



**ST HELENS**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# CABINET

23 September 2020

Report Title:	<b>Test and Trace Model for St Helens Borough Council including the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub</b>
Cabinet Portfolio	Cabinet Member - Public Health, Leisure & Libraries
Cabinet Member	Councillor Anthony Burns
Exempt Report?	No
Reason for Exemption	Open
Key Decision	No
Public Notice Issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All Wards
Report of	Executive Director - People's Services
	Professor Sarah O'Brien
	SarahO'Brien@sthelens.gov.uk
	01744 676309
Contact Officer	Sue Forster
	Director of Public Health

	susanforster@sthelens.gov.uk	
	Tel: 01744 673232	
<b>Borough priorities</b> Please mark <b>X</b> for any priority supported by this report  <b>NB</b> Use Section 4 - Background Information to explain how each selected priority is supported	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence and care across our communities	x
	Create safe and strong communities for our residents	x
	Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy	x
	Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of	
	Be a modern, efficient and effective Council	

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to describe the model for outbreak management for St Helens Borough Council, which includes the arrangements within the council and the development of a Cheshire and Mersey Hub. This report pulls together all the decisions that have been made so far, into one document to ensure transparency of the overarching model. Decisions have been made at speed to ensure that St Helens had a team in place to manage outbreaks locally.

## 2. Recommendations for Decision

**Cabinet is recommended to:**

- i) **To note the decisions already made**
- ii) **To approve the overall model of delivery**

## 3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 On the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 Directors of Public Health received a national briefing and presentation from Tom Riordan the Chief Executive of Leeds City Council who had been seconded to support government and the Department of Health and Social Care on Test, Trace, Contain and Empower arrangements.
- 3.2 Within the presentation Local Authorities were given clear guidance that their future role in managing the spread of COVID-19 would be to manage local outbreaks. Local government was considered best placed to understand the implications for their communities and be able to work alongside partners and residents to manage the spread of COVID-19.

3.3 Local Authorities were also given additional funding to support the setting up of local systems to support outbreak management. Through the public health grant conditions St Helens Borough Council has received an additional £1,328,091. This money is to support the council to have a system in place to manage outbreak for the next 18 months to 2 years. Funding allocations and grant conditions are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-test-and-trace-service-support-grant/local-authority-test-and-trace-service-support-grant-allocations>

3.4 St Helens Borough Council has approved their local Outbreak Management Governance processes and plans through emergency decision processes and this has subsequently been approved by the People's Board. This report however sets out the overarching structures that have been put in place to ensure that St Helens has the resources and skills to manage outbreaks effectively. Some decisions have been made through either delegation Delegated Executive Decisions and Administrative Decisions. In order to ensure complete transparency, the overarching model and associated costs are described in this paper.

#### **4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations**

4.1 It was nationally mandated for Upper Tier Local Authorities to have Outbreak Management Plans and governance in place that cover 7 specific areas:

- i. Care homes and schools
- ii. High risk places and communities
- iii. Local testing capacity
- iv. Contact tracing in complex settings
- v. Data integration
- vi. Vulnerable People
- vii. Local Boards

4.2 St Helens process and governance are described are available on St Helens Borough Council website <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/omp>

4.3 The Outbreak Management Plan has been developed using a framework that was developed by CHAMPs (Cheshire and Merseyside) public health network.

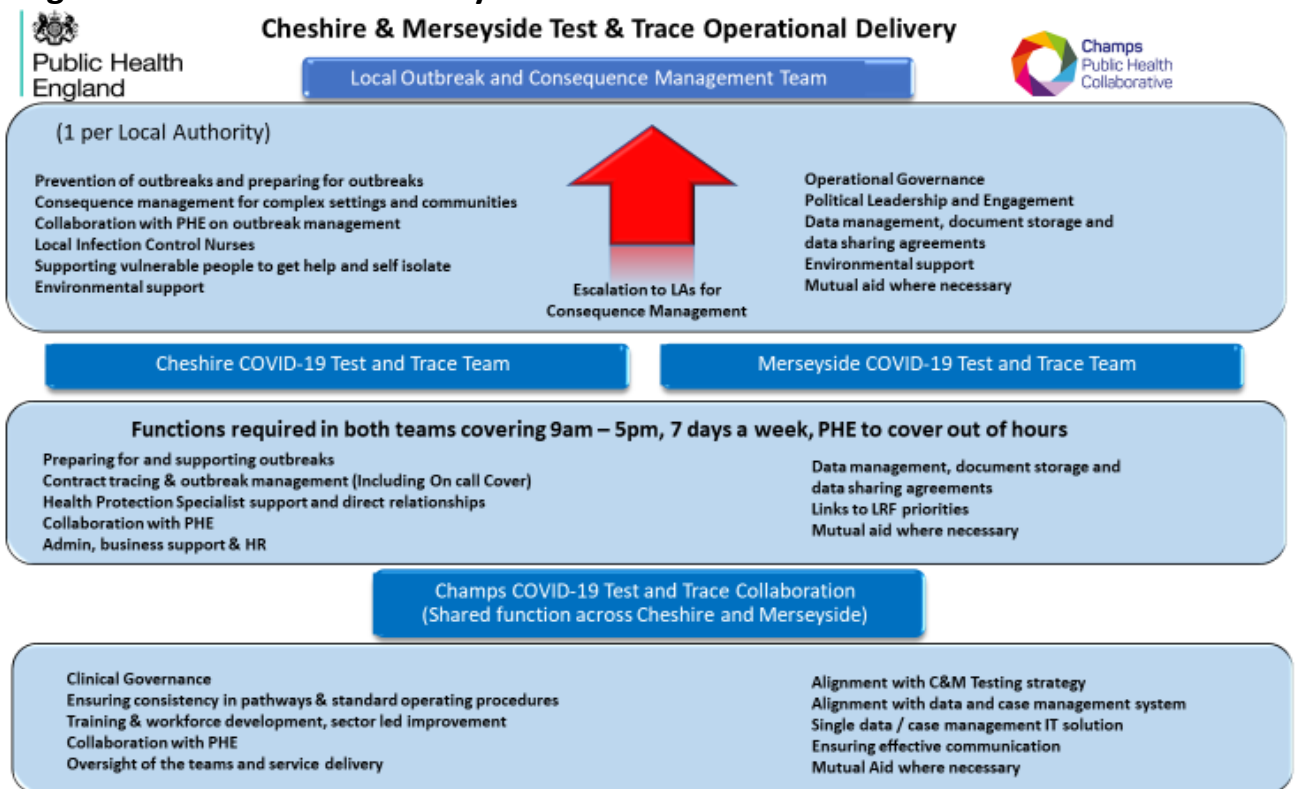
4.4 However, whilst the plans describe how we will manage outbreaks, additional resources and skills are needed to ensure we have a workforce of an appropriate size and skill set to support this new and additional requirement. This workforce will need to be in place for 18 months to 2 years. St Helens Borough Council, alongside the other local authorities in Cheshire and Merseyside, have decided on a mixed model to support outbreak management. This would consist of some contact tracing happening within a Cheshire and Merseyside Hub with a skilled workforce in St Helens Borough Council to compliment this capacity at a local level. Figure 1 describes the different levels of operation.

4.5 The Cheshire and Merseyside Test and Trace Hub will support localised outbreaks in all areas of Cheshire and Mersey. COVID-19 is an infectious disease that does not respect organisational boundaries.

4.6 The Hub is an emergency response and will scale up existing arrangements at pace with PHE. It will not replace local work but bolster local resilience, this will be particularly important during the winter period or should a second wave occur.

4.7 A team will be in place, one for Cheshire and one for Merseyside within the Hub model, enabling greater local insight but also maximising shared functions. Mutual aid will ensure no one local authority becomes overwhelmed should multiple outbreaks occur. The shared service will undertake test and trace for all people that are referred from the national Test and Trace Service. The service will escalate to local areas outbreaks where further consequence management is required at a local level. This service is funded by contributions from all local authorities across Cheshire and Merseyside. The business case for this was approved by Local Authority Chief Executives. In order that this service operates effectively a case management system has also been purchased which will mean the service can manage individual cases but also link cases to outbreaks and allow all staff to be able to update the system with actions. This system MS Dynamics has also been purchased across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and the whole of Wales.

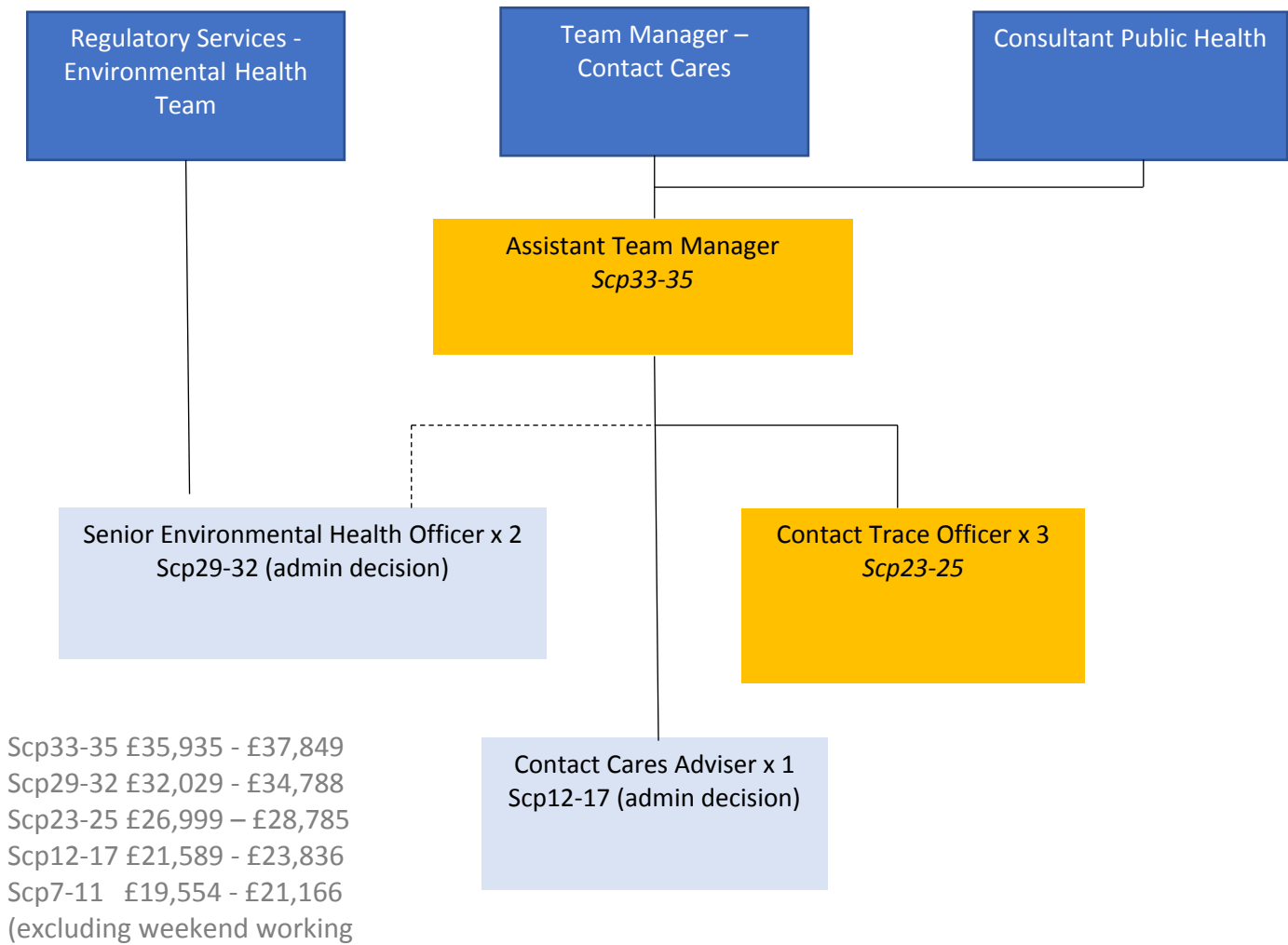
**Figure 1: Cheshire and Merseyside Test and Trace Service**



4.8 However, whilst the above service will manage a lot of the day to day complex cases, in order that we keep our rates at a manageable level, we need additional support and resource to tackle prevention and the consequence management of cases. Within St Helens Borough Council we have developed a team to support this which includes Environmental Health Officers supporting workplaces and wider events and a team manager for our local contact tracing which will support more complex cases and consequences. Additional support has also been established for contact cares who are our single point of access. Figure 2 shows the makeup of the team and the management arrangements.

4.9 In addition to the direct St Helens Test and Trace Service Public Health have relied heavily on the Infection, Prevention, Protection and Control Service specifically to support care homes. This service is commissioned by Public Health and is hosted by St Helens CCG and covers infection prevention, protection and control for the 3 boroughs of Warrington, Halton and St Helens. Throughout the pandemic this service has been working almost exclusively on Care Home Outbreaks with some support to schools. However, the resources to continue throughout the winter supporting care homes and schools will be stretched to manage the current pandemic. Therefore, agreement was made with all three boroughs to increase the infection control nurse capacity in the interim. The decision has been made through delegated executive decision.

**Figure 2: St Helens Council Test and Trace Service**



4.10 A breakdown of costs associated with the services and staffing is described in table 1. Currently all decisions have been made for 12 months, this will be reviewed after 6 months as we understand the future implications for our population on the management of COVID-19.

Table 1: Current financial implications for test and trace and outbreak management

<b>Description</b>	<b>Cost (12 months)</b>	<b>Running Total</b>
Cheshire and Mersey Hub	£74,537	£74,537
Cheshire and Mersey MS Dynamics	£11,742	£86,279
St Helens Test and Trace Staffing cost (incl weekend allowance)	£200,982	£287,261
St Helens Test and Trace service equipment and additional licenses for MS Dynamics	£20,000	£307,261
Infection Prevention, Protection and Control Team (DED 0134 2019/20)	£77,121.10	£384,382.1

- 4.11 The spend described in Table 1 reflects 12-month costs for staff with the systems covered for 2 years. This will need to be reviewed in 6 months as we understand more about COVID-19 and the spread of the infection and what resources we may need in the future. The remaining of the grant not spent in 2020/21 will need to be transferred to 2021/22 as it is unlikely that any additional funding will be forthcoming. It is also likely that the staffing resource will be required throughout 2021/22. Therefore, staffing costs may need to be extended for a further 6 to 12 months. Finance have been made aware of the requirements to carry forward slippage from this year to 2021/22, however, it is important that we manage this resource effectively with the changing nature of COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.12 There will also be ongoing costs to manage outbreaks which may include publicity, engagement, support for people to isolate. Decisions relating to these funds will be made either through Administrative Decision or Delegated Executive Decision or Cabinet as appropriate

## **5. Community Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 The Community Impact Assessment identified the following key implications
- Access to translation services including sign language - this has already been implemented for the St Helens service
  - Safeguarding training - this will be implemented with all new starters
  - Ensure that community groups and voluntary sector are involved in Outbreak Management to support community cohesion, specifically groups that maybe disadvantaged due to COVID 19. A Communications and engagement group has been set up to develop plans to engage locally with wider groups within St. Helens
- 5.2 The implementation of a local Outbreak Management Plan does entail interference with Human Rights Articles such as:
- Article 5 - Right to Liberty and Security
  - Article 8 - Right to Respect for Private and Family Life, and
  - Article 11 - Freedom of Assembly and Association

The Human Rights Act does permit a public authority to interfere with these rights under certain justifiable conditions – these include the protection of health, and the prevention of the spreading of infectious diseases. However, to minimize the impact of using such powers the aim of the service and model is to initially prevent spread.

## **6. Consideration of Alternatives**

6.1 The two alternatives to this model are:

- A service funded and operational at a Cheshire and Merseyside level only. However, evidence is showing us that as much intelligence on outbreaks is coming directly from our local communities to the current public health team. A Cheshire and Merseyside model would miss that vital element
- A service to be funded and operational at a St Helens level only. This model has been discounted as the Cheshire and Mersey model working together with the St Helens model brings a lot of experience from Consultants in Communicable Disease Control that can support the local service. The Cheshire and Mersey Model also supports intelligence on cross boundary issues within Cheshire and Merseyside. The cost of the Cheshire and Mersey model is shared across LA's and as such is cost effective as the cost per authority is less than the cost of one whole time equivalent Consultant in Communicable Disease.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 The paper brings all the current decisions around test and trace and outbreak management into one report for complete transparency around the spend of the additional Public Health Grant to support Outbreak Management.

## **8. Implications**

### 8.1 Legal Implications

All decisions have gone through either administrative decision, delegated executive decision or Corporate Executive Group with appropriate legal and financial input.

### 8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

#### 8.2.1 Social Value

The model promotes local solution to Outbreak Management which ensures a closer link with community and community groups.

#### 8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

The proposal relies heavily on human resources who will operate generally in a hybrid working environment.

#### 8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

The overarching aim of the service is to prevent spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the population.

#### 8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

All employment will consider equality. The service delivery model will manage risk of COVID-19 based on evidence of risk therefore ensuring we address inequalities. Interpretation services have been commissioned.

### 8.3 Customers and Resident

The service will develop quality standards of operation.

#### 8.4 Asset and Property

No issues identified.

#### 8.5 Staffing and Human Resource

All decisions have been made with HR Input.

#### 8.6 Risks

8.6.1 Having adequate resource and skills in place to protect our population from outbreaks linked to COVID-19

8.6.2 Communication between Cheshire and Mersey Hub and local activity

8.6.3 Information flows between Cheshire and Mersey Hub and local activity

#### 8.7 Finance

The budget for the test and trace and outbreak management arrangements will come from the dedicated Public Health Grant. All decisions have involved the relevant finance officers.

#### 8.8 Policy Framework Implications

The model will meet the requirements of the Outbreak Management Plan.

### 9. **Background papers**

N/A

### 10. **Appendices**

[Appendix 1 – Update on Mobilising and Emergency Response Test and Trace Shadow Hub](#)

[Appendix 2 – Case Management System](#)