



GWENT TEST, TRACE & PROTECT UPDATE REPORT

7th December 2021

Author: Ruth Betty, Head of Gwent Contact Tracing Service

Contributions from:

- Eryl Powell, Public Health Consultant – SRO Regional Cell Delivery Programme
- Tracey Deacon, Public Health - Principal Public Health Specialist
- Holly Townsend – Project Manager
- Rachel Jowitt - Chief Officer, Neighbourhood Services, Planning & Public Protection

Purpose

1. To update the GTTPS Regional Board (GPSB) on the development and performance of the Gwent Test, Trace Protect Service (herein referred to as the Service).
2. To ask that the Regional Board note and approve the contents of the report.

Key Messages

- Funding has been approved for the first quarter of 2022/23 to support the current planned level of workforce to the end of June 2022.
- The Service is operating within its financial envelope.
- The Service continues to deliver high quality activity to protect public health.
- Alignment with wider Public Protection and Police services has proven critical to manage the wider Covid response i.e. the “protect” element and the Incident Management Team structures provide an effective framework.
- Planning has started to explore options for the future to secure a sustainable public health protection system for Gwent.

Background

Gwent Public Service Board is the Regional Board for the Service responsible for:

- Ensuring the Service is delivering against its stated purpose, aims, objectives and principles
- Representing the interests of their respective organisations
- Agreeing the financial framework
- Ensuring effective, governance, leadership and management of the Service
- Ensuring the effective planning and delivery of the Service
- Scrutinising the performance of the Service
- Ensuring the Service is operating in alignment and complimenting wider Covid-19 strategies
- Promoting the interests of the Service to national partners

This report provides an update on the Service to date.

Key areas focussed on in this report are:

- Contact Tracing Performance
- Workforce
- Coordination Unit update
- Regional Oversight Group (ROG) update
- Regional Cell Delivery Programme update
- Risks

Contact Tracing Performance

It is important to assess the performance of the Service, in terms of whether contact tracing is completed promptly, as the greatest public health benefit is realised when Contacts of Index Cases are isolated quickly to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 in our communities.

It is important to remember that successful contact with Index Cases and Contacts is not solely down to the efforts of the Service: members of the public who refuse to answer their phones etc. will reduce performance outcomes.

Index Cases enter the CRM as results are released across a 24-hour window, this means that cases are populated overnight after the Service closes at 20:00 hours. The impact on the overnight feed can result in cases being in the queue up to 12 hours into the target response time when the Service reopens at 08:00 hours. This makes achievement of the 24-hour target much more difficult, especially on the 'end-to-end' measure.

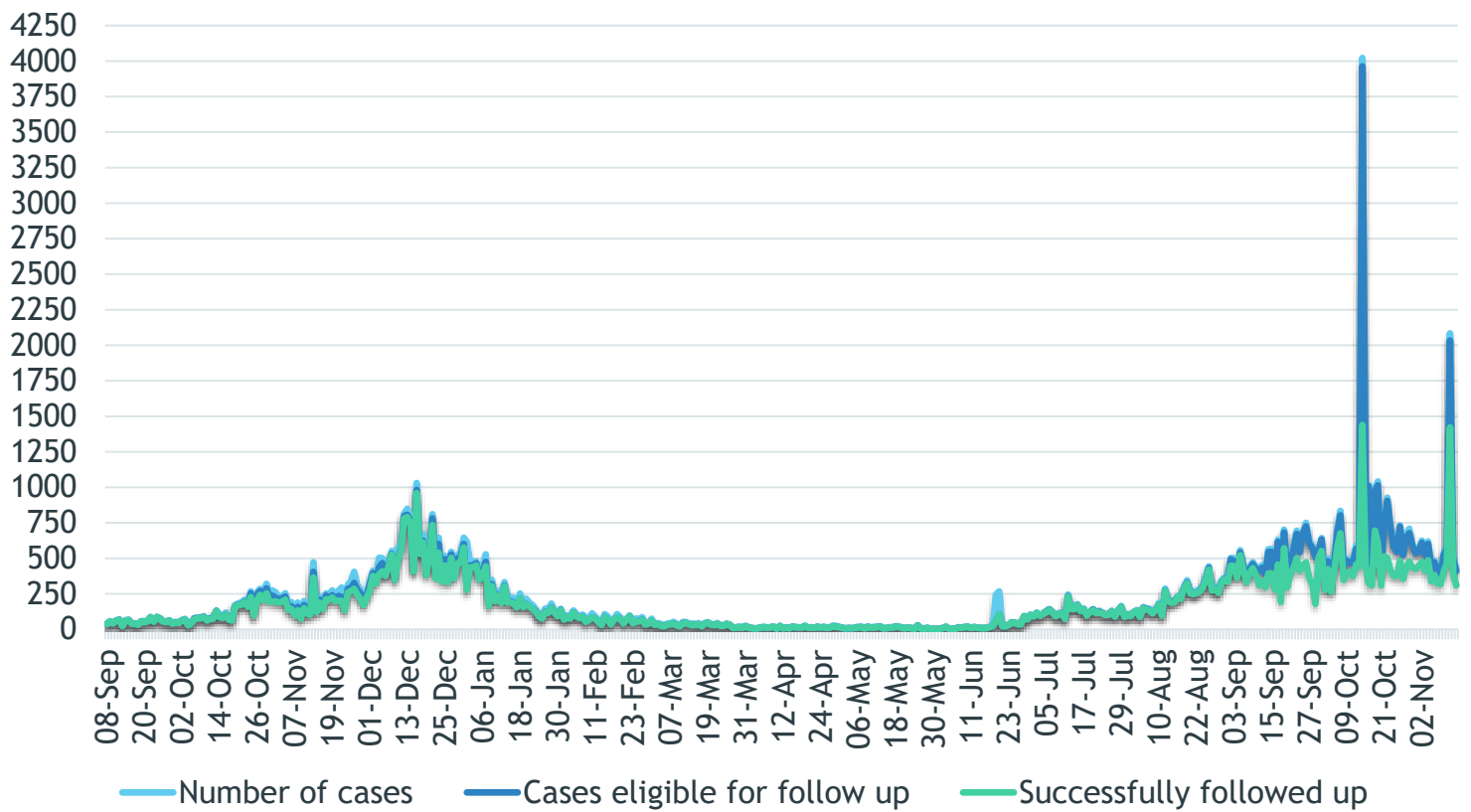
The Staff Wellbeing Cell within ABUHB also completes Contact Tracing and because the CRM is based around the Index Case's/Contact's residential postcode, the performance outlined also incorporates the work of this team.

Demand on the Service

Since moving to alert level zero from the 7th August 2021 the Service have managed a significant increase in demand. The impact of this level of demand has affected the regions previously good performance record across the key performance indicators.

The graph below illustrates the demand managed by the Service between the 8th September 2020 and the 13th November 2021.

Gwent Index Case Demand



Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators monitored by the service are set nationally by Welsh Government and performance is reported from the national Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database.

Results

Positive Cases of Covid-19

- % successfully contact traced
- % of eligible Index Cases successfully traced within 24 hours (of the Index Case entering the CRM) – WG target 80%

Contacts of Positive Cases

- % successfully contacted
- % eligible Contacts successfully contacted within 24 hours (of the Contact being created in the CRM by the Contact Tracing process) – WG target 80%
- ‘End to end’ performance measure. The % of Contacts successfully followed up within 24 hours of the Index Case entering the CRM – local target agreed by ROG 70%

Positive Case of Covid 19 - Performance

The Service is starting to see a levelling off in case numbers, which has enabled an improvement in performance as illustrated in the table below

Reporting period 14th to the 20th November 2021:

Index Cases				
Local Authority Tracing team	Number of Eligible Cases	Number of Cases Successfully Followed Up	Percentage Successfully Followed Up Target 80%	Percentage Successfully Followed Up within 24 hours Target 80%
Blaenau Gwent	305	261	86%	72%
Caerphilly	942	741	79%	60%
Monmouthshire	576	533	93%	87%
Newport	751	635	85%	77%
Torfaen	531	443	83%	74%
Region Total	3105	2613	84.2%	84.2%

Reporting period 8th August to the 13th November 2021:

Index Cases				
Local Authority Tracing team	Number of Eligible Cases	Number of Cases Successfully Followed Up	Percentage Successfully Followed Up Target 80%	Percentage Successfully Followed Up within 24 hours Target 80%
Region Total	47997	38942	81.0%	40.0%

For the period of the 8th August to the 13th November 2021 the Service managed to achieve the target for the percentage of cases successfully followed up.

There is a reduction in the percentage of cases followed up in 24 hours due to level of demand on the service.

Contacts of Positive Case of Covid 19 - Performance

The improvement in performance has also been evidence in recent weeks for Contacts of a positive case, illustrated in the table below

Reporting period of 14th to the 20st November 2021:

Contacts					
Local Authority Tracing team	Number of Eligible Cases	Number of Cases Successfully Followed Up	Percentage Successfully Followed Up Target 80%	Percentage Successfully Followed Up within 24 hours Target 80%	End to End Performance Target 70%
Blaenau Gwent	589	532	90%	88%	81%
Caerphilly	1392	1181	85%	80%	74%
Monmouthshire	987	879	89%	87%	87%
Newport	1349	1129	84%	82%	78%
Torfaen	699	680	97%	95%	91%
Region Total	5016	4401	87.7%	87.7%	81%

Reporting period 8th August to the 13th November 2021:

Contacts					
Local Authority Tracing team	Number of Eligible Cases	Number of Cases Successfully Followed Up	Percentage Successfully Followed Up Target 80%	Percentage Successfully Followed Up within 24 hours Target 80%	End to End Performance Target 70%
Regional Total	73070	64107	88%	78%	31%

For the period of the 8th August to the 13th November 2021 the Service managed to achieve the target for the percentage of Contacts successfully followed up.

There is a reduction in the end-to-end performance as a direct impact of only 40% of positive cases being followed up in 24 hours.

Workforce

The contact tracing workforce plan has increased within the period to reflect the demand on the service by using slippage in the actual spend year to date to fund additional posts.

Role	Original Plan WTE	Revised Plan WTE	Actual WTE	Ongoing Recruitment Target
Contact Tracer	150.9	162.9	154.1	8.8
Contact Advisor	150.7	155.7	126.1	29.6

The Service continues to operate within the funding provided. Underspends are well managed within the regional governance framework. Welsh Government have extended funding for the first quarter of 2022/23 which has enabled extensions of contracts across the Service to the end June 2022.

Recruitment

Each team have live recruitment campaigns which remain ongoing to reach the agreed revised planned whole time equivalent (WTE). There is still some turnover within the teams as staff secure permanent posts.

The challenges are:

- The current market has plenty of choice of permanent employment opportunities.
- The number of applications received is a lot lower than previous campaigns.
- The calibre of applicants reaching interview stage is not as high as we have previously experienced in a competitive market.

The team

Teams have managed the pressure of high case numbers along side several changes to guidance and processes within the period. It has been a difficult period to rapidly adapt to the changes required to implement a targeted contact tracing service. Motivation has at times been difficult to maintain. With leadership, support and the news of contracts being extended to the end of June 2022 morale is improving.

Coordination Unit Update

The coordination team have focused on the following initiatives within the period.

Workforce

Recruitment of three vacancies is ongoing.

Capacity Building

Working with National Resource Wales colleagues to explore if the Service could utilise NRW employs to increase capacity in preparation for the Winter period.

Eform Pilot

Working with WG, in scoping, process mapping and piloting if the current Eform could support contact tracing to support the winter operating plan.

Three Gwent teams piloted the approach, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire. All pilots provided positive and constructive feedback.

Since the pilot the team have been working with WG on drafting National guidance on the use of the eform to manage short term pressures and to inform system development in the future.

Implementation of Schools Framework

The team have coordinated a Gwent response and implementation plan for the introduction of the Schools framework. A large amount of time has been dedicated to this project to support the CT teams.

Implementation of Self Isolating for Exempt Household Contacts

Coordination of revised scripts and operating process in a rapid deployment to accommodate changes to self-isolation requirements for exempt household contacts. This work included the sharing and adoption of coms with WG to improve public information of changes.

Ethnic Minority Engagement

Further development of the faith leader network, and extended employer database to 41 employers.

Support and attendance in community meetings to discuss TTP considerations.

Gwent Operating Christmas Pack

Creation of the Service operational hours for the Festive period along with the standard operating approach to be applied.

National Telephony Replacement Working Group

Representing the Gwent Service at the working group that are scoping the replacement of the current telephony provider, as a result of the contract ending in May 2022.

Winters Pressures Task and Finish Group

Representing the Gwent Service on three task and finish groups to support WG colleagues in the development of the Winter pressures delivery framework.

Interim National prioritisation framework

The Service were managing increases in demand by operating a targeted CT approach that focussed on reaching the high-risk cases as soon as possible. The work was shared with WG colleagues and the basis of the Gwent framework has gone on and been development to be adopted as the Interim National prioritisation framework.

Regional Oversight Group (ROG)

Key decisions taken at ROG include:

- a) Roll out of the Service Prioritisation Framework
Welsh Government used best practice shared by the service to issue National Interim Guidance to Prioritisation.
- b) E-form pilot
An e-form pilot was established to explore the efficacy of digital solutions to support contact tracing in the future. Agreement that Gwent should be part of the pilot, subject to individual local authorities deciding whether to take part. Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire agreed to participate.
- c) Christmas period working arrangements
Arrangements have been agreed. No service will be provided on Christmas Day as it was agreed that engagement from the public would be poor.

Regional Cell Delivery Programme (RCDP)

Workforce

Recruitment into vacancies is ongoing. Clinical Lead vacancies have been filled, with two new Clinical Leads commencing their induction at the beginning of November.

Two new advisors have been offered posts to fill vacancies in the Data Cell.

GTPS evaluation

An evaluation project has commenced to understand the development of the Service and continued adaptations to the pandemic in Gwent. The focus is on exploring collaboration, leadership, coordination and the structures, governance and formal/informal communication associated with Service. The evaluation aims to contribute to the evidence base on population scale contact tracing services.

The data collection has commenced and the response to the survey, interviews and focus groups undertaken has been positive. The analysis should be completed by the end of January 2022.

Future development of contact tracing and health protection in Gwent

Discussions are underway between the Service representatives from the Health Board and Gwent Local Authorities to explore what contact tracing and health protection requirements will be required after June 2022. Consideration is being given to :

- securing a sustainable public health protection system through retaining and then professionally developing knowledge, skills and experience acquired through the Covid-19 pandemic.
- retaining a scalable pandemic response for future incidents.
- strengthening the core functions of IMTs.
- supporting communities through providing high quality and long term 'pathways to employment'.

Keep Wales Safe – COVID-19 Behaviours Programme

Excellent progress is being made towards developing a co-produced peer influence intervention in 16-18 year olds to encourage PCR testing and isolation where appropriate. A survey was developed, piloted and launched to gather baseline data and insight from learners in Coleg Gwent, receiving approximately 600 responses. Focus groups to develop the intervention are planned to commence 7th December. Grant funding of £5k was secured to commission Frame to facilitate the work with the young people.

Inpatient tracing change

To support and enable extra capacity within the local contact tracing teams, ABUHB's Staff Wellbeing Cell have taken over the tracing of inpatients, with the support of the Clinical Leads. Between 19th October – 7th November a total of 157 inpatients were contact traced.

Revised guidance was developed to support the change; the process has now embedded, and the initial issues overcome. Other challenges included issues in being able to contact hospital wards and with inpatients' next of kin. Clinical Leads have helped to improve contact details for wards, resulting in more timely contact tracing.

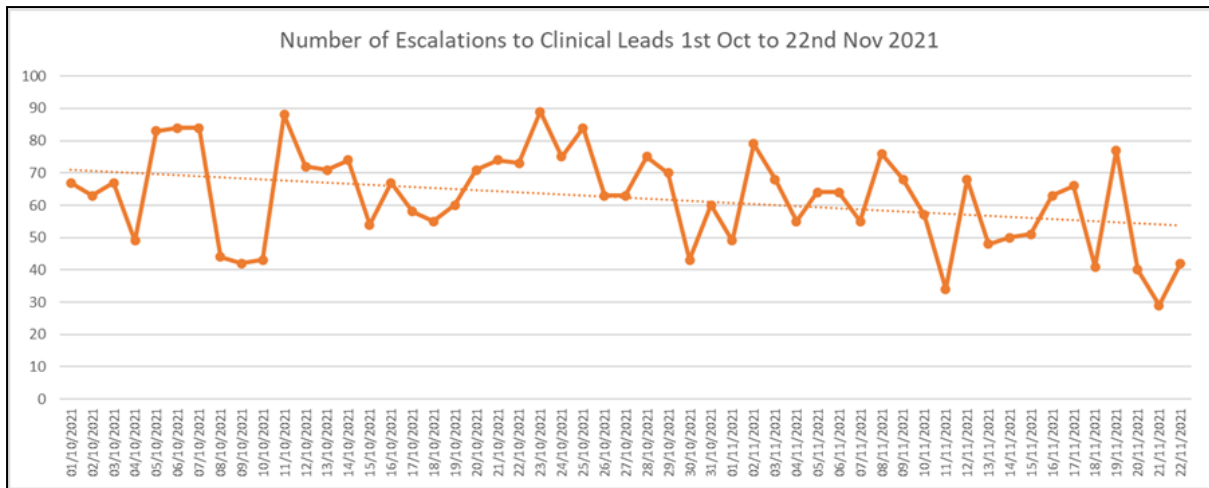
Care home guidance and SOP changes

The recent release of revised guidance on the management of Covid-19 in care settings has made several changes, including changing the definition of an outbreak, and removing the requirement for whole Home testing as part of outbreak management. As of 25/11/2021 there were 8 care homes in Gwent with a confirmed outbreak.

The Enclosed Settings Cell is working as part of a Gwent-wide working group to develop a sustainable approach going forward based on the guidance. A number of points of duplication in work have been identified and are being reviewed. One of the outputs will be a system of capacity and confidence building by the care home sector to enable them to fulfil their new responsibilities.

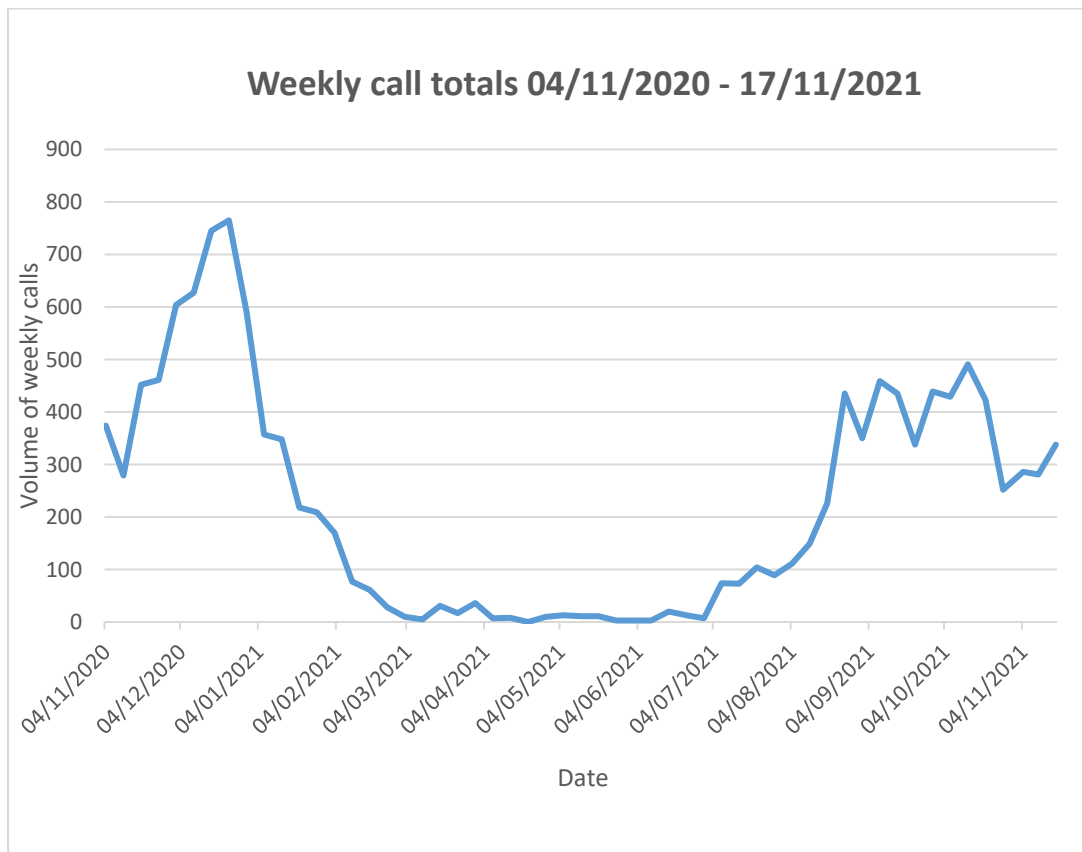
Clinical Leads

Between 1st October and 22nd November there were 3,308 escalations to Clinical Leads. The vast majority being resolved within 2 hours. Although the chart below indicates a slight downward trend in escalations, complexity has increased, particularly due to the increase in the number of inpatient cases.



Staff Wellbeing Cell

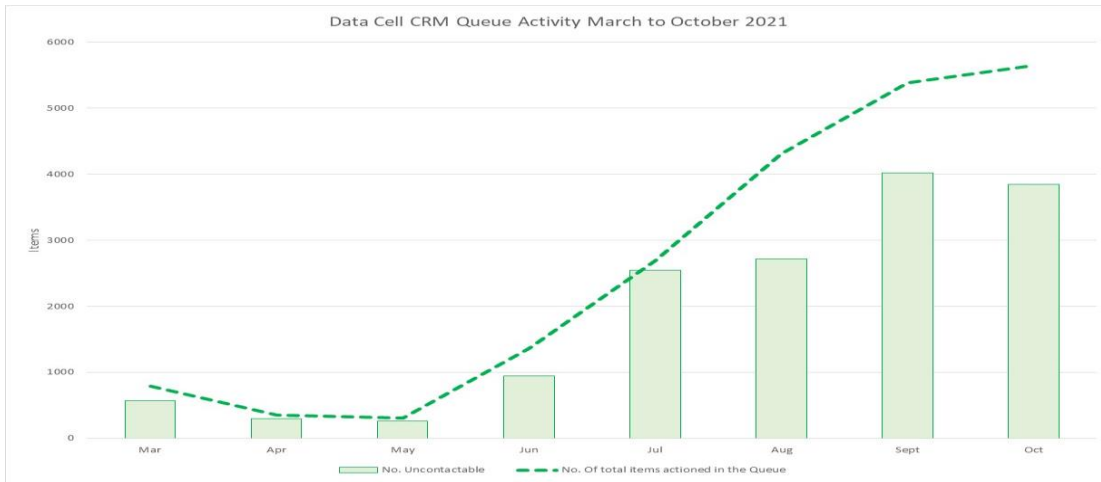
The number of positive and possible positive cases in the ABUHB workforce have decreased overall since the last PSB meeting, but activity remains higher than that seen in the spring and summer of this year.



Data and Surveillance Cell

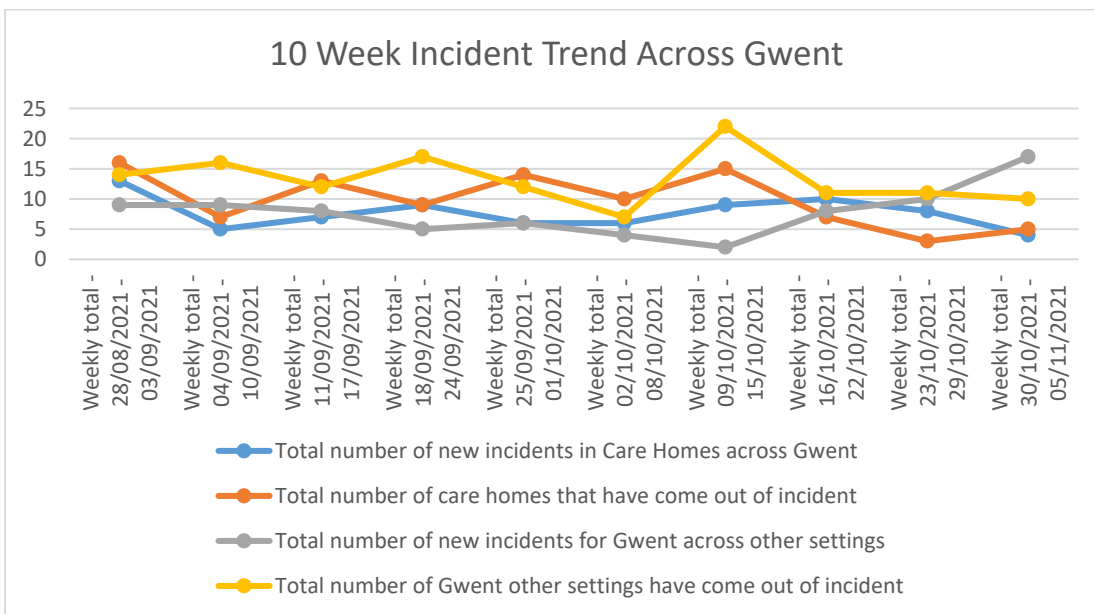
Daily reporting continues, including providing trends on the rolling 7-day case incidence, testing positivity and incidence numbers. In addition, surveillance reports for each local authority area are produced weekly for Incident Management Team members. Work in development includes producing a Gwent Surveillance report.

The Data Cell provides support to the Gwent TTPS by monitoring the regional CRM queue and checking 'uncontactable' cases on clinical systems to verify or obtain additional details where possible; nearly 4,000 uncontactable cases were dealt with in October.



Enclosed Settings Cell

Activity includes reviewing cases and incidents through multi-disciplinary team meetings where the decisions on risk, sampling and infection prevention and control are made. The chart shows the trend in care home incidents for the last ten weeks. The new guidance mentioned in section 2.6 above affects the definition and thus the categorisation and number of incidents going forward.



Support has also been given to the booster vaccine rollout across care homes, including provision of a FAQ sheet to the care sector to increase the uptake of the booster and flu jabs. Currently, 73% of care home staff have received their booster jab. 16% have received their flu jab.

Guidance for health and social care staff, initially produced on 14th October and revised 5th November, provides additional safeguards and protection for people who may be more vulnerable to Covid-19. It outlines a process of risk assessment and mitigation for patient/

service user facing staff working in specific settings. This advice has been circulated and discussed at MDTs and advice given to care home managers where required.

Risk

New or updated risks and mitigations identified since the last update report:

Risk ID	Risk Description	Consequence	Mitigations
65	Solgari & CRM Technical faults/Issues	Issues affecting Solgari (telephony system) & CRM are increasing in complexity therefore taking longer to resolve. Increasing workloads, Downtime increasing in duration	Escalating to Service management board hosted by DHCW colleagues with WG in attendance
67	SGSS Results (Second Generation Surveillance System) mainly Arriving travellers and those who opted for private lab tests.	1, Due to technical issues, the results were significantly delayed in entering CRM to be contact traced - leading to community spread of Covid-19. 2, a considerable number of IC had completed their isolation before the result had entered the CRM. 3, Given nature of private lab tests and their prescription for in the main Arriving travellers - there is a significant risk of variants/mutation of the virus in the community	DHCW have implemented several system changes to ensure results are flowing into CRM and downstream systems in a timely manner. We are confident in fix implement; however, the CU will continue to monitor the situation
47	New VOC/VUIs with higher transmissibility than wild type virus 2, of potential concern by PHW	1. As more countries are moved from Red list to amber/green the possibility for VOC/VOIs are increased. 2. More severe clinical picture or higher infection fatality than from wild type SARS-CoV-2 infections 3. Additional VOC's/VUI's as virus continues to mutate	1. Minimum workforce numbers have been agreed to prevent the Contact Tracing workforce from shrinking too far. 2. Local modelling undertaken to understand the scale of the workforce required for the current situation and the situation is being closely monitored, while awaiting revised modelling.

62	Vaccine efficacy overtime	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Depleting or eroding Anti-bodies over 6-month period 2. Members of the public do not come forward for testing because double jabbed status. 3. Self-isolation fugitive 	Targeted national public information campaigns.
67	Contact tracer/Advisor wellbeing	As a service, we are experiencing exponential growth of cases increased pressure on TTP staff leading to increased sickness levels and issues arising from stress related issues.	Embedding of wellbeing services into TTP working days, other inactivates (Coffee morning, learn and lunch etc..)
63	Testing Facilities unable to cope with demand	Modelling currently demonstrates IP5 labs are at risk of exceeding capacity by November. Delaying results could lead to higher nosocomial rates in hospital settings.	Situation escalated to WG via SBAR
63.1	Private Labs testing	A large cohort (20k+) have received false negative results across Gwent therefore not isolating during infectious period leading to further community transmission.	Investigation being conducted by UKHSA.

64	National Interim Prioritization framework - in practice means not all infections are likely to be investigated	Due to pressures faced by TTP service and introduction of Prioritization framework means not all infections are investigated to step further community spread.	This is pan wales approach - the risk is accepted by WG & PHW and will be reviewed as part of winter pressures guidance.
66	Change in SMS Provider	From solgari to Gov.notify. Concern is that texts that are not auto translating will lead to further isolation of Non-English-speaking cohorts.	Use of Symbols to indicate different language options - Languages written in English rather than in native script.

Gwent Leadership Decision Log

The following decisions have been agreed since the last update report. The Gwent Public Service Board are asked to note these for formal approval:

Meeting date	Decision
20 th September 2021 (Virtual agreement)	To increase Tracer minimum WTE by 3.0 using funding slippage to support the new school’s framework.
23 rd September 2021	To increase workforce minimum WTE using the funding slippage as follows: Business support 1.4 WTE Tracers 7.0 WTE Advisors 5.0
21 st October 2021	To extension TTP contracts until June 2022 for existing and new staff.
18 th November 2021	To work with Natural Resource Wales to explore options for a shared resource to increase TTP capacity for the Winter period.

Conclusion

The service has managed significant changes in the period alongside high numbers of positive cases.

The workforce across the partnerships, has gone above and beyond, demonstrating flexibility, resilience, and commitment in challenging times to provide the service to the Gwent population.

The challenges on the immediate horizon are ensuring that the Service meets the demands of the Winter pressures through focused contact tracing, the development of the workforce as professionals return to their substantive roles and the recruitment and retention of employees.

The longer-term strategy is still awaited to give greater clarity on the nature of the service required for the future, which will assist with an exit strategy for the t Service in its current guise.

Recommendation

Gwent Public Service Board:

Notes and agrees the actions taken by the service detailed within the report.

Notes and comments on the service as appropriate.