

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Health Protection Board

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the views of the Health & Wellbeing Board on the way in which the Gateshead health protection system will provide leadership and ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to outbreak control, infection prevention and the treatment and management of disease.

Background

2. Throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, from the first confirmed case in Gateshead in March 2019 to 'Living with Covid', the health protection system, under the governance of the Gateshead Outbreak Control Board has provided solid and consistent leadership to the local system on outbreak control, infection prevention, management and Covid-19 services. The Board has provided evidence based and coordinated action as the pandemic unfolded, providing intelligence led decision making, mobilising services to minimise transmission and protect the most vulnerable. This included the development of a Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) to set strategic direction and provide assurance that appropriate actions were in place to respond to any outbreaks affecting our population.
3. Although the Covid-19 Contain Framework and the statutory requirement for an Outbreak Control Board and LOMP was withdrawn on 7th April 2022 following the Prime Ministers announcement in February 2022 that all legal Covid-19 restrictions would end (including the requirement to self-isolate following a positive test result), it is imperative to ensure resilience and maintain contingency capabilities to deal with a range of possible Covid-19 scenarios.
4. Whilst we learn to live with Covid-19 it is important to remember that the pandemic is not over. Infection rates at the time of writing remain raised, both nationally and locally – albeit reducing. However, at the same time, harms as measured by hospitalisation and severe illness are currently low. As we transition into this next phase, we will need to continue to be vigilant for new variants and surges and be ready to respond.
5. In addition it is also important that as a system, Gateshead continues to protect the health of the population by leading and developing innovative programmes of work which focus on wider health protection priorities and emerging non-Covid 19 diseases so that any future incidents or outbreaks can be effectively managed; many of which have been exacerbated by Covid-19.
6. In order to ensure that the Gateshead health and care economy maintains safe, resilient and effective communicable disease and environmental protection services as well as meets the requirements of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act

(section 6C regulations) , the ‘Gateshead Outbreak Control Board’ will be renamed the ‘Gateshead Health Protection Board’ and will continue to work to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect the health of communities and develops robust assurance frameworks. This includes whole system wide reporting, strengthened governance arrangements, the development of a Gateshead Health Protection plan as well as regular updates to system leaders on surveillance of circulating infections.

7. A key focus of the Board will be on addressing emerging health protection priorities that disproportionately affect those people living in the most deprived communities in the Borough as well as considering the impact of worsening deprivation statistics, the impact of Covid-19 and health inequalities when planning programmes and monitoring progress on priorities. The key priorities of the Board will be:
 - Communicable Disease Control
 - Environmental Health
 - Immunisation
 - Infection Prevention & Control
 - Screening
 - Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR)
8. The Board will report to the Health and Wellbeing Board and will be Chaired by the Service Director for Transformation, System Resilience and EPRR.
9. Membership will include representation from the following organisations:
 - Gateshead Council
 - Public Health and Wellbeing (Public Health and Emergency Response Team)
 - Economy, Innovation and Growth (Environmental Health and Trading Standards)
 - Care, Wellbeing and Learning (Adult and Children’s Services)
 - United Kingdom Health Security Agency
 - Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust
 - Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
 - Primary Care
 - Community Pharmacies
 - NHS England
 - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
 - Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE)

Proposal

10. It is proposed that the ‘Gateshead Outbreak Control Board’ will be renamed the ‘Gateshead Health Protection Board’.

Recommendations

11. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:
 - Agree to rename Gateshead Outbreak Control Board to the Gateshead Health Protection Board;
 - Receive an update annually on work and progress of the Board;
 - Ratify the Terms of Reference (Appendix A).

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Gateshead Health Protection Board Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Health Protection Board is to:

- Provide strategic oversight of the health protection system in Gateshead.
- Improve integration and collaborative working on health protection between Gateshead Council, the NHS, United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and other local health and care service providers.
- Provide assurance to the Director of Public Health and the Health and Wellbeing Board, on behalf of the population of Gateshead, that the threats to the public's health are understood and that there are safe, effective and locally sensitive arrangements in place for the protection of the public's health.

Functions

In order to deliver of the strategic purpose of the health protection forum, the meeting has a range of different functions, these include:

- Developing a health protection action plan for Gateshead to be approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board and oversee its implementation by partners.
- To review the reports of significant incidents and outbreaks, consider recommendations for change as a result and promote quality improvement of the health protection system through encouraging implementation of recommendations.
- To monitor and then ensure that learning from incidents and outbreaks etc. has been established in future working practices of commissioners and providers.
- To identify, communicate and provide recommendations for the management of health protection risks, on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- To challenge, share and escalate concerns and risks to commissioners and appropriate bodies when health protection plans and arrangements are considered inadequate to provide sufficient protection of patients or public safety.
- To share and escalate concerns to commissioners and regulators where relevant, when a provider's management of healthcare associated infections is, or may be inadequate to provide sufficient protection of patients or public safety.
- To receive the reports of significant incidents and outbreaks, consider recommendations for change and promote quality improvement of the health protection system through encouraging implementation of recommendations.
- To identify, communicate and make recommendations to address health inequalities arising from a variation in exposure to and outcomes from environmental hazards or infectious diseases, or from a variation in uptake of vaccination, coverage of screening or access to other health protection interventions.
- To identify key health protection needs for collaborative work and to feed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Oversee preparation of the annual Health Protection Board report.

Scope

The Board will provide advice, challenge and advocacy to protect the population of Gateshead.

Issues that are within the scope of the board are, but are not restricted to:

- Prevention and control of infectious disease in the community
- Environmental hazards including extreme weather events
- Immunisation programmes
- National screening programmes
- Sexually transmitted infections including HIV / sexual health
- Blood borne viruses
- Tuberculosis
- Planning, surveillance and response to incidents, outbreaks and emergencies

Issues that are specifically out of scope of the Board include:

- Environmental permits
- Business continuity
- Predictable 'business as usual' events such as NHS/social care winter planning
- Hospital acquired infection
- Methods of working

Governance

The Gateshead Health Protection Board is accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board through the Director of Public Health.

The Gateshead Health Protection Board will provide verbal and/or written reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board and to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis (or more frequently as required) through the Director of Public Health.

Where there is a need to escalate concerns or risks this will be done via the Director of Public Health through the Health and Wellbeing Board, Local Health Resilience Forum, Corporate Management Team of Gateshead Council, Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (soon to be North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board) or NHS England (or other organisation) as appropriate.

The group will link with:

- Gateshead Council Corporate Risk Management Group
- Gateshead multi-agency Resilience and Emergency Planning group
- Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP)
- Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF)
- Newcastle Gateshead Quality Safety and Risk Committee

The Gateshead Health Protection Board will share information and collaborate as appropriate with other fora and organisations engaged in the protection and promotion of the public's health.

Membership and Decision-Making

The membership of the Board reflects its purpose and functions as identified above. Accordingly, the membership will include:

- Gateshead Council
 - Public Health and Wellbeing (Public Health and Emergency Response Team)
 - Economy, Innovation and Growth (Environmental Health and Trading Standards)
 - Care, Wellbeing and Learning (Adult and Children's Services)
- United Kingdom Health Security Agency
- Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Primary Care
- Community Pharmacies
- NHS England
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE)

The programme board will be chaired by the Associate Director Transformation, System Resilience and EPRR/Director of Public Health.

Frequency

The board will meet on a three-monthly basis (i.e. four times a year) but may meet more often if required.

Agenda

There are a number of standing items that should be on the agenda each time the programme board meets:

- Welcome, Introductions and Apologies
- Screening and Immunisations
- Communicable Diseases
- Infection Control
- Emergency Planning, Risk and Resilience
- Substance Misuse
- Sexual Health
- Environmental health protection
- Air Quality
- Seasonal Influenza
- Communications
- Horizon Scanning

Other agenda items may be included at the discretion of the Chair.

Sub-Groups

It may be necessary in some cases to establish sub-groups on a standing basis to deal with issues that need ongoing attention (e.g. 'Flu).

In other circumstances it may be appropriate to set up a time limited task sub-group to address specific identified issues, with delegated responsibilities, if necessary, and with a view to reporting back at the next Board meeting.

Administration

Administrative support for the Board will be provided by Gateshead Council. The agenda will be finalised not later than two weeks before the meeting. Papers for the meeting will be circulated at least two weeks in advance of the meeting to allow members to familiarise themselves with them before the meeting.

Later items can be included at the discretion of the Chair, but it is expected that this would be exceptional.

Review

Terms of reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.