

SUNDERLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

25 June 2020

LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL BOARD

Report of the Director of Public Health

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report details the proposed arrangements for the Sunderland Local Outbreak Control Board for agreement by the Sunderland Health & Wellbeing Board.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 22 May 2020 the UK national government announced that as part of the next phase of the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, alongside the NHS Test and Trace Service, there is a need for a co-ordinated effort from national and local government, the NHS, GPs, businesses and employers, voluntary organisations and other community partners as well as the general public to control the rate of reproduction of the virus, reduce the spread of infection and so help return life to normal for as many people as possible in a way that is safe.
- 2.2 Upper tier local authorities have been tasked with developing local outbreak control plans due to their statutory responsibility for public health. In developing the plan they will need to work with Public Health England's local health protection teams, the NHS and other relevant organisations through a local COVID-19 Health Protection Board. The COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan will focus on preventing, rapidly identifying and swiftly responding to complex cases in high-risk places, locations and communities. This allows the response to be targeted and tailored to local circumstances and supports the move towards recovery from the pandemic. The aim is once again to contain the virus.
- 2.3 The development of the plan is the responsibility of the Director of Public Health working through a local COVID-19 Health Protection Board. There are seven key themes that need to be addressed by the Plan as follows:
- Managing local outbreaks in care homes and schools;
 - Managing high risk places, locations and communities of interest;
 - Prioritising and managing deployment of testing capacity;
 - Ensuring capacity for contact tracing in complex settings;
 - Integrating national and local data to support decision making and action;
 - Supporting vulnerable people;
 - Establishing governance arrangements.
- 2.4 The plan will be completed by the end of June 2020. The local response set out in the Plan will build on existing health protection good practice and will involve working collaboratively with a range of partners, such as PHE, NHS, care homes, educational establishments, private businesses and the voluntary sector.

3.0 Establishing governance arrangements

- 3.1 While we continue to live in unprecedented times, much of what we are required to do in response to this new phase of the pandemic is known and will, therefore, be built on existing processes, relationships and structures.
- 3.2 National guidance identified three critical roles and the relationship between them. The public health response will, therefore, operate within local governance arrangements that include three approaches for multi-agency working as depicted in figure 1.

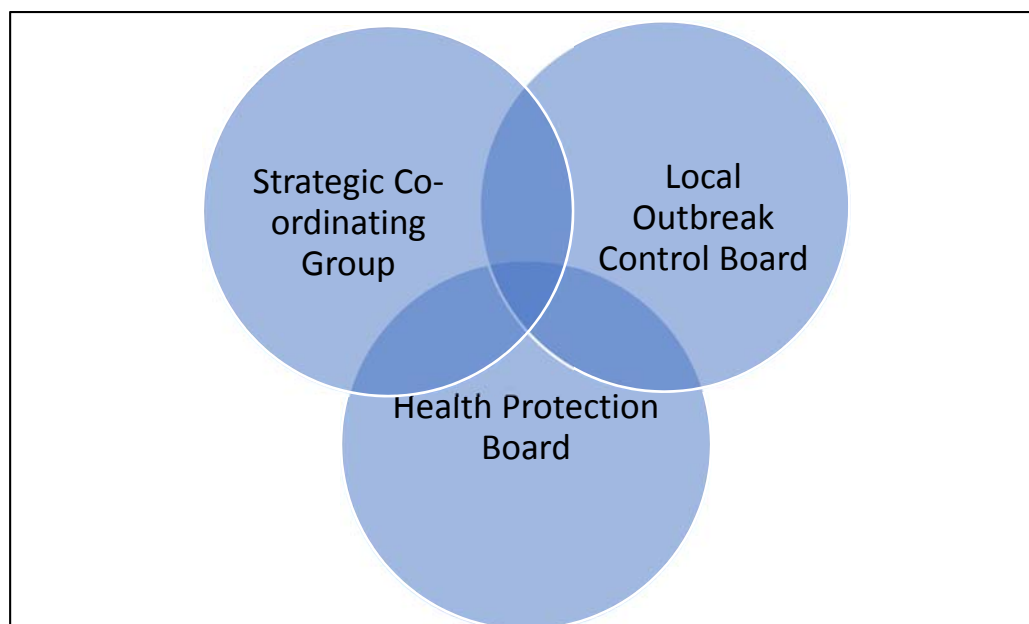


Figure 1: Three critical local roles in test and trace.

- 3.3 The COVID-19 Health Protection Board will support the development and delivery of the Plan and provide expert health protection and infection control advice to incident management and outbreak control teams, as well as giving assurance and advice to the Local Outbreak Control Board and the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. This will build on and strengthen the current processes that are in place for managing outbreaks of infectious disease and will have a direct link to regional PHE teams.
- 3.4 The Local Outbreak Control Board will facilitate political ownership and support public facing engagement and communication for the local outbreak response. It will also act as liaison to Ministers as needed. This will build on existing place-based relationships.
- 3.5 The Strategic Co-ordinating Group will support delivery of the outbreak plan through co-ordinating and working with partners to ensure swift resource deployment. This group will link with the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Whitehall and COBR.

4.0 Proposal for the Local Outbreak Control Board

- 4.1 One of the key objectives for the next phase of the response to COVID-19 is to enable individuals and organisations to safely return to as close to normal as possible. To achieve this, it is imperative that we work with our local communities to ensure that together we continue to behave in a way that keeps ourselves and others safe.
- 4.2 Local authorities are required to create a Local Outbreak Control Board which provides political ownership, communication and engagement between key stakeholders and with communities. This is key in preventing local outbreaks and ensuring coordinated local action should they occur. The Board will have oversight of all aspects of managing the COVID-19 epidemic including local decisions on opening and closing venues and settings, subject to national government rules and guidance, and recovery and restoration of services. It will also agree any additional control measures required for which there are currently no local powers and therefore needs the agreement of Ministers.
- 4.3 The Health and Wellbeing Board, with its joint political, health and care system leadership, currently has a function to ensure that more people in Sunderland live healthier longer lives and so it makes sense that it undertakes this important new function. It is, therefore, proposed that the Health and Wellbeing Board should take on the role of the Local Outbreak Control Board. This will ensure that new responsibilities build on existing functions and relationships and that there is clarity of responsibilities and avoidance of duplication of effort.
- 4.4 National guidance recommends that the Local Outbreak Control Board is chaired by the Leader of the Council. It is therefore proposed that when matters relating to COVID-19 are being discussed the Leader of the Council takes the Chair. If the Leader is unavailable then the Deputy Leader of the Council will take the Chair.
- 4.5 It is important that the Local Outbreak Control Board is flexible in its approach so that it can respond to rapidly moving events. As a result, it may be that the Board will need to meet urgently. Members are, therefore, asked to be as responsive as possible on these occasions.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:
 - Note the contents of this report;
 - Agree to fulfil the role of Local Outbreak Control Board;
 - Agree that for that part of any meeting when matters relating to COVID-19 are being discussed, the Leader of the Council will chair the meeting.

