**Ealing Covid-19 Newsletter**

**Issue: 6**

**4 May 2020**

**ONS Reports 239 Covid-19 Deaths in Ealing Between 1 March and 17 April 2020**

The Ealing Covid-19 deaths/100,000 rate was 103.2. This compares with 141.5 in Brent (one of London’s worst) and 69.2 in Hounslow (one of London’s ‘best’). The overall London rate was 87.7 deaths/100.000. This is almost double the next highest regional figure of 43.2 in the West Midlands.

**Care Quality Commission (CQC) Reports 31 Covid-19 Deaths in Ealing Care Homes Between 10 April and 24 April 2020**

CQC has also reported more than 4,300 Covid-19 deaths in Care Homes in England and Wales 10 April to 24 April 2020.

**How Many Ealing Residents Have Been Tested for Covid-19?**

No-one seems to know this. Who might be responsible for collecting this data? It could be our 200 or so Ealing GPs. They are locked away in their surgeries and no doubt currently have their hands full. There are eight Primary Care Networks (PCNs) which link together the 75 Ealing GP Practices. However the PCNs meet in secret and don’t seem to generate any publicly available reports. There is of course the Ealing Clinical Commissioning Group (ECCG) – based in Perceval House. ECCG commissions (i.e. purchases) all health care services in Ealing. No doubt all ECCG staff are working at home. The ECCG Chair last published a progress report on 25 March 2020. The ECCG Governors haven’t met for over three months and no plans have been made public about meeting via live-streaming on a virtual platform.

**Who Will Carry Out The Covid-19 Tracking and Tracing in Ealing?**

Apparently nationally the NHS is recruiting 18,000 volunteers to ‘track and trace’. An NHS App is being developed which could identify people who have been in proximity to an infected Smartphone user and subsequently develop Covid-19 symptoms and tell them to self-isolate. The App can inform the NHS and an anonymous alert can be triggered to any other App user the infected person came in contact with by analysing the collected logs.

Will this 18,000 perhaps include some of the 500 volunteers Ealing Council’s ‘Ealing Together’ initiative has signed up? Will the NHS work with Ealing Council? Will it all be organised locally by ECCG? Maybe like the regional Covid-19 test centres the Government will give the job to an outsourcer like Deloitte, G4S, Serco or Sodexo. Maybe Public Health England – the national body responsible for testing – will be given the job.

The NHS Smartphone App approach however does have its critics:

+ The App is still in development by NHS. Trials on the Isle of Whight are mentioned. The NHS track record in technology projects is appalling. The worst one of all was the 2002 £6.2 billion NHS National Programme for IT which failed and was abandoned in 2011 with costs rocketing up above £10 billion.

+ 79% of UK adults own a Smartphone. With an adult population of 49 million this means that 11 million adults don’t own one. To compound that gap, only 55% over the age of 55 own a smartphone. (statistica.com). According to the 2011 Census, out of an Ealing population of 338,449, there were 59,774 Ealing residents over 55 years of age. 55% of that gives us 32,875 Ealing residents with no Smartphone. Of course within this cohort there will be a significant number of the ‘clinically vulnerable’. To make the situation even worse NHS England tells us that the actual number of patients currently registered at Ealing’s 75 GP surgeries is more than 420,000.

+ Owning a Smartphone is one thing, understanding how to use it and actually using it ’smartly’ are completely different issues.

+ Many human rights activists are very unhappy with the state introducing the tracking of citizens for whatever reason. Objectors to the introduction of the fifth-generation mobile communications technology (5G) have similar concerns. They fear that when 5G is implemented nationwide the state will know exactly where we are and who we are with and might use that information in ways many of us would object to.

+ The NHS centralised approach is at odds with the distributed Apple /Google App in development and the existing distributed App DP-3T which uses the short distance wireless technology Bluetooth. This has been developed by a team of 25 scientists across Europe including experts from University College London. It employs a decentralised privacy design to ensure data remains anonymous.

Apparently the national track and trace teams will be mobilised within two weeks from now. Hmmm.

**Where Are Suspected Ealing Covid-19 Cases Being Triaged?**

Apparently the location is the car park behind the NHS Mattock Lane Health Centre in West Ealing.

**And Covid-19 Testing?**

Today (4 May) some people can be tested in the Gurnell Leisure Centre car park in Ruislip Road East, West Ealing. The army is running the testing site, not everyone can be tested and you must make an online appointment before you attend. For eligibility details (e.g. essential workers and clinically vulnerable) and to book an appointment go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

News of this testing initiative broke on Saturday 2 May 2020.

**Ealing Council Has Paid 4,170 Ealing Organisations £56 Million in Government Covid-19 Grants**

Apparently some 5,000 Ealing organisations applied for £10,000 and £25,000 Covid-19 Government Business Support Grant Funding. Ealing Council has paid out £56 million to 4,170 of them since 6 April 2020. We don’t know which organisations have received these grants. We also have no idea why some applicants were unsuccessful nor do we know what decision criteria were adopted. I worry that some small businesses run by ethnic minority families (corner shop businesses for example) may not have known that these grants were even available!

**How Many ’Clinically Vulnerable People’ Over 70 Years Old in Ealing Will Not Leave their Homes for 12 Weeks?**

From talking to just five of my friends in this category, they all of them go walking outside every day. They all say they need to do this in order for them to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing.

**Crossrail Admits That Covid-19 Has Caused Work to Stop on New Stations at Acton Mainline, Ealing Broadway, West Ealing and Southall**

‘Building’ magazine quotes Network Rail in an April 2020 letter stating that Crossrail western branch station enhancement work has been put ‘under review’. The work dried up in March 2020, but is expected to re-commence in mid-May 2020. There are unsurprisingly no published completion dates for the stations.

In the glory days of Crossrail future (2009) the Crossrail trains were going to be ten carriages in length. This got chopped down to nine carriages at some point. Nine carriage Crossrail trains should have begun direct travel to Heathrow in April 2020 – just 23 months later than promised. We won’t know whether this direct travel is a reality until we are allowed to travel on these trains.

**Ealing Council Planning During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

In this pandemic emergency we have sick residents, some seriously ill and some dying. Businesses of all sizes are struggling with no income. Some will go to the wall. Building work on sites small and large is sporadic. In June 2020 many people be on 80% of wages backdated to March. Others will have to wait till July. However this ‘furloughing‘ is only guaranteed to the end of June 2020.

Given all this, is it really sensible or appropriate for Local Authorities (LAs) to be pressing ahead with planning for 10/20/30/40 storey tower blocks? Well the Government thinks it is and have told LAs to crack on with planning during the pandemic.

Ealing Council’s Planning service has announced its process changes in response to the Covid-19 emergency. There has been some criticism about aspects of it. Site visits by Planning Committee members prior to Planning Committee meetings have been abandoned. The April 2020 Planning Committee meeting was cancelled, but the 21 May 2020 meeting will go ahead as a live-streamed one on the Microsoft MS Teams virtual platform. The period for pubic consultation on Planning Applications has been extended from 21 days to 42 days. For those residents staying indoors this extension will make little difference to them, as they will not walk past a lamppost displaying the Planning Notice. The Council seems to be blaming the lack of a new Local Plan on the pandemic. Ealing Council’s 2012 Local Plan is the oldest in London, and is spectacularly out of date.

More at:

<https://www.ealing.gov.uk/201262/coronavirus_covid_19/2669/changes_to_council_services/15>

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