

Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Contact Tracing (ICT) Pilot

Partner Update #2

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wellbeing in Cheshire and Merseyside

Introduction

From Julie Webster, Director of Public Health, Wirral, and Lead Director for Integrated Contact Tracing (ICT)



Welcome to Cheshire and Merseyside's Integrated Contact Tracing (ICT) Pilot Partner Update.

As we head into the colder months, we can be sure that the steadily rising number of positive cases of COVID-19 will create further pressure on the local health and care system. We are also now responding to a new COVID-19 variant, Omicron. We must do everything we can to mitigate these pressures, Public Health Teams are working hard to ensure that this pilot helps us to develop a resilient model to see us through winter and beyond.

Thankfully, our data tells us that the COVID-19 vaccine has reduced the link between infection and mortality and morbidity, which in turn indicates that there should be a more targeted approach to contact tracing. This is something that we will be carefully considering throughout the pilot.

I am delighted to say that we are working closely with local councils and other important stakeholders to discuss and agree on what we think the best operational model will be for our ambition to create a connected, integrated 'one team' for contact tracing. There was complete approval for the preferred option, a **Cheshire and Merseyside shared service, with elements of local delivery**. This builds upon the great work done to date, with an evolution toward the optimum model over the next few months in line with evolving national policy, with a focus on immediate priorities to help address winter pressure risks. This includes actions to enable our subregional Contract Tracing Hub to increase capacity and offer out of hours support during the winter.

What we're working towards

Cheshire and Merseyside's Integrated Contact Tracing (ICT) Pilot seeks to enable the local, regional, and national contact tracing systems and functions to work effectively as 'one team', that will work flexibly across the subregion's nine local authority areas to provide excellent contact tracing for local people. The team will build upon the already-existing experience and expertise in the system to help manage outbreaks of COVID-19, as well as other transmissible infections.

This pilot is being led by the subregion's Directors of Public Health, working together as the Champs Public Health Collaborative, with funding from the Department of Health and Social Care.

This work is not starting from scratch. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cheshire and Merseyside has benefitted from an Integrated Contact Tracing Hub, that was established and co-managed with Public Health England (now the UK Health Security Agency). Since its inception, the Hub has worked specifically with complex settings, which require more intensive support, and will continue to do so within this new team, as new models are explored.

The overriding ambition is to have a well-resourced, flexible, resilient, and sustainable system, functioning at local and subregional level, supported by a skilled and motivated workforce, that will keep our communities safe.

Progress this month

Design Working Group

Following the agreement of the preferred operating model – a Cheshire and Merseyside shared service, with elements of local delivery – among local places, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the subregion's Contact Tracing Hub, Directors of Public Health also endorsed the model and have asked the pilot to move forward to the next stages.

First, the pilot will work collaboratively to produce a proposed operating model, including all elements of the offer, costings, workforce requirements, standard operating procedures, clinical governance, and form. Secondly, a roadmap of quick wins and other early interventions will be created, to ensure that no time is lost while the model is developed.

Workforce Development

The Workforce Development Working Group has started a detailed examination of the current contract tracing service, which will help us to understand existing workforce practices and skills, as well as operational risks and challenges. Subsequent workforce requirements and needs, steps for safe transition and delivery of the new service will also be identified during this time.

Information Management and Technology

This workstream is working with local places to encourage the activation of the shared Microsoft Dynamics Case Management System (CMS) in at least one area

by December 2021. The subregional Contact Tracing Hub, as well as Wirral, Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East, are all currently live and processing significant numbers of incidents and cases.

Support for Self-Isolation Pilot

It has been agreed that Halton will be the host local authority for the self-isolation pilot, building on the fantastic work already happening in this area and taking further examples from other areas like Hackney. The pilot is now in further development and is expected to go live in the New Year with a possibility for other areas to get on board.

Communications and Engagement

The main priority of the communications and engagement workstream is to appoint an external agency to develop the insight, branding and communications planning for the pilot. This is now well underway, with a live tender now in progress and agencies bidding for the work. The workstream expects to review all submissions and appoint an agency in mid-December.

Evaluation

An evaluation plan and framework has been established with Ipsos Mori, meaning that the evaluation work can begin. The aims of the evaluation will be to gather learning about the implementation of the pilot and to understand the impact of individual elements on key programme outputs.

Find out more

To find out more about this pilot and read previous Partner Updates, please visit www.champspublichealth.com/integrated-contact-tracing.