, at https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk. Much of the campaign resource is available to the public, whilst access to some resources requires a login which is available to anyone with a .gov or a .nhs email address.

In addition to the plethora of posters, banners, videos, social media posts etc. on this resource centre, the most recent (and for the foreseeable future, main) campaign, recently launched (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-to-prevent-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-this-winter) is the '***Hands, Face, Space***' campaign, originally launched in June but drowned out by the 'Eat Out to Help Out' initiative and under-promoted.

The ***Hands, Face, Space*** campaign has now been well promoted (from September 2020) - including through a relatively high exposure advertising campaign, which includes local targeting - and there are a range of resources available to support partners to boost the delivery of this locally, including videos and social media post assets.



The full campaign assets can be found on the Public Health Campaign website.

Key public and health sector bodies can use their corporate online presence to promote this generic social media content. The assets are available for use by NCC and partners, or can be shared from social media platforms.

6. Care homes and residential settings – priority area 1

A toolkit has been developed for use by care homes, both privately owned or council-managed and staff in Infection Control Team, to support understanding about what to do should there be an outbreak of COVID-19 and to ensure everyone is following the correct guidance and measures to keep both staff and care home residents safe.

6.1. What is the local picture?

The health and care system supporting the care homes and care settings in Northumberland consists of:

- Northumberland CCG
- Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT (Infection Prevention & Control Team Community Nursing Services)
- Northumberland County Council (Commissioning, Public Health)
- 40 GP practices / Primary Care
- There are 151 care homes and domiciliary care providers registered with the CQC in Northumberland. The breakdown is as follows :
    - 69 Care homes for older persons.
    - Of these homes 36 are residential and 33 are nursing, all of which are privately owned
    - 31 specialist care homes for people with a learning disability or a mental health issue 2 of these homes are managed by Northumberland County Council
    - 52 Homecare organisations, all of which are privately owned except one (run by the council).

6.2. Mental health and wellbeing support

COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges for staff, patients and families who have been affected by the virus.

Mental health and the wellbeing support of staff is hugely important to ensure emotional resilience during these difficult times. It is important to celebrate self-care amongst staff so they are comfortable being as compassionate towards themselves as they are to their patients. Many professionals will be under enormous pressures at work and will be trying to manage their own emotions in an ever-evolving situation.

The Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust has implemented a suite of support for the psychological wellbeing of their staff which includes YouTube videos, resources directories, training for those in leadership positions to run appropriate team sessions and a helpline.

Each care home will have its own procedures in place for looking after the wellbeing of its staff and residents. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality standards cover the mental wellbeing of older people (aged 65 and over) receiving care in care homes (including residential and nursing accommodation, day care and respite care). The focus is to support people in improving their mental wellbeing so that they can stay as well and independent as possible. It describes high-quality care in priority areas for improvement.

Balancing infection control and wellbeing during COVID-19 continues to be a challenge. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) offers some advice and best practice with some associated care studies: www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/care-homes/supported-living/infection-control-wellbeing.

6.3. Communications protocol

The communications protocol informs how information is sent to care homes from the NHS and Northumberland County Council, and the sign-off process.

The Senior Commissioning Manager and the Operational Manager (Contracts) have direct contact with the care homes and linked agencies. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 the relationships have strengthened as contact has been more frequent to care home managers who have been at the forefront of caring for the most vulnerable through the pandemic.

Information on outbreak prevention and control is managed through the Care Home Dashboard and through partners in the Care Home Outbreak Control Group. This meeting is chaired by the Executive Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Safety.

6.4. Media protocol

This protocol determines how formal media statements from the council are handled e.g. in the case of a local outbreak. A media spokesperson is identified, who will be responsible for delivering a consistent message on behalf of the council. This is usually the Director of Public Health.

The media statement will outline relevant data whilst maintaining confidentiality to protect those involved, and information which will anticipate questions and topics likely to be asked by the public and reporters, for example:

- When was the case identified?
- How widespread is the infection risk?
- What policies and procedures area already in place?
- What risk does this pose and what does that mean?
- What is the message to the public?
- What are the next steps?

Media statement

A media statement can be drafted that will provide the media with the correct facts for a breaking story. Details will include:

- The extent of the outbreak
- What has been done so far
- A quote from the Director of Public Health
- Reminder messages about handwashing, social distancing and face coverings and visiting.

Government guidance:

The government has provided support and advice for care home workers:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-health-and-wellbeing-of-the-adult-social-care-workforce/health-and-wellbeing-of-the-adult-social-care-workforce

https://local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/workforce%20-%20wellbeing%20social%20care%20-%20ICS%20Sustaining%20wellbeing%20COVID19%20poster.pdf

6.5. Communications toolkit overview

The Northumberland County Council provides answers to residents' questions in relation to COVID-19 on their website: https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/Latest-information-and-advice-on-Coronavirus.aspx#socialcare

The Care Homes and Residential Settings toolkit which has been produced includes:

- Flowcharts for in- and out-of-hours information for care homes.
- Family and carer-facing communications: sharing changes to government guidance, visiting policy and reassurance.
- Website copy: an up-to-date website with timely updates if a resident or member of staff has tested positive or there is a suspected case.
- Posters for Care Homes: to cover topics such as infection control, domiciliary care, and protecting residents and staff.
- Communication cards which staff could carry in their pocket or clipped to their lanyard including information such as key contact numbers, key triggers, key reporting information, symptoms, social distancing, handwashing and social isolation guidance.

- Stakeholder communications such as MPs, local elected members and elected officials. They need to be informed of a breaking story before or alongside the media, so that they are prepared to answer any questions from their constituents quickly.

7. Educational settings – priority area 2

The Educational Settings toolkit consists of

- A schools-specific comms plan
- Assets already developed for educational settings and examples
- Assets created, including templates, for educational settings.

Note that all assets can be adapted to different locations and as the COVID-19 situation progresses. Other new assets may also need to be created, depending on the as yet unknown circumstances.

7.1. What is the local picture?

Northumberland has 39,907 school-aged children, 42,717 including 6th form (taken from the January 2020 census).

The breakdown of educational settings is:

- 122 first and primary Schools
- 14 middle schools
- 16 secondary/high schools including one which is all-age
- 9 special/Pupil Referral Unit
- 16 alternative providers
- 95 private voluntary and independent nurseries
- 174 childminders
- Further Education Colleges
- A secure unit

7.1.1. Primary, middle and secondary schools

The majority of schools are operating under local authority control, but academies, faith and independent schools will also look to the local authority for guidance[4] and Head Teachers across all types of school settings are part of the COVID-19 networks and groups already set up.

[4] Caveat that schools with independent governance may also look to their own legal teams for guidance, which may be different.

Schools have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020 lockdown and generally have considerable plans and preparedness in place for cases of COVID-19 within the school. All are required to have a published Risk Assessment in place, which should follow government guidance, although the content of these is adapted for the specific school setting.

An Education Outbreak Management Group (E.OMG) convenes to make decisions and advise on action around COVID-19 in schools.

7.1.2. Further education settings

There are three sites for Northumberland college: Ashington Campus, Berwick Campus, Kirkley Hall Campus. The safeguarding team at the college look after all aspects of COVID-19 communications. There is a section on their website dedicated to COVID-19 and an FAQ section: https://www.northumberland.ac.uk/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-faqs/.

The website also details how students can protect themselves and others; regularly washing hands or using hand sanitiser, following social distancing guidelines, looking out for signs or floor markings, wearing college ID badge, 'Catch it, bin it, kill it' if students cough or sneeze and no sharing of any equipment.

The government have produced guidance on their website for further education colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision?es_c=CB602C0EE2B384B00C99090AEB797566&es_cl=17B9AA2D49D8714BBCBF705C3EE7

The infection response recovery group (FE)

The infection response recovery group is responsible for handling outbreaks.

They are part of the Education partnership North East and outline clear roles and responsibilities, and stay at home protocol for students and staff.

The college also utilises their health risk data to determine prioritisation of remote learning, as an outbreak occurs, and/or as social distancing measures are relaxed. This is also true of vulnerable students and those known to safeguarding.

All students who have had symptoms must be screened by the Designated Safeguarding Officer prior to return to study.

As an outbreak escalates or de-escalates the infection and response recovery group will make a decision on whether to remove students from industry placements, and likewise permit their return. This group will also review if residential provision remains open.

This group would also oversee and coordinate the temporary re-opening of campus - 'Stay Safe Get Ready', then this will move into the 'Stay Safe Get Going' phase when the majority of staff and students return.

A specialist team at Northumberland College is providing mental health support to its students and addressing the growing challenges of COVID-19. The Intensive Support team provide individual and group support to students who are experiencing mental health or wellbeing issues.

7.1.3. Nursery schools, afterschool clubs and childminders

The government have produced some guidance for early years providers in particular:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak

In Northumberland the early years settings (birth to five years) and most childminders are part of a group called 'Northumberland Early Years Providers'. During lockdown there were twice weekly emails aimed mostly at home learning and staff wellbeing. Those emails then linked to the Northumberland Education website, an online resource base.

Examples of updates would be; guidance on returning to early years or your childminder, frequently asked questions, available grants or training.

The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) also offered reassurance to parents worried about sending their children back to early years settings and childminders with the following guidance under the #BackToSchoolSafely campaign:
https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/6-6836_DfE_Reassurance_Leaflets_Early-Years.pdf

Children attending nurseries and childminders were able to return from 1 June. From 20 July, nurseries were able to return to their normal group sizes. Settings were contacted and a database was built to record if settings were opening and in what capacity so that there was a clear picture across the region of what provision was available to parents who needed it.

Each childminder or Early Years setting also operates a buddy system. This means that every setting or childminder has another 'buddy' that they would be able to work with to ensure

there are consistent messages or someone they could go to if they were unsure about something.

7.1.4. Pupil referral units

The Northumberland pupil referral unit looks after 40 pupils from Key stage One to Key Stage 3 (y1-y9). The pupils are those that are vulnerable, at risk lor have an Educational Health Care Plan (ECHP). As they are a small unit, they tend to communicate directly with parents by telephone. A large part of their role is safeguarding, so they welcomed the weekly bulletins from the council, particularly those that contained safeguarding advice and information.

They stated that a flowchart showing what to do if there was a confirmed positive case and some clarification on questions would be useful.

One of their biggest challenges is getting pupils and families to understand and follow the guidance around isolation and social distancing.

7.1.5. Secure children's home

The secure unit Kyloe House in Morpeth, Northumberland has protocols in place including isolation areas for those that are showing symptoms and specific incubation times for new pupils to the unit, to reduce the spread of any infections. Any visitors have to register that they are coming 24 hours before they arrive and the area they use is COVID-19 secure.

Because of the vulnerable nature of the work, there is no website or social media account associated with the unit.

This setting is unique as it accepts pupils from all over the country and has very good support through the secure accommodation network.

7.1.6. Special schools

Many of the children that have additional needs found the lockdown particularly challenging. During the outbreak, some of the specified special education and health care provision within Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans were made more flexible.

This flexibility has now ended, which means that children with an EHC plan should receive the support they need as usual when they return to school.

Details on the modification to the Children and Families Act can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings

The government have listed some resources on this website to help families with children who have additional needs.

There have been calls for extra specific emotional and therapeutic support for those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) because of the impact and communication difficulties faced.

7.2. Mental health and wellbeing

Pupil wellbeing is of key importance given the changes and uncertainties they have experienced and the return to school in the Autumn has seen a range of wellbeing advice in the media and elsewhere.

There are many resources available to support children's wellbeing. In Northumberland, a guide has been produced:

https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Child-Families/Looked%20after%20children/Guide-for-Education-Settings-Supporting-CYP-MH-EWB-COVID-19-FINAL-v1-0-1.pdf

Out-of-area resources which may be of use to supporting pupil wellbeing include:

- A guide to communicating with parents who may be anxious and supporting children https://beaconschoolsupport.co.uk/newsletters/the-new-normal-returning-to-school-after-COVID-19
- Activities aimed at helping children if they are feeling unsettled: https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/services-for-schools/mental-health-resources-for-schools/coronavirus-wellbeing-activity-ideas-for-schools/

In addition, at the time of writing an update has been published nationally on support bubbles, which is relevant to pupil wellbeing:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing?utm_source=e23873ca-148d-4fb4-8ec1-5dea2673d582&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily

7.3. Northumberland Education website

Information is housed on here for all school settings in Northumberland; this is the main place where teachers go to get the most up-to-date information:

http://northumberlandeducation.co.uk

Much of the information contained in the toolkit appears on this website, with links back to the NCC web pages for the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

7.4. Communications toolkit overview

The Educational Settings Toolkit which has been produced includes:

- Flowcharts for schools to follow should a member of staff or child show symptoms
- Parent/guardian-facing communications e.g. instructions should a member of staff or child show symptoms, sharing changes to government guidance
- Website copy: an up-to-date website with timely updates if w resident or member of staff has tested positive or there is a suspected case.
- Q&A examples
- Stakeholder communications such as the governors, MPs, local elected members and elected officials. They need to be informed of a breaking story before or alongside the media, so that they are prepared to answer any questions from their constituents quickly.

8. High risk individuals, communities and settings – priority areas 3 and 4

8.1. What is the local picture?

This priority area covers people who are vulnerable or 'high risk'. It has been set out in the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan as two equally weighted priority areas - High risk/consequence individuals and communities, and High risk/consequence settings.

A generic Standard Operating procedure (SOP) is in development, which aims to pull together the different areas under one umbrella process.

The priority area has a multi-agency group which meets weekly/bi-monthly to discuss areas of collaboration, needs for the different high risk individuals, communities and settings, and to develop the SOP.

The high risk individuals, communities and settings included in this priority area are diverse in both the people included and in the type of organisations supporting them and there are many cross cutting themes in this work. Whilst the approaches and toolkits have needed to take a generic approach - reflecting the multi-agency working that is taking place - consideration needs to be given to this diverse nature and the bespoke additional needs for each area may have.

In the absence of very targeted toolkits for each different group or setting, a range of materials drawn from research in other areas have been included and can be considered for adaptation going forward.

Note: Across all areas are important generic and public/patient facing campaign messages - national government, NHS, local campaign.

8.2. High risk/consequence individuals and communities

A wide range of high risk individuals and communities have been identified, namely:

- Residential, housing associations and ISLs for people with complex needs (learning disabilities, autism and mental health)
- People with existing mental ill health known to IAPT, MIND and CNTW
- Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (including New Age Travellers) encampments (excluding permanent sites)
- Dispersed accommodation for asylum seekers placed in Northumberland
- Adult social care - community services and safeguarding
- Domestic abuse and sexual violence victims
- Drug and alcohol service users
- Probation services

Summaries and resources per area

Given the diverse nature of this group, specific materials for each area have not been developed within the scope of this work. Where specific materials are needed, these can be considered as part of ongoing work.

However, there are many assets already circulating and sourced from specialist organisations, especially the charity sector, as well as good examples from other local services outside Northumberland.

8.2.1. Residential, housing associations and independent supported living (ISL) accommodation for people with complex needs

There is cross-over between this area and the Care Homes and Residential Settings priority area - ISLs sit here.

Many residents in these settings are likely to be vulnerable, elderly or at risk in a range of ways, not least through experiencing greater health issues, being on lower incomes and being at greater risk of job losses (with a greater proportion working in the gig economy or on zero-hours contracts), due to COVID-19.

The key Housing Associations in Northumberland are listed below.

- Anchor (Alnwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Morpeth)
- Bernicia (Ashington)
- Bomarsund co-operative (Blyth)
- Castles & Coasts
- Four housing (Berwick-upon-tweed)
- Housing Associations in Northumberland include:
- Housing 21(Alnwick, Cramlington)
- Home Housing (Hexham)
- Johnnie Johnson (Bedlington)
- Karbon (Morpeth)

Risk assessments and FAQs can be found on the company websites e.g. https://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/coronavirus/

Communications resources:

Residents will look to their respective housing associations for guidance. Many are linked to larger housing associations and will get information cascaded from their Head Offices. NCC's will support them through providing accurate information - online, via social and if needed directly.

Examples of materials developed by housing associations within Northumberland and wider is detailed in the toolkit.

Government guidance can be found at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-social-landlords-on-essential-moves

8.2.2. People with existing mental ill health

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust provides the support for people with long term and serious/diagnosed mental health problems in Northumberland.

The NHS trust has policies and procedures to support both staff and patients around COVID-19 - see https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/coronavirus/ and links to the national NHS resources for its communications.

The Trust also has specific dedicated COVID-19 resources for staff, including a helpline.

Communications resources

The practices at the Trust will have similarities with care homes settings and resources can be adopted across both - e.g. information for nursing staff, updates on visiting. Care homes resources such as posters (already developed by North Tyneside), videos and Z-cards (currently under consideration) may be relevant and adaptable for this setting.

Other national resources can be found in the toolkit.

8.2.3. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) encampments

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) Encampments pose a specific issue during COVID-19 outbreaks which may be hidden - in terms of infection/transmission, testing and communicating with key

messages. They are a difficult to reach group with specific needs who do not traditionally engage with services.

The council's Gypsy Roma Traveller Liaison Officer is the usual engagement point for this group within the council.

Communications resources:

A Toolkit from another area where a recent COVID-19 outbreak has been successfully managed is being considered.

8.2.4. Dispersed accommodation for asylum seekers

Single points of contact for the most vulnerable can provide information/resources. Training for frontline staff - digital, through team meetings etc - can assist in getting messages and resources to vulnerable people.

Referral pathways for outbreaks have been developed to support Frontline staff during sessions with service users.

Resources in different languages have been suggested as a need, which explains COVID-19 and the process in the UK, as some may be receiving information from family or contacts in their home country, which may not be consistent with current UK practice.

Communications resources:

There are no resources specific to Northumberland, but the generic resources apply. Translation may be required for locally specific information. More information, including national examples can be used or adapted, are in the toolkit.

8.2.5. Adult Social Care

Broad overarching function and including safeguarding and vulnerable adults. Specifically isolated older people and those with dementia (in patient and community), people with autism and learning disabilities and serious and enduring mental health issues. Links to drug & alcohol and domestic abuse services.

Safeguarding has an overarching function. The council details safeguarding issues here https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Care/Support/Safeguarding.aspx#informationforprofessionalsaboutsafeguardingadults

Communications resources:

Much of the communications need is covered within the specific services, or NHS/social care settings. An additional need might be quick reference guides for how to explain COVID-19 issues to e.g. dementia sufferers in the community for families. The National charities also have resources that can be of use.

Government guidance can be found here https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-supporting-adults-with-learning-disabilities-and-autistic-adults

8.2.6. Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Victims (updated: also Sex workers)

During the pandemic, when people are spending more time at home with less opportunity to leave the house, the rise in cases of domestic abuse and the reduced contact with support services is of concern. Incidents are less likely to be reported and coercive control can be exacerbated.

Regular cascade of information to all related services via the lead - usually by email and video meetings. FAQs/flowchart would be welcomed.

Communications resources:

The council website holds information about Coronavirus and domestic abuse in Northumberland. Generic FAQs might be useful, plus the general resources being developed on engaging with service users across the priority area. Many recognised domestic abuse charities have resources and signposting, which have been included in the toolkit.

Government guidance can be found here https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help

8.2.7. Drug and alcohol service users

Drug & Alcohol services provide support services, in both clinical settings and the community, from CNTW NHS Foundation Trust and through the linked recovery partnership https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/services/northumberland-recovery-partnership/. They have developed procedures to manage COVID-19 cases in service provision and are supported by Trust structures and policies.

Cascading information to front line staff takes places and can do so for COVID-19 outbreak messages via the lead.

Communications resources

No additional specific communications requirements were identified. Useful information for staff and service users can be found via national drug and alcohol resources, included in the toolkit.

Government guidance can be found here https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-commissioners-and-providers-of-services-for-people-who-use-drugs-or-alcohol

8.2.8. Probation Service

Services are provided through Northumbria Probation and the Community Resilience company - officers work jointly.

For this group, service users have chaotic lives and are unlikely to follow advice so present a bigger risk, as well as a challenge in creating specific communication tools.

Communications resources:

Current resources are primarily verbal via cascade amongst staff and meetings for the priority area.

Government guidance can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-and-prisons

8.3. High Risk/consequence Settings

There are two key areas for this priority group covered in the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan:

- Council owned temporary shared accommodation
- Hostel accommodation

Communications resources:

A checklist has been developed for homeless hostel accommodation, which includes a table of key principles to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in a hostel setting.

Two flowcharts were provided and have been developed. These are

- Flowchart for those with COVID-19 symptoms, and
- Flowchart for those without COVID-19 symptoms

Linking to the in-development SOP, a checklist 'script' for front line staff would be welcomed, to equip staff with the following

- **What questions they need to ask, when interacting with a service user,** and
- **What answers they should give to the questions service users may have.**

These Q&A for staff/service user interaction need to be developed with input from the lead and in tandem with the SOP.

As with the High Risk communities and individuals, other resources exist and the specialist organisations supporting homeless and hostel accommodation are best placed to provide information for these settings. Examples of what is available are included in the toolkit.

8.4. Communications toolkit overview

Bespoke assets for this workstream need to reflect the SOP being developed and can be produced following this.

Valuable and quality resources have been developed by other organisations (National charities, consortiums and independent providers) for most of these areas; these organisations are specialists in their field and if material exists which is fit for purpose, it can be used as it stands, or adapted if necessary. Assessment of this - which national resources can be used vs those which warrant adaptation or localisation - can be part of the next phase of work to support the priority area.

National, charity and NHS/PHE resources

The full range of national assets available can be used in these settings as well as local NHS assets developed. These, alongside charity resources are given as examples in the toolkit.

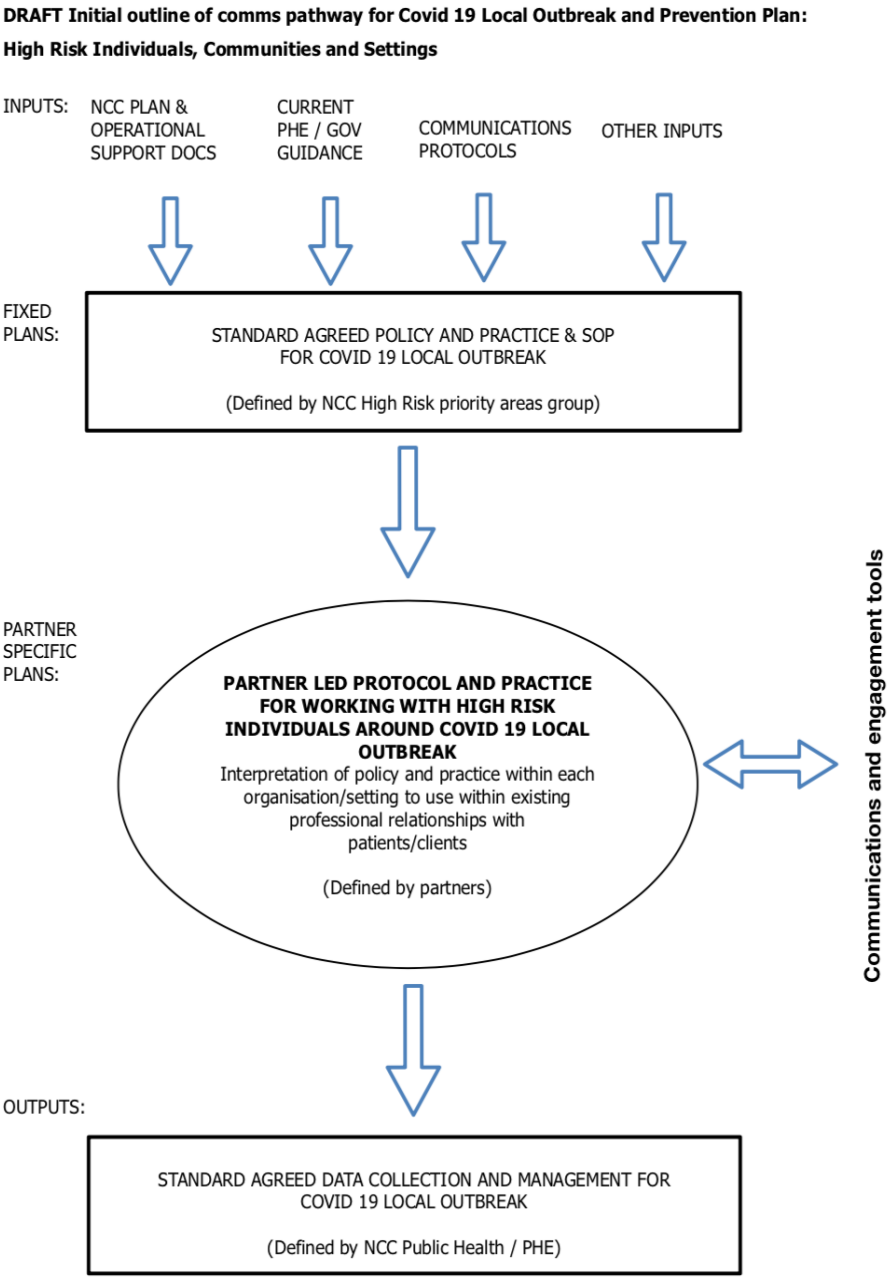
Cascading information

The leads for each area already cascade information to their teams and staff and any networks they are linked to, which can continue and will be important in the case of a local outbreak.

Communications support for specialist settings

Whilst the council needs to define the procedures involved and supply factual information, the details of how staff work with services users was one for them to decide themselves, based on their skill, experience and judgements, rather than being heavily prescribed (illustration below). This will form part of the SOP development work in progress.

Communications and engagement tools can support this activity, once it is decided.



Social media

The national government '*Hands, Face, Space*', regional NHS *#DoYourBit* and local Northumberland-wide *Protect* campaigns, are accessible on social media from the NCC and other local accounts, promoting valid and current information for the public. They can be shared and posted on any of the partner social media feeds.

Additional resource support, such as for general materials in different languages from the Doctors of the World, can be accessed as needed.

Flowcharts

Three flowcharts have been developed by the partners across the High Risk individuals, communities and settings workstreams. These are:

1. High Risk individuals and communities: Flowchart - pre-SOP
2. High Risk settings: Flowchart for those with COVID-19 symptoms, and
3. High Risk settings: Flowchart for those without COVID-19 symptoms

The content is still draft and under discussion within the group. They can be designed for wider circulation once finalised, along with the SOP documents.

Note: These two workstreams have been considered as one, given the cross over in their nature and in the people involved through the respective working groups. Whilst there are differences in the workstreams, for the purpose of communications and engagement they can be treated similarly and collectively.

The high risk individuals, communities and settings toolkit contains examples of some assets which have been developed.

9. Workplaces and businesses - priority area 5

9.1. What is the local picture?

Northumberland is a semi-rural area with the majority of businesses categorised as small, media enterprises (SMEs) or micro-businesses (less than 10 employees).

The research undertaken has demonstrated that several different organisations, including the council, hold pockets of data on workplaces and businesses (data gatekeepers).

Overall there is a lot of data available, specific organisations hold more information on business types and contact information than others. But it should be emphasised that the data available is not comprehensive, it is not held in one place or by one organisation.

Engagement predominantly took place with organisations who act as gatekeepers to information on workplaces and businesses, including various departments within Northumberland County Council, Funding, Support and Development Organisations as well as Northumberland based business networks and trade associations.

9.2. Data available - overview

A range of bodies and organisations involved with businesses in Northumberland were engaged. Officers within Northumberland County Council highlighted the contact information the authority held was limited in the most part to predominantly to business name and address and the business, in the main fitting into the following criteria:

- Businesses that pay business rates
- Businesses that MUST register with the council for licenses
- Businesses that the Council has received a complaint about.

Northumberland based business funding, support and development organisations hold much more detailed information on businesses and workplaces, with full contact information be available. However, their range of businesses is much smaller.

Similarly, the data held by business networks and trade associations is also very detailed, with full contact information available, however, again the quantity and range of data available is limited.

Northumberland County Council has contact information, mostly postal addresses, for all businesses that require regulation in for the form of a licence or have business premises in Northumberland.

The following types of businesses or workplaces require a licence:

- Credit and Financial Services
- Dog breeding
- Ear piercing
- Gambling services
- Goods haulage
- Import and export
- Pet shops
- Private coach operators
- Security guards
- Sports coaches
- Taxi drivers.

9.3. Gaps in the data and how to fill them

When considering the types of businesses to be targeted for C-19 prevention and outbreak control information, gaps appear to emerge. This includes, the self-employed who are more likely work or be based from home and wouldn't require a licence or have a business premises to pay business rates.

They may also have a registered address, often based with their accountant, different from their home address. This would minimise impact or response rate to postal information.

To mitigate these gaps, engagement with networking organisations that support other businesses such as Northumberland Business Service Limited (NBSL) and Super Network.

Businesses would register with these organisations to gain business support or funding. These organisations predominantly work with micro businesses and a high proportion are very likely to work from home. However, the limitation with the data held is it is only on businesses that have decided to registered with them.

This exposes another, smaller gap around trades and self-employed which can be classed as hard to reach in business terms.

Self-employed trades people don't usually have business premises, nor do they require a license, and they usually wouldn't register for business support.

Engagement with this key group was carried out via trade organisations. A list of local key commercial wholesale trade counters this group would use for business supplies has been produced.

Developing a relationship with these trade counters would support access tradespeople in the county.

Trade associations work in a similar way to referral/networking organisations, and consumers use associations to find reliable trades people. There are a lot of trade associations and referral/networking organisations covering Northumberland and beyond. Engagement with The Guild of Master Craftsmen and the Federation of Small Business highlights that their data is again only for tradespeople who have registered with them.

There is a large range of industry federations, associations and professional bodies covering all aspects of industry. Creating a comprehensive list of these bodies would be prohibitive, therefore a list of the larger and more common bodies has been collated.

Networking organisations are a source of connecting with businesses that otherwise are hard to reach as they include small businesses and sole traders. Of the many networking organisations, the largest is a worldwide franchise model BNI (Business Network International). The local franchise owner covers a certain geographical area and sets up meetings with interested businesses joining on a yearly subscription. This type of networking organisation would be of interest from trades however in Northumberland there is currently one weekly online meeting and it has not yet started officially owing to low numbers.

There are other networking groups throughout the North East, such as network B2B, focuses more on business-to-business and very few trades join these groups. In Northumberland there is only one group based in Hexham.

To benefit from networking organisations, businesses would join a group, therefore connecting with NBSL or the Federation of Small Business would be a way to target these sorts of businesses.

9.4. What are workplaces and businesses telling us they need

In the main data gatekeepers are happy to share information on behalf of the council in relation to C-19 prevention and outbreak control.

Insight gained highlighted that the best rapid contact method would be via a mobile text alert, however many data gatekeepers do not hold mobile telephone numbers.

Contact to business via data gatekeepers should be done in the main way they usually communicate with their contacts, e.g. if they usually email, then they would feel more comfortable sharing information by email.

In order to share information in the best way possible, data gatekeepers should be provided with the message/copy to share, and make as it easy as possible to send to their contacts. This also ensures that messages aren't misinterpreted.

Businesses and workplaces need easily accessible guidance on how to operate safely. During the height of the Spring/Summer 2020 lockdown the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) dealt in the main with questions about what was safe and what was not safe to do. FSB have requested a guide that is easily accessible should be produced that they could share with their members.

Tourism Northumberland felt their role had changed and they had become the first port of call for businesses and consumers that were concerned over queries about holidays and visits. A Covid-19 guide would be a helpful tool for them.

There is feedback about how businesses have struggled to find the right guidance, at the right time, with guidance going out of date quickly because of the fast moving situation.

In terms of a local lockdown, guidance should be proactive rather than reactive, with information provided in advance if possible. Businesses would like some time to prepare in order to ensure as little service disruption as possible.

The guidance should include how to systems in place to help them to continue operating safely. The guidance should advise on current safeguarding measures, as well as measures that they will need to take around local lockdown. It should also include support on what to do if customers are not adhering to the rules.

Guidance should also cover extra support for staff around their own health and wellbeing. Practical advice on face masks and visors, current information around inclusion of stats in order to help the business explain their safety decisions. Staff training could be needed.

Businesses would benefit from a business coach to help them continue to trade even if their offering needs to change, along with links to available funding opportunities to support businesses.

9.5. Data held by Northumberland County Council

NCC has been developing a combined dataset to use for communication mailouts to businesses across the county. Whilst the data is not a complete set and will have gaps, this offers potential for future COVID-19 outbreak related mailings.

The council holds limited data for the following types of businesses:

- Businesses that pay business rates
- Businesses that MUST register with the council for licenses
- Businesses that have received a complaint.

Engagement has taken place across council departments; business rates, public protection, Advance Northumberland, Visit Northumberland (culture and tourism), Economic and inclusion policy and policy.

9.5.1. Business rates

Some information is held on those businesses which pay business rates. This includes 13.5k businesses, with data fields including business name, contact and address details. Information for home-based businesses, such as tradespeople is not available. A list of local commercial trade counters has been developed as well as a list of networking organisations which may hold.

9.5.2. Public protection data

Public protection team holds data on 20k premises which includes premises address, business name, address and telephone number. They do not record personal information.

The data held by public protection differs from business rate data, in that each business is categorised.

They hold robust data for the following categories:

- Business related to food - corner shops, cafes, restaurants etc
- Caravan parks
- Business that sell alcohol
- Petrol stations
- Small businesses that need a license e.g. taxi drivers
- Street businesses such as ice cream vans, coffee vans etc
- Bed and breakfasts.

The data held around livestock is fairly comprehensive, with contacts for all farms in Northumberland totalling around 1k premises.

When a complaint is made about a business, public protection investigates and will hold limited data on a variety of businesses not listed above (for example hairdressers and tanning salons.) It would be a helpful exercise to review complaints for trends, themes and insights and use to inform planning.

Northumberland has a large number of industrial estates, however the data held for businesses occupying these locations are likely not to be up-to-date as there is a high turnover of businesses.

Civica system is used and business details can be extracted from this system per business area (the database of 20k premises held by Public Protection containing business address, and

potentially phone numbers). This is reliable data for all small businesses that need a licence (B&B, farms, animal health, cafes, restaurants etc.)

9.6. Public sector data held in partnership with NCC

9.6.1. Advance Northumberland

Advance Northumberland are the business support and engagement arm of the Northumberland County Council. They hold data for all businesses that have registered for support, currently standing at approximately 1.5k businesses. The majority of businesses that apply for support are micro and small businesses although they do work with significant organisations too.

Self-employed and trade organisations are not likely to engage with Advance or ask for support.

9.6.2. Visit Northumberland

Visit Northumberland works with 400 tourism businesses based in the county. Regular update communications take place at least once a week. They also have over 1.8k tourism businesses on the database, and for these there is an open rate for communications sent at around 28%. Information and data on these businesses is limited.

Few pubs or restaurants class themselves as tourism organisations and therefore visit Northumberland information in this sector is limited.

Due to the nature of their organisation, the information they hold is predominantly on businesses that are business to consumer (B2C) and during the lockdown, tourism organisations contacted Visit Northumberland for guidance and support.

9.7. Data held outside NCC

Outside of the council, engagement took place with Northumberland Business Service Limited, Super Network, Business Approval, The Guild of Master Craftsman and the Federation of Small Business.

9.7.1. Northumberland Business Service Limited

NBSL hold similar data to Advance Northumberland. NBSL provides funding to businesses and hold data on businesses that have contacted them to either apply or find out more about the funding they have available. They are currently working on the North East Growth Hub.

In terms of businesses in Northumberland, they have information for approximately 250 and are able to segment data into categories.

9.7.2. Super Network

Super Network have details from predominantly B2B - similar to Advance Northumberland, businesses approach them. They have found it difficult to engage with rural businesses.

SN send a newsletter to 2.5k local organisations which are North East based, not just Northumberland. They are not able to segment this data to be area specific.

They have a good social media presence.

9.7.3. Business Approval

Business Approval is an online platform where people can search for trades people to use that have been recommended. They have 2k businesses registered with them in the North East. They are mostly trade businesses which have one or two employees.

9.7.4. The Guild of Master Craftsmen

Similar to Business Approval - an online platform for craftsmen to register with and for people to search. They potentially have 300 businesses in Northumberland. Data can be organised per craft as well as postcode sector.

9.7.5. Federation of Small Business (FSB)

The FSB are happy to work with local authorities and provide guidance on the position of small businesses as well as share information with their members.

They are a member of the Local Area Outbreak Board for Gateshead Council. The FSB are happy to share some communication they have received from Gateshead and Durham.

In Northumberland they have approximately 500-600 members, which are mostly micro businesses. They also hold information on businesses who have enquired about joining the FSB, but have not yet signed up. Also members are quite often part of other groups, they would also be happy to ask their members to help spread the word on messages.

Lessons that they have learnt from members in Leicester and Aberdeen is the requirement for guidance quickly. Their members were frustrated when they were checking the council websites in the above areas and the data was not refreshed and out of date.

9.8. Communications toolkit overview

A variety of communication tools are needed to reach the range of workplaces and businesses across Northumberland. Some assets will be generic and easily available from central sources such as Public Health England. Individual industries may look to their Trade Associations, Trade Federations or professional bodies for industry specific advice.

The workplaces and business communications toolkit provide the following:

- FAQs (generic across all the sectors)
- Outbreak templates:
- Website copy
- Social media posts

Signposting information about other resources e.g. HMRC

10. Community and workforce

10.1. Northumberland Communities Together

Vulnerable people have been identified in the Local COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan, in addition to the high risk individuals, communities and settings workstreams, which states:

> *"The objective is to ensure vulnerable people in self isolation as a result of the NHS Test and Trace programme are safe and have access to food and medicines."*

Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) provides the co-ordination of resources from the council to support these vulnerable people during COVID-19. The council COVID-19 website pages on Northumberland Communities Together can be found at: https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/Northumberland-Communities-Together.aspx

The pages include lots of information about support available to those who are more vulnerable, such as those who have been shielding, as well as other resources, e.g. almost 300 businesses that have adapted to COVID-19 can be found via the business directory.

The NCT team has created three Community Packs since lockdown containing trusted information only (Gov, NHS, NCC) and links to key contacts e.g. Good Sam, Citizens Advice, the care system. There is also a glossary so that community connectors are using the right terminology and can explain and educate residents using trusted information.

The packs are sent out to the community connectors and have become a trusted source for information as well as creating pathways to other organisations.

NCT are present on social media with Twitter being mainly used for organisations such as Citizens Advice and CVA whereas Facebook has become the go-to place for information relating to volunteers.

NCC are exploring the role of Community Champions, to support peer-to-peer message delivery, which can link to work within the staff networks and also Communities Together.

In terms of communication with volunteers, functionality to send text messages to volunteers is of interest - there is the potential for Communities Together to invest in this.

Assets have been suggested for adaptation as communications tools for the public around COVID-19 for use by the NCT team.

Getting the right messages out at the right time within local communities can benefit from an understanding of local online communities and the social media group, open or closed, that exist.

Exploration of these groups, alongside information already known to the council, has produced a map across the county which can help, in the event of a local outbreak - particularly within towns or geographical areas.

More work is needed to develop relationships with the group owners/moderators and support them to ensure accurate and factual information is shared.

10.2. Workforce as citizens

As the county's biggest employer, employing approximately 4,500 staff, most of whom will live in Northumberland.

Combined with the NHS workforce, this constitutes a wide-ranging potential influence and ability to get the facts about any outbreak out quickly, accurately and at little cost, to support other means of communication and advertising. Supporting, empowering and entrusting staff to be community messengers is a powerful tool for engagement.

Routes to support this include:

- Chief Executives Briefing (NCC/Trust): widely read by all, via email.
- Health and Wellbeing (HWB) champions: 100+, support HWB messaging, various methods.
- Making Every Contact Count (MECC) trained staff: 80+, equipped to use their MECC engagements to support COVID-19 local outbreak messaging, via face to face.
- HWB networks: online, drop in, intranet tiles: Specific engagement of staff not on email (e.g. depot - refuse collection, street teams - staff).

Much of this work is already taking place and many of the communications are led by the communications and engagement team. NCC's HWB lead (Human Resources) is also a key contact for the distribution across the council staff.

The role of staff in delivering, reinforcing and rebutting messages in the community is one that has scope for development.

Social media groups

Getting the right messages out at the right time within local communities can benefit from an understanding of local online communities and the social media group, open or closed, that exist.

Exploration of these social media groups, alongside information already known to the council, has produced a map across the county to help understand the social media landscape and potential access to local communities in the event of a local outbreak - particularly within towns or geographical areas.

More work is needed to develop relationships with the group owners/moderators and support them to ensure accurate and factual information is shared (see Recommendations).

11. Wellbeing and special considerations

11.1. Wellbeing as a cross cutting theme

Maintaining our wellbeing can be extra tough when also dealing with COVID-19 issues - such as having to stay at home, the stains of families indoors together, the added anxieties of uncertain work or study, or worries about money or health. All of us can benefit from kindness in how we work with and support each other as well as specific actions we can take to help be mentally healthy in these uncertain times; we can include these things in our communications to support this.

Providing tips on taking care of your mental health and wellbeing (e.g. promoting the five ways to wellbeing) and altering working practices with this in mind can all help.

Locally, there is support for staff wellbeing through the NCC HWB hub (intranet), which provides information on COVID-19. The Trust also has a dedicated staff resource including a helpline.

There are many resources available nationally

- Mind: Coronavirus and your wellbeing https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/
- Every Mind Matters: Tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/
- NHS: advice, audio guides and practical tools around stress, feelings of anxiety or low mood https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/

Children and young people may need extra support because of COVID-19. There are many resources available for schools.

Children and young people-focused resources are available nationally, examples below:

- Alderhey Children's Hospital: Coronavirus facts for kids, downloadable from the PHE resources website https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/nhs-resources-facilities/resources/coronavirus-fact-sheet-children/ (also available as a video with audio narration at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcMmLOcHhTE)
- Every Mind Matters: Looking after a child or young person's mental health https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/childrens-mental-health/
- Young Minds: Supporting your child during the Coronavirus pandemic https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/
- Mind: Coronavirus and wellbeing - for young people https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/

The content from national resources could be woven into communications for NCC - from social media posts to website articles to direct communication with staff to highlighting resources to businesses.

Government guidance on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19 can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19

12. Materials in other formats and languages

Throughout the exploration of communications and engagement needs and in all the high priority areas, production of materials around COVID-19 was requested in different formats.

The council has access to translation services, including different languages and BSL sign language. Large print formats have been suggested, along with Easy read versions of key documents, particularly for those with learning difficulties, were requested by partners and stakeholders.

Information in different languages

General COVID-19 information is available in different languages through the Doctors of the World initiative, which provides resources translated into 60 languages at: https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/

Materials for deaf, deafened or hearing impaired

A commitment to subtitling video and provision of transcriptions of audio content could be considered by the council. This is in addition to BSL provision, which is only one part of deafness.

NCC provides a service to British Sign Language (BSL) users for the Communities Together Response Hub using SignVideo Web Access, an online sign language interpreting service, for 9am-5pm weekdays. Contact Northumberland Together using this service via: northumberlandcc-covid.signvideo.net.

Other sources of materials are:

- "Materials in British Sign Language" (funded by Scot Gov) at https://bda.org.uk/covid19/
- https://signhealth.org.uk/resources/coronavirus/
- Wigan Council: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsRJbkXoG6c&feature=youtu.be

Materials for the blind and visually impaired people

Wherever possible, materials should adhere to guidance around sight impaired readers. NCC is familiar with these needs and how to deliver communications materials e.g. website content that are DDA compliant.

Audio descriptions for videos could be developed

Information in braille can be developed, though this is usually on request.

Materials for people with learning development needs

Easy read versions of key information about COVID-19 local outbreaks are intended for development by NCC.

The NCC Learning Resource Centre provides support to NCC and are developing a series of resources for 'Jack and Josephine' booklets, to be used to communicate key issues in an appropriate way - either through digital (videos) or hard copy laminated resources. Resources under development include:

- Being socially distanced
- Getting tested
- PPE
- Understanding bubbles.

13. Recommendations

In developing this work, a number of opportunities for further communications and engagement approaches to support COVID-19 outbreak prevention and control planning have become apparent. These have been captured below and grouped in related themes.

Public sector partners lead by example and staff engagement

There is a significant opportunity for the council and partners to lead by example – NHS and council staff are significantly more trusted to provide the right information to the public than the media itself.

Staff are a huge resource and provide a significant opportunity to share messages, model behaviours and correct myths.

There is some evidence of resistance and message fatigue with instructions from public institutions.

Northumberland County Council and partners should actively promote what staff are doing to follow the rules, e.g., photos, video, social posts of staff working environments and demonstrating correct use protection equipment when out and about.

The 'protect' campaign could model key public services within a proactive staff campaign to remind them about prevention measures and to ensure they are modelling good practice in their contacts with the public - always wear a mask, always keep distance, always use hand sanitiser/wash hands. This is particularly important for meetings with external organisations and when carrying out regulatory duties.

Support to become advocates across all staff groups. Equip, support and boost staff to be part of the solution to COVID-19 outbreaks - provide with key messages and tools to use as citizens, beyond their staff role.

Quick wins include templates for e-signatures and advice on how to implement and include messaging on wage slips, if still used, plus all internal communications.

Staff are well places to develop and strengthen relationships with community social media group owners/moderators. Recruit social media savvy staff who reside in each locality to link in to the group owner/moderator to promote services and messages. Support staff with training and a bespoke staff online group to mobilise proactive relationships with group owners/moderators.

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) trained staff organised and supported with materials on local outbreaks and wider staff HWB resources linked to COVID-19 - for them as staff, for the people they work with (publics, service users) and to pass on outside their staff role, as citizens

General

Because FAQs are being updated quickly as the situation keep changing, version control is causing some confusion; provide a publication ID on the document and keep in a single location website location as the place to check for the most up to date information.

Conduct a proactive campaign to signpost wellbeing resources to staff, public and stakeholders on social mechanisms and websites.

Highlight in a simple grid format how COVID-19 differs from cold, flu, asthma, hay fever etc to reduce the amount of people asking unnecessarily for test.

Capitalise on Global Handwashing Day, October 15th. It already has a hashtag: #GlobalHandwashingDay and #HandHygieneforAll. Global Handwashing Day is recognised and promoted to foster and support a global and local culture of handwashing with soap, shine a spotlight on the state of handwashing, and raise awareness about correct practice and benefits of handwashing with soap.

Young people

Implement a campaign to targeting young adults, ensure social marketing approach and a no blame, focusing on asking for their help to keep the things they want to do going such as visiting the hairdresser, nail bar, gym and pub. Promote through Spotify, cinema, video on demand. A campaign positioning has been developed.

Education

There's a range of activities that could support the development of digital content on a class, school or village/neighbourhood or town level. The content can then be shared through digital and social channels more widely, essentially as a form of crowd sourcing.

Encourage schools to share videos, songs, artwork on the public health messages and link to their own local community (empower the schools with Northumberland County Council as a conduit) which can be aligned to public health messages. Crowd sourced content (that is in-line with PH messages) has the ability to be more influential that official messages, and allows a level of creativity not available to public bodies.

Other activities include digital poster design to promote handwashing or rule following; sharing a song or a poem to help others in school follow the rules; keeping spirits up and random acts of kindness; what I'm doing to keep myself and my family safe such as a drawing competition.

Stakeholder and business data

There is a need for a systematic customer relationship management system, an intelligent data base, to bring together key council stakeholder contacts in order to ensure efficient, timely and planned access and management of key contacts.

This can be supported by a simple crowd sourcing marketing campaign targeted at workplaces and businesses to self register to receive latest information directly from the council. It is essential to collect relevant contact data including mobile phone. By including a 'Sign up for latest updates' under the business section on the website, this would self populate to ensure accuracy of data and be a good way of collecting further data on workplaces and businesses. Ensure a social marketing approach is included, for example an incentive of something that is important to them for signing up.

Workplaces and businesses

There is an urgent need to provide more information about track and trace and develop a proactive campaign element to businesses to highlight this is compulsory.

Also to continue to provide more information about the furlough changes once we know in simple infographics and bite sized information.

There is a high turnover of businesses in trading and industrial estates, and a gap in information about which business is present. A mail shot/leaflet drop all industrial estates with a call to action of updating their details would help provide better information. Advance Northumberland to use their established social media to get messages out to businesses in Northumberland.

Supporting businesses

Engagement has taken place with business networks however, further primary research with the business community is recommend in order to understand their particular challenges. This could be done quickly via survey or focus groups with support from the business networks.

In line with the social marketing approaches around influencing young people (which focuses on ensuring their social distancing compliance keeps their favourite pubs, nail salon, restaurant open etc) – a campaign to support the business community could dovetail and amplify messages. A segmented approach would allow the opportunity to understand those businesses most at risk and provide a more targeted approach.

This should include the opportunity to recognise and celebrate good practice through case studies shared on social media – e.g. it's safe to get a taxi or a bus.

Business networks would be happy to provide peer to peer support on a sector level, this could take the form of webex or videos on becoming COVID-19 secure, show casing how to do it, and provide an opportunity to questions and answers.

Look for opportunities for a positive celebration of businesses that are adhering to the guidance well.

Include a high profile COVID-19 element in the Better Health at Work awards, the Journal Business Awards and other industry awards. Include categories that recognise good COVID-19 practice. Support a mark of excellence or a virtual awards.

Review what is available via a small business grant (eg for screens in taxis).

Target self employed and trades people, who are often not as connected with the business networks, via trade counters and wholesalers are access points. Messages could be over the counter or digital communications.

Engage businesses which are at the heart of local communities and around on high streets big and small. For example; Pharmacists, opticians, hairdressers and barbers, nail bars. These offer specific touch point for delivering key messages. Scripts/checklists could be developed for staff to use in interactions with customers.

High risk areas

Specific materials for the two High Risk priority areas have not been developed because a Standard Operating Procedure is still under development and because many good quality assets have already been produced from specialist organisations, especially the charity sector, as well as by other local services outside Northumberland. Further assessment of how these can be used and which require local adaptation is needed, working alongside the multi-agency group and individual leads.

The multi-agency group members need to decide if/which resources from other areas are of value and need updating as bespoke Northumberland County Council tools.

Equality actions and alternative formats

The council need to explore how alternative formats are included in the production of materials and assessed against audiences need in-line with equality act requirements and linked to the equality impact information around COVID-19 for the county.

Alternative formats need to be considered in particular for those in the high risk priority areas. There is already some work already happening for people with learning disabilities (under Adult care). Further work around what additional assets are required and what should be produced by Northumberland County Council verses using those available from elsewhere needs exploring.

There should be a commitment to subtitles on all videos as standard.

It's also recommended to systematically review all resources in different languages against, for example, Doctors of the World materials to assess what is needed in addition for Northumberland.