

## Young Healthwatch Forum Meeting with Director of Public Health – Anna Hartley December 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 (draft notes)

Present:

Ann Hartley- Director of Public Health for Wakefield District

Sarah Akers - Senior Lead for NHS Covid Vaccination Programme

Safeen Rehman/ Kate Honeyman and 5 volunteers –Young Healthwatch Wakefield

Emily Castle - Young Lives Consortium CEO

Sugrah Ashraf/Danielle Wallace - Wakefield Youth Service + 1 Build our Futures (BOF) volunteer & 2 Youth Council volunteers.

Emma Coyle &1 volunteer –St Georges Youth Project

### **Introduction**

Anna started her presentation by saying she would talk about the most recent data and then talk a bit about Omicron the new variant. Any questions on the new variant and the vaccine programme, can be answered by Sarah Akers when hand over for her to give her talk to you.

### **Slide Presentation**

Anna showed some slides to show where the show where we are in terms of case rates, shows no real reduction in case rates, numbers steady at present. For every 100 tests, the percentage that comes back positive is 12% - would like this to be lower at 5%. There is a lot of Covid infection circulating in Wakefield district.

The slides show age ranges, give a quick picture of what is happening e.g., 80+ line shows 18 per 100,000, in November this was 124 per 100,000. This is a great reduction - the Booster programmes correlates with the drop-in numbers. Sarah & her Vaccination team have done a great job. In the 60+ age group there is also a corresponding drop in numbers testing positive for Covid. Younger age groups not seeing that drop in infections because they have been called for Booster jab yet. It is good proof that the vaccine works and is effective.

There was a huge jump in 11 to16 year olds, getting infected when schools went back in September. Since October, and the vaccine has been available the rates have come down, at one-point 1in 50 people had Covid before the vaccination programme was introduced.

### **Hospital Admissions affected by Covid – how?**

If there are lots of people with Covid, it means a knock-on effect re how many beds are available in hospital and the whole health care system. However, death rates have gone down due to the Vaccination Programme – there is a correlation. This, time last year case rates were the same (a bit lower) but high hospitalisation of those who were not vaccinated. Death rates now are around 5 deaths a week which is a steadier rate. Any death is not acceptable, but the rates are proving vaccinations are slowing the impact of Covid-19.

### **Omicron Variant**

There were some questions about Omicron sent in, so will talk about that now. Expect viruses to mutate (but have milder effect). The concern is it is a highly infectious variant. In South Africa where it was first identified, they have lots of concerns- mainly because it was not a country that had a robust Vaccination Programme. We know need to understand how it will affect our population, and what the impact will be on the population. Hopefully the Christmas break will be ok, but they are still monitoring the effects of it. The vaccine that we have was formulated to be closer to the Omicron variant rather than the Delta variant.

The Booster is working very well. Any vaccination is good, it raises your immunity. The good news is the vaccine may work better with this variant (Omicron). Any vaccine is a good thing to have, to build up your immune system, don't listen to the myths that are circulating on social media.

### **Should we have restrictive measures to counteract Omicron?**

The reality is Lockdowns cause damage to the economy. The biggest risk is in households – no mask wearing etc. So, to put in new restrictive rules could be damaging without knowing the impact of Omicron at the present time.

### **How Long will Covid Last?**

We don't know because it is a new virus and learning as we go, unlike TB or Cancer which have had researcher's working on them for years and know the disease inside out. There is lots of research on Long Covid will send this to YHW.

### **How do you recover from Covid?**

Anna's children got Covid at school and she caught it from them. She said had been very careful and followed restrictions and rules but because in same household all the family got it. I was double jabbed, I am healthy and not in old age bracket, yet I was badly affected by Covid-19. In terms of recovering from I, the disease will have a range of impacts. People respond differently to diseases, e.g., chicken pox is (can be very ill or have mild illness). However, with the Covid 19 virus we have no immunity to it because its new and lots of

people are getting it at the same time. What we do know is the younger you are, probably will not get too sick like an older/frail person.

A small thing that affects a lot of people makes for a BIG THING. We have immunity from flu because have been exposed to it over our lifetime. Even if people get mild Covid, over a lot of people it will still have a big impact. Lab results are being looked at this week re Omicron.

There is info on WF I Can re self-care after Covid and it is being updated. Key advice is lots of rest, plenty of sleep, short walks in fresh air etc.

### **Vaccination Programme- Sarah Akers**

Anna Hartley asked Sarah Akers to give her presentation re the Vaccination Programme. Sarah showed us a map of the sites where the Vaccine programme is being delivered, e.g., Spectrum Health on Navigation Walk, St. Swithuns Community Centre, Eastmoor, both in Wakefield. Castleford Civic Centre, Nine Community Pharmacies e.g., in Ossett, Horbury, Knottingley, Featherstone etc. Also, can get the Jab in Boots and Morrison Pharmacies. Good coverage across Wakefield District.

Sarah told us how Wakefield was fairing re vaccinating people:

- 93% of over 50year olds have had their 1<sup>st</sup> dose
- 74% 18- 49year olds ditto
- 63% 16 - 17year olds ditto
- 46% 12 – 15year olds ditto

Booster dose (due 6 months after last jab\*)

- 118,000 vaccinations up to now
- 75% of those who are due a jab

Since last year (2020), 7000,000 ‘needles in arms’. The army are now helping us with the vaccination programme, because of the high volume of people wanting it.

\*Time gap for Booster shortened now to 3 months - this starts next week \*

### **What vaccine is offered to 12-17year olds?**

- We are using Pfzier vaccine, 2 doses 12 weeks apart

### **Special Cases:**

- Offering the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose vaccines to anyone YP @ high risk or living with someone with condition affecting the Immune System
- YP Studying/working/volunteering in Health & Social Care sector

Started vaccinated 16 to 17 year olds first, guidance now confirmed. Then can roll out to 12 to 15 year olds in schools. There is a gap between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> jab of 12 weeks because a small risk was identified in this age group. We have been offering the vaccine to high-risk groups. Not offering the Booster yet to this age group, some have only just had their 1<sup>st</sup> jab and will be eligible for 2<sup>nd</sup> in 12 weeks. Need to see how their immune systems react over time. May not need Booster.

**What groups will people with special Needs/Disabilities come under?**

- The list of conditions is a very long list, e.g., diabetes, asthma.
- Your GP can identify if you are in an at-risk group.
- There are arrangements for those who can't have the vaccine – they can get an exemption

There is lots of misinformation on social media about the vaccines. Need to ask qualified medical professionals and listen to the scientist about the facts. We are not making vaccination mandatory, only if you work in health and social care settings.

**End of Presentations and Thank you.**

Thank you both Anna Hartley and Sarah Akers for their knowledgeable and interesting presentations and for answering the questions sent in prior to the meeting and those asked today. Thank you also to all of you for attending.

These notes will be put on the WF I Can website for Children and Young People to access.

Kate Honeyman/Safeen Rehman (Young Healthwatch Coordinators)

Young Healthwatch Wakefield &

Young Lives Consortium

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