

2 SISTERS CASE STUDY

PKAVS MINORITY COMMUNITIES HUB

WHAT HAPPENED?

On Friday 14th August, we were notified by one of our contacts at the 2 Sisters Factory in Coupar Angus that an employee had tested positive for Covid. The 2 Sisters factory employs approximately 1,200 people, of whom over 75% are from minority ethnic communities. 17 languages are spoken by factory workers, with the largest groups being Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian. 300 of the factory workers, almost all minority ethnic individuals, are engaged by an agency on zero hour contracts.

By Sunday 16th August, cases had risen to 4, the local authority was notified and the factory was closed. All workers were asked to self-isolate and get tested for Covid. Cases continued to rise throughout the week, and on the evening of Thursday 20th August, new guidance was issued asking all factory workers and their entire household to self-isolate until 31st August, including those who had tested negative for Covid.

Over the following 2 weeks, a total of 201 cases were recorded, 174 of whom were factory workers, and 27 of whom were contacts of factory workers.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Ask to be included. *Our role in communicating with and supporting communities was vital, and being part of the partnership prevented duplication and allowed resources to be used where they were needed.*

Plan ahead. *The more prepared organisations and partnerships are for a localised outbreak, and for specific scenarios like this one, the easier it will be. In particular, if the TSI is involved in local resilience planning it is possible to tap into existing community assets quickly to provide support.*

Identify key allies, *before you need them if you can. Existing partners in the Ethnic Minority Resilience Network and the local authority in particular provided essential support and information to allow us to get on with the task at hand.*

Accessible communication is possible. *By working together, we, the local authorities, and public health were able to get large amounts of information out in multiple languages in response to a quickly changing situation. It is our hope that lessons from this will be taken into account for future communication efforts.*

KEY CHALLENGES

- Communication in 17 languages and English. The changes in guidance after the initial few days presented an additional challenge.
- A lack of networks – factory workers primarily socialise with one another, and many are recent arrivals to the UK without extended networks to support them to isolate.
- Financial support for those on zero hour contracts, primarily newer arrivals, with limited or no access to public funds or system consciousness to seek help through appropriate channels.
- Geographical spread – workers from the factory live throughout Perth & Kinross, Angus, and Dundee council areas, with small numbers based in Stirling and Fife also.
- Community Tensions – between the factory workers and the local community, and also within the factory workers between those who were following the guidance and those perceived not to be.

HOW DID WE RESPOND?

PKAVS Minority Communities Hub immediately approached the local authority to request to be involved in the response to the outbreak. By day three of the factory closure, we were involved in both the Perth & Kinross Council response group and the Tayside Local Resilience Partnership. PKAVS' key contributions to the response were:

- *Providing a trusted point of contact for community members. We expanded our helpline to include cover until 7pm each evening and a weekend service, and agreed with our funders at Impact Funding Partners and the three local authorities that we would temporarily expand coverage to all of Tayside. In providing this service, we were able to support 54 individuals impacted by the outbreak who had questions or concerns over the 2 weeks of the factory closure. Support provided included:*
 - *Arranging food deliveries through the local authority for those who had either been missed or not received enough food for their families in efforts to deliver parcels to all workers.*
 - *Support to apply for crisis grants and other financial packages and to access services such as energy top-ups while isolating.*
 - *Signposting for those who needed to book a test and were unsure of the process and those with other concerns relating to the test and protect measures.*
- *Working in partnership with the Welfare Rights team to make welfare calls to the 300 individuals employed by an agency who would not receive pay for the closure period, and complete crisis grant applications where appropriate.*
- *Working in partnership with BEMIS to provide grants to those impacted, who had no recourse to public funds either due to immigration status or having arrived too recently in the UK.*
- *Providing a source of community intelligence to the partnerships, for example around community attitudes to self-isolation and feedback about needs and gaps in support provision.*
- *Communicating updates and guidance to community members in multiple languages, both through our own networks, mass texts and social media channels and by translating information for use by partners. For example, we developed an electronic flyer in Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian and English detailing the support available around money, housing, schools and food, and shared it with partners and locations that those flouting guidance were known to be visiting such as Eastern European food shops throughout Tayside.*
- *Developing a guide in English, Polish and Romanian to completing the self-isolation certificate available online from the NHS, which was requested by the agency for those staff applying for Statutory Sick Pay.*