Local Lockdowns:
Social Distancing & Self-Isolation
Supporting Compliance

INTRODUCTION

Regulations restricting freedom of movement across the UK were implemented in late March 2020 to prevent/reduce the spread of Covid-19, including a period of full national lockdown (March-May). More recently, areas identified as having an increase in local transmission have been required to enter 'local lockdown' as part of Local Outbreak Plans. To effectively reduce/prevent the spread of Covid-19 in these areas, compliance to social distancing requirements is essential. Understanding the behaviours that support compliance is therefore key to the success of the prevention agenda.

For residents to comply with requirements to social distance during periods of local lockdown they need to have the capability, opportunity, and motivation to do so[1]:

1. **Capability**
   The physical and psychological capability to perform the behaviour (i.e. the knowledge and skills).

2. **Opportunity**
   The physical and social environment provides support to perform the behaviour.

3. **Motivation**
   Social distancing is consistent with their values and identity, beliefs about their ability to socially distance, and their belief in the benefits of doing so/ consequences of not doing so.

As steps are actively taken to implement Local Lockdown Plans, consideration should be given to the widely acknowledged risk that social distancing/isolation place upon an individual's mental health[2]. As such, local authorities should ensure that adequate measures are taken to protect the mental health and wellbeing of all residents, particularly those most at risk.

This briefing paper aims to share the key recommendations on supporting compliance to social distancing/self-isolating in areas of local lockdowns. A full review, which also includes supporting the mental health of those complying with these restrictions, and an accompanying brief, can be found here.

[1]Michie S, Rubin GJ, Amlot R. Behavioural science must be at the heart of the public health response to covid-19. BMJ. February 28, 2020.
[2]J. Banks & X. Xu, 'The mental health effects of the first two months of lockdown and social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, 2020', Institute for Fiscal Studies; E. A. Holmes et al., 'Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health science', The Lancet Psychiatry, 7, 6 (2020), 547-560.

RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS

To inform the recommendations made within this briefing a review of the available literature was completed, identifying key factors that have been shown to increase the likelihood that residents will comply with social distancing measures during periods of local lockdowns. These are:

- Residents know exactly **what to do** and are **confident** that they can do it.
- Residents are **motivated** to change their behaviour and to maintain it for the duration.
- **Vulnerable groups** are identified, and their specific risks/needs considered.
- There is **regular, open communication** in times of uncertainty.
- Residents have **access to essential goods,** services, and practical support.
- Residents have **access to mental health support** and services.
- Residents can **socially connect/engage** with others.
- Residents are **empowered** to help themselves.

The following recommendations provide a brief overview of the principle, specific guidance on how each principle could be applied, along with an example of its application within a local authority. Following the recommendations section, a selection of useful tools and resources for each recommendation have been provided.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Make it clear what people need to do

If people understand what you want them to do and why, they are more likely to do it, particularly if it is something that requires them to make personal sacrifices.

Recommendation: ensure that communications clearly articulate exactly what people need to do, when you want them to do it, how they should do it, and why. Do not use terms that are ambiguous or open to interpretation, for example 'as much as is practicable'.

Example: use short succinct instructions such as 'work from home, if possible', 'avoid visits to long-term care homes/settings', and 'avoid going into the community unless absolutely necessary'. Providing examples of what constitutes 'absolutely necessary' within the specific context can add further clarity, as can accompanying any messages with clear images that relate to the instruction.

Make people aware of the personal risk

People are more likely to do something if they perceive a personal risk to not doing so.

Recommendation: increase knowledge of the personal risks associated with non-compliance with social distancing and provide clear guidance on what actions they must take to reduce the risk.

Example: consider messages like 'social distancing during a pandemic can save your life', and 'stay home, stay safe'. Consider imaging that demonstrates the risk i.e. one person in a group with Covid-19 with the others unaware can be helpful.

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Increase sense of responsibility to others

People are more likely to do something if they believe that not doing so will place other people they care about at risk.

Recommendation: increase knowledge of the risks to others (in particular, friends, family, and neighbours) associated with non-compliance to social distancing. Use communications to induce feelings of responsibility to others.

Example: terms like 'we social distance now so that when we can come back together, nobody is missing', and 'social distancing may not be for you, but it is for everyone' are examples of language that emphasises our responsibility to others.

Build confidence

People are more likely to do something if they feel confident that they can achieve it and that it will be effective.

Recommendation: communicate the requirements positively, with an emphasis on protecting oneself and others, and in a way that instils confidence in the effectiveness of doing so.

Example: consider messaging like 'social distancing does not mean social disconnection', 'reach out and connect with that long-lost friend/relative', and 'social distancing isn't difficult – we are here to support you'. You may also want to consider using case studies of people (relatable messengers i.e. community leaders and key influencers) demonstrating the performance of the behaviours and their effectiveness.

Motivation

Different things motivate different people, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work for everyone.

Recommendation: research the different motivational levers for different groups and communities (via surveys, focus groups etc.) and ensure that communications focus on a variety of these influencing factors. For example, some people are motivated by a desire to protect themselves, for others it is protecting their loved ones, and for others protecting the NHS.

Example: emphasising the impact on the NHS is a particularly salient message that has resonated across the UK, for example 'Stay home, protect the NHS, save lives', and can be a powerful additional motivator to the drive to protect oneself or others.

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Use the power of social approval

Fitting in with others, and being viewed positively by those around us, is a powerful motivator for many people. Social disapproval can increase compliance with pro-social behaviour.

Recommendation: clearly articulate the desired behaviours, emphasising the way in which others in the community will view their actions positively. Provide examples of good practice, encourage residents to keep their community and neighbours safe, promote a strong collective identity, and communicate the responsibility each member has to each other. Take care not to inadvertently encourage social shaming or stigma.

Example: messages that focus on 'We all must do it to get through it' and 'we are in this together', and 'we can only do this together', can be accompanied with examples that emphasise pro-social behaviour – 'be a good neighbour and stay two meters apart', and 'keeping your distance keeps your community safe'. You could also use images and case studies that support these messages.

Provide alternatives

People are more likely to comply with requests to give up social/outdoor activities that they enjoy if they can engage in indoor activities that are enjoyable and rewarding.

Recommendation: communicate to residents the resources and support that are available, and develop the infrastructure required to deliver these. For example, by utilising support from within the community.

Example: create a campaign that emphasises that social distancing doesn't need to be boring, and create a digital pack of resources that includes things like links to online museums, digital learning courses, podcasts, music playlists, or access to the local library's eBook and audio book collection. Advertise via social media channels and through key community members. If there are local faith groups, support them in taking their congregation online.

Ensure access to essential goods, services, and practical support

People are more likely to comply with requests to remain indoors if doing so doesn't restrict their access to essential goods, like food and medicine. Financial support is also key for compliance for those where there is a loss of income/employment.

Recommendation: ensure residents are aware of the support available to them, including financial support, and the online resources that they can use, for example online shopping and information on benefits.

Example: tailor the NHS letter that is sent to shielding individuals to include local support/services. Identify local supermarkets and develop a simple guide for online shopping that can be circulated to those who are less IT proficient.

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Help people plan

When obstacles arise, it can become harder to maintain new behaviours.

Recommendation: consider potential obstacles and suggest ways in which residents can prevent or overcome these. Provide tools and resources for contingency planning.

Example: provide daily, weekly and monthly planners to support residents to plan ahead. Help people make contingency plans by writing down 'Who I will contact if there is an emergency.....their telephone number is...', 'I will get my medicine by xxx', 'xxx will help me with my shopping and if they are not able to help I will xxx'. Consider using community volunteers to assist people who may need help completing the planners.

Communicate regularly, clearly, and honestly

People are more likely to engage in a behaviour and maintain that behaviour if they feel they are informed about the situation, and if they believe that communication is open and honest.

Recommendation: ensure that residents are kept up to date with information, including the anticipated end date for any social distancing measures, what actions are being taken and why. If there is uncertainty then communicate this and inform the residents when they are likely to receive further information, and maintain contact even if there is no additional information.

Example: devise a communications strategy that details what information will be provided, when, by whom, and the channels it will be communicated through. Ensure that you don't just rely on digital as there are likely to be residents who do not have access to online channels, or sufficient IT literacy.

Choose the most appropriate messenger

Trust is important, and people are more likely to listen and comply if they trust the source of any information and the information is relevant.

Recommendation: ensure that communications come from the most appropriate person and are tailored to any differing needs of groups within the population.

Example: if there are particular groups within the local community (e.g. faith groups and BAME), consider asking group leaders to communicate with their members the importance of social distancing. They could do this in a specific message, or embed it within their usual communications (e.g. online meetings with congregation).

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USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

To support the implementation of the above recommendations, you will find below a number of useful tools and resources.

Please note that the following resources are a combination of those specific to Hertfordshire and ones that are more general. Local authorities may wish to review the support and services available in their local area and provide details of these to their residents.

General Covid-19 information and guidance

Guidance for local councils during the Covid-19 outbreak
Covering a wide range of topics including business and charity support, housing, local lockdowns, parks and public spaces, and schools and education.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government

Local Covid-19 alert levels: what you need to know
The link below takes you to the government website where you will find information on local Covid-19 alert levels, including what the different levels are, what they mean, and why they have been introduced.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-you-need-to-know

Local authority compliance and enforcement grant
Information and guidance on the £30 million grant to local authorities for compliance and enforcement activities.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-local-authority-compliance-and-enforcement-grant

Local Covid-19 outbreaks: lessons learnt and good practice
A report detailing lessons learnt from the Leicester City/Leicestershire experience of local lockdowns.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-covid-19-outbreaks-lessons-learnt-and-good-practice

Self-help resources to increase resilience

Top Tips for Building Resilience Whilst at Home (https://bit.ly/30zxmwd):
A number of factors have been shown to promote health and wellbeing and promote positive mental health. This evidence-based set of Top Tips have been developed into a resource for residents to promote resilience during lockdown and provides a good starting point. This resource should be promoted through relevant communication channels to ensure all residents can access this information.

- **Be up to date:** follow up to date guidance and advice about limiting exposure.
- **Be active:** find ways to keep physically active, e.g. gardening or home-based exercise.
- **Be connected:** identify who you need to stay in contact with to provide you with practical and emotional support and find new ways to connect with them. This could include family, friends and local community or faith groups.
- **Be prepared:** think about what you are going to need and make a plan. You can make daily, weekly, and monthly plans to help consider and get the things you need.

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- **Be in a routine:** develop a new daily routine that works for you, this could include regular waking up and bedtimes, planned mealtimes, and time to be physically active.
- **Be occupied:** continue with your current interests or explore new ones. You could try a hobby that you used to enjoy but haven't had the time for.
- **Be helpful:** find ways to support others. Whether it's a chat on the phone or volunteering to support people locally there are lots of ways to get involved with your community even from home.
- **Be relaxed:** find a relaxation or meditation practice that works for you and practice it once a day for at least 10 minutes.
- **Be heard:** talk to friends, family or community and faith groups about how you are feeling.
- **Be positive:** train yourself to actively look for the positives in the situation e.g. having some extra me time or being able to catch up with thigs you have been meaning to do.

Communications

General communications strategy guidance
The Local Government Association (LGA) Comms Hub, an online resource to support the development and delivery of effective communication.
https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support

Covid-19 related communications guidance
Simple guidance on communicating with teams, stakeholders and communities during Covid-19.
https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/a-leaders-guide-communicating-with-teams-stakeholders-and-communities-during-covid-19

A range of communications templates and examples which have been collated by the Local Government Association (LGA) and councils around the country which can be adapted to your local context.
https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support/coronavirus-covid-19

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