

Reflections of a Director of Public Health during Covid-19

Dr Justin Varney

Director of Public Health

Justin.varney@birmingham.gov.uk



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Role of the Director of Public Health

The Director of Public Health (DPH) is a statutory chief officer of the authority and the principal adviser on all health matters to elected members and officers, with a leadership role spanning all three domains of public health:

- health improvement
- health protection
- healthcare public health

Health Improvement

- Physical activity
- Diet & Nutrition
- Obesity
- Smoking Cessation
- Drug & Alcohol Abuse Treatment
- Public Mental Health inc. suicide prevention
- NHS Health Checks
- Sexual and reproductive health services

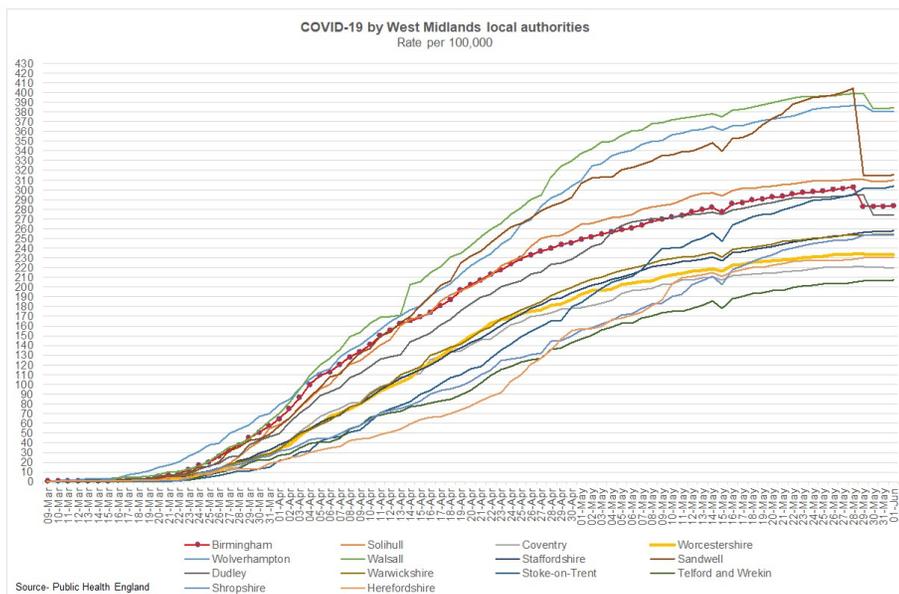
Health Protection

- Immunisation
- Screening
- Infectious disease outbreak response

Healthcare public health

- Quality improvement activity e.g. maternity improvement partnerships

Role of Director of Public Health during Covid-19



- Technical advice to Members and Officers
- Data analysis and presentation
- Community engagement
- Media engagement
- Leading outbreak response
- Interagency partnership with NHS, PHE, neighbouring authorities
- Translating national guidelines to local situations

Engaging Communities during Covid-19

Direct communication & engagement events

- Faith leader groups e.g. Mosques, African & Caribbean churches, Interfaith Groups
- Online ward forums
- Communities of interest/identity groups e.g. WM Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans Alliance
- Translated resources

Media engagement

Regional radio – West Midlands BBC weekly live question & answer session
Community radio – Unity FM, New Style Radio
Online radio - Switch FM
Community podcasts
Local print media – Birmingham Live

Social Media Response

- Whatsapp audio and video segments
- Instagram Live Q&A – targeted at BAME young people
- Instagram videos
- Facebook Live Q&A
- Multi-lingual Streaming Live Q&A e.g. Miripuri channel, Sikh Channel

Public Meetings

- Special Health and Wellbeing Board
- Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny
- Cabinet

Birmingham Special Health & Wellbeing Board

- Community members raised concerns about number of deaths in ethnic minority communities.
- Discussion with NHS Acute Trust & CCG chief exec shared concerns and agree to discuss in special session of Health & Wellbeing Board
- Board convened under special measures in the constitution with 4 days public notice
- Public call for questions via social media submitted to Chair and DPH
- Questions synthesised into 15 core questions answered by different members of the board with discussion
- Meeting live audio-streamed via CMIS & Civico platform and recorded
- All questions answered individually afterwards by email from Chair and responses published alongside the minutes on the [CMIS website](#)
- Letter sent to Secretary of State for Health & Social Care with meeting audio recording and a copy of all of the questions submitted

Reflections

- Hindsight is valuable but important to reflect on the context during which the decisions were made.
- Engagement is time consuming but important and valuable.
- Humble and authentic discussion is important.
- Recognise the history as well as the present situation.
- Important that done by knowledgeable professionals and there is continuity between engagement.
- Important to look at who isn't in the room as well as who is and reach out proactively to groups who are silent.





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PAGE 7