

Notes from YHW Meeting (Dec 16th, 2020) with Anna Hartley – Director of Public Health (Audio recording)

Communities Briefing:

Covid-19 Update in Wakefield District

Anna Hartley (AH) went through a presentation re the current situation in respect of Covid-19 in Wakefield district, various graphs and facts re deaths and rate of infections. Cases are counted per 100, 000 and graphs showed difference when Lockdown introduced cases fall, but with Tier system cases generally go up. We looked at Age profiles, so 0 to 15 years there were 263 cases on Nov 12th by Dec 3rd there were 106. In the summer months younger people were getting it more

Young People are not the problem, if they get the disease it is in a mild form. Rhetoric from the media not true, it is not backed up by the science. Young People contracting the disease in their communities not in school. Statistics show older people are more ill when they have the disease, in some cases die of it (if have underlying health conditions). Problem with Covid-19 is that the older you are the more dangerous it is. Most of the deaths in the district have been in people over 70 years, so if all ages are mixing, we are then putting older relatives (Grandparents) at risk. Not just Covid-19 but with any virus some people will suffer more than others. e.g., Flu or Measles.

We can also measure which age groups have the most infections. Going into the last Lockdown had a lot of cases, higher than I would like to see. With the 2nd peak, hospitals had improved their treatment of people with Covid-19 and cured many but still seen more deaths.

Tier System

Tiers are calculated by the government on 5 criteria:

- Cases detection rate
- Infections in over 60's (more at risk)
- Cases: rising & falling
- Positive tests (want to see these come down)
- How hospitals are coping (NHS Mid Yorkshire hospitals)

Tier rates are calculated by the government, Public Health does not set them. Tomorrow (December 17th) is the Tier review and probably looks like Wakefield district will not go into Tier 2 (we are in Tier 3 now)

The Vaccine(s)

Started vaccinating people in our area – people all round the world worked on the vaccines for Covid-19. When it is first rolled out it will prioritise those over 80 years and those who are clinically vulnerable, Care Home residents & staff also key NHW front line staff.

Christmas Bubble

- Up to 3 households allowed to meet indoors – means maybe that 24 people in your household will be getting together.
- There is low risk if no vulnerabilities, need to take extra care if people are in Care Occupations.
- Stay on Santa's nice list by keeping each other Safe.

Christmas Bubble (continued)

- Keep hand washing- proven to help a lot, effective way of reducing infections and has reduced other infections, e.g., flu virus.
- Also keep wearing face coverings and make space at least 2mtrs. It is 2mtrs because droplets (of speech spray) stop at 2mtrs (we cannot see them)
- Ventilation is also important, keep windows open even though in the winter it can be difficult.
- If you are meeting outside there is a lower risk
- Advice on the Council and Government Covid-19 websites

Self-isolation is now 10 days not 14 days and there will be testing in schools planned for January 2021.

Thank you for listening and Merry Christmas.

Anna Hartley (AH) finished her presentation and we started on the questions Young People had sent in prior to the meeting.

Question and Answer Session

Q1. A lot of adults have become bored with Covid-19, unless their vulnerable or old and lots of adults do not seem to believe in Covid-19 anymore. What info can you give YP trying to get through this mess, and where can we get sensible info from?

A. (AH) It is hard for people to cope with Covid-19, going about their daily lives. You can learn good life skills by accessing truthful and accurate information from Wakefield Council or Gov.uk websites. There is a lot of misinformation on social media or word of mouth.

Q2. When do you think Covid-19 will go away?

A. (AH) Covid-19 is likely to never go away (like flu), we will get used to it in years to come but we will have the Vaccines then and the population will be vaccinated. Restrictions will still apply but there will be fewer deaths. We do not know what the immunity will be or is. For lots of young people it is a mild illness. It is probable that you will build immunity during the life course particularly if you are exposed when you are young. In 1917 to 1919 the Pandemic known as Spanish Flu (Influenza) killed millions around the world, those who were young when it struck did not get Flu (Influenza) in later life, they built up immunity.

Q3. I have been told I may have Long Covid – how long will it last?

A(AH) There is ongoing work on Long Covid which some people are developing after having Covid-19. It affects lung function - researchers do not know yet how long it will last in individual patients.

Q4. Who makes sure that homeless people stay safe over winter and what happens if they get ill from Covid-19? Surely, they will not be sleeping rough.

A (AH) I am aware of a homeless person who we were able to accommodate in safer facilities. He was in a hotel for homeless people throughout the Pandemic. He caught Covid-19. He was also a smoker so that meant he had to smoke outside and could not isolate in his room. It was not possible to keep him and others safe while he was there, so he was found a flat with support so he could recover and get well. It is important that we care for our homeless population and put healthcare and other services in place. That story proved that finding funds for the homeless can be done.

Q5. What is the Covid-19 Vaccine and is it safe if its new?

A.AH. Yes, very safe, cannot wait to have it but I am too young and healthy so will be well down the list before can have it. Licences given and regulations are very strict with any new vaccine. Vaccines are there to save people's lives, 5 million children globally die of diseases that can be prevented if they were vaccinated e.g., Measles.

Q.6 Can you have the Vaccine if have certain long-term conditions and would you be on the priority list if you were a young person?

A.AH. I will have to check if there is a list regarding underlying conditions re eligibility and in respect of a young person's age.

Q7. Why are some people still not wearing masks?

A.AH. Some people will always 'break the rules' and at this time put others at risk. Some though are exempt, e.g., people with Asthma. In town now there are Street Marshalls for when people might be near each other and shops are asking people to wear masks. We are aware that it is an anxious time for those with long term conditions when they are out and about.

Q.8 Is it true that people with Allergies cannot have the Vaccine? What measures have been put in place?

A.AH. There is a robust system in place for the new Vaccines – if you carry an 'EpiPen' they will not vaccinate you. There are risk assessments in place re allergies. There are 3 Vaccines at the present time being licenced.

Q9. How will people be called to get Vaccinated?

A.AH. This is the biggest Vaccine campaign ever. People will be called by their GP when it is their turn. Top priority will be if you are over 80 years old. Care Home residents and workers, Front Line NHS Staff, People with Underlying conditions Cancers etc. Then in age order e.g., over 75, 70 etc.

Extra Questions (not Covid-19 related)

Q.10) Young Minds are pressuring Government re Mental Health (MH) & Young People due to the Pandemic. There is a financial package that Services can apply for re MH can Wakefield access this?

A.AH. I do not know the answer to this. The NHS fund Mental Health services, we fund Public Health initiatives. I am a great supporter of the VCS (Voluntary sector) and work with Community Anchors e.g., St Georges etc also the work that Yong Lives do and the Future in Mind programme of work (which is about MH and Wellbeing). Why do we have the unhappiest Young People in Europe? There was an interesting piece of work done a few years ago asking YP about their expectations for the future. The top results were concerned with Employment, House prices, and social networks. YP these days are under a huge amount of pressure - my teenage daughter is tested at school 5 or 6 times a day, when I was at school we were tested once a year and was not a big deal. Safeen has contacts with Mental Health Services and sure they would love to come & talk to you all.

Safeen. -YHW can write to them and invite them to a Forum meeting.

Q.11 Do we know what the Health job market will be like in the future?

A.AH. From what we are seeing, Care Services, Nursing, Midwifery in all these areas they are desperate for people to train. Other jobs on the rise Digital, IT and Media but these areas are out of my expertise. What we do need to do is mentor YP to reach their potential and enable them to have aspiration, and practical support through work experience.

End of questioning session.

AH said they were very challenging and good questions and thanked the group for the invitation.
AH left the meeting.

Forum meeting continued. Safeen asked the group if they thought the session went well.

They agreed it had & thought what Anna told them as Director of Public Health was from the right source because there is a lot of misinformation out there, e.g., on social media.

Kate Honeyman

On Behalf of

Safeen Rehman/ Kate Honeyman

Young Healthwatch Coordinators

Young Healthwatch Wakefield

January 5th, 2021