
Report to West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

24 June 2021

West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Report by: Alison Challenger, Director of Public Health

Summary

This report provides a quarterly update on progress of the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board.

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 2021.
- (2) To consider how the LOEB could further increase engagement with residents and communities across West Sussex during the ongoing pandemic, recognising the steps within the government's roadmap out of lockdown, and aligning with key messages.

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) has been established as a sub-group of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to provide 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 \(LOCP\), published on 30 June 2020](#). 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 (WSCC) Strategic Management Group (Gold Command) and the LOEB.
- 1.3 The LOEB has been chaired by Amanda Jupp, Chair of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and Cabinet Member for Adults and Health from July 2020 to May 2021. Following local Elections on 6 May 2021, key appointments to the Council's Cabinet were confirmed on 21 May, after Full Council. Some changes took place including a new portfolio for Public Health and Wellbeing for which Cllr Bob Lanzer is the Cabinet Member. Consequently, Cllr Lanzer is appointed as Chairman of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and the LOEB, taking this forward as part of his portfolio responsibilities.
- 1.4 The LOEB looks forward to welcoming Cllr Lanzer to his new role and would like to take this opportunity to express their sincere thanks to Cllr Jupp for driving the Board forward throughout the pandemic.
- 1.5 The Board meets on a monthly basis and has met ten times during the period July 2019 to May 2021. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 17 June 2021.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board Progress Update

- 1.6 The LOEB continues 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.
- 1.7 Standard agenda items remain focused on providing Board members with updates across important areas including a COVID-19 update by the Director of Public Health, COVID-19 data overview, and communications and engagement activity.
- 1.8 Further agenda items during the period February to May 2021, have included the Asymptomatic Testing Programme for West Sussex, COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, Local Tracing Partnership (LTP), early years, schools and university, preparations for Election, adult social care, and future events.
- 1.9 This approach has enabled a greater 'deep dive' into available data and knowledge, particularly for early years, schools and university, and adult social care, enabling Board members to gain greater understanding of the impact of COVID-19 in these settings and provided the opportunity for further clarification questions to subject matter experts presenting the updates.
- 1.10 With regards to future events, it was highlighted to the Board that event planning is becoming an increasingly busy area for the WSCC Public Health team as restrictions ease, with the team working closely with district and borough council colleagues to ensure events are COVID-secure. It was also acknowledged that Councillors were likely to receive enquiries from their

residents and communities regarding events, therefore signposting to information and advice on events was suggested as a useful addition to be included in the regular WSCC Members Bulletin.

- 1.11 In preparation for Elections on 6 May, Board members emphasised concerns regarding ensuring COVID-secure polling stations across the county to reduce the spread of the virus. It was recognised that a pan-Sussex approach to public health guidance for Elections was required due to the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections taking place at the same time (which were across Sussex) as local Elections. Following this, the WSCC Public Health team worked with public health colleagues across Sussex to develop guidance and share with democratic services colleagues across these areas. The WSCC Communications Team provided further support by communicating key public health messages around safe voting procedures to further support this approach.
- 1.12 At its most recent meeting in May 2021, WSCC Head of Communications and Engagement, reported that a wide range of COVID-19 communications activity continues to take place across multiple media channels. This includes out of house advertising with a focus on testing, including banners to promote home testing at collection points, complemented by geo-targeting social media messaging, and a large focus on COVID-19 vaccinations, particularly with communities experiencing health inequalities. Focuses include promoting quiet vaccination sessions, free transport, assurance over the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and encouraging attendance at second dose appointments. There is also a weekly feature in the WSCC Residents' newsletter regarding vaccinations; the newsletter now has nearly 200,000 subscribers (data as at 30 April 2021).
- 1.13 Additionally, communications messages supported Mental Health Awareness Week during 10-16 May.
- 1.14 With regards to forward planning, social media announcements and reminders will continue to go out from the WSCC Communications Team to reinforce positive behaviours to prevent the spread of the virus, in line with public health guidance, government announcements, and key messages at each step of the government's roadmap out of lockdown.

Key Policy Changes

- 1.15 On Monday, 22 February 2021, the Prime Minister announced the publication of the 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' which set out the roadmap out of the current national lockdown for England and how the government will continue to protect and support citizens across the UK.
- 1.16 Setting out 4 key steps for the easing of restrictions and activities, Steps 1-3 have taken place in line with proposed dates, however, on Monday, 14 June, the Prime Minister announced that from Monday, 21 June, there will be a 4-week pause at Step 3 of the roadmap due to the exponential growth of the Delta variant spreading across England. After 2 weeks, the data will be reviewed by the Government to ascertain if risks have reduced. It is expected that England will now move to Step 4 on Monday, 19 July. Consequently, Step 3 restrictions will remain in place during this time.

- 1.17 The LOEB will continue to support the delivery of national messages at local authority level, using its voice to engage with residents, local communities, businesses, and key partners, to help to keep West Sussex safe.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide a formal quarterly update to the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress of the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB).
- 2.2 Views are sought from the Health and Wellbeing Board on how the LOEB could further increase engagement with residents and communities across West Sussex during the ongoing pandemic, recognising the steps within the government's roadmap out of lockdown, and aligning with key messages.

3 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 3.1 Not applicable.

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Appendices: None

Background papers: None