
Report to West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

28 April 2022

West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Alison Challenger, Director of Public Health

Summary

This report provides a quarterly update on the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB).

The Board was established as part of the Government's requirements for the COVID-19 National Test and Trace Programme and is accountable to the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, as a sub-group of the Board, providing formal updates at its quarterly public meetings.

Recommendation(s) to the Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to: -

- (1) Provide feedback on the progress of the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB) since the last quarterly report to the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2022.
- (2) To consider how the LOEB can continue to maximise its collaborative strength as we progress through the 'Living with COVID-19' phase of the pandemic, engaging with residents and communities across West Sussex.

Relevance to [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

West Sussex Public Health's COVID-19 response aims to minimise the impact of the virus on the population of West Sussex by controlling the COVID-19 rate of reproduction (R), reducing the spread of infection and saving lives. In line with the West Sussex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities, this preventative approach also aims to improve the overall health outcomes of West Sussex residents and reduce inequalities, supporting our local population during these challenging times.

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The West Sussex member led Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB) is a sub-group of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, providing political ownership and public facing engagement and communication for outbreak response during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 The LOEB is a key part of the governance structure for the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP). The Director of Public Health drives this local plan through the West Sussex COVID-19 Health Protection Board in

collaboration with the West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) Strategic Management Group (Gold command) and the LOEB.

- 1.3 Following the Board's decision at its meeting in October 2021 to reduce meeting frequency, the Board now convenes every two months instead of monthly but retains the flexibility and ability to regroup more frequently if required. The Chairman will regularly review this as we progress through the Living with COVID-19 stage of the pandemic.
- 1.4 The Board has met once (14 February 2022) since the last formal update to the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2022.
- 1.5 The next meeting will take place on Friday, 22 April 2022.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board Progress Update

- 1.6 The LOEB remains focused on its role in bringing together key systems leaders across the County Council and the wider health and social care system, applying its collective strength and resources to reduce the spread of infection and save lives across the county. This continues to be important in the 'Living with COVID-19' phase of the pandemic.
- 1.7 Updates from a range of areas across the COVID-19 response are provided to the Board so they are kept informed and can contribute widely. These include COVID-19 data, communications and engagement, testing, children and young people's update, NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, Local Tracing Partnership (LTP), and many more.
- 1.8 At the Board meeting in February, an update on the LTP was received, noting the significant increase in case volumes during November and December in line with increased case rates in the county during this time. The LTP also signposts individuals to where they can access further local support, such as the West Sussex Wellbeing website, and the Community Hub in emails and text messages.
- 1.9 NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Programme: West Sussex Public Health continues to work collaboratively with local NHS partners, Sussex Health and Care Partnership (SHCP) who lead the programme, to tackle inequalities, including access to vaccination, to increase uptake across the local population.
- 1.10 The programme continues to be delivered at a great pace in line with Government requirements. The ongoing drive to encourage those who haven't yet taken up the offer of their first or second dose, or booster jab to come forward was emphasised, noting that there is plenty of capacity within the system to deliver these vaccinations. The success of Vaccine Champions and outreach work in Crawley, engaging with residents and local communities, was highlighted.
- 1.11 Communications and engagement remain central to the COVID-19 response, disseminating key messages to our local population and engaging with residents and communities in a variety of ways including social media, the residents' newsletter, press releases and many more.

- 1.12 A focus on communicating national public health messages and reminding people of the simple actions we can take to help keep ourselves and others safe (hands, face, space and fresh air), and highlighting the NHS COVID-19 vaccination offer, was welcomed.

Key Policy Changes

- 1.13 On Monday, 21 February 2022, the Prime Minister confirmed the next steps for living with COVID-19 and published the Government's plan 'COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19.'
- 1.14 The plan sets out how England will move into a new phase of managing COVID-19, like other respiratory illnesses, and outlines how the Government has and will continue to support and protect citizens "by enabling society and the economy to open up more quickly than many comparable countries; using vaccines; and supporting the National Health Service (NHS) and social care sector."
- 1.15 It highlights that the pandemic is not over, and the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has advised there is considerable uncertainty about the path the pandemic will take in the UK. The plan therefore also outlines how the Government will ensure maintaining contingency capabilities and resilience to deal with a range of possible scenarios.
- 1.16 This plan comprises several key policy changes:
- All domestic COVID-19 legal restrictions ended on 24 February 2022, including the requirement to self-isolate if an individual tests positive with COVID-19.
 - Self-isolation support payments, the medicine delivery service and national funding for practical support are no longer available.
 - Routine contact tracing has ended, including venue check-ins on the NHS COVID-19 app.
 - Testing: From 21 February, guidance to undertake twice weekly testing in education settings was removed. Free asymptomatic and symptomatic testing for the general public ended on 1 April 2022, however, limited symptomatic testing is still available for a small number of at-risk groups, and social care staff.
 - On 24 March the Government removed the COVID-19 provisions within the Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance Regulations.
 - From 1 April the health and safety requirement for employers to explicitly consider COVID-19 in their risk assessments, and guidance on voluntary COVID-status certification in domestic settings was removed. It is also no longer recommended that certain venues use the NHS COVID Pass.

(please note this is not an exhaustive list; full details are available in the plan)

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide feedback on the progress of the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB) since the last quarterly report to the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2022.
- 2.2 Views are sought from the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board on how the LOEB can continue to maximise its collaborative strength as we progress through the 'Living with COVID-19' phase of the pandemic, engaging with residents and communities across West Sussex.

3 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 3.1 Not applicable.

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Appendices: None

Background papers:

HM Government. COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19. February 2022.
Available from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1056229/COVID-19_Response_-_Living_with_COVID-19.pdf

[Accessed: 19 April 2022]