

Appendix 2

‘Trusted Voices’ – engaging with communities to support the management of outbreaks of COVID-19

On coming out of the national lockdown and the devolution of responsibilities for the management of local outbreaks to Local Authorities and their partners, Public Health Dorset has developed a comprehensive communications strategy in support of the Local Outbreak Management Plans for Dorset and BCP Councils. The objectives of the communications strategy are:

- To communicate the NHS Test & Trace advice and guidance, and wider public health messaging, to maximise awareness and compliance and so contain COVID-19 and stop the spread.
- To highlight key messages in the event of an outbreak in particular settings or areas, so that we can contain COVID-19 and stop any further spread.
- To warn and inform residents, staff, businesses, communities and visitors of what actions they need to take and to reassure them as to the actions public services are taking to protect them.

If we are to be effective in achieving these objectives in an effective and timely way, it is critical we develop the right channels of communication, particularly with those individuals and communities who may not typically engage with public sector messaging. It may also be that specific circumstances limit our ability to communicate quickly with people e.g. with those who do not read or speak English; people with a physical impairment or learning difficulty; or people without access to online communications. To support good communication with these and other groups, we have developed an approach to building on existing networks, both as a means of getting key messages out in a timely way, and to learn more about the needs and concerns that communities may have as they seek to respond to COVID-19. Our aim is to better harness the voices of local people, already known and trusted in their own communities.

The Trusted Voices project involves:

- Identifying contacts for those groups and communities that may be less likely to receive and benefit from key public health messaging quickly.
- Inviting those contacts we find to sign up online to a regular e-newsletter (produced by Public Health Dorset) which shares status reports, updates and relevant guidance relating to COVID-19, the prevention of transmission and management of outbreaks. Doing so, will mean they become a ‘Trusted Voice’ for their community.
- Asking those contacts to forward on to their communities the information we share with them, including timely communication of any messaging linked to emerging outbreaks or situations which may occur.
- Asking the Trusted Voices network to feed back to us on:
 - issues or concerns their communities may have in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - any specific communication needs their communities may have, e.g. requirements to translate or reformat material.

It should be noted that the Trusted Voices project is designed to enhance existing arrangements rather than replace them. In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, for example, a Community

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Champions network has already been established and there is already a myriad of existing networks across both councils.

Whilst the project has primarily been developed to support those communities who may not normally engage with public sector communications, there is no reason why people who relate to other settings cannot sign up to become a Trusted Voice too, e.g. those linked to workplaces, other institutions or groups.

In the interest of transparency, the information shared through the e-newsletter, or via other communications with the network of Trusted Voices, will also be made publicly available through the Public Health Dorset website and participants will be asked not to add to, or embellish the messages they pass on to their communities.