

**WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL EXCEPTIONAL PRESSURES BRIEFING  
24 NOVEMBER 2020**

**Priority issues**

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## Priority issues

### a) National and Local Outbreak Management

#### *National lockdown*

1. A second [national lockdown](#) is being enforced in England. It started on 5 November and will be reviewed by 2 December. People are required to:

1. Stay at home, except for specific purposes.
2. Avoid meeting people you do not live with, except for specific purposes.
3. Close certain businesses and venues.

2. There are a number of specific, limited exceptions.

#### *West Sussex Data*

##### *Recorded Cases*

3. **Scale** - On average for the 7 days between 29 October and 4 November 2020 there were approximately 124 new cases a day across the county.

4. The **seven-day incidence** rate varies among the districts and boroughs of West Sussex.

- Over the period 29 October to 4 November, Crawley had the highest rate of 129.9 per 100,000 population, Adur the lowest rate at 73.1 per 100,000.
- Overall, the county rate is now approximately 101 per 100,000. The rate for the South East region was 130.5 and for England the rate was 243.3 per 100,000.

Area	<b>Cases</b> in the 7 Days between 29 October to 4 November	<b>Rate per 100,000</b>
Adur	47	73.1
Arun	158	98.3
Chichester	147	121.4
Crawley	146	129.9
Horsham	145	100.8
Mid Sussex	133	88.1
Worthing	97	87.7
<b>West Sussex</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>101.0</b>

5. While we are seeing some larger numbers relating to specific outbreaks in care homes, or related to school/university and a few workplaces, most cases

are attached to residential postcodes and are single cases, **this is widespread community transmission.**

6. **Positivity Rates have been increasing overall but have fallen slightly in Crawley in recent days** – the highest rate (between 29 October to 4 November) in Crawley at 5.9% and lowest in Worthing at 2.9%.
7. **Pace of Change** - Using data as of 10 November 2020, current doubling time for cases in the county is 21 days. There has been some lengthening of doubling time in recent days; the Public Health and Social Research Unit are tracking this closely to see if the change is sustained.

#### *Age-Specific Incidence Rate*

8. Age is an important factor in the severity of disease and likelihood of needing hospital treatment, so changes in older age groups are especially concerning.
9. Of the 866 people who tested positive between 29 October and 4 November, **20% were aged 60 years or over.**
10. Young adults have the highest age-specific incidence rates however, it is important to note that there have been increases in all age groups.

#### *Local Tracing Partnership – preparation*

11. Preparations are well underway to establish a 'Local Tracing Partnership' (previously referred to as Locally Supported Contact Tracing).
12. The Partnership will provide additional capacity to the National NHS Test and Trace service by contacting positive cases that the national team have been unable to reach within 48 hours. It will act to ensure that these individuals are given advice and support as soon as possible and details of their contacts are collected and uploaded to the national system, in order to control the COVID-19 rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of infection, and save lives. The contacts of positive cases will be followed up by the national team.
13. A collaborative approach is being used to prepare to implement this service; West Sussex County Council is working in partnership with colleagues in East Sussex, and District and Borough Councils across the county with support from Public Health England.
14. West Sussex County Council's Customer Experience Service will manage the Local Tracing process with dedicated Community Hub staff undertaking the contacts for both West Sussex and East Sussex. The Community Hub was established in response to the first wave of the pandemic and incorporates a full ranging customer service centre approach. To ensure a fully localised approach despite operating consistently across both Counties the phone number seen by the individual contacted will be a local number.

## *Communications Approach*

15. Throughout our response to COVID-19 we have taken a proactive approach to communications to make sure we are doing everything possible to supporting residents, making sure they have access to the information and support they need and to spread the important public health messages in order to Keep West Sussex Safe.
16. We have taken a localised approach, reaching out to community leaders and influencers on the ground alongside a successful social media advertising campaign. This will continue throughout the lockdown with bespoke messages to make sure people understand the guidance and restrictions and how to keep themselves safe.
17. Alongside this we will continue to communicate detail of any service changes or restrictions relating specifically to county council run services. We continue to work closely with partners in health and district and borough councils to make sure the way we communicate with our residents is joined up and coordinated.
18. Our social media adverts have reached 493,727 social media accounts out of a possible 550,000 operating in the county; that's 90 per cent. Those adverts have been served 5,989,203 times.

## **b) Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and the Community Hub**

19. The Government has introduced new National Restrictions guidance, which will come into effect on 5 November and will apply until Wednesday 2 December.

### *Clinically Extremely Vulnerable*

20. The new National Restrictions guidance announced on 31 October will protect everyone, including those who have been deemed to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), meaning that they face the highest risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19. Residents who are in this group, should have received a letter from the NHS or from their GP advising them that they are assessed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or they may have been advised to shield in the past.
21. Down's syndrome (adults only) and chronic kidney disease (stage 5) have recently been added as conditions that meet the criteria of extreme clinical vulnerability, and therefore the new guidance also applies to individuals with either condition.
22. Government will not be re-introducing nationally provided food parcels. West Sussex County Council will receive funding to provide support to those Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people who may not be able to rely on friends, family or neighbours to access food and essential supplies. This support may include signposting to local community groups, assistance with using digital/online services, referrals to partner organisations as well as information and guidance.

## *Community Hub*

23. The Community Hub, launched in late March 2020, is fully prepared to provide a range of support and practical assistance for the more than 34,000 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents across West Sussex.
24. Telephone lines are open from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week supported by website content and a series of e-forms to provide digital access. The core team has already been increased in size to ensure capacity to respond to increased demand during this Lockdown period.
25. We had already re-established proactive outbound calls to some of our most vulnerable residents. Almost 1000 calls have been completed already to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals and will continue daily. This activity is being complemented by the Prevention and Assessment Team following up with residents who previously had multiple contacts to the Community Hub requiring an urgent/same day response to address a critical need or required a referral to Adult Social Care. This will include individuals who were previously contacted by the Library Service as part of the 'Keeping in Touch' programme and required additional support from Adult Social Care.
26. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals, or their friends and family are encouraged to contact the Community Hub or use the new online registration service to:
  - Request priority access to supermarket delivery slots (if you have already got priority supermarket deliveries, you'll keep them).
  - Tell the County Council if they need support in order to follow this guidance that cannot be provided by friends, family or other support networks.
  - Update details, for example, your address.
27. This service can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support>.
28. The Community Hub will be able to complete registration by phone and we would encourage people to get in touch directly if they have an urgent need or have any questions.
29. The COVID-19 version of the County Local & Information Online (CLIO) system used within Libraries designed to provide Community Hub staff with immediate access to relevant information whilst on the telephone (e.g. supermarket details, community-based support options, opening hours of key partner organisations, etc) has been updated along with our website pages.
30. The County Council continues to utilise its own locally developed sustainable food and supplies offer available via the Community Hub, providing flexibility to support either a one off or ongoing requirement. Each food and supplies delivery is followed up by a call to minimise dependence by working on sustainable options where appropriate.

## *COVID Winter Grant Scheme*

31. On Sunday 8 November, the Government announced extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. WSCC is set to receive almost £2M (£1,989,591.80) from this COVID Winter Grant Scheme managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
32. Designed to provide direct assistance to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals this grant covers the period from early December 2020 until the end of March 2021.
33. There is a requirement for the County Council to determine eligibility across the county and targets support within the scope of the grant conditions to provide direct assistance to individuals, vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic with meeting the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. Included in the scope is the opportunity to provide support to families who have access to Free School Meals during term time.
34. Proposals are currently being developed with partners on how deliver this support which will require a blended approach to meet the grant criteria. Discussions underway include the delivery model to support children and families in receipt of Free School Meals over the Christmas holiday and February half term and the utilisation of existing partnership arrangements and infrastructure. West Sussex County Council has flexibility in administering the funding within the confines of the scheme – which may include cash, the provision of food, vouchers, or funding through third party organisations.

### **c) Schools Reopening and Attendance – update**

35. Almost all schools have remained open through the first half term with only Littlegreen Academy closing in its entirety due to the need to isolate children and staff.
36. At the beginning of the autumn term strong risk assessments and plans were in place to ensure that the return was managed safely. These will now need reviewing in light of the changing situation.
37. Attendance in schools has been consistently above the national average and this is also reflected in the proportion of children with EHCPs attending school and also the proportion of children with a social worker. Data is submitted by schools to the DfE on a daily basis and the proportion of West Sussex Schools submitting their data runs at 74% which is above the national average.
38. Attendance has been consistently around 93% against a national declining trend in school attendance (83.6% nationally). The attendance of pupils with an EHCP similarly has remained high at 89.5% compared with a decline nationally to 76.4%. Attendance of children with a social worker remained high with 86.6% of pupils with a social worker attended school compared with 78.4% attending nationally.

### *Home to school transport*

39. Home to school transport is working well overall. There have been some investigations in key localities where suggestion has been made that public transport has made it challenging to maintain social distancing. Using Government support funding additional buses have been running into various schools around the county to ensure there is sufficient capacity on public bus services.
40. Following changes in national guidance, students from Year 7 upwards will now be required to wear face coverings on school transport as they are required to wear on public transport.

### *Local lockdown*

41. While our aim is to ensure schools remain open, every school will also have a plan for the possibility of a national requirement to close, a partial closure of a school owing to an outbreak in a 'bubble', 'class' or 'year group', and how they will ensure continuity of an education service should such scenarios occur.
42. We are assured our school leaders and governors, whilst operating with the national and local guidance we have provided, have been supported to take and make the very best decisions on behalf of children and families in their community.

## **d) Care Homes - update**

### *Care homes*

43. There are 235 care homes for older people in West Sussex. The care homes provide around 8,608 beds. A third of these are commissioned by the County Council with the remainder commissioned through other local authorities, health or funded directly by residents.
44. There is increasing concern among care market providers about the increase in COVID-19 within local communities, staff and residents in care homes, resulting in some closing to admissions as a preventative measure. Any care home with two or more confirmed Covid-19 case is advised by Public Health England to close to admissions for 28 days (twice the incubation period of COVID-19). Any closures, either preventative or advised by Public Health England, reduce options for care for people who are medically ready for discharge from acute or community hospital but require an admission to a care home either as an interim or longer-term option. This is also having a significant impact on availability of respite care, which has a real impact on informal carers and families.
45. Testing still remains an issue for providers, mainly delayed collections that can mean test results are void and delays in returning weekly test results. This is being picked up by the Sussex testing group. Supported living and extra care are outside of the testing programme, however there is a roll out

of an initial round of testing for staff and residents in supported living and extra care settings which meet certain risk-based criteria.

46. For the week commencing 9 November, 14 care homes for older people were closed due to confirmed cases among staff and/or residents (10) or as a precautionary measure (4). In the same period, 4 learning disability and one mental health service had confirmed cases.

47. For the same week, local data on care homes reports admissions are currently restricted in:

- 14 care homes for older people,
- 2 extra care setting,
- 10 care homes for mental health/learning disability,
- 0 domiciliary care providers, and
- 2 supported living settings.

48. On 16 October the County Council submitted a response to the Department of Health & Social Care, updating on its approach to designated settings for COVID-19 positive people being discharged from hospital with care needs which requires ongoing consideration and planning. The County Council is working closely with NHS partners and has been exploring potential options for supporting people with COVID-19 who are unable to return home, and those isolating and unable to isolate in their home, including community rehabilitation beds and available care home provision in specific settings which are empty either in part or in whole and could therefore isolate individuals safely. An expression of interest has been sent to the market to invite interest from providers to determine who would like to work with the County Council to mobilise designated accommodation to support COVID-19 positive people with care needs, requiring isolation who are unable return home.

49. The County Council continues to support care providers through a wide variety of means as detailed in previous reports. In addition, a resource pack is being created for all care providers to include current business continuity templates for care homes and community providers with a reminder for them to be reviewed (particularly with regard to disruption due to severe weather and outbreaks), resources on staffing including considerations when using agency (including block booking) and contingency when staff and agency do not respond. An infection control focussed provider newsletter was issued on 6 November and included information on the following items:

- New guidance to support safe care home visits during lockdown,
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Social Distancing,
- Updated PPE Guidance,
- Free weekly PPE,
- Impact of PPE when engaging with customers,
- Employers' responsibilities under the Health and Safety Executive,
- COVID-19 staff risk reduction,
- Management of staff and exposed patients and residents in health and social care settings,
- Flu vaccination for people with learning disabilities and autism.

50. There is also a new focus on covering gaps in services that are needed to continue to safely operate, in a way that supports good infection prevention control such as laundering, cleaning, and food preparation, together with information on key contacts. The County Council continues to work closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure providers receive the correct professional input. The Council has a robust (and now well tested) Care Setting Emergency Management Plan specifically developed for Covid-19 to support the overarching Outbreak plan.

#### *Infection Control Fund*

51. On 1 October tranche 1 of the second round of funding for the national [Infection Control Fund](#) was received and will be distributed by the County Council to providers in West Sussex. This time 80% of the funding is ringfenced for care homes and registered community providers, with a requirement for providers to have completed the NHS NECS Tracker or the CQC Home Care Survey for two consecutive weeks and commit to completing it weekly.

52. As part of the reporting requirements to Government, the County Council must submit:

- A self-assessment (on Service Continuity and Care Market Review) response by 21 October 2020 (completed).
- A response on providers business continuity, the Winter Plan and a signed statement of assurance by 31 October 2020 (completed).
- Monthly reporting on spend against the allocated (just under £11m) from November 2020 to April 2021.

53. On 2 November 2020 a regional response was submitted, which drew on the self-assessments, and the regional work led by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).

#### *Adult Social Care: Our COVID-19 Winter Plan 2020-21*

54. On Friday 18 September the Government published the policy paper [Adult social care: our Covid-19 winter plan 2020-2021](#) (this references and builds on previous guidance and policy set out in the Social Care Action Plan (May 2020) and Hospital Discharge Guidance (August 2020)). The winter plan has been reviewed and the key issues for the local authority are:

- Ensuring everyone who needs care or support can get high-quality, timely and safe care throughout the autumn and winter period.
- Protecting people who need care, support or safeguards, the social care workforce, and carers from infections including COVID-19.
- Making sure that people who need care, support or safeguards remain connected to essential services and their loved ones whilst protecting individuals from infections including COVID-19.

55. The original social care action plan (May 2020) has been updated to incorporate readiness for winter and in response to the policy paper, enabling a single plan to be in place to:

- Maintain the focus on future planning,
- Enable a consistent approach with regular review and monitoring,
- Reduce the risk of disparate plans losing overall focus.

56. The key themes and actions were shared with a range of stakeholders for feedback and this formed the basis of the assurance letter required by the submitted to the Department of Health and Social Care on 31 October.

#### *West Sussex Adult Social Care Winter Plan*

57. The County Council has been working closely with NHS partners to identify the commissioning activity required to support additional pressures and demands over the winter period. A decision has now been confirmed to approve the plan and the commencement of the procurement of initiatives to support additional demands. Tenders have started to be issued to the market.

58. The plan includes the commissioning of additional Home First Hospital Discharge Care provision, additional capacity in domiciliary care, block purchase of residential dementia and nursing beds and enables more funding for community equipment services, 3 days free meals on wheels for people being discharged home from hospital and a focus on commissioning provision for people who may be isolating as a result of COVID-19. It is planned for additional provision to be in place by the end of November to support over winter. The local health and social care system have agreed to fund the Combined Placement and Sourcing Team until the end of the financial year, in recognition of how it has supported the hospital discharge pathway at a time of incredible pressure.

#### *Sussex Winter Operating Model (Plan) 2020/21*

59. The County Council and partners submitted their Winter Plan for 2020/21 to NHS England (NHSE) on 1 October.

60. In relation to discharge and social care, NHSE declared it was an "exemplar plan – should be shared a good practice" as there were good schemes for winter in place, a practice of continuous improvement, a data driven approach, comprehensive detailed plans for care homes support with clear strategic oversight.

#### *Mental health system*

61. There continue to be pressures within the inpatient beds for people with mental health needs that warrant an admission, with a significant number of people requiring placement in beds outside those delivered by Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust. There are some positive initiatives actively supporting discharges e.g. the discharge to assess beds in the community

and strong oversight of any delays to discharge. However, these are not able to keep pace with admissions which are, as anticipated, higher than previously due to the COVID-19 mental health surge nationally and locally. The Council continues to work well with partners to support both prevention of admission and discharges wherever possible.

#### *People with learning disabilities*

62. There has been active and ongoing engagement with providers of day services to, wherever safe and possible, enable them to re-open or to continue to support people in alternative ways. This is particularly critical for those living in family settings or where a placement is at risk of breakdown and it is recognised that lockdown has been a particular challenge for some people with complex needs who have not been able to always access their usual support. Where placements have broken down, COVID-19 restrictions or anxieties have, at times, made sourcing an alternative particularly difficult.
63. The new guidance regarding those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable now includes those with Downs Syndrome. This means people's needs for services require review and potentially alternatives identified.

#### *Hospital capacity*

64. At the present time there is adequate acute hospital and community bed capacity in West Sussex, although in the week ending 6 November, community hospital capacity in West Sussex was challenged due to the need to support neighbouring systems and one ward being closed due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Hospital discharge hubs and a combined placement and sourcing team continue to operate, as well as working with the CCG to secure appropriate levels of domiciliary care, care/nursing home beds and voluntary services to support effective discharge.
65. Hospitals are now facing increasing pressures with rising numbers of COVID-19 positive cases - symptomatic and asymptomatic - and there will be challenges to managing this on the wards. Hospitals are also being expected to deliver against the national restoration plans including for cancer treatments. The County Council played an active role in a week-long exercise to increase the pace of discharge and identify themes and issues that impact on this. This highlighted positive system working but also the pressures in the market and on services to support people going home.
66. The County Council's commissioned Hospital Discharge Care services are operating well since commencement in April 2020, supporting many people to return home following discharge from hospital. Demand for these services is increasing and, in the week ending 6 November all of these contracts across the County were operating at above the block contracted hours. Additional capacity for these care and support at home services is being sought, to commence from the end of November to support over the winter months as demands are anticipated to continue to increase.

#### **e) Impact on West Sussex County Council's public facing services**

67. Some changes have been made to services in light of the latest government announcement on COVID-19 restrictions.

- All wedding and civil partnership ceremonies between 5 November and 2 December have been postponed. Registration offices will remain open, so notice appointments can continue for marriage and civil partnership appointments.
- All death registration appointments will continue to be conducted by phone. Appointments can be [booked as normal](#), but people are asked not to attend the Registration Office.
- All birth registrations are still being done face to face, but customers will be seen strictly by appointment only, which can be [booked online](#).
- West Sussex Record Office will be closed from Thursday 5 November until further notice.
- West Sussex libraries are currently closed for browsing and only open for returns and collections. Opening hours are subject to change and residents can find the latest [information about your local library](#) on our website. Limited computer sessions are only available when pre-booked in advance.
- Residents can continue to reserve items directly from the [library catalogue](#) free of charge, and you will be notified when items are ready for collection. Library staff are also offering a select and collect service, where our expert staff put together a selection for you to borrow. Simply complete our [online form](#) or phone your [local library](#) and staff will let you know when your items are ready for collection from the library entrance.
- Household Waste Recycling Sites (HWRSs) will remain open in and operate to normal opening hours for the duration of the second lockdown, in line with the “reasonable excuse” exceptions to restrictions on movement set out in the most recent Government regulations. These permit visits to a waste disposal or recycling centre.
- Just like in the first national lockdown, our Highways teams continue their maintenance work in keeping West Sussex roads safe, and with improvement projects continuing, too.
- West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service will also continue to operate as usual during the new lockdown if residents need them.
- The service is encouraging residents to keep a checklist of fire safety advice to stay safe at home or where businesses are open and reduce the risk of an emergency incident occurring. This can be found on the [fire service COVID-19 web page](#).
- The fire service is continuing to provide free Safe & Well Visits to people in their homes on a risk-based approach. There is also the option for a Safe

& Well Visit via phone, Skype and by posting a useful resource document, instead of face-to-face.

68.A full list of the services that have been affected is available on our website by visiting [www.westsussex.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/coronavirus).

#### **f) Managing concurrent pressures – autumn/winter 20/21**

69.The County Council has been successfully managing the impact of COVID-19 since March 2020, but the pandemic is expected to continue to have impacts well into 2021.

70.A number of other pressures / risks have been identified and are being mitigated:

- Continuing COVID-19
- COVID-19 Mass Vaccination
- Seasonal Flu Vaccination Programme
- Health System – Operational Pressures
- Flooding and Severe Weather Events
- End of the EU Transition Period (AKA “D20”)
- Concurrent Major Incident

71.The Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) Framework identifies a risk of disorder, crime and community tensions within our local communities arising from any of the above.

#### *Incident Management Structure*

72.The current incident management structure was set up in March 2020 and, although designed for shorter duration incidents and emergencies, has proved effective and resilient.

73.The internal response structure (Strategic Management Group > Tactical Management Group > Functional Groups/Cells) was set up in March and mirrors the Sussex Resilience Forum’s approach. The internal structure was reviewed by ELT in October 2020 and is deemed fit for purpose to continue to oversee and manage our response to COVID-19 and any concurrent “exceptional pressures” as set out above.

74.The only exception to this is the setting up, under the Director of Highways and Transport, a Severe Weather and Flooding Sub-cell. This will not necessarily meet regularly but after an initial review of risks and actions, will be convened if and when required in advance of forecasted issues.

75.A further risk to the authority - which would potentially be increased by having to co-respond to multiple additional pressures – is staff / institutional fatigue. This risk is being addressed through the revision of degradation plans which outline which service areas could be de-prioritised in the event of severe stress, development of welfare support packages to staff and managers and consideration by ELT of options to augment / add resilience to existing staff resources.

### **g) Financial Position (2020/2021)**

76. The latest estimated gross cost of the pandemic (as at 6 November) in 2020/21 to the County Council is £103.8m (£94.2m additional costs, together with income losses of £9.6m), whilst funding received from Government and partners currently totals £78.5m.
77. Each month, local authorities report their costs to central government through an online return. The impact of the pandemic on the demand for council services should become clearer as we progress through the autumn and projections for outturn for 2020/21 and future years will be adjusted accordingly.