

## Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

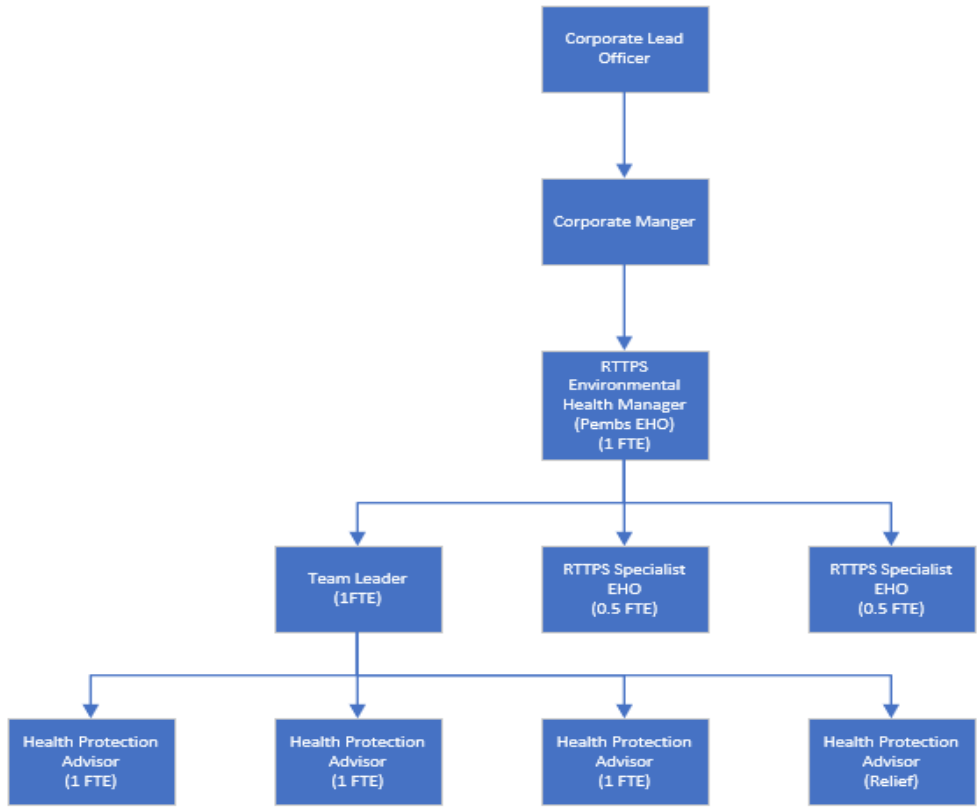
<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	23rd January 2023
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Hybrid
<b>TITLE:</b>	A report on the Trace and Protect service in Ceredigion.
<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT:</b>	To provide an update on the Trace and Protect service for Ceredigion.
<b>REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:</b>	To be updated on the current position.

### Background

In July 2022, a new but temporary service delivery model for the Trace and Protect Service was established, within the Hywel Dda Region. The new service was set up in response to the objectives outlined in [“Together for a Safer Future: Wales’ Long-term Covid-19 Transition from Pandemic to Endemic”](#) and the expectations from Welsh Government regarding the use of the significantly reduced contact tracing funding for 2022-23 i.e. 40% of 2021/22 budget. To account for the reduced budget and reduction in staff numbers (15-20% of the 2021/22 staff complement), Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion TTP services combined to achieve economies of scale and build resilience across the two smaller local authorities. The combined team works alongside the Carmarthenshire TTP service.

Each Trace and Protect Team is supported by a Regional Response Cell (RRC), staffed by the Health Board and Public Health Wales. Each team reports to a Regional Strategic Oversight Group (RSOG) who are generally responsible for agreeing the main strategic direction and priorities. The RSOG is comprised of senior officers from Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, and Pembrokeshire County Councils, Hywel Dda UHB and Public Health Wales.

## Ceredigion Team Structure



Since the beginning of July 2022, contact tracing has been targeted on protecting the most vulnerable and supporting the response to local Covid-19 outbreaks and clusters, primarily in closed care settings. In practice, this means that only positive cases identified as health and social care workers or who are connected to other closed settings such as care home residents, hospitals, and Additional Learning Needs Educational (ALNE) Units are contact traced. Their close contacts are then sent an automated “warn and inform” text message rather than receiving a telephone call.

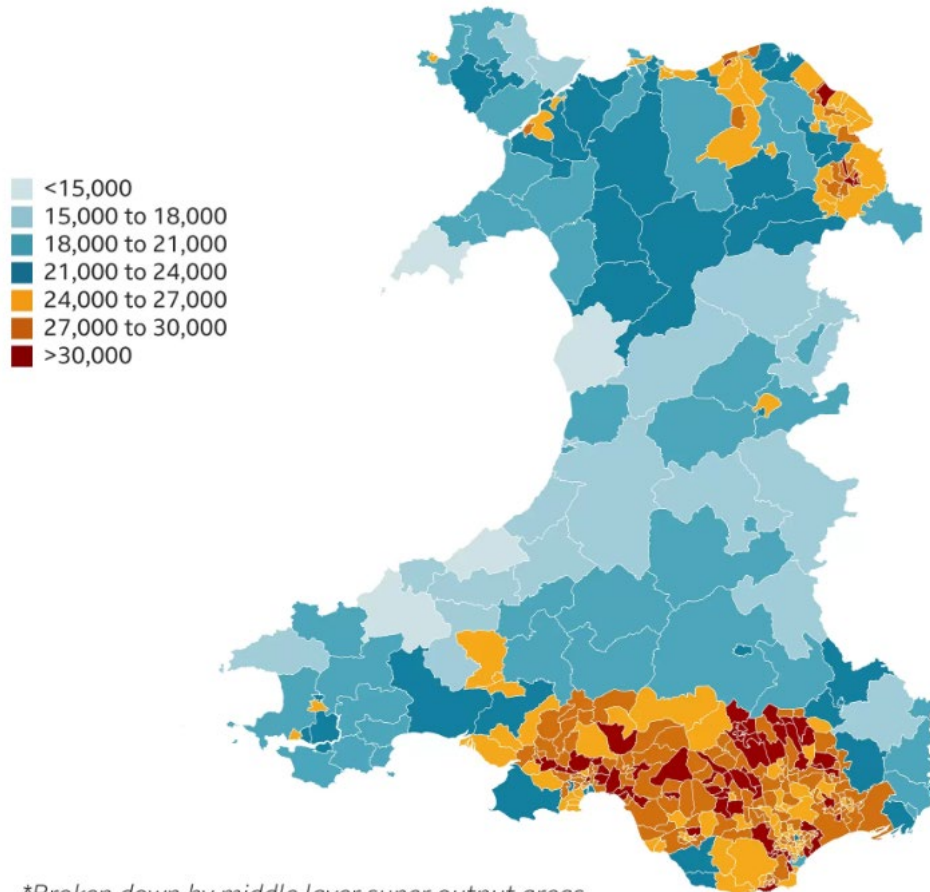
As a consequence, the scope for full contact tracing is very narrow and coexists alongside a significant reduction in the scale of testing now available. Testing is currently only made available to specified groups of individuals within our community, as described above. Widespread community testing, as seen during the height of the pandemic, is no longer available.

## Incidence of Covid-19 in Wales

The series of graphs and illustrations below have been included to visually represent the development of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout Wales since March 2020.

### Welsh Covid-19 cases

Cases per 100,000 people (Mar 2020 - Apr 2022)



*\*Broken down by middle layer super output areas*

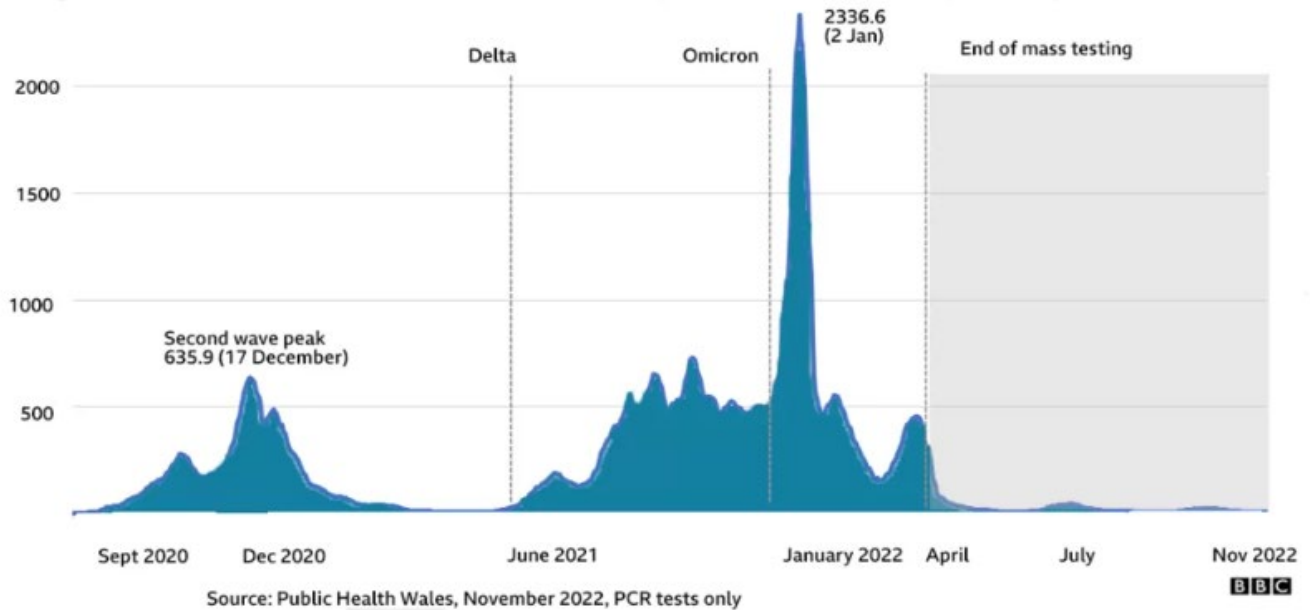
Source: Public Health Wales

**BBC**

The map of Wales above clearly demonstrates that the incidence of Covid-19 in Ceredigion during that period was one of the lowest in Wales. Please note that this map includes cases up until April 2022. Following this mass testing was significantly scaled back.

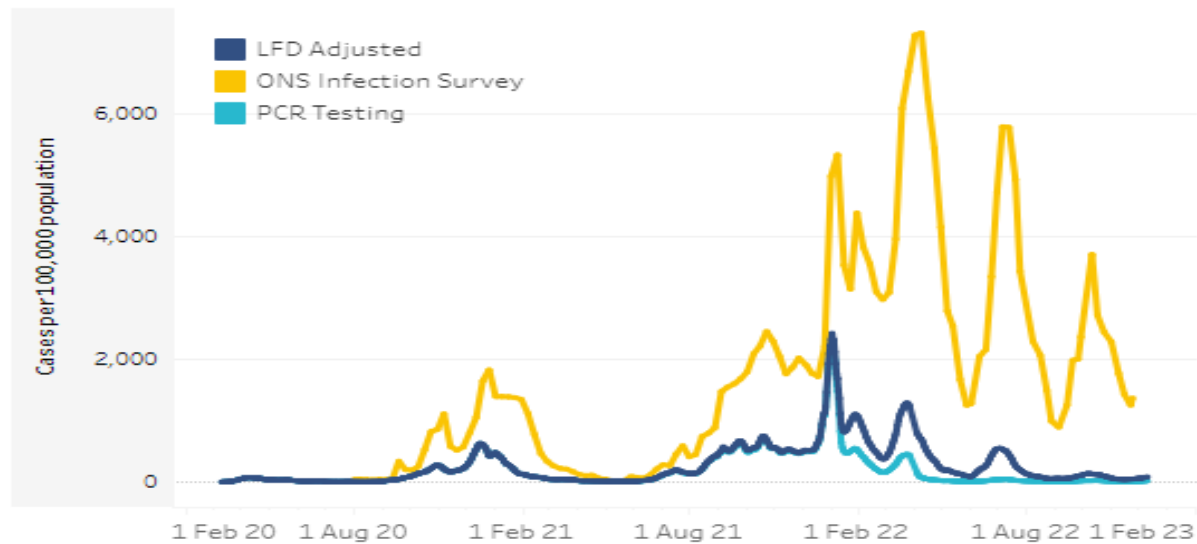
# Covid-19 case rate in Wales

Positive tests per 100,000 people over seven day period



The graph above provides a clear timeline of the development of the COVID-19 pandemic depicting the case rate across Wales over time. The associated 'waves' of the pandemic are clearly visible. Also of particular interest are additional annotations to help provide some context along the timeline, which include the two most virulent variants of COVID-19 (Delta and Omicron) and the end of mass testing.

Comparison of adjusted case episode rates (PCR + LFD episodes) per 100,000 population to cases estimated by the ONS infection survey



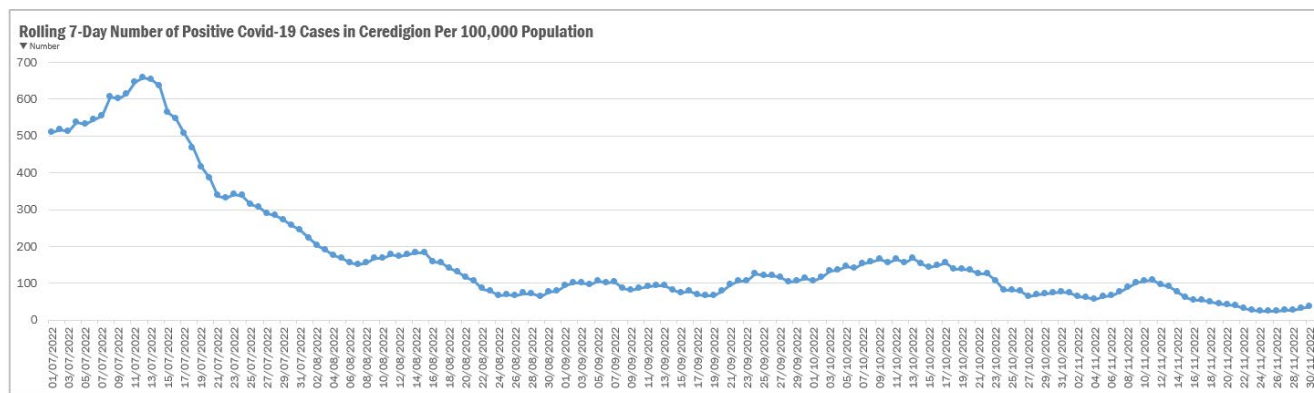
Following the end of mass community testing, the numbers that are generated for the incidence of COVID-19 are no longer reflective of the true levels of infection within the community. The above graph highlights this point by including the data provided by the ONS infection survey (which estimates the true levels of infection in the community) against the cases reported through either PCR or LFD testing. The disparity between the two are more evident post April 2022.

### Current incidence of Covid-19 in Ceredigion.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of July and 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2022 there have been a total of 2647 cases officially reported to TTP in Ceredigion. 591 of which are deemed to be priority cases and therefore would have received a full trace. This accounts for approximately 22% of the total cases reported. The table below provides details of the number of cases per month:

Month	Total	Priority	%
July	1381	255	18.5
Aug	398	99	24.9
Sept	309	59	19.1
Oct	389	106	27.2
Nov	170	72	42.4

Below is a line graph that represents the incidence rate for COVID-19 in Ceredigion per 100,000 population from 1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022.



The incidence rate in this period was highest in mid-July and has fallen since and remained relatively stable over the last four months. The most recent data for December, that are not shown in this graph, are starting to increase.

## Performance

The performance of the Ceredigion TTP team was acknowledged as being one of the best in Wales. The table below illustrates the continued performance of the team in cases received and processed from 1<sup>st</sup> July – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

<b>% Successful follow up</b>	<b>% Cases followed up in 24 hours</b>	<b>% Successfully followed up within 48 hours</b>
97.87%	87.23%	97.87%

## Contact tracing priorities and additional work streams July 2022 - March 2023

Regional Priorities (in order of importance) for the new Team are as follows:

Covid-19 response:	
<b>Priority 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact tracing</li> <li>• Reactive response to significant incidents and outbreaks across the Region</li> <li>• Surge contingency plans and maintenance programme</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-active and preventative advice and support to priority settings (i.e. Health care / Care homes / Special schools )</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-active and preventative compliance checks to priority settings (with referrals to Environmental Health Practitioners, Health and Safety Executive, Care Inspectorate Wales where appropriate)</li> <li>• Engagement with diverse and minority groups with respect to Covid-19 (i.e. health awareness, vaccine uptake, advocacy to ensure they are not disadvantaged by practices/ processes)</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 pro-active and preventative advice and support, compliance checks to lower priority settings (i.e. schools, childcare, large manufacturers and processors)</li> </ul>
Wider health protection delivery:	
<b>Priority 4+</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Tracing of other infectious diseases</li> <li>• Wider health inequalities support for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (i.e. health promotion, childhood vaccinations, participation in screening programmes)</li> <li>• Food safety support</li> <li>• Supporting testing or supporting Covid-19 vaccination</li> </ul>

### **Priority 1 - Contact Tracing / Reactive Response / Contingency Planning**

- From July 2022 contact tracing has continued and is targeted on protecting the most vulnerable individuals. It continues to be the main priority of the team.
- Support and response to significant incidents and outbreaks of Covid-19 within Ceredigion is provided by Specialist Environmental Health Officers who have been retained within the team. These Officers provide public health support to all high-risk settings within the county when outbreaks of COVID-19 occur. These settings include residential/nursing homes and ALNE Units. The officers actively work with these settings providing advice on infection prevention and control to prevent further transmission of the virus.

In Ceredigion there are 18 residential/nursing homes and 10 ALNE Units. When onward transmission of COVID-19 is identified at these settings, enhanced public health interventions are triggered and an incident is declared. On average the Specialist Environmental Health Officers would respond to 2/3 incidences a month. However, this number fluctuates considerably in line with the prevalence of the virus in the wider population and is seasonal dependent - we are currently experiencing an increase in the number of incidents within our care homes during the autumn and early winter period.

- Contingency planning to ensure that mechanisms are in place for a surge workforce if required. A 'reservist' register of previously employed TTP staff is held by the Authority.

### **Priority 2,3 & 4 - Health Protection**

When demand for contact tracing is low and there is capacity within the team, other priority areas are considered which include the following:

#### **Proactive Care Home Project**

The first phase of this project has been completed. All residential and nursing homes in Ceredigion have now received a proactive call from a Health Protection Adviser. The purpose of the call was to discuss their understanding and compliance with current guidance in the care home in readiness for the Autumn and Winter period. Information on the following areas was gathered for each care setting:

- Details of care setting including number of residents and staff
- Details of standard infection prevention and control precautions (IP&Cs) in place
- Details of policies, procedures, and training in place.

The team are now progressing to 'Phase 2' of this project. The information gathered from the care settings has been considered by the Specialist Environmental Health Officers and those homes requiring further assistance and advice have been determined. These homes will receive ongoing proactive support whilst also being provided with training in relation to infection prevention and control. Some establishments have already received specific training in relation to donning and doffing/ hand washing by the Health Protection Advisors. Whilst carrying out this project, Health Protection Advisors have also taken the opportunity to engage again with these settings to promote the uptake of the COVID-19 and flu vaccinations for both residents and health and social care staff.

#### **Investigate sporadic cases of gastrointestinal illness**

As part of the TTP Service, the Health Protection Advisors have developed specialist skills to undertake their duties in contact tracing. These focus predominantly on communication, interviewing and investigatory skills gained during the pandemic. These skills have been



recognized as having value within the wider communicable disease function of public protection. As such Health Protection Advisers have been trained to undertake other communicable disease investigations to assist the wider public protection team.

**Summary**

The team continues to trace and provide support to Covid-19 positive individuals with the overall aim of protecting the most vulnerable in our society. In addition, the team will continue to implement, where possible, the regionally agreed alternative workstreams which promotes the wider public protection agenda.

<b>WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:</b>	<b>Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why</b>		This is a report on an activity not a new policy.
	<b>Summary:</b>		
	<b>Long term:</b>		
	<b>Integration:</b>		
	<b>Collaboration:</b>		
	<b>Involvement:</b>		
<b>Prevention:</b>			
<b>RECOMMENDATION (S):</b>			
That scrutiny considers the content and accept the report for information.			
<b>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):</b>			
<b>Contact Name:</b>	Carwen Evans		
<b>Designation:</b>	Corporate Manager Public Protection		
<b>Date of Report:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2022		
<b>Acronyms:</b>	None.		
<b>Background Papers:</b>			