Minutes of the Redbridge Voluntary Sector Network – 24 June 2020

# Present

Chris Merritt, Redbridge Forum

Andrea Thorogood, Haven House Children’s Hospice

Jon Pushkin, Redbridge Music Lounge

Edith Galliers, Redbridge Council

Hari Rattu, Imagine Independence

Jahan McCready, Redbridge Carers Support Service

John Cooke, Redbridge Council

Alan Jaye, [Ilford & District Indoor Bowls Club](https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/01793193)

Linval Walker, POhWER

Karen Kent, Redbridge Faith Forum

Ian Diley, Public Health London Borough of Redbridge

Sharon Grundy, One Place East

Kate Allardyce, Forest Farm Peace Garden

Kaaren Cruse, Eastside Community Heritage

Edel

Susila

Jenny Ellis, RedbridgeCVS

Colin Wilson, RedbridgeCVS

Binal Patel, RedbridgeCVS

# Voluntary and Community Groups

Attendees of the meeting one after another introduced themselves to the group.

Ian Diley, Consultant in Public Health London Borough of Redbridge

Ian introduced himself and provided updates on the Covid-19 situation in Redbridge. He gave an overview on the nature of the virus such as where it came from, how it has been affecting the elderly and people who have underlining health conditions more seriously, and the ways in which we can prevent the spread of the virus. These include washing our hands regularly for 20 seconds, cleaning surfaces we have come into contact with frequently and socially keeping a distance of two metres. Ian mentioned the government announced yesterday a change to the social distancing rules, to keeping one metre apart while taking mitigation measures seriously. Professor Chris Whitty advised the public to keep to the two metres distance whenever possible.

**Cases of Covid-19 in Redbridge**

From late February to the 18th of June there have been 768 cases of Covid-19 confirmed in Redbridge and as of 16th June, 306 people have died from Covid-19. The peak of cases in Redbridge occurred on 7th April, which was in line with the trend in other London Boroughs. Since then the number of cases has gradually fallen to only 4 new cases between the 3rd and 10th June.

Comparisons between cases of Covid-19 in London, England and Redbridge show rates are higher in Redbridge. The reason for this is not known, there is a potential for it to be a data artefact which could be because of the way data has been recorded and collected. However Ian noted when comparing excess deaths amongst London boroughs, Redbridge was in the middle. To see detailed graphs showing these comparisons and others see Ian’s presentation slides.

**Test and Trace**

Ian explained that the government is putting into place Test and Trace which is the primary method to try and restrict the spread of the coronavirus. They are trying to move the responsibility for the social restrictions we seen at a national level down to a more localised level. A systematic approach is being taken to identify those people most at risk of having the virus who may be asymptomatic and are potentially infectious to other people. This is where the biggest risk is for the continuous spread of the pandemic. The Test and Trace system has been designed to enable focused local breakout control to replace the national social restrictions. It allows control measures to be placed just in the areas where there has been an outbreak allowing the rest of the borough and country to return to some kind of normality and to enable more economic activity.

To see how the Test and Trace system works, a diagram of the steps of the system can be seen on slide 10 of the PowerPoint presentation attached. The system as a whole works in three levels mentioned below:

**Level 1**: National and regional health protection teams – this is where joint work between Public Health England (PHE) and local authorities are being done to contain outbreaks and deal with complex situations.

**Level 2:** Professional contact tracing staff employed by NHS – phone interviews are being conducted and online questionnaires/algorithms for Covid-19 positive cases are being carried out to trace people who have come into contact with someone who has the virus.

**Level 3:** Call Handlers – at this level contacts are informed they need to isolate as they have come into contact with someone who test positive for Covid-19.

Ian explained level 1 in more detail and mentioned at the start of this outbreak Public Health England created the London Coronavirus Response Cell (LCRC) that works across 33 London Boroughs. This is the lead for all of the coronavirus response work and they will continue working with them through this Test and Trace programme. One of the focus at this level is building engagement in the communities to allow fewer barriers to stand in the way for people to engage in the system such as language barriers, lack of digital access or the lack of trust in authority. The system will only work well if a large proportion of people who need to isolate do otherwise infection rates are likely to go up and the need for local restrictions to come in place. Ian asked groups to think about how they can engage with their members to help spread the importance of what Test and Trace is and the importance of the engagement with the system.

**London Plan and the system in Redbridge**

All London Boroughs are working towards the same London plan which has 6 particular action areas. Details of this plan can be seen on slide 13 of the PowerPoint attached.

Public Health in Redbridge are working on developing a local outbreak plan in parallel with the London model. This plan will be completed by the end of the month and shared publicly after the end of June. The Pandemic Committee which is a partnership Committee that leads on tackling Covid-19 is helping to advise and support the development of Redbridge’s local plan. Gladys Xavier The Director of Public Health in Redbridge is the designated Lead for the plan and Ian Diley Consultant in the operational lead.

**Communications plan**

On a London wide basis a communications plan is being developed. Ian explained they are putting together resources and plans to provide communications to explain what test and trace programme is and how it works. They want to do face to face and one on one work with communities and individuals to get engagement through Redbridge.

If you have any questions about the Test and Trace work being done you can email Ian on ian.diley@redbridge.gov.uk or call him on 020 8708 6687.

Hari Rattu from Imagine Independence asked about the rate of infection in Redbridge especially for the BAME community and whether the figures are high?

Ian explained certain communities and people of certain ethnicities have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 as they are experiencing higher infection rates and more serious outcomes. This too has been the case in Redbridge and other boroughs across the country. The risk is at a population level rather an individual level this would indicate there is nothing specific about someone’s ethnicity that would increase the risk of catching Covid-19 or have a serious outcome from it and no evidence has been found to suggest a genetic link. However people of certain ethnicities have a lot more risk factors through social reasons for example based on the type of job they may be exposed to the virus more, long term health conditions in some communities and in others there is more multigenerational living where elderly people are further exposed to the virus.

Chris Merritt from the Redbridge Forum mentioned various people have said to her, when they were contacted through the Test and Trace programme the information they were asked did not seem relevant. Chris asks how will people know it is an official contact and not someone trying to scam them and what information is being asked through the Test and Trace programme?

Ian explains the system was originally set up so the great majority of the Test and Trace work happens through the national system where there is one single phone number that you would get contacted by. Public Health England and local authorities are taking a larger proportion of work than ever expected which would produce more telephone numbers. Ian said he doesn’t have an answer for this question but what he will do is make sure the local outbreak plan for Redbridge considers how to best mitigate this in terms of getting communication out to people about the questions they would and would not be expected to be asked.

Jon Pushkin from the Redbridge Music Lounge said that there was evidence from America this morning to say cases are beginning to escalate again – is there flexibly in what we do here outside the national guidance?

Ian explained the move of responsibility from national lock down to local lock down would put more responsibility on local authorities however they have not been given the powers that nationally exist to impose lockdown in certain areas. The government are trying to work through with local authorities how this might work. There is some flexibility to act on in terms of what the London Borough of Redbridge do but this would have to be in the laws of what already exist.

Also Jon asked for more information about the Test and Trace app.

Ian explained that if the app was working it would be useful at a broad level as it could be able to pick up contacts you would not know for example such as people at a train station. Due to certain difficulties in making the app work the release of it has kept being pushed back and there are also concerns around trust issues in terms of security of peoples data when using the app. Ian explains at present its important to concentrate on other systems than the app and make sure the phone and interview system can work as well as it can do within the Test and Trace Programme.

Government Guidance

Colin mentioned that RedbridgeCVS have produced, as requested, a summary of the government guidance for organisations looking to return back to their work premises. This document was sent out with the mailing of this meeting. He suggested groups make a risk assessment to help identify what the current risk factors are. The purpose of a risk assessment is to look at the work your organisation is doing to consider what work is still possible to do and what work should not be continued during the current situation and see what changes can be made based on what has been identified. Colin mentioned it may be worth speaking with funders to see what flexibility they can offer groups if you are concerned how to deliver a service you are funded for. He explained that a lot of funders have stressed they will be flexible about project output they are funding you to deliver.