

**APPENDIX THREE****Test, Trace & Protect arrangements at Monmouthshire, 2020 to 2022**

1. Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) was a crucial part of the Welsh Government's (WG's) approach to limiting the spread of Covid-19 and reducing the need for restrictions on people's lives. Appendix One outlines the various restrictions WG introduced throughout this two year period. The TTP programme was developed rapidly from scratch through the partnership arrangements put in place when the virus first arrived and formed part of the wider response to its' control. WG's 'Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales' provided guidance for the regions and localities, and their 'Test, Trace, Protect strategy' set out the key elements of the programme which comprised -
  - identifying and testing people who may have COVID-19
  - tracing people who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and
  - providing advice and guidance to protect the public and supporting people to self-isolate where necessary.
  
2. In Monmouthshire we were keen to set up a system that would work both for our county and Gwent and be flexible. Using the skills of staff in-house formed the basis for a solid foundation of a TTP team. MCC partnered with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), Public Health Wales (PHW) and neighbouring local authorities to collaborate on a Gwent-wide approach. This provided economies of scale maximising the benefits of the professional expertise such as clinical leadership provided by PHW.
  
3. At the inception of the Gwent wide TTP system, MCC and Torfaen CBC staff were based together in offices in Pontypool to enable co-production and for the system to bed in. When the benefits tapered out, eg. from rapid joint training of staff, and noting some risk of persons coming together for work, MCC staff withdrew from the joint Torfaen arrangement and worked solely in an agile way. All the staff in the Environmental Health (EH) Commercial team, all trained in infectious disease control, worked on a rota system to support those making the calls to persons infected with the C-19 virus. Two EH staff supported the 'tracers', and a Community Hub Manager provided the managerial support to the 'advisors'.

The main roles of these two positions were:

A **contact tracer** made the initial call to the index case, the positive case. They obtained as much information as possible to determine -

- the number of contacts that they may have potentially infected,
- the locations the case may have visited whilst infectious and,
- provide advice regarding the isolation requirements and any other assistance that they may need.

The **contact advisor** role was to contact -

- all individuals that have been identified as contacts.
- maintain daily contact with those individuals, either by SMS or phone to enquire if they are well.
- to advise when a test should be undertaken and their isolation period.

#### 4. Process

From the end of May to the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020 an interim system was used. After June 15<sup>th</sup> this was changed to the CRM (Customer Relationship Management system) owned by NHS Wales. LA's Environmental Health departments worked in partnership with PHW and ABUHB to develop Standard Operational Procedures (SOP's). The CRM system recorded all positive and negative results of Covid 19 in Wales.

MCC set up TTP differently to other LA areas by using our own EH staff to trace and subsequently investigate any outbreaks or clusters. When case numbers increased, regionally it was agreed to provide a 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week service, ie. a 84 hour a week service. The use of tracers with a specialist knowledge and understanding of the risks involved and being able to act on information very quickly, enabled the team to reduce the number of cases and outbreaks within the county. Our numbers were typically far lower than any of our neighbours. EH staff were fully integrated into the TTP team and all TTP staff (tracers and advisors) knew who to contact with any queries immediately.

At the start of September 2020 the team seconded an EHO to the role of Regional EHO for TTP for MCC and created a Programme Lead. These two Officers successfully recruited and trained all the contact tracers.

As an example of MCC TTP team helping regionally, in September 2020 Caerphilly CBC had an escalation of cases and we were able to trace over 300 cases on their behalf whilst our numbers were low. We also assisted North Wales TTP teams at this time with their case load, (the CRM system enabled us to identify their cases and call them direct).

We achieved a very high standard of tracing and started carrying out 'backward contact tracing' also in September 2020. Backward tracing takes cases back beyond the standard 48 hours from onset of symptoms or test. This was found to be immensely useful, (which is how we'd normally investigate communicable disease cases), as it gathered intelligence on the sources of Covid-19. This was replicated by other TTP teams in Gwent and the rest of Wales late into Spring 2021.

#### 5. Data analysis

Cases numbers were measured on a 7 day rolling data analysis. In order to understand the overall picture of cases, and any links between them, MCC TTP Leads started a 7-day rolling spreadsheet recording town, case employment and short details. This provided an overall picture that could be colour coded and giving insight on the general picture of cases within the community. It became a significant task for the Officers concerned when cases rose (often up to 100 a day), but enabled the team to identify clusters and outbreaks that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. For example, identification of a small number of cases that all visited one premises, but at different times, resulted in contact with the premises, getting staff tested and ensured no further increase of the cluster of cases by isolating asymptomatic, but positive, staff. The system was praised by PHW in our Monmouthshire Incident

Management Team (IMT) meetings because EH TTP were able to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of what was happening in the county at any one time.

## **6. Flexing up workforce to deal with increasing case numbers**

With a predicted wave for December 2020/January 2021 approaching, extra TTP staff were needed and further tracers and advisors were taken on through September and October. In October 2020 the Advisors came under the management of the EH (regional EHO and Programme Lead) because the Community Hub manager had to return to his substantive post. Due to the increased numbers of the Advisors, posts of Business Support Supervisors were put in place to oversee daily work activities, including workloads/rotas and provide advice and support to them and liaise with the tracers and TTP Leads.

Between October 2020 and January 2021 EH TTP were working unprecedented hours to enrol, train, provide IT, set up extra staff to deal with rising case numbers. At its peak we had 87 staff in the TTP team. Modelling of numbers of tracers and advisors was regularly provided by ABUHB, but we disagreed with their numbers, eg. up to 67 advisors alone. This proved the right decision as EH TTP managed all our own contact cases as well as helping out other teams over the months of September to November 2020.

EHO's provided a weekend regional rota cover for all of Gwent from June 2020, so that an Officer from any LA would be responding to any call for EHO advice to any part of Gwent. This evolved to an EHO being seconded in September to cover Monmouthshire issues, noting the strong links between the TTP team and EHO's in the EH Commercial team. The role also became a joint TTP lead in managing cases and caseload for MCC.

Due to the way MCC set up the TTP team, through a variety of temporary contracts, casual contracts, use of redeployed MCC Officers, etc. we were in a position to be able to respond to the number of cases and increase or decrease the TTP team accordingly to demand.

## **7. Working with others**

The first major cluster that needed intervention from EH was on Easter weekend 2020 concerning a care home. Working closely with Social Care's Commissioning team, a care providers group was set up to allow direct discussion and assist care providers with interpretation of guidance and any queries they had. This built up a strong and trusting relationship with all involved to provide support and direct contact to us at any time they needed. The EH Commercial team set up small groups of Officers to deal with specialist roles that were needed to respond to matters, in particular these were –

- Care homes, residential homes and assisted living, led by the Communicable Disease Lead EHO,
- MCC schools working closely with all the head teachers, private and specialist school,
- Worker accommodation certification requirements under the Covid regulations.

Throughout the pandemic the EH team were heavily involved in providing support to care homes, schools and businesses on all Covid matters, eg. self-isolation requirements, social distancing, screening, one-way walking routes, etc. Noting the

numerous changes – see Appendix One – this was an onerous task, eg. making sense of latest rules on a Friday (when Alert Level regulations typically announced) so they could be implemented by schools or other affected settings.

As numbers increased the TTP team were dealing with very difficult and distressing calls where families had suffered loss, sometime that same day. Specialist training was provided on dealing with difficult situations, including grief through loss of family members, by MCC Training. This was well received and was provided, at their request, to our colleagues in Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent.

The internal recording telephony system of CRM became less reliable, eg. it went down for 6 hours on one occasion, so an alternative was sought. Where time is of the essence in making contact with index cases and contacts, to ensure they are not contributing to community spread, this was unacceptable. Teams telephony was installed for all the TTP team, (up to 87 Officers covering variable work patterns), to ensure reliability of telephony service.

## **8. Cross border issues**

Monmouthshire borders four Welsh LA's and two English LA's, latter being Herefordshire and Forest of Dean. There would often be referrals regarding commuters, eg. a case lives in Chepstow but works in Bristol. So there was significant liaison with colleagues in other nearby districts. MCC TTP soon established close working with border areas and knew the networks, local EHO's, Public Health England (now UKHSA), etc. This was invaluable in dealing with cluster in schools, colleges and large employers across LA borders. Building up relationships with other agencies ensured swift responses were made, for example arranging very quick home testing for vulnerable school pupils and residents of sheltered living accommodation. Being able to respond at all times was also an important part of managing clusters and outbreaks, which often originated outside of Monmouthshire.

## **9. Case numbers to July 2022**

Case numbers started to decrease when WG's Alert Level 4, implemented on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020, started to take effect by mid-January -

29/12/2020 Gwent cases totalled 525, MCC 39

30/12/2020 Gwent cases totalled 541, MCC 50

10/01/2021 Gwent cases totalled 237, MCC 41

4/02/2021 Gwent cases totalled 130, MCC 11

1/03/2021 Gwent cases totalled 75, MCC 4

27/3/2021 Gwent cases totalled 12, MCC 0

11/04//2021 Gwent Cases totalled 20, MCC 3

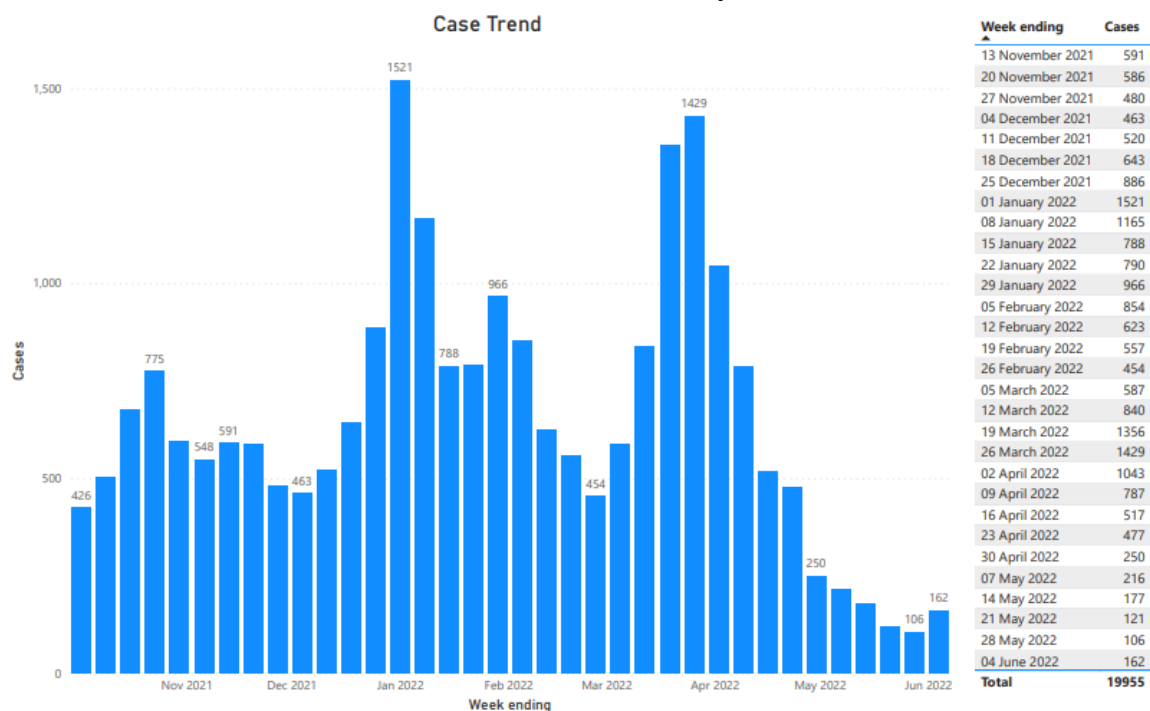
With the continued low numbers at the start of April 2021 the TTP team reduced to a core number of staff, but with the ability to flex up if required through our own Public Protection staff, (EH and Licensing with support from Trading Standards), and casual staff that had previously worked successfully with the team.

Cases did indeed surge again with the advent of the Omicron variant at the end of 2021 – with peak case numbers w/e 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, as per graph below - so

staffing was increased to deal with the track and trace demand. Case numbers from 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 were as follows -

12th December to 18th December – 643 cases, a 24% rise from the previous week  
 19th to 25th December – 886 cases, 38% increase on previous week  
 26th December to 1st January – 1,521 cases = 72% increase on week before

### Monmouthshire cases from November 2021 to May 2022

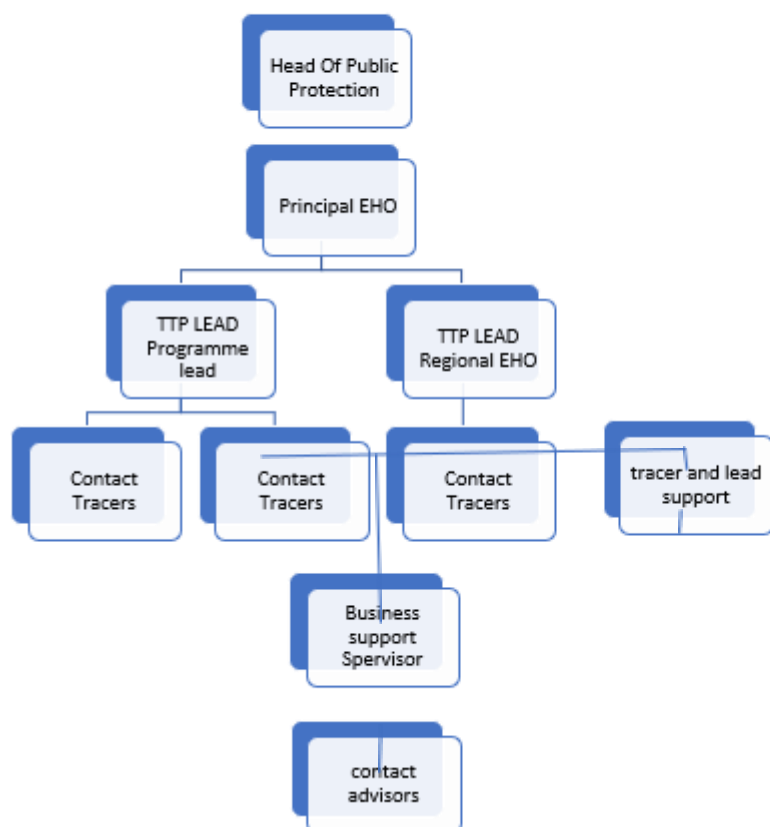


## 10. Dealing with cases from August 2022

From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 the MCC TTP team was disbanded and thereafter delivered regionally, for the Aneurin Bevan region by Caerphilly CBC, (as referenced in Appendix Two). There was a huge reduction in staff numbers across the region. Contact tracing was targeted wholly on protecting the most vulnerable and supporting the response to local outbreaks and clusters, as directed by ABUHB. A new process was established by PHW to help regional teams to triage cases so that they prioritised contact tracing to specific areas. These were cases potentially connected to a vulnerable setting such as a care home, hospital or special school. Gwent LA's were funded to support one EHO each to support the new TTP team. This provided the local link to support reviewing the details of any care home outbreaks and linked cases. The funded EHO's also advised care homes on generic infection control advice and liaised with MCC's Commissioning teams where needed. Our Specialist EHO continues to attend care home cluster meetings/MDTs/IMT's and supports the incident response at the setting thereafter, in accordance with the SOP for care homes.



## 11. Reporting lines, Monmouthshire TTP team



## 12. Care homes in Monmouthshire – priority settings throughout pandemic

Ashbury House Nursing Home, Green Moor Lane, Magor, Caldicot, NP26 3HT
Avenue Road Nursing Home, 28 Avenue Road, Abergavenny, NP7 7DB
Belmont House Residential Home, 4 Belmont Road, Abergavenny, NP7 5HN
Bethany Residential Home, Old Bulwark Road, Bulwark, Chepstow, NP16 5JL
Cantref Care Home, 87 Brecon Road, Abergavenny, NP7 7RD
Castle Court Residential Home, Welsh Street, Chepstow, NP16 5LN
Cherry Tree Care Home, 209 Newport Road, Caldicot, NP26 4AF
Crick Care Home, Crick House Nursing Home, Crick Road, Crick, Caldicot, NP26 5UW
Foxhunters Care Community, Iberis Road, Llanfoist, Abergavenny, NP7 9LQ
Gibraltar Care Village, 14, Catalan Court, Monmouth Road, Mitchel Troy, Monmouth, NP25 5FB
Glaslyn Court Nursing Home, Crickhowell Road, Gilwern, Abergavenny, NP7 0EH
Llanhennock Lodge,, Newport, NP18 1LT

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Mardy Park Lodge,, Hereford Road, Mardy, Llantillio Pertholey,  
Abergavenny, NP7 6HU

Parade House Residential Home, The Parade, Monmouth, NP25 3PA

Pen Y Hill House , Pen Y Pound, ABERGAVENNY, NP7 7DW

Penpergwm House Ltd, Penpergwm House Care Home, Bryn Road,  
Penpergwm, Abergavenny, NP7 9AH

The Priory Nursing & Convalescent Home, Llandogo Road, Llandogo,  
Monouth, NP25 4TP

Rozelle Nursing Home, 93 Brecon Road, Abergavenny, NP7 7RE

Severn View Residential Home, Mounon Road, Chepstow, NP16 5BS

St. Anne's Nursing Home, Welsh St, Chepstow, Wales, NP16 5LX

**March 2024**