

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 14 JULY 2020

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PARTNERSHIPS AND ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 - VULNERABLE PEOPLE

EXEMPT INFORMATION

None

PURPOSE

To update Scrutiny on the actions taken to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing actions around the **most vulnerable** people in our communities

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Note and endorse the contents of the report and actions taken
2. Thank **anchor organisations**, such as **Communities Together**, for their unwavering efforts to support some of the most vulnerable across Tamworth Borough Council
3. Comment on the emerging evidence base and questions as work progresses on vulnerability and recovery planning, set out on page 3 of this report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting vulnerable communities is at the heart of the Councils vision to “**Put Tamworth, its people and the local economy at the heart of everything we do**”. Helping to build resilient communities is fundamental to our purpose. With a focus on people and place – working collaboratively and flexibly to meet the needs of our communities is never more important now as we start to plan and prepare for our recovery from COVID-19 and what is likely to be lasting impact of the Pandemic.

On the 23rd March 2020 the Prime Minister announced extension restrictions to our social and economic infrastructure to support the Country’s response to the pandemic. These restrictions were enacted through the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions England) Regulations 2000. Since the 4th July 2020¹ the Government have eased some of these restrictions as transmission and death rates

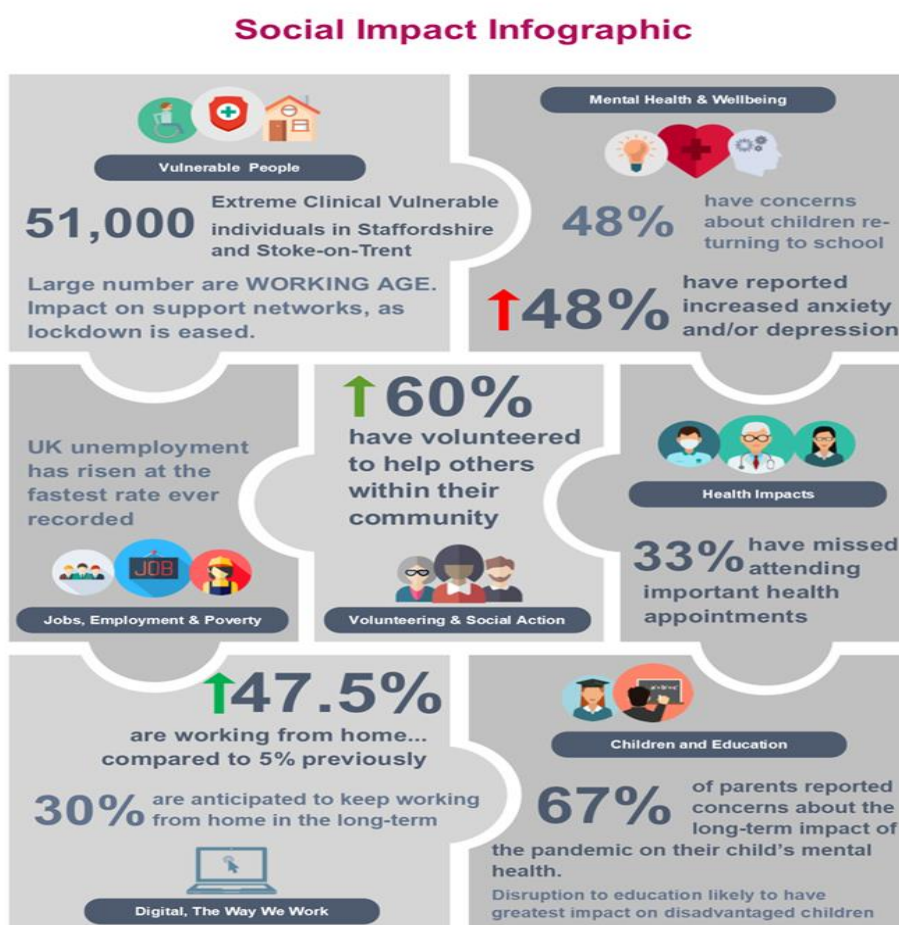
¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-easing-of-lockdown-restrictions-23-june-2020>

are contained and as the scientific data supports a move into recovery.²

During the pandemic the Council has been part of a County wide emergency response, supported by Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF). Chief Officers have attended weekly strategic and tactical briefings sharing good practice as well as discussing matters escalated to the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) often advising government ministers directly.

Staffordshire County Council, in June 2020, prepared a **social recovery** paper for the Recovery Co-ordinating Group to outline some of the challenges going forward. Headlines are being used to inform recovery plans County wide; highlights include reference to:-

- Volunteering and social action of the scale seen hasn't been seen since World War 2.
- Rich and diverse communities have come together with a new wave of shared civic pride and determination; 60% have offered help across Staffordshire with 47% receiving help.
- The vital role of charities and community groups has been highlighted supporting the "people helping people" ideology. This, underlined and shown to be vital to community connectivity and leadership.
- Support Staffordshire have confirmed two thirds of the Staffordshire VCSE sector has continued to operate.



Source – SCC recovery paper June 2020

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

For Tamworth specifically, during what was effectively a 15 week lockdown the impact on the most vulnerable in our community has been self-evident as we have seen

- Over 2.2million³ nationally identified through the Governments **extremely clinically vulnerable** shielding programme. Staffordshire County Council estimate nearly 40,000 across Staffordshire of which 2922 were in Tamworth's own district
- Between 10-20% of our communities are classed as **vulnerable** as a result of being either over 70 years of age and therefore more likely to be isolated
- Increase in demand on **statutory service** provision with a doubling in the amount presenting to us a homeless; with 20 rough sleepers placed in temporary accommodation as part of the '**every-one in**' initiative – compared to usual numbers of rough sleepers <5.
- Over 2000 households contacted the voluntary sector, led by Communities Together, to receive support around food, medicine delivery and to access befriending services
- Nearly a 1000 council tenants receiving tailored support, living in sheltered schemes, high rise, in receipt of support and/or being advised with regard to homelessness

Not only has Tamworth deployed its own resources to support these efforts, but Tamworth has been instrumental in the development and support of its own '**anchor organisations**'. This approach has been co-designed with Support Staffordshire, other districts as well as the County Council to co-ordinate efforts to review the offer to the most vulnerable in our Community, maximising the benefits of community resources and assets.

Communities Together(CIC) along with other third sector and voluntary groups, acted with us, as our very own anchor organisations. In partnership the Council is currently progressing a lottery bid to enable work to continue; this builds on the Governments earlier funding announcements to support community efforts.⁴ This funding sits alongside other funding opportunities for work on mental health, domestic violence and veteran support – all of which will feature in further recovery planning.

On the 1st July 2020, Tamworth commissioned work to produce a comprehensive base line assessment around vulnerability so that plans can be intelligence led and support the Council in its wider recovery around the pandemic. In collaboration with partners and key stakeholders this work will form the basis of informing a **social deal fit for the future** detailing the offer to those most vulnerable in our communities – this research will test:-

1. What we mean by vulnerability to develop a shared understanding
2. The evidence base aligned to this definition setting out the metrics
3. A community impact assessment around the Councils role and response, recognising that SCC also have a lead role in relation to care, support and health
4. A table showing vulnerable groups; potential recovery actions alongside resource opportunities

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-ease-guidance-for-over-2-million-shielding>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-funding-to-support-most-vulnerable-in-society-during-pandemic>

5. Observations on the potential for service re-design to support vulnerability going forward

It is anticipated this work will be completed by August, so that Cabinet can receive further recommendations in the Autumn. Officers welcome Scrutiny observations around vulnerability and the questions being posed above as it develops its plans.

Tamworth Borough Council Response

At the beginning of the crisis Community Together CIC (CT CIC) updated that the organisation had received some funding as part of their work around with the CCG to support a befriending telephone service for existing users and referrals from GPs to maintain contact with vulnerable people advised to shield or those in the wider vulnerable groups who had been advised to stay at home or for those in self isolation.

The Partnership team formed and immediate contact and partnership with Community Together CIC and the recently formed Tamworth Isolation and Support Group who were set up to start delivering donated food parcels to those who did not have support.

Following a grant of £5,000 from Tamworth Borough Council (retained voluntary sector grant funding) CT CIC were able to invest in a digital and expanded phone system to enable wider use and expand provision.

The Partnership team were able to signpost CT CIC to the Heart of Tamworth (Sacred Heart) community group to enable the combining of resource and to ensure a central call number.

Heart of Tamworth offered the use of facilities at the Sacred Heart Church for food headquarters.

Four Tamworth Borough Council officers from the Partnership team were identified to act as team leaders for the volunteers and to act as referral points to council services and give advice. This allowed the service to operate 7 day per week.

The allocation of 2 Street Scene officers with the use of a van who could support delivery

The service offered included:-

- Emergency food boxes for persons self-quarantining with no support (donated food)
- Work with the Tamworth Foodbank to deliver food to those who qualified for assistance but unable to collect food
- Befriending services
- Signposting to support service eg Tamworth Advice centre/Council services
- Options for paid for home delivery service with Tamworth Co-Op for those able to pay

Key highlights:

- 2,043 calls received

- 2,846 outgoing calls
- 254 people signed up for befriending
- 810 food parcels delivered with top 3 wards being Glascote, Castle and Mercian
- 302 social impact surveys completed

The Partnership have now published a video to highlight their work
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP1FxqjmjM8&feature=youtu.be>

Neighbourhoods Team staff were also tasked to receive details of all referrals and calls to the Support line; to record actions and identify council tenants and other support needs.

The Council in response to its obligations as a landlord has also sought to identify all vulnerable tenants' and provided telephone contact with:-

- 365 households in sheltered housing schemes, including identifying those providing domiciliary care support to ensure joined up support across care and supported housing
- Over 300 households in the Council's high rise accommodation in the town centre to provide tailored support to those that needed it
- Over 100 council tenants on the OAP grass cutting list with identified supported needs
- All 48 households and residents at Eringden to offer tailored support
- 20 single family units at Ellerbeck and Chestnut
- Over 50 people placed in temporary accommodation during lock-down and presenting as homeless
- Members of the tenants consultative group (aimed at representing council tenants) to offer and discuss further tailored support

Working with the Council's PR team a wide range of information was placed on the website with continued work on social media – latest details can be found by clicking on the links available

County Response

The Assistant Director Partnerships and Neighbourhoods were nominated to act as leads for vulnerable persons and partnership response to the crisis.

The County Council are responsible for the distribution of essential food boxes to clinically shielded people who do not have support until 31st July 2020.

CT CIC was identified as an anchor organisation to assist in this response and will continue to assist and signpost any persons self-isolating after this time without community support to relevant on-line shopping and/or community food providers.

The Neighbourhoods team supported this response by phoning over 600 people who had been identified as shielding and had not registered

Customer services assisted callers who had had a letter to register and this data is reflected in the that included above

Recovery Actions

The Partnership team are supporting CT CIC and partners with Lottery bid of £100,000 for ongoing COVID-19 specific support over the next six months to:

- Support continued on-line support and activities
- Assist groups to become COVID-19 compliant
- Development support
- Befriending services
- Volunteer support and training
- Bereavement support

The bid has passed the regional team and results are awaited

Using learning and data as a result of the crisis, the Partnerships team are working with Support Staffordshire, SCVYS, Staffs County Council, CT CIC and other VCSE partners to create an ongoing VCSE partnership framework in Tamworth to identify support for our most vulnerable people. The governance structure and terms of reference is being established to link with the Partnership Co-ordination Group.

The aim of the ongoing partnership is to provide a formal link to the community groups in Tamworth to develop successful network of support and wider community wellbeing and support.

The telephone befriending services will continue at this time.

Work will link to the wider Council and Community Safety priorities around vulnerable people and early help.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Various resources have been deployed to support the pandemic however, other than the £5k grant funding for CIC; there are no direct financial implications arising. Going forward this will continue to be assessed as recovery themes are identified.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

None at this time

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

All activities to give due consideration to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy - Making Equality Real in Tamworth (MERIT)

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Future partnership work will be subject to strategic governance and work planning to produce longer term sustainability and identification of high level need

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 25th March 2020 the UK Government announced a variety of lockdown provisions including:

- The immediate instruction for 1.2 Million people who were clinically vulnerable
- Person over 75 to consider shielding
- All people to work from home where possible
- Closure of non-essential shops
- Instructions around self-quarantine for those with COVID-19 symptoms and their families

The report highlights our response to this.

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

APPENDICES

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