
Report to West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

27 April 2023

West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Report by: Alison Challenger, Director of Public Health

Summary

This report provides a quarterly update on the West Sussex COVID-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB), following the previous update to the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) in January 2023.

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 HWB, 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 2023.
- (2) Acknowledge that the LOEB has resolved to move to a 'standby' position and reactivate if required, reflecting the progression through the living with COVID-19 stage of the pandemic.
- (3) Recognise the value of the LOEB throughout this time, maximising its collaborative strength to engage 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.

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 has met regularly since its launch in July 2020, originally meeting monthly, moving to meeting every two months from October 2021, and then to quarterly, as we have progressed through the pandemic. Meeting frequency has been regularly reviewed by the Chairman, with the Board retaining flexibility and the ability to regroup more frequently, if required.
- 1.3 The Board has met once (23 February) since the last formal update to the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2023.
- 1.4 At this meeting, the Chairman recommended the Board move to a 'standby' position, in line with LOEB peers elsewhere that are standing down from the end of March 2023. COVID-19 updates would continue to be received by the HWB. This approach was supported by the Director of Public Health (DPH), providing assurance that the local authority will remain vigilant, and meetings would be reinstated, if required. This reflects the progression through the living with COVID-19 stage of the pandemic.
- 1.5 Board members valued the cross-cutting approach of the LOEB, with quarterly virtual updates on key areas suggested, moving forwards.
- 1.6 It was resolved that the LOEB would move to a 'standby' position and reactivate if required.
- 1.7 The Chairman thanked all those who had contributed to the LOEB for their excellent contributions, teamwork, dedication, and hard work.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board Progress Update

- 1.8 The LOEB continues to be committed to its role in bringing together key systems leaders across the County Council and the wider health and social care system in West Sussex to reduce the spread of infection and save lives across the county.
- 1.9 At the Board meeting in February 2023, the DPH provided a COVID-19 update, which included the key message that the virus has not gone away, however, it is currently not at a high level or presenting the same risk that it has done in the past. Therefore, some of the pressures seen previously, are no longer the issue that they were, however, these continue to be monitored.
- 1.10 A COVID-19 data presentation was also provided at the meeting.
- 1.11 An update was received from the Consultant in Public Health (Health Protection) on how West Sussex Public Health is supporting the delivery of both the NHS COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes, working collaboratively with NHS Sussex, focusing on tackling inequalities, including access to vaccination, to increase uptake across the local population.
- 1.12 Communications over recent months have centred on promoting the COVID-19 and flu vaccinations through a long-term series of sustained messages across the County Council's communications channels. During December 2022, there was a focus on promoting vaccinations to high risk groups, and, in January 2023, messaging moved to "It's not too late" to get your COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

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 2023.
- 2.2 It also updates the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board on the LOEB's resolve to move to a 'standby' position and reactivate if required, reflecting the progression through the living with COVID-19 stage of the pandemic.
- 2.3 The West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to acknowledge this transition and recognise the value of the LOEB throughout this time, maximising its collaborative strength to engage with residents and communities across West Sussex.

3 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 3.1 Not applicable.

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Appendices: None

Background papers: None