

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### How was the Hub established?

Following the sign off from local authority leaders of a detailed proposal developed by Directors of Public Health and local public health teams, work started on the Hub on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020, when a Cheshire and Merseyside Mobilisation Team was formed.

The Mobilisation Team was led by Julie Webster, Director of Public Health for Wirral and Dr Sam Ghebrehewet, Head of Health Protection for Cheshire and Merseyside from PHE North West. The Team included representation from each local authority, PHE and the Champs Public Health Collaborative Support Team.

The Hub was set up at a rapid pace on 6<sup>th</sup> July.

### What are the benefits of having a sub-regional Contact Tracing Hub?

There are a number of benefits to adopting a sub-regional approach to Contact Tracing for complex settings.

Due to the size and scale of the national programme, there are limitations in how data flows from national to local teams, meaning that in a time-sensitive situation, sub-regional and local teams are better placed to carry out extensive contact tracing as soon as the data becomes available. This reduces any delay between a positive case and a contact tracing interview, as the sooner this happens, the better.

Also, with leadership and guidance from Cheshire and Merseyside's Directors of Public Health, the Hub is able to quickly understand the areas of concern and concentration in the region, which will ensure that contact tracing interviews produce as much relevant information as possible.

### What is a 'complex case' or 'setting'?

A complex case or setting can be defined as:

- Potentially complex settings (For example: Special Schools, Homeless Accommodation; domestic violence refuges; HMO's; Day Centre Provision; Social Care settings; Statutory Service HQ's; residential children's homes, critical national infrastructure)
- Potentially complex cohorts (For example: rough sleepers; faith communities, asylum seekers)
- Potentially complex individuals and households (For example: safeguarding issues, clinically shielded; Learning Disability; diagnosed Mental Illness; substance misusers Rough Sleepers; Victims of Domestic Abuse; complex socioeconomic circumstances)
- Workplaces where there is a high risk of transmissions such as food production plants and warehouses

## **How does the Hub work with the national Test and Trace programme?**

The Contact Tracing Hub in Cheshire and Merseyside is not a replacement for any national Test and Trace programmes. The Hub will work alongside the national team to prevent and contain outbreaks in a complex settings, as local knowledge and resources will ensure a quick and efficient handling of any incidents.

## **How does the Hub utilise data?**

Every element of Cheshire and Merseyside's response to COVID-19 has been led and informed by data and intelligence and the Hub is no exception to this.

Alongside the data provided by the national programme, the Cheshire and Merseyside data group, led by Public Health England, is continually reviewing local and national information and have agreed on thresholds for activities. This review forms part of a dashboard, which is shared with the two Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and Directors of Public Health in Cheshire and Merseyside.

This approach to data and intelligence helps quickly identify potential increases in COVID-19 infections in Cheshire and Merseyside's nine local authority areas and allows for prompt escalation and outbreak management.

## **Are schools included in the Hub's remit?**

Some educational settings such as: special schools, special nurseries, special early years, special colleges or residential schools are within the remit of the Hub and should contact the Hub regarding confirmed cases and contact tracing.

Mainstream colleges, schools, nurseries and early years should call their Local Authority School Support Team or the Department for Education's helpline on **0800 046 8687**.

## **Which organisations have been involved in the Contact Tracing Hub?**

The Hub is a collaboration between Public Health England, Champs Public Health Collaborative and the Directors of Public Health from Cheshire and Merseyside's nine Local Authorities:

- Cheshire East
- Cheshire West and Chester
- Halton
- Knowsley
- Liverpool
- St Helens
- Sefton
- Warrington
- Wirral

## **How will the hub evolve over the coming months?**

We are still learning about the virus and successful approaches to contain COVID-19. The winter will be particularly challenging, and the successful implementation of the new vaccine is critical. It is however likely that COVID-19 will be with us for the foreseeable future.

Directors of Public Health and PHE will continue to adapt the approach in response to changing circumstances, taking learning and continually working to improve the model.

Local areas are also taking on contact tracing for those cases that the national Test and Trace programme is unable to reach. A Cheshire and Merseyside Contact Tracing Strategic Programme Board has been established to provide strategic leadership and oversight for contact tracing across the region. The ultimate aim of this work is to develop an effective integrated contact tracing system across Cheshire and Merseyside that utilises national, sub-regional and local expertise efficiently to save lives and livelihoods.