
Councillor Bryan Turner
Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny
Chairman
Via Email

9 February 2021

Dear Bryan

Recommendations from the Covid-19 Preparedness and Restoration, Recovery Planning in West Sussex Task and Finish Group

Thank you for your letter setting out the recommendations of the Covid-19 Preparedness and Restoration, Recovery Planning in West Sussex Task and Finish Group. As requested, I am responding as Chair of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and Cabinet Member for Adults and Health. For ease of reference, I have commented in turn to each of recommendations.

a) Recommends that the model of 'Trusted Voices' (community leader, a leader in a workplace or voluntary setting, or a representative of a given community) be replicated in West Sussex to assist with public health messaging regarding the pandemic. The TFG emphasises the importance of avoiding 'generic messaging' approaching a second wave of the virus.

I fully support the recommendation and the County Council has been using community leaders and contacts in all of our work across Public Health, Communities, Adults and Health and Communications. In addition, we have funded the District and Borough Councils from Covid-19 monies to support their community engagement on the pandemic response. They have varied approaches, sensitive to local circumstances, but all of them link with community leaders in this, including faith leader networks to reinforce to target communications.

b) Recognises that the Local Outbreak Plan is a live document, responding to the pandemic as it develops. The TFG welcomed sight of a lessons learned document relating to a local outbreak of the virus in Crawley and recommends that these be taken forward by the Local Outbreak Engagement Board. It particularly wants the Board to support District and Borough Licensing Teams, to ensure that licensed premises have understood and are following the guidance in relation to 'Track and Trace'.

I agree with the recommendation about the Outbreak Control Plan and the document has been reviewed regularly and has recently been significantly revised. This has been informed by developing Government guidance and national best practice, alongside our local regular reviews of outbreaks and learn lessons from them. The Plan is considered by the Health Protection Board and the Local Outbreak Engagement Board, so these Boards see the outcome of the reviews. Local regulatory teams, Environmental Health and Licencing are part of the working groups on Covid-19 and have been supported with Covid-19 funding from the County Council to increase their capacity to undertake this work. They follow up all outbreaks in commercial premises and report the findings back into the Public Health Functional Group daily meetings on the pandemic.

c) Asks the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, in its role of supporting the overall health and wellbeing of West Sussex residents, to discuss the issue of appointment non-attendance at hospitals and develop further communications to reassure patients, especially approaching the winter period.

The significant increase in the challenges of managing the pandemic in West Sussex has meant there has been a need to prioritise the work of the NHS, Public Health and Adults and Health, which has impacted on non-urgent services and communications to patients during the winter period. I do however support the recommendation as this will be an important element of the work to restore NHS services as we move past the recent surge in cases of Covid-19.

d) Concludes that the community response has been outstanding throughout the pandemic and commends the partnership working between the County Council and District and Borough Councils, in supporting those residents who had or still were shielding. It recommends that the 'keeping in touch' element of the Community Hubs should not be lost and that connections be continued with residents the County Council has not had knowledge of previously, as this is integral to its health and social care long term prevention agenda.

I recognise that the proactive contact approaches developed during the pandemic have been incredibly well received by residents, their friends and families as well as our partner organisations and support the recommendation. The County Council has continued to develop our approaches and continue to evolve this work based on feedback and emerging challenges faced by residents. The Keeping in Touch programme from the first lockdown has been refined and currently delivered as Local Resident Support Calls which have been focused on some of our most vulnerable residents living independently, or with some support across our communities. The Communities Directorate is keen to embed this work, and that more widely of the Community Hub, into the future service delivery models but acknowledges that this activity does require significant resource and organisational infrastructure. As we emerge from the pandemic and take stock of the learning from the past year, we will explore how this activity can be accommodated for the longer term to strengthen the support for residents to underpin improved health and social care outcomes.

e) Requests that officers work collaboratively with all local members to support their communities throughout the pandemic and beyond.

I support the recommendation and officers have worked collaboratively to ensure all Members are kept fully updated, including any local developments or challenges within their communities. Whole council and local briefings have been provided to Members and officers have been responsive to any individual, community or services issues that have been raised by Members. This work will continue to be critically important as we address the longer term impact and challenges of the pandemic on local communities.

I hope my response is helpful,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Cabinet Member for Adults and Health