

Last week Lambeth Council passed a motion of support for local councils to take on all Covid test and trace work currently being organised nationally by so-called NHS track and trace run by Serco and a myriad other private companies and consultants. Currently local authority involvement is patchy and unfunded even though local public health departments have proved they can do a much better job. The Lambeth motion is based on the one passed by Oxford City Council recently which has inspired the launch of the Oxfordshire 'Crush Covid with Local Test and Trace' campaign.

SE London campaigners hope to use the Lambeth success to build a similar campaign for London's boroughs to provide a truly local Test and Trace service which could be coordinated at regional (in this case London) level.

Test and Trace

Council notes:

- With concern that the country still does not have an adequate testing and tracing system. Numerous experts have repeated that to be effective contact tracing needs to be managed and carried out at a local level by people with expertise in public health.
- That instead of funding local bodies the Government has squandered billions of pounds of public money on a privatized and outsourced system that has contributed to failures to contain the virus and ultimately to an increased loss of life and economic damage.
- In late recognition that its tracing performance could not improve without local participation, NHS Test and Trace are now passing to local authorities those cases who have tested positive but who they have been unable to reach. While a welcome step this doesn't go far enough:
 - o there are still large numbers of people named as contacts that the national system is failing to reach. The Government's Sage group advised that 80% of contacts need to be reached and asked to isolate if the transmission of the virus is to be suppressed. NHS Test and Trace is still falling short of this target and surveys show that the proportion of people self-isolating can be very low;
 - o the centralised system lacks integration both into the normal, local NHS services (which would allow GPs to contact positive cases with crucial and timely medical advice) and into local authorities who can offer the financial, social and practical support needed to enable people to isolate.

- That pressure is building on the Government both to use local authorities more and to cease contracting out “NHS” Test and Trace to private companies.
- That council passed an amendment to a council motion in June 2020 to use the “skills and experience of local authority public and environmental health officers to test, track, trace and isolate citizens of Lambeth, to ensure we can control the virus locally as much as possible”.

Council believes:

- That the only way to fully rectify the situation is for full control of contact tracing to be passed to local authorities and their Public Health partners. This must be accompanied by a transfer of the necessary funding and resources, with national input providing any support needed to ensure effective coordination and where necessary to help people to isolate.
- That a local scheme will:
 - o Improve contact tracing
 - o Enable increased and targeted testing, including asymptomatic testing
 - o Be better integrated into existing Council COVID support services
 - o Be a more cost-effective solution
 - o Achieve greater community engagement and GP involvement
 - o Allow for the engagement of local volunteers.

Council resolves to:

- Add its voice to those challenging the current, failed system by asking the Leader to:
 - o Call on our Director of Public Health and, if appropriate, the London Regional Director for Public Health England, to continue to support further devolvement of responsibility for testing and tracing;
 - o Write to our MPs asking them for their support including writing to the Secretary of State asking for provision of the necessary resources to deliver a sustainable and effective local test and trace system;
 - o And ask London Regional Government to pressure the government to give full control and sufficient resources to local authorities to achieve this.

