



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Response by the Portfolio Holder:

The overall purpose of Contact Tracing is to identify those at risk of contracting the illness and isolating them before they have the chance to distribute it more widely. If someone is infectious enough to spread the virus to one person, it is likely that more than one person will be affected by them, consequently, being able to identify contacts in a timely manner and require self-isolation is critical to prevent the spread of infection in our communities.

However, the question remains “who or where did the index case get the virus from?”. Each positive case is as a result of an infection event and there will be a route of transmission. Backwards contact tracing aims to identify the source of the infection (either a person or place) and help understand the route of transmission.

The Regional Response Cell in Powys has been using Backwards Contact Tracing since early August. However, in August, when the number of positive cases was very low, it was often possible to identify potential sources of infection through the normal contact tracing process; cases would recall contact with other positive cases or could be linked to clusters in other areas. Only those cases that seemingly ‘appeared out of nowhere’ were backward contact traced to try and help understand the route of transmission.

As the number of new cases in Powys has begun to rise, backwards contact tracing is being used routinely for all cases that meet a defined criteria:

- The case is symptomatic
- The case is Powys resident i.e. they are not residing in another part of the county, university students for example
- The case has no known links to other positive cases or clusters
- The case hasn't returned from a foreign holiday in the previous 14 days
- The case has been contact traced

Powys County Councils Environmental Health Officers who are specialists in communicable disease control and have extensive local knowledge, undertake backwards contact tracing for any case when the above criteria are met. To date, this has been possible for all cases that meet the above criteria, but this can only continue whilst there is the capacity to do so. If cases continue to rise, backwards tracing may be limited to areas of concern only.

Backwards contact tracing has helped the regional response cell and the Incident Management Team understand the routes of transmission within the County and help identify workplaces that are potentially at risk. This type of tracing also increases the opportunity of identifying symptomatic contacts of a case and directing them to testing and requiring isolation.

If you require any further, please just ask.