

Covid Update: Community Briefing Note

June 9, 2021

The Government has just announced that whole of Greater Manchester is going to be designated as an Enhanced Response Area (ERA).

This is the status that was given to Bolton recently and other areas including parts of Lancashire.

The reason this is happening is because Greater Manchester Covid cases are increasing and we know that this is linked to the Delta variant of concern, first identified in India, which is easier to spread.

There is no evidence that this variant makes the vaccines any less effective (and they have shown how much they reduce serious illness and hospital admission) – the main issue is how quickly it can transmit from one person to another. **We think it spreads 40% more easily than previous strains.**

ERA status will build on all the work we have already been doing and it also means that we should get extra support around:

- more vaccine supply and help to give it to people,
- military support if needed to set up any additional centres,
- as well as further support around Covid testing and tracing.

It also includes help where needed on supervised testing in schools, as well as extending the wearing of face masks in schools on the same basis as before (which we have already done in Manchester).

There is no travel ban, but people are asked to be careful (staggering journeys etc and work from home where they can).

In Manchester's case our policy has always been to act early - and we already have our own Covid prevention plan in place, which is giving extra focus on those areas where there has been ongoing transmission rates and low uptake of the vaccine.

These eight areas at the moment are:

Ardwick,

Moss Side

Whalley Range

Rusholme

Longsight

Levenshulme

Cheetham and

Crumpsall.

We are also doing more analysis to make sure all areas with low vaccine uptake are supported, wherever they are in the city.

ERA work – which is like to start from the end of this week - will give us further support with the plans and strategies we already have in place, along with all the fantastic work that you and our communities are already doing.

For example, we will be boosting our extra measures to bring more proactive help to those people who need to self-isolate (including financial, emotional, social support, and helping with other issues like looking after pets) so that do not need to break that isolation period. We also want to make it very clear to people that there is no stigma attached to needing help – because no-one asks to catch Covid.

In the meantime, we have a critical window where what we do now as a city, will have a major long-term effect. With that in mind our key advice – which is also ERA guidance - remains the same:

- Take extra care and meet people outside, rather than inside, wherever possible
- Follow all the rules around social distancing, face coverings, washing hands, wiping surfaces and keeping windows open
- Take the vaccination when offered – and if you have any questions please talk to your GP, who will want to help.
- Do the free twice-weekly testing sessions (these are the lateral flow kits that are for people who do not have Covid symptoms). This is because we know that 1 in 3 people can have the virus without ever showing any sign of it. Then, please record your results -and if it is positive please book a PCR test immediately to confirm the result. More details can be found on the council website www.manchester.gov.uk/coronavirus.
- If you have Covid symptoms, please don't delay, book a free PCR test immediately and stay at home until you get your result and advice on if you need to self-isolate.
- Please take the help and support we can offer while you self-isolate. There is no stigma in catching the virus or being a contact.

Manchester will remain open as usual for business – and if we all follow the rules it means that we can all enjoy what the city has to offer.

My final message is one of thanks – please could you share that thank you with all the residents and groups you work with because their continued response to the pandemic is something to be very proud of.

If you need any more details, the latest updates are on:
www.manchester.gov.uk/coronavirus.

David Regan

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