

COVID-19 IN SALFORD – AT 8 JUNE 2020

On Friday 5 June, Government confirmed the R number (measuring the rate of transmission) for the UK as a whole was 0.7-0.9, unchanged from 29 May. At the same time, regional 'R' numbers were confirmed. The North West's median 'R' was 1.01, within a 95% range of certainty of 0.83 – 1.18. All of the UK regions had a range of certainty which includes 1; which makes the median R number unreliable in deciding whether a region is below or above 1.

Region	Median R	95% Range of Uncertainty	
East of England	0.94	0.73	1.14
London	0.95	0.72	1.20
Midlands	0.90	0.73	1.07
North East and Yorkshire	0.89	0.75	1.04
North West	1.01	0.83	1.18
South East	0.97	0.78	1.17
South West	1.00	0.77	1.29

The announcement on Friday has led to a number of concerns and in some cases a call for measures to ease lockdown to be halted. Regionally, the Mayors of Greater Manchester and Merseyside have called on government to release information in a more timely way, and with earlier consultation with regional and local leaders. They have also called for greater regional involvement in decision making on easing measures and on any discussion about local variations in lockdowns and response measures.

Locally, in Salford, we believe it is not helpful that information of this public importance is released without notice or consultation on a Friday afternoon and we support calls for greater local involvement in the government's decision making. Our emphasis has been really focused on working with our Director of Public Health to better understand the 'R' values, and even more importantly, to understand at a more granular level transmission of the virus in Salford, and to ensure that our response is proportionate and effective based on our understanding of the risk factors.

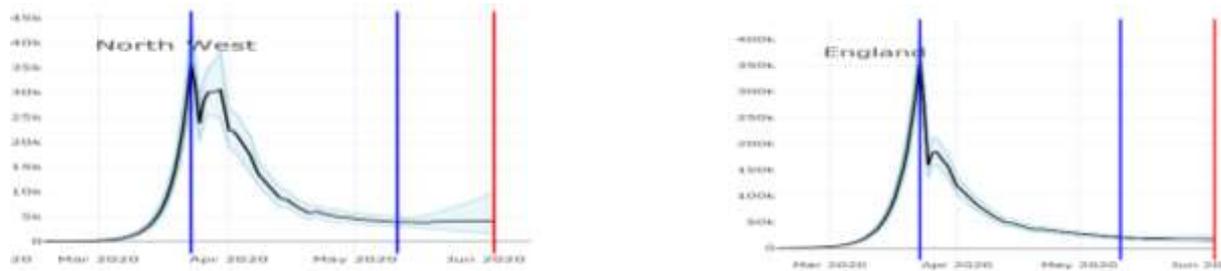
This briefing seeks to provide a summary of the Public Health advice that has informed our decision making in Salford.

The R number – national and regional

Regional R numbers have increased everywhere – not just in the NW. This is to be expected as government eases lockdown. However, these R numbers have a very wide range of uncertainty. For this reason, R numbers at regional level (and certainly at any lower level, such as city or district) must be treated with a high degree of caution. Public Health advice is that any use of the regional median 'R' must also be considered alongside measures of incidence at the local level – numbers of infections, what we know about our different settings like care homes and schools, and also sadly the numbers of deaths.

The incidence of infections in the North West has not changed substantially – as illustrated in the graphs below. However, there is now more variability in infection rates across the different populations in the North West, meaning that the level of uncertainty has increased (the shaded area in the graphs). Whilst PHE advise the North West is experiencing a slower decline in cases, the numbers of deaths and cases does continue to reduce.

Incidence of infections in the North West and England (Source: <https://mrc.bsu.cam.ac.uk/nw-casting/>)

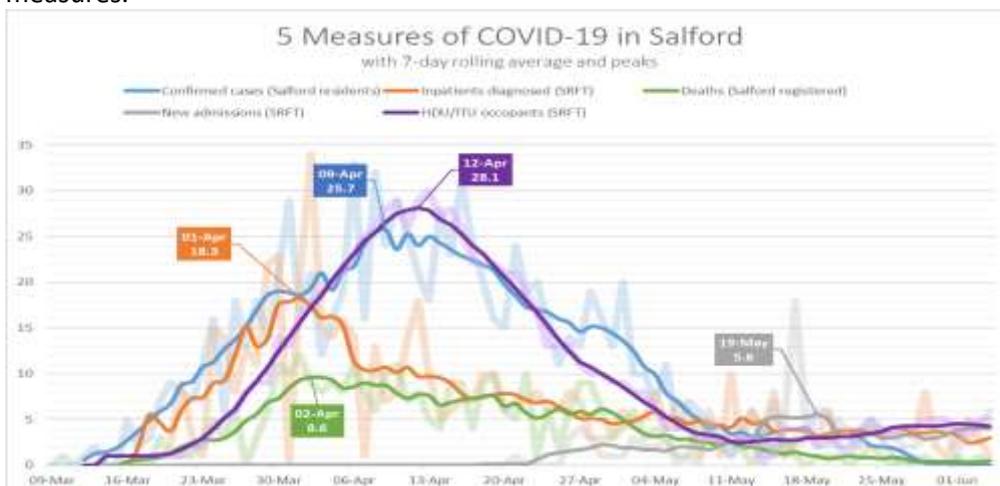


In Salford

Any 'R' number calculated locally would be largely meaningless given the wider range of variation and therefore uncertainty. However observations on incidence do help us to understand the virus. Alongside the national and regional R rates on 5 June, PHE also advised that local data on hospital admissions, deaths, and test and trace should be considered by each local area to interpret the local levels of transmission.

- The rates of transmission will vary in settings – in care homes, in schools, in work places, in communities
- Salford care homes are seeing a reducing number of both cases and deaths – implying an effective rate of transmission less than one in that setting
- Through the end of May and continuing to latest data on 4 June, the number of beds in SRFT occupied by COVID-19 patients was on a plateau, with new admissions about 3 per day. This also indicates there is no exponential growth of the outbreak in the community
- Excess deaths are now back to average levels for the past five years, and Salford is experiencing on average one COVID-19 related death per day or less.

These levels are reported in the graph below – showing a plateauing across all five measures.



- Comparing the numbers of cases across Greater Manchester, Salford (and Stockport) have the lowest rates of new cases in the 14 days up to 4 June in Greater Manchester, similar to the average for England. Comparatively, Tameside, Rochdale and Bury appear to have higher rates of infection in that time period.

Name	Total Cases in last 14 days	Population	Rate per 100,000 in last 14 days
Bolton	30	287,550	10.4
Bury	50	190,990	26.2
Manchester	84	552,858	15.2
Oldham	40	237,110	16.9
Rochdale	57	222,412	25.6
Salford	25	258,834	9.7
Stockport	20	293,423	6.8
Tameside	65	226,493	28.7
Trafford	43	237,354	18.1
Wigan	61	328,662	18.6
Greater Manchester	475	2,835,686	16.8
England	5,205	56,286,961	9.2

Based on this more detailed local intelligence, the Director of Public Health advises:

- Salford will be one of the NW local authorities where the rate of effective transmission (the R number) is less than 1.
- All managed settings (Schools, care homes, workplaces) have risk assessment and procedures in place to be COVID secure.
- We have not seen sustained transmission in schools. Schools are managed settings with 'bubbles' in place to help manage the impact of unwell staff and children.
- Care homes have never stepped down the use of PPE and infection control procedures – these remain in place
- To ensure we bring the rates of transmission down, social distancing needs to continue to be followed – including in social settings between different households and in workplaces.

For schools in Salford

Salford Public Health have been working with Head Teachers to provide advice on risk assessments for all staff and individuals, including targeted advice for those that may be at risk of more severe complications from the virus. Locally this is supported by the additional local testing arrangements at AJ Bell Stadium. Local testing together with local contact tracing supports our ability to manage any suspected cases, and to do so quickly to prevent possible outbreaks in Salford schools.

Given the information on the numbers of cases and the rates of transmission outlined in this note, the DPH advice remains unchanged – that plans for schools carry on based on individual school risk assessments and a rapid local response to suspected cases.