

Slough Borough Council

Report To: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 17/09/2024

Subject: East Berkshire Health Protection Board
Information Update

Chief Officer: Tessa Lindfield, Executive Director of Public
Health and Public Protection

Contact Officer: Dr Jonas Thompson-McCormick, Interim
Director of Public Health RBWM & Chair of the
East Berkshire Health Protection Board
Emily Macdonald, Interim Slough Health
Protection Officer

Ward(s): ALL

Exempt: NO

Appendices: [None]

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report provides an overview of key health protection issues presenting a risk to or affecting the local community.

Recommendations:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended:

- a) To note the report for information.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Health & Wellbeing Board of the work of the Berkshire East Health Protection Forum and to highlight local health protection risks.

2.2 The report will outline:

- The key health protection risks/issues, people at risk, public health mitigations.
- The current situation and challenges.
- Proposed actions and recommendations.

Background

2.3 *Health protection* is a term used to encompass a set of activities within public health. It is defined as protecting individual, groups and populations from single cases of infectious disease, incidents and outbreaks and non-infectious environmental hazards such as chemicals and radiation¹.

2.4 Directors of Public Health (DsPH) and Local Authorities (LAs) have statutory responsibilities to maintain an oversight function, ensuring plans are in place to mitigate health protection risks for their population and to support the health protection response work of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA); this is set out in the Health and Social Care Act (2012).

2.3 The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) classifies LAs as Category 1 responders with statutory responsibilities for actively planning for and leading the response to health protection incidents and emergencies. Category 1 Responders are also responsible for warning, informing, and advising the public.

2.4 The Berkshire East Health Protection Forum is a mechanism set up to provide Directors of Public Health with assurance that the populations health is protected from threats and hazards. Stakeholders such as NHS Frimley, UKHSA Health Protection, and NHS England attend to give updates to the group.

2.5 The Health Protection Forum has a reporting relationship with Health & Wellbeing Boards to ensure members are sighted on issues, risks and actions.

2.5 Administration of the meeting is rotated annually by local authority. At present it is chaired by the RBWM DPH, Jonas Thompson-McCormick.

Overview of Key Health Protection Issues for East Berkshire

2.6 Vaccine Preventable Disease

2.6.1 Measles

2.6.1.1 Issue: national [increase in measles; in Slough, 84.6% of 5-year olds have received two doses of MMR](#). The World Health Organisation advocates ensuring 95% of people have had two doses of MMR in order to avoid measles spreading in communities.

2.6.1.2 Impact on Health: potential for outbreaks, hospitalisation especially in children under 5, long term health complications, avoidable death

2.6.1.3 Populations at risk: anyone who has not had two doses of MMR vaccine and others who are immunocompromised

2.6.1.4 Mitigations:

2.6.1.4.1 Regional commissioners working to identify local GP practices with unimmunised patients and commissioning additional services to invite and immunise people in the community.

2.6.1.4.2 UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and NHS England childhood immunisation campaign, "If we're not vaccinated we're not protected." Targeting parents with children before they go back to school.

2.7 Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

¹ Royal College of Nursing

- 2.7.1 **Issue:** national increase in pertussis, 9 infant deaths in the UK between Jan – July 2024².
- 2.7.2 **Populations at risk:** children under 5, especially infants, are at high risk of poor health outcomes or death if infected
- 2.7.3 **Mitigations:** communications to encourage timely vaccination in pregnancy which is key to passively protecting babies before they can be directly protected by the infant vaccine programme

2.8 Infectious Disease

2.8.1 Shiga toxin producing E. coli (STEC)

- 2.8.1.1 **Issue:** An outbreak of STEC, a type of E. Coli infection, was confirmed across England and Scotland in May and June. Nearly 250 people were confirmed cases. The outbreak was de-escalated on 28th June 2024 by UKHSA³.
- 2.8.1.2 **Population at risk:** Exposures most significantly associated with becoming infected included: eating pre-packaged sandwiches, iceberg lettuce, and eating out.
- 2.8.1.3 **Mitigations:** A briefing note was sent out to the health sector on 01 June 2024 to ensure healthcare professionals are aware of the current increase in cases, the national level investigation into the cluster and the guidance and recommendations for action.

2.9 Health Emergency Plans

2.9.1 Plans for Responding to Emergencies Affecting Health

- 2.9.1.1 **Issue:** some local authority & system plans require updating. Capacity to respond to emergencies is currently stretched.
- 2.9.1.2 **Mitigations:** heat health plans and responses have been reviewed, updating pandemic plans has been added to the teams' work plan. All employees of Slough Borough Council have been invited to apply to be Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) to strengthen the workforce of the emergency response team.

2.10 Other Risks and Future Considerations

2.10.1 Health Inequalities

The group discussed certain groups in the community who may be not be up to date with the UK Immunisation Schedule. This work is discussed in more detail in the Immunisation Network Group.

2.10.2 Vector-borne Disease

- 2.10.2.1 Changing climate patterns have led to a change in the prevalence of certain types of [mosquitoes](#) that can harbour infections which can affect humans. UKHSA put on a training session in August to raise awareness with and ask for support from local authorities.

2.10.3 Mpox

- 2.10.3.1 The group will keep a watching brief on the epidemiology of mpox following a World Health Organization (WHO) announcement of a new

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pertussis-epidemiology-in-england-2024>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shiga-toxin-producing-e-coli-outbreak-o145-may-to-june-2024/investigation-into-an-outbreak-of-shiga-toxin-producing-e-coli-stec-o145-in-great-britain-may-to-june-2024>

mpox virus strain (clade 1) which is circulating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

- 2.10.3.2** There is a potential for the virus to spread further across countries in Africa and outside the continent however, the risk to the UK population from mpox clade 1 is currently considered low. UKHSA & the NHS are preparing for any cases that we might see in the UK.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 *Financial implications*

3.1.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.2 *Legal implications*

3.2.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.3 *Risk management implications*

3.3.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.6 *Procurement implications*

3.6.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.7 *Workforce implications*

3.7.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

3.8 *Property implications*

3.8.1 This is not applicable, as this report is just for information.

4. Background Papers

None