

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

27TH APRIL 2022

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

HEALTH PROTECTION ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY

This report proposes a local Health Protection Collaborative to provide support systems-working and assurance in relation to health protection matters, together with a draft terms of reference.

RECOMMENDATION

The report recommends that the Board:

1. Considers and supports the proposed Health Protection Collaborative.
2. Reviews the draft terms of reference for the Collaborative.

DETAIL

1. Health Protection covers a range of public health issues, including infectious disease control, chemical / biological threats, screening and immunisations and public health input to the emergency and major incident planning process.
2. Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) the statutory responsibilities of the Director of Public Health were confirmed to cover health protection, with the duty to provide assurance that robust systems are in place to protect the health of the population.
3. The Local Authority (as the employer of the DPH) also has existing public health powers that cover health protection matters as well as broader responsibilities with respect to major incident planning, response and recovery. All Board organisations have key responsibilities and / or involvement in health protection matters, including the NHS's role as responder and as commissioner of screening and immunisations services; and the VCSE role in supporting the response and recovery to health protection incidents such as the pandemic.
4. To-date, the Health and Wellbeing Board has received annual reports from the Director of Public Health, to provide an overview of key health protection matters to support the DPH in their assurance role, reporting to the Board as the local body with the system lead on health and wellbeing matters for the population.

5. During the pandemic, the DPH has provided monthly update to the Board on outbreak management matters. Under the government's Contain framework, a Covid Control Group has also existed locally as a forum for the local system to share situational awareness; agree systems approaches to outbreak management in the context of the pandemic; highlight and help address key issues such as Long Covid (now called Post Covid syndrome); and provide system support and mutual aid as needed.
6. Due to the success of the local Covid Control Group and the fact that the governance arrangements under the Contain framework can now be stood down from a national perspective, it is proposed to evolve the Covid Control Group into a broader Health Protection Collaborative. The Collaborative will provide assurance to the Board on Health Protection matters for the Borough and support local system working to ensure a robust and resilient local health protection system.
7. It will not duplicate the work of existing system meetings around e.g. screening programmes; rather it will seek to ensure the system is working at a local borough-based level and support the DPH in their assurance role, reporting to the Board.
8. This approach would also fit with the shift in national policy direction away from Covid being managed as a separate stream of activity, to an 'all-hazards' approach that considers Covid alongside other threats to the population's health.
9. The DPH will also link the Collaborative's discussions in to work with neighbouring local authorities / DsPH, the work of the NE DsPH network; and the existing system meetings and discussions on health protection matters.
10. The draft terms of reference are appended to this paper with the proposal that the Collaborative is confirmed immediately after Board agreement and that quarterly updates on general health protection matters are brought to the Board, with more frequent updates brought as needed in the interim e.g. on Covid. It is proposed that the frequency of reporting is kept under review.
11. The Social Care Protection Operational Group is proposed to report to the Collaborative. The Group's terms of reference are currently undergoing a refresh to reflect a broader agenda beyond Covid and to cover the care sector more broadly (beyond the care home focus that has been in place during the pandemic). Though the Social Care Protection Group will have a broader remit than health protection, a significant proportion of its work is relevant to this area and therefore it is proposed the Group's governance sits well with the Collaborative.

Name of Contact Officer: Sarah Bowman-Abouna
Post Title: Director of Public Health
Email address: sarah.bowman-abouna@stockton.gov.uk

