

Southend Health & Wellbeing Board

Agenda
Item No.

Report of the Director of Public Health

To
Health & Wellbeing Board

on
7th March 2022

Report prepared by: Krishna Ramkhelawon,
Director of Public Health

For information only	X	For discussion		Approval required	
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Coronavirus Pandemic Management Updates from the Health Protection Board and the Oversight and Engagement Board Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

Purpose

This is to provide an update on the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan implementation and the on-going management of the pandemic following the removal of COVID-related restrictions from the 24th February 2022.

Background

In February 2022, the Government announced that the restrictions introduced to help manage the pandemic, under the Coronavirus Act (2020), will cease to be active. The Department for Health and Social Care and Department for Education, along with the UK Health Security Agency have been working closely with the Association of Directors of Public Health to ensure that we can continue to manage the challenges posed by COVID-19 in a more measured way.

Some core element of test and trace will remain effective as these play an important ongoing role in the management of local outbreaks and in continuing to bring the infection rates down. It is a core element of our shared ambition to ensure that we can continue to live safely with COVID-19. Passenger locator forms will still be utilised to support the need to undertake rapid tracing of contacts if a new variant of concerns has been identified from overseas travellers.

Local communities will remain at the heart of our local response. It's important that there is a continued strong local, regional and national partnership to support people in understanding and in using guidance and advice designed to continue protecting their health and their communities.

Local authorities and their local system partners are an integral part of the response to COVID-19, working closely with regional health protection teams (HPTs) and the wider COVID-19 regional partnership team.

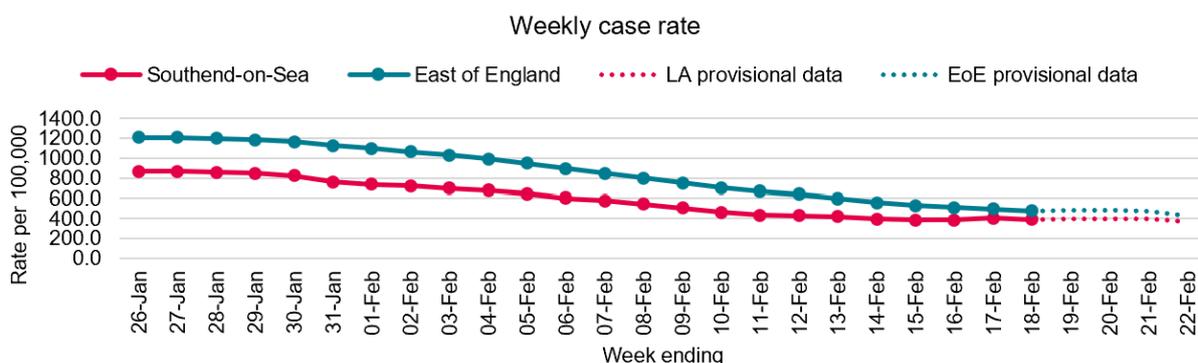
Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP)

Local planning and response are enshrined in the Southend LOMP which was published at the end of July 2021 and remains a dynamic document. This document will remain active, whilst we await the final publication of the national management strategy over the next couple of weeks and into March 2022. The document will be refreshed as required to ensure a safe transition to more local determination and will ensure we remain vigilant in dealing with any potential newly identified 'Variant of Concern' or in dealing with any significant surge in infection rates.

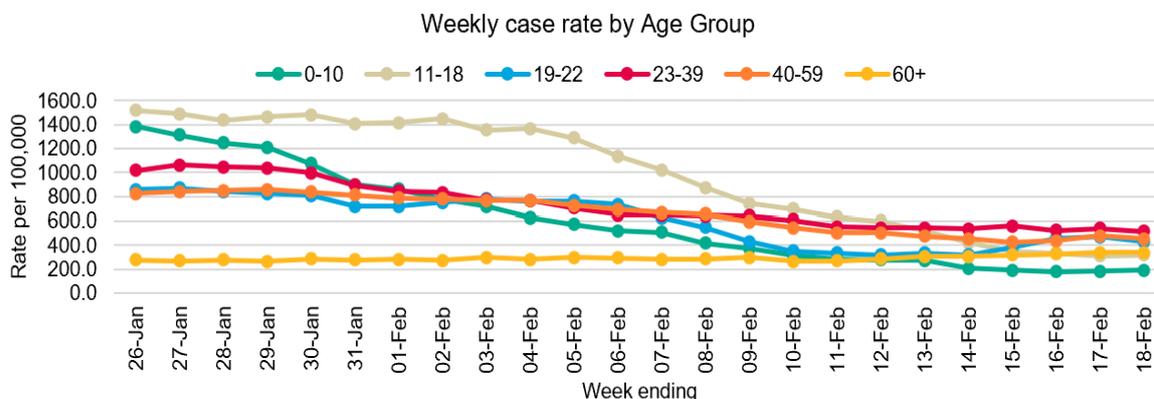
Local Boards & Pandemic Management

The Health Protection Board (HPB) is now meeting monthly and will continue to receive the local Pandemic Surveillance Report and necessary actions.

The infection rate has remained high and in the past week has seen a marginal increase as we observe fewer people making use of the public health measures aimed at curtailing increases in rates. Our overall rate was 476/100,000 (18th February), and we are expecting seeing a slow but gradual decrease in infection.

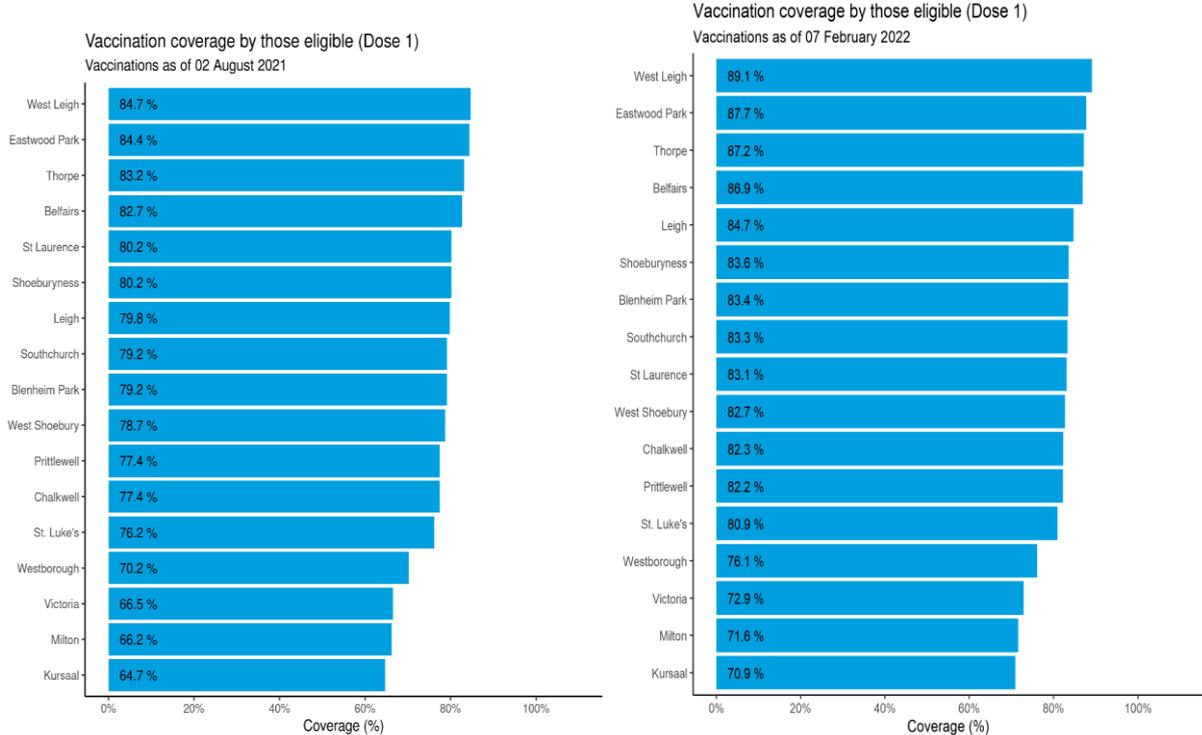


Rates in the over 60yrs have remained higher than anticipated, primarily as more families are mixing and with fewer people testing. We continue to explore new ways to engage and communicate the risk of virus transmission with them.



We continue to work closely with the schools and care homes which are the higher risk settings for transmissions and consequential impact on health and wellbeing.

There will be a significant reduction in testing by the start of April 2022 and we will only utilise the local contact tracing team when our risk assessment has flagged an area of concern. The team has been redeployed to support the delivery of the vaccine hesitancy plan, which has been successful at bringing our vaccination rates up in the four wards with lowest uptake.



With regards to the local mortality rate, we have been reviewing the excess mortality from COVID and as we have seen even more deaths during the current wave. A number of outbreak management teams were initiated to manage the response to care home outbreaks and to ensure all infection prevention and control measures were being followed effectively. We have seen very few consequential COVID-related admissions from care homes.

The Outbreak Control Oversight and Engagement Board continues to lead on a number of communication and engagement activities, including refreshing our messaging to the public and local businesses. We will continue to hold regular community engagement events to provide reassurance, respond to local concerns and gain more insight to support our local response.

The Board is actively supporting the NHS in addressing local hesitancy with the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

All our actions and local interventions are reviewed and shared with the Regional Test and Trace Support and Assurance Team.

Recommendation

1. For the HWB Board to note the proposed ending of all COVID-related restrictions on the 24th February 2022. The Southend's Local Outbreak Management Plan will be reviewed and updated by the Local Health Protection Board, when national guidance has been published.
2. For the HWB Board to note that the Health Protection Board and the Outbreak Control Oversight and Engagement Board will continue to meet monthly to support the ongoing management of the pandemic-related activity.