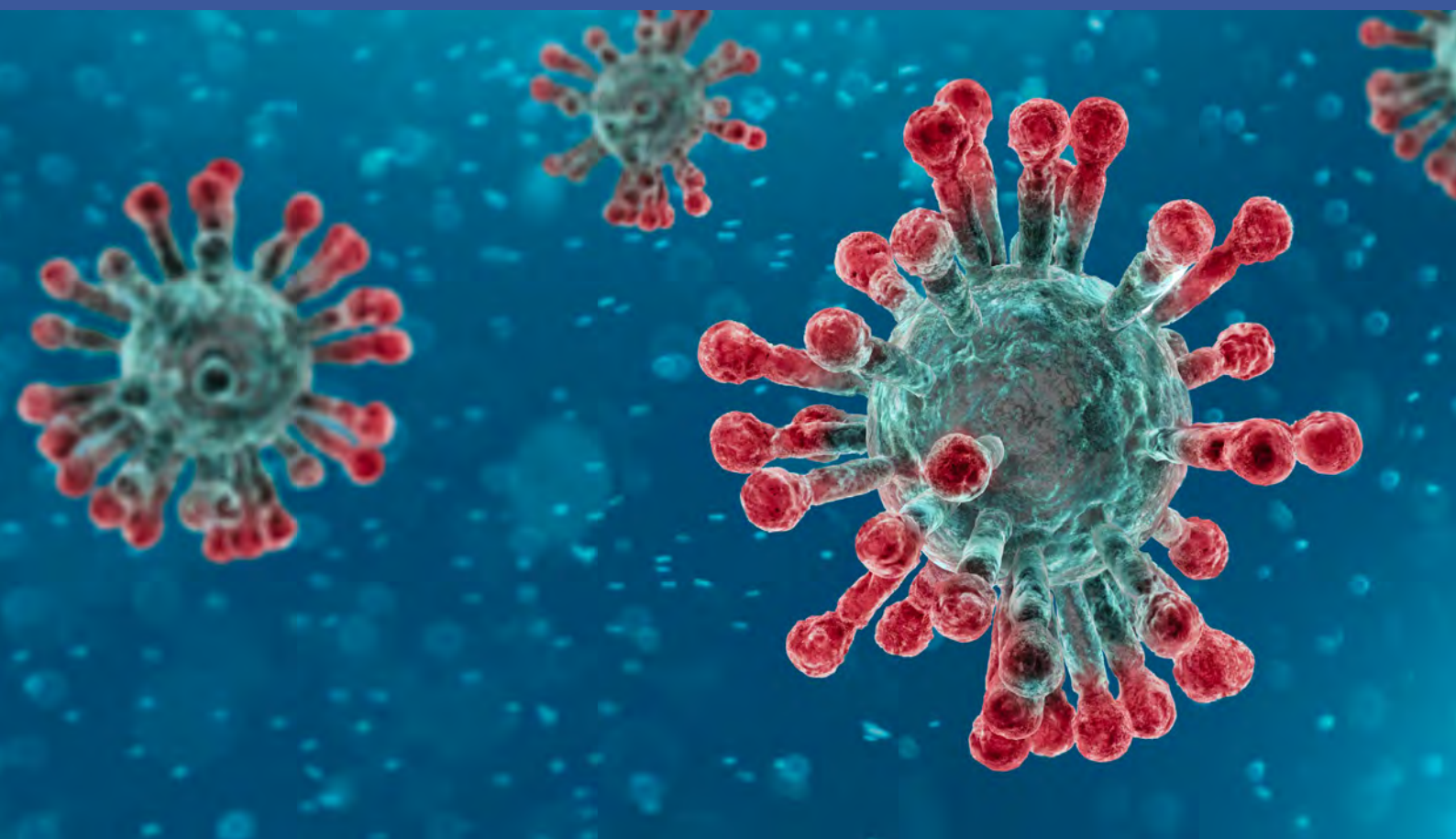


Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020/21 **Swindon**



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Introduction



Welcome.

As a Director of Public Health, I have a statutory requirement under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to produce an annual report, detailing the health of the population. Many Directors choose to theme their report, and for my first report, the theme cannot be about anything but COVID-19.

Since joining Swindon Borough Council in April 2020, I have seen the case rate for Swindon rise and fall. I began early in the pandemic, where the case rate was 0.8 per 100,000 people and have seen this rise to 642 per 100,000 and fall again. Today the rate is 83.3 per 100,000. As I write this (May 2021), we have seen 11,598 cases of Covid-19 across our town and sadly lost 272 lives to the virus.

The year has been a challenging one for professionals and residents alike. The fight against COVID-19 is like being at war against an enemy that we cannot see. However, we have fought back and will continue to fight. We have learnt a lot across the past year, we know what works, what does not work and at the heart of it all, the hard work our residents and communities have put in to protect themselves and each other.

Let me take this opportunity to thank each and every person that has been involved in protecting the health of the people of Swindon across 2020-21 and beyond. This document can never truly capture all the work that goes into protecting the health of our residents, but hopefully can provide reassurance that we are doing all we can, with the knowledge and tools we have to tackle COVID-19 and the impact it has upon our communities.

Swindon: It's up to all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Maddern'.

Professor Steve Maddern

Director of Public Health
Swindon Borough Council

17 May 2021

Foreword



“Our Public Health team has played a critical role over the last year, from the guidance and support provided to local residents, businesses and partners, to the

support provided in the local vaccine rollout and the distribution of PPE to those working on the frontline. Alongside this, the department has continued to meet the day-to-day responsibilities of Public Health, outside of the pandemic.

“I have been immensely proud to see how we as a council, our partners and our residents have responded to the pandemic, working together without barriers in Swindon’s response to what is likely (and hopefully) to be for many of us, the biggest health crisis of our lives.”

Councillor David Renard

Leader of the Council



“This year has shone the spotlight on the role of Adult Social Care and Public Health like never before. Social care colleagues have been crucial in keeping people safe in the

most challenging of circumstances by supporting care homes, providing care to people at home and supporting the voluntary sector to look after residents throughout the pandemic. With the effects of COVID-19 sadly likely to affect our residents for many years to come, the work of Public Health will continue to be just as crucial for our community, particularly with the need to support those suffering with the long-term physical and mental health effects of the virus.

“However, the work carried out by Public Health and others does not start or end with the pandemic, there is so much more work that goes on behind the scenes to improve the health of our local population. As we begin to see brighter times ahead, this work will carry on over the next 12 months, and beyond, with the same dedication shown throughout the past year, to ensure we continue to be able to champion health across Swindon, prioritising support where it is needed the most.”

Councillor Brian Ford

Cabinet Member for Adults & Health

1. COVID-19 – an overview of an extraordinary year

Pandemics are rare and as a Public Health team, we plan for them but never really expect one to occur, particularly one so global and life changing as COVID-19. Back in December 2019 when the first human cases of COVID-19 were identified in Wuhan, China, no one in the UK would have believed that 14 months later, over 120,000 people would have died from the disease and phrases like isolation, contact tracing and lockdown would be commonplace. The first UK case was identified on 31 January 2020 with the first death a month later.

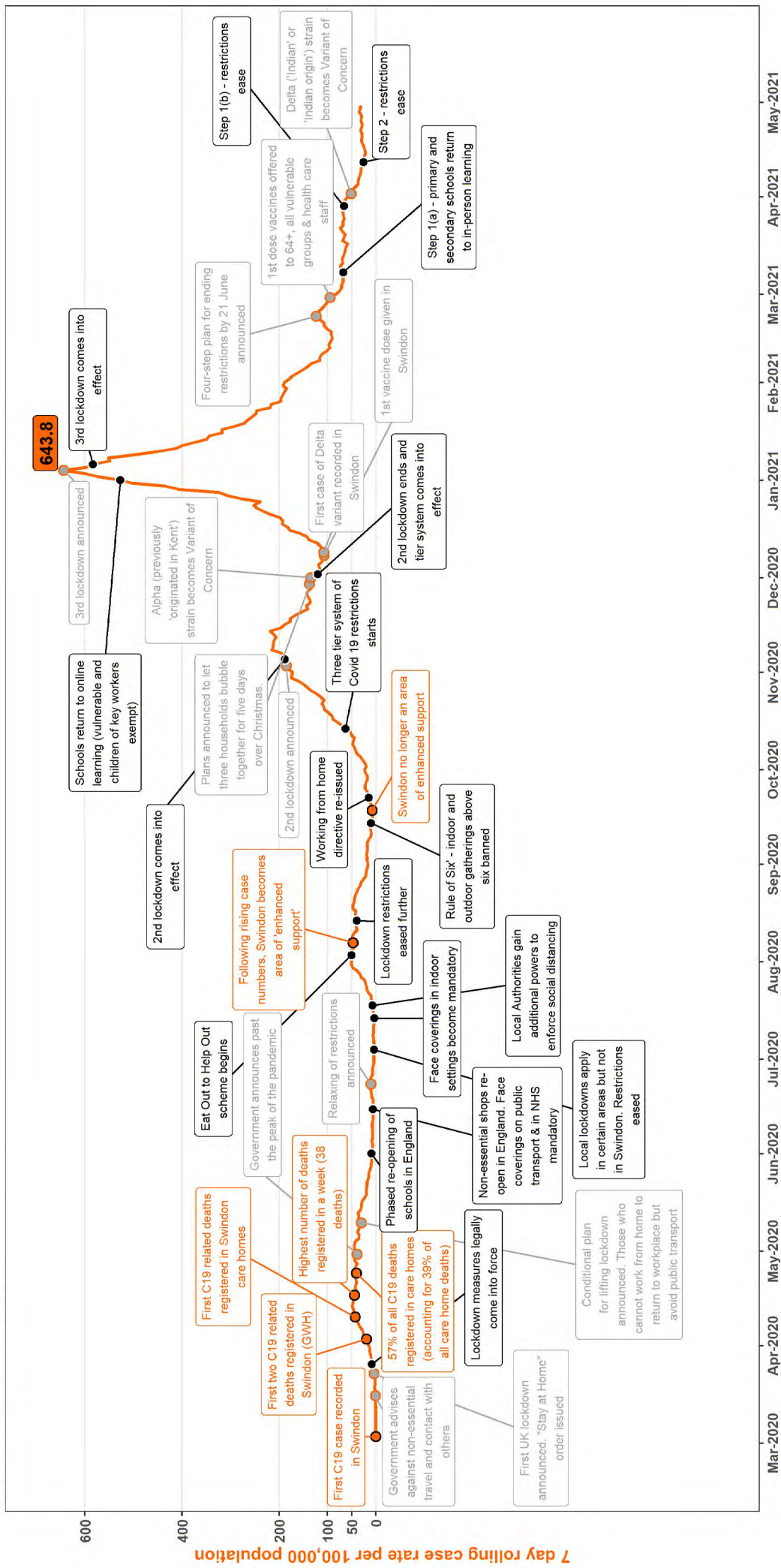
The table below outlines some key events and the chart overleaf the trajectory of cases for Swindon.

| Year | Month | COVID-19 Timeline |
|------|--------------|---|
| 2020 | 3 March | First COVID-19 case recorded in Swindon |
| | 16 March | UK advises against non-essential travel / Swindon Borough Council declared a major incident |
| | 20 March | All schools in UK to close |
| | 26 March | First Lockdown begins |
| | 6 April | Number of cases in Swindon goes above 100 |
| | 12 April | Nationally the number of people dying in hospital with COVID-19 reaches 10,000 |
| | 28 May | Contact tracing systems go live in the UK |
| | 6 August | Number of cases in Swindon goes above 1000 |
| | 23 August | Local contact tracing begins in Swindon |
| | 30 May | First testing centre in Swindon opens at Wroughton Park and Ride |
| | 5 November | Second lockdown begins |
| | 15 September | Additional testing sites open at Broadgreen and Civic Offices in Swindon |
| | 29 December | Highest number of Swindon cases in one day (289) |
| 2021 | 6 January | Third lockdown begins |
| | 10 February | Number of cases in Swindon goes above 10,000 |
| | 22 February | Roadmap published for moving out of lockdown |
| | 15 March | Number of lateral flow tests taken in Swindon tops 100,000 |
| | 6 May | More than 95,000 vaccination first doses completed in Swindon |

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/timeline-lockdown-web.pdf>

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/cases?areaType=Itla&areaName=Swindon>

An overview of Covid-19 rates in Swindon (01 Mar 2020 to 30 Apr 2021)



Readmap out of Lockdown:

Step 1(a) - Outdoor gatherings of up to 6 (or two households) permitted; outdoor sports facilities to re-open; official 'stay at home' rule to end
 Step 1(b) - Outdoor gatherings of up to 6 (or two households) permitted; outdoor sports facilities to re-open; official 'stay at home' rule to end
 Step 2 - Re-opening of non-essential retail, personal care premises, and public buildings incl. community centres, indoor leisure facilities re-open; outdoor attractions including outdoor hospitality, zoos, theme parks; weddings receptions & wakes to rise to 15 people (funerals continue with up to 30 people)

2. The impact of COVID-19 in Swindon



"This year was the most challenging year we have ever experienced – not just at the hospital, or even within the NHS, but across the whole health and care system as we collectively responded to the biggest health crisis of modern times.

"I'm really proud of what was achieved, not just by our own staff but from colleagues in all our partner organisations.

"When others quite rightly were asked to step back, we stepped forward and it was only by working together that we achieved what seemed like an impossible task – to provide care to every patient with COVID-19 who needed it.

"Our hospital has treated more than 1,500 patients with COVID-19 so far. Very sadly many of those patients died, and we also look back and remember those members of our GWH family who we lost this year.

"More positively, our teams have been involved in trialling new types of treatment and we've seen many patients survive the disease and benefit from ongoing care within the community following their discharge.

"Whilst our Covid-19 journey will continue for some time to come, I believe that we will look back and see how our successful vaccination programme carried us out of the pandemic and back to more normal times.

"Our challenge now is to find new ways of working which will enable us to safely recover our services as quickly as we can and treat patients who have been waiting longer than we would like.

"My unending gratitude goes to every member of staff, every volunteer and every member of our community who has stepped forward to support us through a year like no other. When I look back on this year, I will remember the spirit of Swindon and how it carried us through – it really has felt like Team Swindon."

Kevin McNamara

Chief Executive

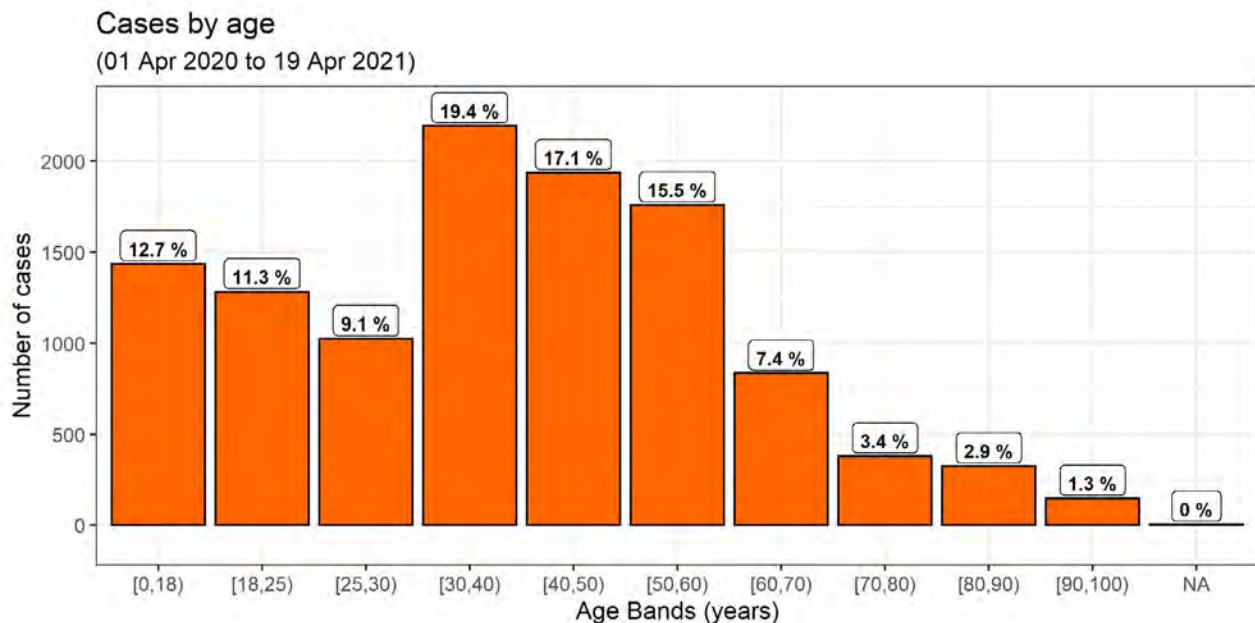
Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

2.1 The numbers

In Swindon, 11,354 COVID-19 cases were recorded between April 2020 and April 2021. So we can compare ourselves with other areas, we have also looked at the number of cases per 100,000 people across each week. This number peaked in January 2021 (643.8 on 04/01/2021). In Swindon we saw more cases in people who were female, between the age of 30 and 60, and who identified as White British or Irish. Compared to the rest of the South West, rates in Swindon were often higher, reflecting our town demographics.

One in five cases were aged between 30 and 40, although across the pandemic, numbers changed with different age groups peaking at different times.

Much of the time, local case rates were driven by the working age population in Swindon, many of whom were still going to work and balancing the demands of needing to earn money in an economy that depended on car sharing and multi-occupancy households, both risk factors for COVID-19. Often the most obvious spread was within households: isolating in small houses proving challenging time and again.



Between April 2020 and March 2021 there were 1,482 COVID-19 related hospital admissions (including those who went to hospital for another reason but were then identified as COVID-19 positive during their stay). This peaked in mid January, during which time over 160 patients were admitted to hospital at one time.

2.2 Profile of cases

Understanding the local situation and who is most at risk of COVID-19 is central to taking action to prevent more cases. Throughout the pandemic we have used local case information to understand who is vulnerable, where they live, what they do and how spread occurs. This is also in the wider context of national research¹ which shows that those who are most vulnerable to hospital admissions and death from COVID-19 are:

- Older people, particularly those aged over 80
- People living in more deprived areas compared to those in least deprived areas
- People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than in White ethnic groups
- People with underlying health conditions (defined as clinically externally vulnerable and asked to isolate in the pandemic)

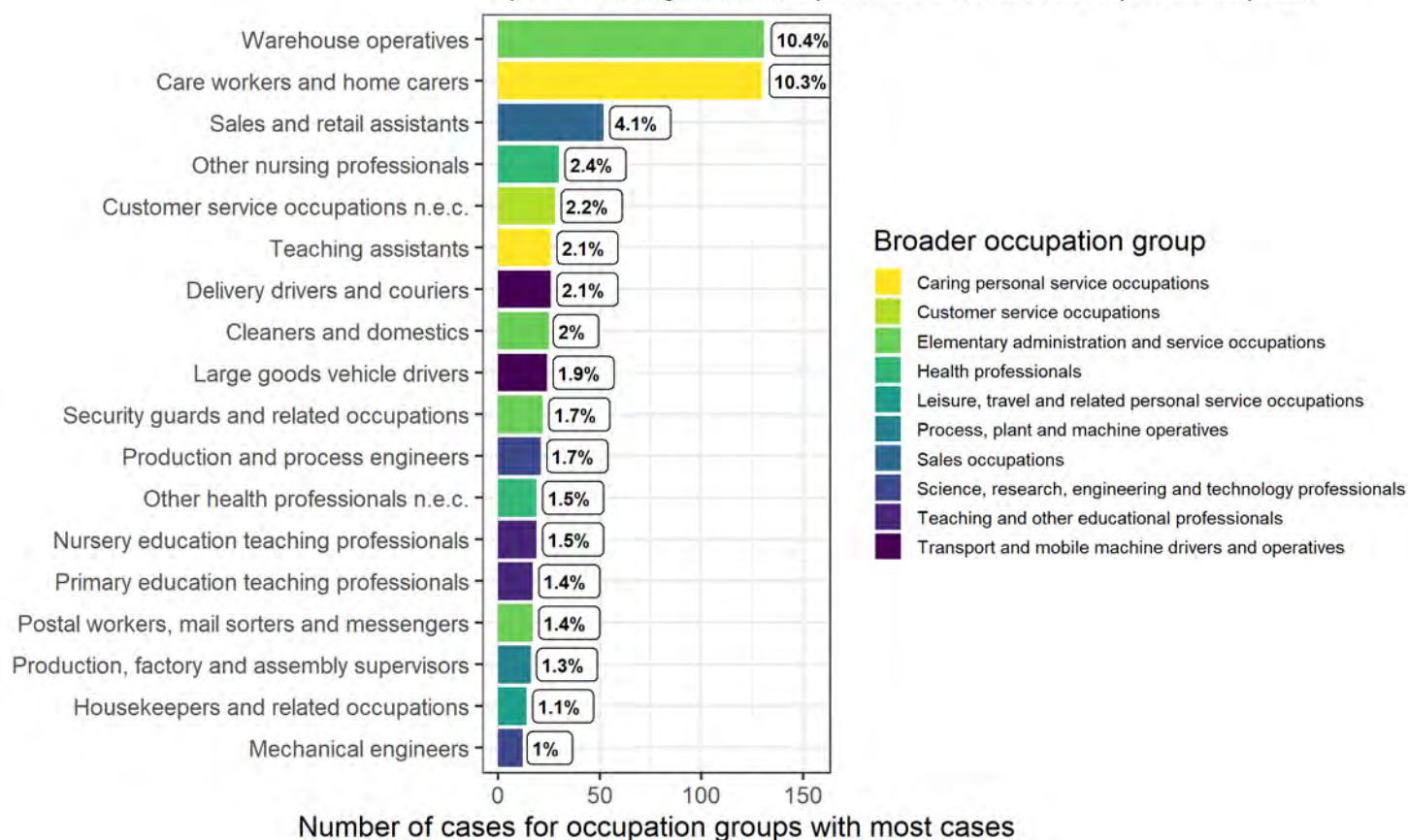
In Swindon we were able to look at case data at a detailed level. Analysis by occupation across a three month period (noting that only one in four cases had an occupation listed) showed that:

- Over half of cases worked in five main occupation groups: administration and service occupations; caring occupations; health professionals; sales occupations; and transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives. Many of these involve work that cannot be done from home
- For outbreaks (two or more cases) reported to the Council by businesses, a majority of cases were in manufacturing, warehouse/ distribution, supermarkets and offices
- There was no clear link between occupations, postcodes and places of work, since people do not necessarily live where they work, but areas with higher numbers of cases in people working in warehouses, cleaning and caring professions, included parts of SN1 and SN2

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID-19_August_2020_update.pdf

Positive cases by specific occupation group since 31/12/2020

Top 50.1% amongst those who provided information with respect to occupation

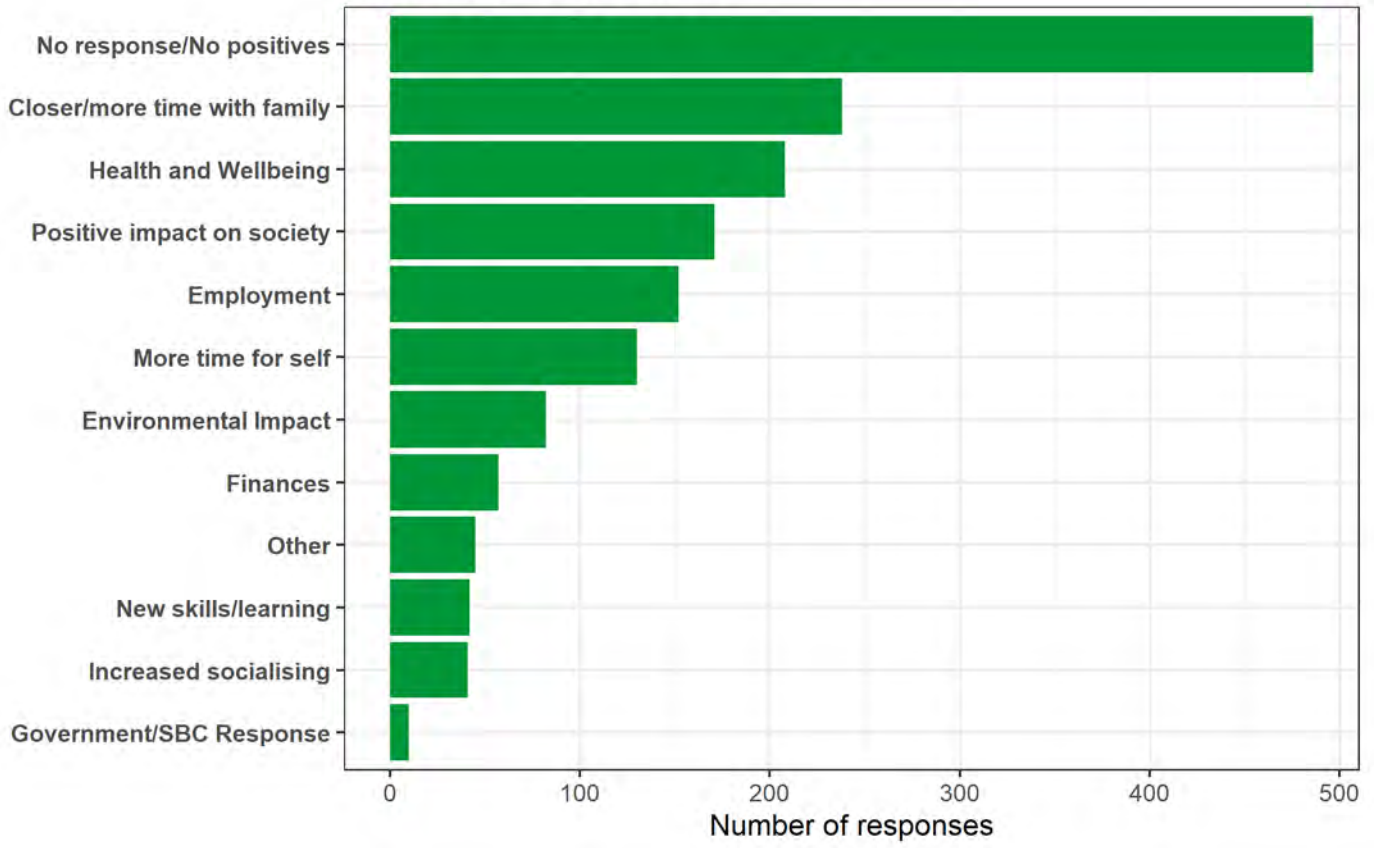


2.3 Residents survey

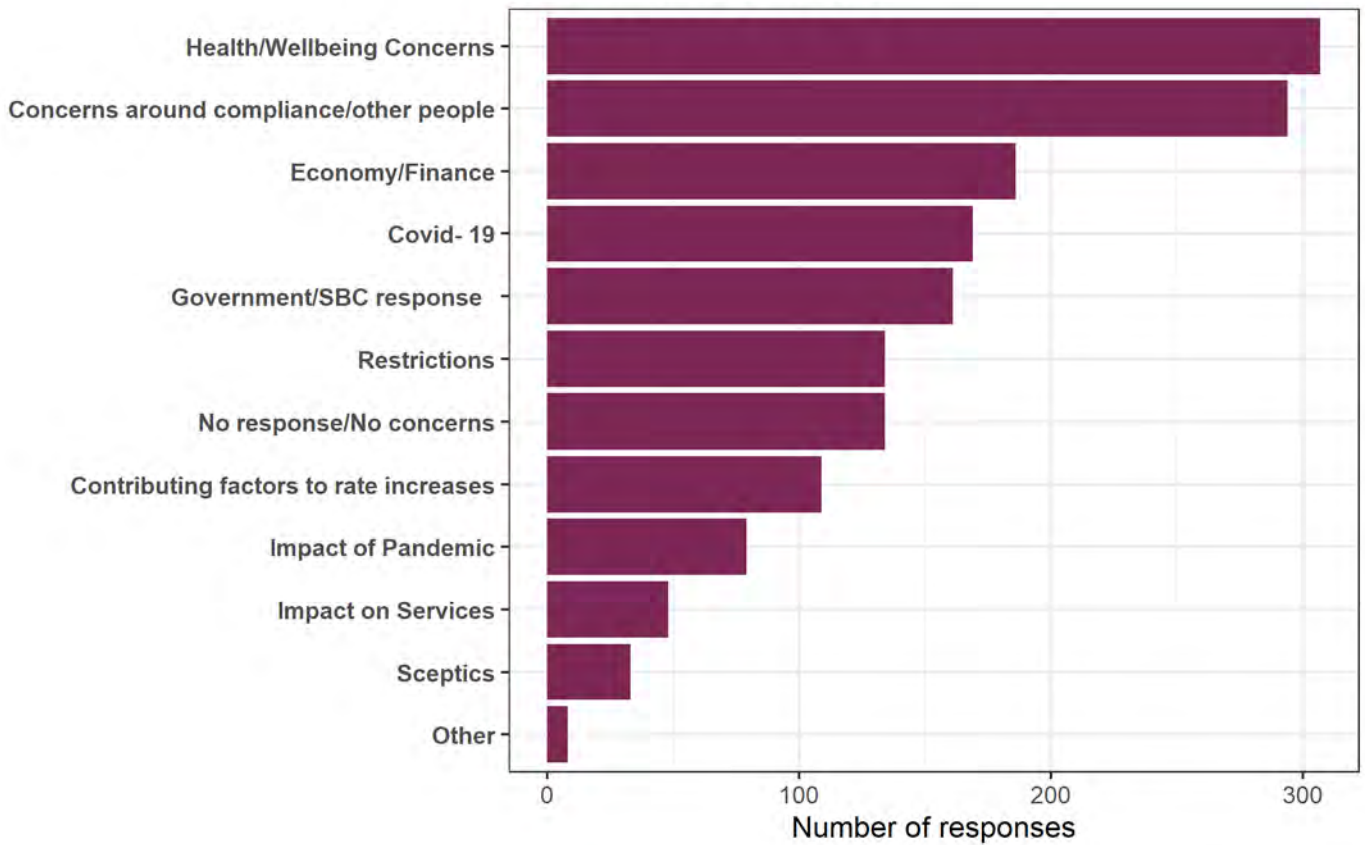
As well as the measurable health effects of the pandemic, we also know that it had a major effect on how people feel. To capture and measure the impact of the pandemic locally, Swindon did a survey of local residents in August and September 2020. Over 800 people replied. The majority were female and aged between 36 and 65.

The survey found that people did follow the national guidance but felt it was not always easy to understand. More than half of people felt their mental health and well-being had got worse and there were concerns about financial and social support. Most people expressed the view that life would not return to what it was like before within one year, although this was not always seen as negative. About one in three agreed that lockdown had brought about positive change, were confident of being happier over the next year and that their life would improve. Priorities for the future mostly focused on exercise, spending more time with family and friends, and following a more balanced and healthy diet.

Main Covid-19 positives



Main Covid-19 concerns



3. Engagement

“When you think of ‘Public Health’ you don’t automatically think of all the fantastic charities and community groups in our town, but our dynamic and vibrant Swindon voluntary sector is such a key cog in the wheel of health and wellbeing in Swindon. During this COVID-19 pandemic, this important and diverse cog truly did keep the wheel spinning with very little oil.

- From 24/7 Domestic Abuse helplines to distributing 90 tonnes of food
- From support to those struggling with anxiety and mental health, to timely financial and debt advice to prevent this escalating
- From support to unpaid carers during the most difficult of times, to mobility aids to enable independent access to shops and essential services
- From support to older people struggling with isolation, to younger people and families struggling too but just in different ways
- From support to those for whom the virtual world presented more challenge, to those who had nowhere to initially isolate other than a doorway

I could go on, in fact I could write a book on the creativity, flexibility; adaptability; dedication; professionalism; collaboration and selfless determination of the collective Swindon Voluntary Sector, staff and volunteers, to help to people at a time when it was never more needed but harder to do. There aren’t many positives to come out of COVID-19 but one is the way that this unprecedented pandemic has brought people and services together, not only across the voluntary sector but with the Council and Parish Councils too. The collective and joined up approach of the statutory and voluntary services in Swindon during this time has been palpable and has forged mutual understanding, respect and collaboration that will be with us long after this pandemic is a memory”.

Pam Webb

CEO, Voluntary Action Swindon

3.1 Businesses

Swindon has lots of different types of businesses, including employers whose staff needed to leave the house to work during periods of restrictions. As well as key workers, there are many distribution centre staff who keep goods and services on shelves and through production to support the national and international economy. Support for employers was provided with Public Health, Environmental Health Officers, Community Engagement, Licencing, Trading Standards, Economy and Communications working together to respond to outbreaks, answer questions and to proactively support businesses to risk assess and put measures in place in line with the guidance and regulations.

Engagement with businesses included:

- Writing to all 1,267 warehouse/ manufacturing/ distribution businesses directly with advice and offer of support
- Holding direct business briefings to give advice about COVID-19 and the situation in Swindon
- Developing car sharing packs to keep people safe when they travel to work
- Webinars for businesses (42 attended) to outline guidance, regulations and answer questions
- Business newsletters – reaching over 750 organisations
- Engagement with key sectors and localities through existing networks including the Taxi Forum, Pubwatch, Parishes and community business forums



The Council's response included managing complaints, concerns and cases/outbreaks across businesses, including:

- Advice emails and phone calls around control measures, compliance and risk assessment – around 355
- Management of around 345 complaints
- 246 Environmental Health visits for various reasons such as complaints, outbreaks and re-openings
- Outbreak control – advice was given regularly over the phone by specialists and Environmental Health for every outbreak identified and 37 Outbreak Control Team meetings held with oversight from Public Health Consultants and/or Public Health England (PHE)

Intelligence to guide the work of the support group was developed over the year. Weekly reports were produced on new cases, contact tracing cases and common exposures, which were used in addition to direct reports of cases and community intelligence.

3.2 Schools / education

Throughout the pandemic, the Council's education team, Public Health and local schools and educational establishments have worked together to reduce the risk of Covid-19 and support different outbreak situations. It has been a challenging time for all teachers both in adapting how they teach but also redesigning teaching space to follow guidance and prioritise learning. As restrictions ease, the impact on mental health and variation in home education will need to be understood and work done to ensure all children have the best opportunity and achievement going forward.



Between September 2020 and April 2021, 301 school cases were reported. Of these:

- 37 were nursery/preschool
- 4 were infant school
- 150 were primary schools and 6 primary special
- 77 were secondary and 12 secondary special
- 13 were FE/College

Where a school has multiple cases, an outbreak control meeting could be called for Public Health, the school, the Education team and communication colleagues to get together to look at the current situation, any risks and anything further that needs to be put in place to reduce the chance of further cases occurring.

As part of an Outbreak Control meeting, schools put in place a range of measures to keep both staff and pupils safe. These included:

- Staggered drop-off and pick up at the school gates
- Encouraging pupils to wash hands when coming into school and leaving; at breaks and lunchtime; with sanitizer at other times
- Introducing extra cleaning duties during the day, ensuring all contact surfaces (doors, handles, rails, etc.) are wiped down regularly
- Mask wearing to follow national guidance
- Creating bubbles, recognising that children will mix but managing this within allocated groups
- Being able to switch to blended learning for any pupils that need to isolate
- Offering alternatives to free schools meals when students are at home
- Virtual pantomimes, choirs, quizzes and games

3.3 Care homes

One of the biggest challenges of COVID-19 has been the effect on care home residents and the balance between keeping staff and residents safe and restrictions on visiting and leaving home. We have worked closely with our social care colleagues, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health England and others to ensure our 100 care homes receive the advice, guidance and support they need.

Support has included:

- Sharing advice and guidance and promoting Public Health England webinars and information
- A weekly provider forum used to update on the current Swindon situation and to understand any local challenges or issues
- Visits by an infection prevention and control specialist to offer advice and guidance
- Work to support with isolation of residents with dementia
- Offering enhanced support and guidance when outbreaks occur
- Sharing of good practice locally and from elsewhere in the southwest

Council care homes provide COVID-safe environment for relatives to visit

Two Swindon Borough Council-run care homes have created special COVID-safe areas so family members can safely meet their loved ones.

Published: Tuesday, 1st December 2020

Staff at Fessey House in Heydon Wick have put together cosy visiting areas complete with decorative lights, candles and flowers to make their visits as special as possible.



Whitbourne House in Park South has also implemented similar arrangements this week as staff have put a small marquee on the outside of the home's conservatory so family members can see their relatives through a glass window eliminating the risk of spreading COVID-19.

More news

[Latest news](#)

[News archive](#)

Case study: Swindon Virtual Senior Games

A virtual Senior Games event was held in September 2020 for six care homes led by the Swindon Sports Forum, Wiltshire and Swindon Sports Partnership and the Council. This included four activities with a bag of resources for each home in a virtual competition. Instruction sheets and Youtube videos were provided and homes had four days to complete activities. Teams of six could be selected for each activity, meaning a total of 24 people could participate from one care home. In total 50-60 residents took part and Gold, Silver and Bronze medals were given out to care homes depending on their performance in the activities along with a certificate to every participant.



"I have not seen any of our customers have that much fun since lockdown began."

"It was such great fun and nice to do something different. We all really enjoyed it."

3.4 Media

Central to the COVID-19 pandemic has been how we communicate locally and ensure the advice and guidance issued nationally makes sense for Swindon. A core part of this has been the Swindon: It's up to all of us brand and campaign. The campaign has been used across posters, leaflets, lamppost banners and social media to raise awareness and as a call to action.

The approach included the message 'Let's do it for our GWH', to encourage people to think about the impact on the hospital in Swindon. A Facebook post in January 2021 declaring a critical incident at the hospital with a call to action reached over 104,000 people and was shared over 1200 times.

Weekly media briefings have kept press, TV and other media outlets up to date with the situation in Swindon and a weekly newsletter with case rates and advice is still emailed to around 30,000 residents on a weekly basis.



4. Action



“The past year has been extraordinary, and while we planned as much as possible for a crisis like the pandemic, we could never fully predict the challenges that would be faced by the Council, its partners, and our community. For Public Health, the pandemic has provided an opportunity to utilise every ounce of our skills, expertise and capability, requiring us to work in partnership to take swift action, put those carefully laid plans into practice, make quick but crucial decisions, and to ensure we are providing the support the residents of Swindon need.

“Despite the tragic stories of suffering and loss we’ve heard over the past year, we’ve also seen stories of hope and kindness across the town, with over 200 volunteers recruited to support the most vulnerable members of our community, over 3,000 prescriptions delivered to those shielding and incredibly, over 1.2 million pieces of PPE distributed in Swindon. Through sadness and difficulty, the pandemic has brought out the very best in people, and I would like to thank everyone who has played their part throughout the past year, to support their friends, neighbours and those most in need.

“The pandemic has also given the Council more visibility across the town, with residents now having a greater understanding of the many aspects of council work, including Public Health, and the invaluable role it plays in our community. As we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, we look forward to building on the strengths and opportunities of the last year and working with partners to continue to make Swindon a healthy place to live, work and play.”

Susie Kemp

Chief Executive

Swindon Borough Council

4.1 Shielding and supporting the community

From 29 March 2020, anyone who was considered to be extremely clinically vulnerable due to their risk of contracting COVID-19 was advised to 'shield'. Shielding involved staying at home at all times and avoiding any face-to-face contact with other people, including avoiding going shopping, or attending social activities, and for many people started a time of isolation that was to last almost 12 months. In Swindon, over 5000 people were in this group. Communities rallied round to support each other almost immediately, with many stories of food deliveries, zoom calls and telephone support. The Live Well team at the Council contacted over 4,700 residents following the introduction of shielding to provide assurance, information and signposting, offering support as necessary.

For the wider community, the team also supported anyone in need. Support included delivering nearly 1500 food boxes and nearly 3500 prescriptions across the pandemic. Having someone at the end of the phone for support was crucial for many residents and gave a new perspective on the role of a local council.

"I asked for help with collection of my medication and by late afternoon it had arrived. Everyone went out of their way to be helpful and reassuring. Sadly I can't remember all their names but to the lady who rang me from your office, the young man from SBC customer service, two ladies in Live Well and the volunteer who brought me two different lots of medication. Thank you so much for all your help."

"We are writing to thank all the people who looked after us during shielding. I don't know how we would have coped if it wasn't for you all. Everyone who delivered our food boxes were amazing and friendly and nice, every time I phoned the Council the operators were very helpful and considerate."

"Hi, we received our food boxes yesterday, sorry to waste your time but I just wanted to give our enormous thanks to you and the wonderful volunteers. Honestly it made us cry how fast we received the boxes full of brilliant and useful things and my daughters were overjoyed to receive pink wafers and pasta. Thank you all for what you are doing."

4.2 Enquiries

In March 2020, the Public Health team set up a COVID-19 Response email box to allow anyone in Swindon whether a local resident, school, business, to ask any queries about COVID-19 and to be made aware of cases in real time when needed. Over 2,000 enquiries have been received as of May 2021, requiring us to provide the interpretation of hundreds of pieces of guidance, advice on over 100 risk assessments and support for hundreds of businesses. Below is a flavour of some of them.

What is the recovery time for COVID-19?

If a member of staff member becomes symptomatic at work and they don't drive, nor have a family member that can collect them and they need to use the bus, what do we do?

Is it ok to use a fan to blow air through a heated element to warm rooms in the colder weather? With the recommendations about ventilation should we also be letting fresh air in at the same time i.e. opening a window?

I wonder if somebody could give me a call? I'm a head teacher and one of my teaching assistants has tested positive this evening.

I am a personal trainer and having been holding sessions in my back garden following COVID-19 secure guidelines. Am I able to continue working throughout the lockdown as the guidance states you can meet one person for exercise, but that you are not allowed to meet in a back garden?

We have exams next week and are following national guidance about spacing. My concern is if we had a positive case would all students that have been in the room need to self-isolate?

We had an email from a local resident in Swindon. The local resident had observed lack of social distancing on one of the buses from the bus station. The bus was full, with people standing.

I tried to book a drive-in COVID-19 test via the government website and was told the nearest centre is Birmingham airport. How do I get a local test?

We provide a dog grooming and pet food service which is essential for the welfare of animals. Do we need to close in the latest lockdown?

Can Community Centres Remain open and if so what sort of activities are allowed?

A rep visited a bookshop who since tested positive. What should we do?

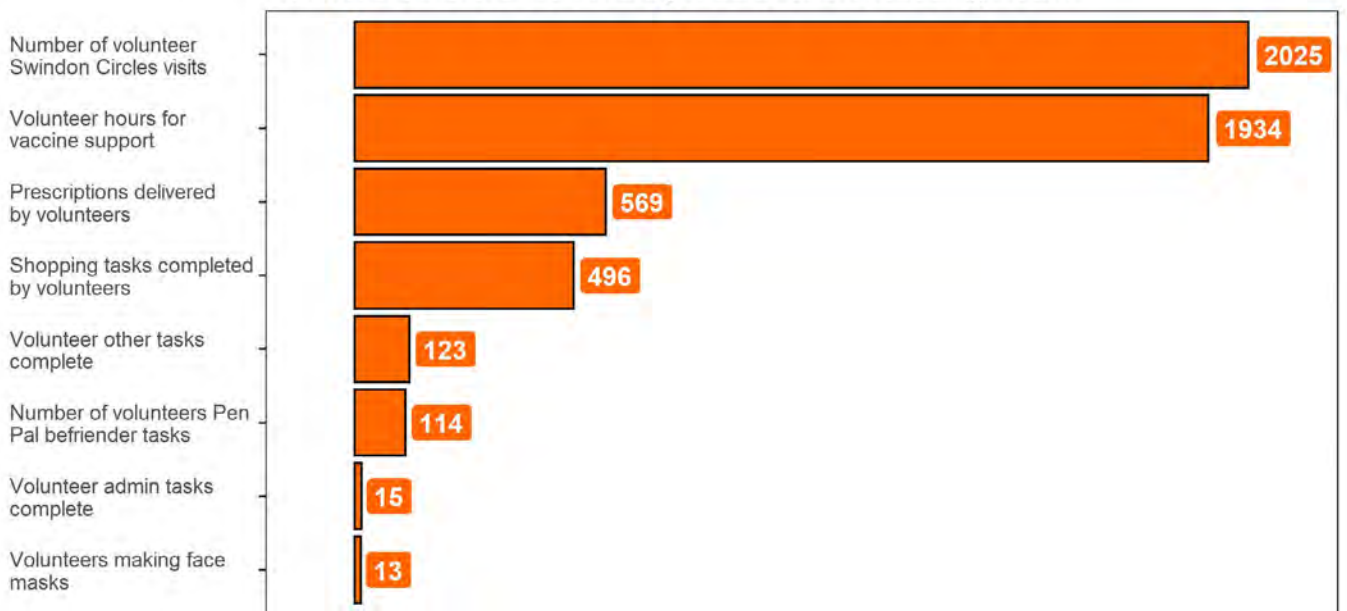
For good COVID-19 hand hygiene, is it better to have hand driers or paper towels?

4.3 Volunteering

Central to the support across the pandemic have been the fantastic efforts of hundreds of volunteers. As well as all those across Swindon, the Council's Livewell Team has been organising volunteers to do everything from supporting the vaccination rollout to making face masks. Between April 2020 and March 2021, 14,387 hours of volunteer time has been contributed.

At the start of the pandemic, Compassionate Swindon was set up by Voluntary Action Swindon to on-board volunteers as quickly as possible. The Council supported this effort by creating an online portal so photo ID and references could be uploaded, and helped those who found online shopping difficult or ran out of cash at home and were unable to go out.

Volunteers via the Community Health and Wellbeing Team



As well as responding directly to COVID-19 need, the Livewell Team also:

- Set up a phone befriending service that meant isolated residents could receive a friendly phone call from a volunteer
- Created the Pen Pal service for people who had a hearing impairment and the phone befriender service was not appropriate where a volunteer and resident could correspond through letters
- Co-ordinated Swindon Circles Volunteers who baked cakes and left them on the door steps of residents

Volunteers supporting the Vaccination Centre at Steam



4.4 Testing

Testing people for coronavirus has been a central strand of government policy to reduce risk and encourage people who are positive to isolate. Testing is important as it can identify cases without symptoms and also identify those with COVID-19 who may need care. There are two types of test used in the UK:

- **PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests which are mainly for people with symptoms and are sent to a lab for results**
- **Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) which are for people who do not have symptoms and can be done regularly at home or in a workplace or school with results back after about 15 minutes**

In Swindon, PCR testing is available at Wroughton Park and Ride, Broad Green Community Centre and the Civic Campus in the centre of town. LFT testing for residents is available by ordering online but also via a range of pick-up points, including some pharmacies, and is distributed in the community and at events by the Livewell Team.



Between April 2020 and March 2021, there were 13,476 positive tests recorded in Swindon and over 100,000 negative ones. We also look at positivity rates which is the percentage of people testing positive compared to the number of people taking a test. In January 2021, the month during which the highest number of cases per day were recorded, positivity rates varied between 7.6 per cent and 17 per cent. However, in September 2020, one of the months when the lowest number of cases were recorded, the reported rates were between 0.4 per cent and 1.7 per cent.

Support was provided to businesses during the roll out of regular asymptomatic testing, including:

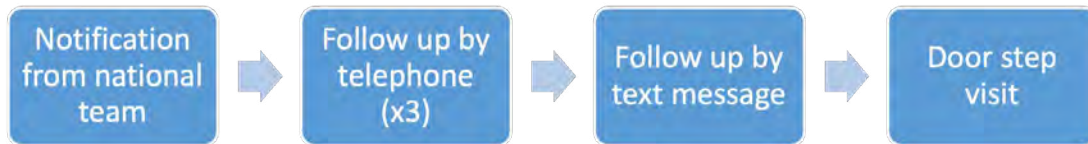
- Prioritising high risk occupations for asymptomatic testing – 1301 businesses identified and invited directly (812 of these were taxi drivers)
- Promoting the national asymptomatic testing programme – 49 businesses signed up, covering 1690 employees to date
- Writing to those signed up with the national programme to offer support with implementation (although no issues were identified)
- Continuing the roll-out of asymptomatic Community Testing – offering this to all people not working from home

4.5 Contact tracing

A key part of the approach to reduce the risk and spread of COVID-19 is via contact tracing. This is a proven Public Health approach, used for many diseases such as meningitis and hepatitis, through which contacts of confirmed cases are identified and are subsequently followed up with an intervention. Sometimes this is a medical intervention, such as a prescription for prophylaxis. For COVID-19 in particular, the intervention included asking people to isolate for a period of time so

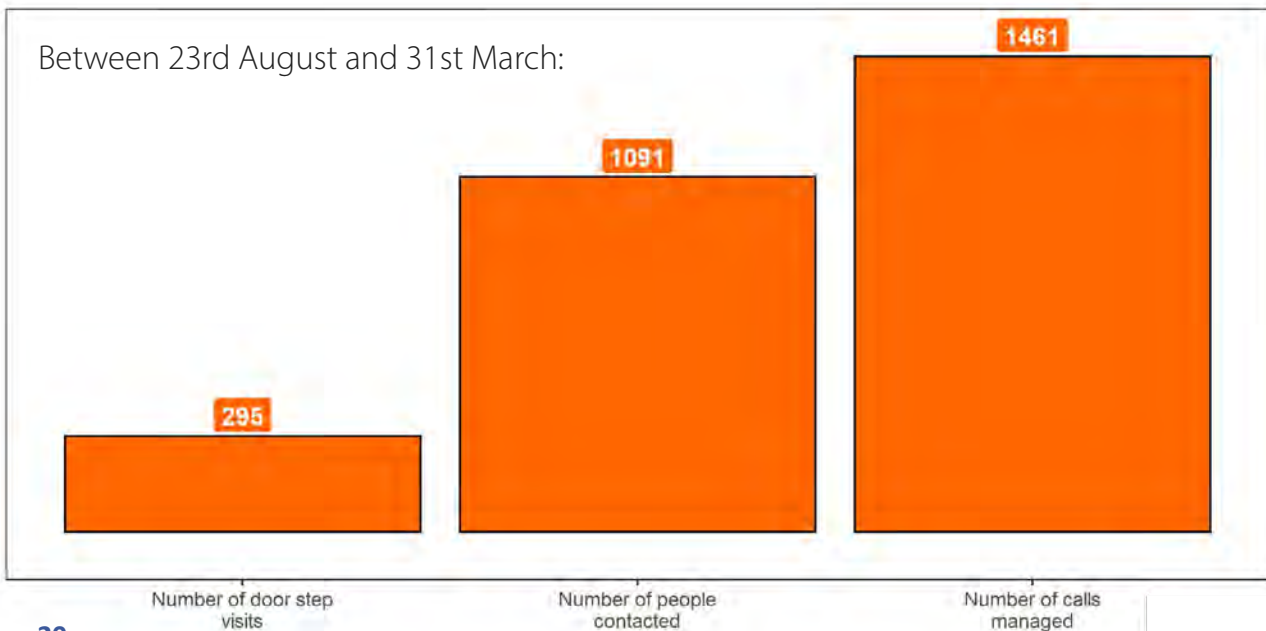
they didn't pass on the disease during their infectious period. Contact tracing was initially carried out by a national team. However, Swindon was the first area to do local contact tracing for those people who the national team were unable to get in contact with. The team were trained in the Contract Tracing and Advice Service System (CTAS) which is part of the national Test and Trace system, and have worked closely with Public Health England to develop guidance and best practice.

The process



Highlights

- This was a cross-council effort, with different departments working together where contact information is either missing or needs clarification, in order to complete contact tracing
- The team has been contacted by other local authorities and asked about the successful Swindon model
- Swindon's Test and Trace programme was featured on BBC Points West and BBC Wiltshire Radio
- Council staff and registered Volunteers were able to help us with cases where English wasn't a first language. The team was creative in constantly trying ways of overcoming barriers if there was a language not known to our translators



4.6 PPE

Early on in the pandemic, one of the big issues across the country was the availability of Personal Protective Equipment or PPE. In Swindon, teams across the Council worked together to set up a distribution system to ensure anyone in need of PPE had a point of access. This included managing demand both in the Council and for other providers for the supply of:

- Surgical masks and fluid resistant masks
- Disposable aprons
- Gloves
- Eye protection
- Hand sanitisers

Tens of thousands of masks, aprons and gloves were distributed. A single care home could use over 4000 gloves a week.



4.7 Financial support

The Council also stepped up to help the community in a different way. When people needed to self-isolate due to being a case, contact or parent, they were, and continue to be, eligible for financial support if they meet certain criteria. Initially these were:

- be making your application during your period of self-isolation, or no more than 42 days after the first day of your period of self-isolation or your positive test result
- be employed or self-employed on the day you have to start your isolation
- have lost, or will lose, income by being unable to work from home while self-isolating, because your employer will pay you less or not pay you during this time
- meet the low income threshold or be in receipt of a range of benefits

The Council developed a process linked to Test and Trace to provide payments. The scheme started in October 2020 and by 7 April 2021, we had received 1759 isolation payments applications.

4.8 Vaccination

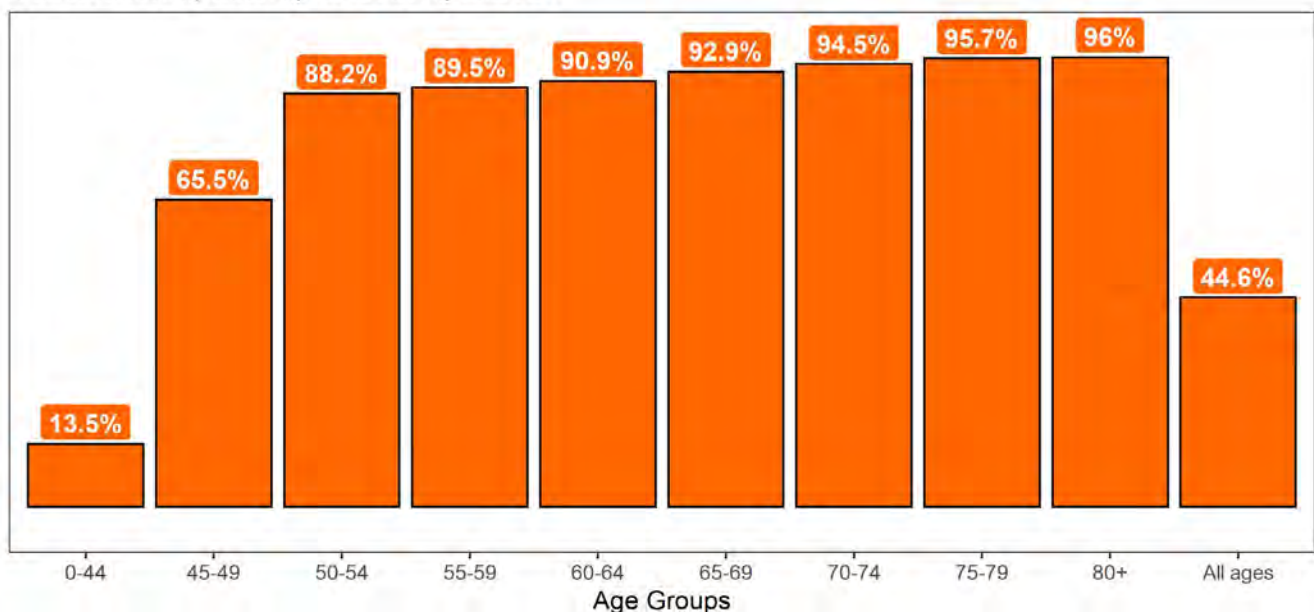
It was acknowledged from early on that a key part of the route out of the pandemic was vaccination. In December 2020, the UK became the first country in the world to approve a COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer) followed by a second at the end of the month (AstraZeneca). The Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Clinical Commissioning Group has led the local rollout of the vaccination programme with local sites



including STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway, Great Western Hospital and pharmacies. As well as following the national Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) guidance on rolling out the vaccine to priority groups, those over 80 years of age and health and social care staff, we have also worked hard to address any barriers to access, including pop-up clinics at accommodation for people who are homeless and a vaccination bus travelling around areas where take up is low. By the end of April take up was over 90 per cent for those aged 60 and over.

We have also worked with community leaders to promote vaccination and to understand what local concerns are. Webinars and local information have been produced to ensure people can make an informed choice and know where to find reliable and evidence based information about the vaccine.

Vaccination uptake up to 25th April 2021



5. Next steps – living with COVID-19

The challenge of a pandemic is not only doing our best while it is happening, but also what recovery looks like and what we learn from the experience. COVID-19 is a core Public Health issue but so are the mental and physical health effects that will be part of our day to day lives for years to come. Many of the outcomes and learning we already knew about, but something on the scale and impact of the last 12 months brings them home like never before:

- How communities pull together in crisis and are willing to support each other and give practical and emotional support
- How workplaces and staff can adapt and change – from museum manager to a COVID-19 testing lead or a sports coach to distributing food parcels
- How change on an hourly basis can be both stressful but exhilarating, but also how difficult that can make returning to normal
- How working together at speed became commonplace and ‘who will pay’ changed to ‘how can we get this done’

Moving forward will not be going back to 2019. Our ways of living and working and view of health and priorities have changed irreversibly. A long distance drive to see a loved one seems like the other side of the world when you are not allowed to leave your immediate area, and a simple cough which had the power to kill was a far greater behaviour change tool than years of health promotion posters, leaflets and adverts.

This report provides an overview of both the Public Health and council response in Swindon during 2020-21. Hopefully the years to come will build on the best of this crisis and our communities in Swindon will emerge stronger, more connected and more resilient than ever before.

Public Health

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