Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

1 December 2020

Subject:	**COVID-19 Update**
Cabinet Member:	**Cllr Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Military Civilian Integration and Communications**
Key Decision:	**Non-Key**

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of activity to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last detailed update to Cabinet in November. Since the last report England has entered a new national lockdown and response meetings have been re-established. Shadow recovery work continues. Work has been done to enhance the Wiltshire Wellbeing hub and develop an enhanced local tracing offer. Support for businesses, vulnerable groups and care homes and schools continues.

Proposal(s)
Cabinet are asked to
- Continue to encourage all residents to download the NHS Test and Trace app on their phone.
- Continue to encourage all residents to follow national guidance.
- To note meetings have been re-established to support response whilst recovery activity continues in shadow.
- To note the current revenue budget is forecast to be balanced by the end of the financial year, with a small underspend of £0.071m
- To note changes in national policy and the work underway within the four Recovery Coordinating Group themes and on organisation recovery.

Reason for Proposal(s)

Wiltshire Council continues to work closely with partners to deliver in a rapidly changing environment.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. A brief summary of the key activity to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last detailed update to Cabinet in November.

Background

2. As of Sunday 22 November 2020, 1,301,559 people in the England had tested positive for COVID-19. Further information is available online. The ONS suggest that as of 6 November there were 58, 536 registered COVID-19 deaths across England and Wales. As of 22 November in Wiltshire there have now been 4,619 people who have tested positive for COVID-19. The rate of cases per 100,000 in Wiltshire in the last 7 days is 136 which is below the national average.   Up to the 6 November, 377 registered deaths involving COVID-19 in all settings in Wiltshire had occurred (210 in care homes, 142 in hospital, 22 at home and 3 in hospices). Further information on weekly mortality is available from ONS.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. Since the last update to Cabinet the Prime Minister announced on 31 October a national lockdown commencing on 5 November until 2 December.

4. As of the 1st of November Wiltshire Council went back into response mode for the COVID pandemic. Internal GOLD response group has been re-established which feeds into weekly multi-agency response groups SCG (Strategic Coordination Group) and the TCG (Tactical Coordination Group). These groups will continue to run through the response phase of the pandemic.

5. The Wiltshire Wellbeing Hub, which has been in place since March 2020, is prepared for requests of support, guidance and signposting. It is also proactively contacting those recently recorded as being clinically extremely vulnerable.

6. The Small Business and Discretionary grant schemes have closed and have been replaced by the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG), which is to support businesses who have had to close during the current four week lockdown and the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), which is aimed to

support businesses who aren't eligible for the main LRSG funding and over a longer timescale.

7. We have helped 1,351 Children whom were issued with free school meal (FSM) payments in the October half term in Wiltshire, which equates to 678 Individual households.

8. Work is in hand to distribute funds available via Department for Work and Pensions to the Council through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. A minimum of 80% of this spend is ring-fenced for families with children in food or fuel poverty. Alongside the government has pledged funding for a school holiday activity fund.

9. Planning for Wiltshire's recovery upon exiting lockdown continues and recovery work is still running in shadow. Significant developments since the last report are summarised under the sub-headings below; with additional detail in **Appendix 1**.

Test and Trace

10. NHS Test and Trace statistics suggest that 70% of cases in Wiltshire are being followed up and this should be nearer 80% if it is to be an effective programme to reduce viral transmission. An enhanced local tracing offer is being implemented to help improve this, with direct access to the national system. Staff have been trained and this service went live on 18th November.

11. Planning is underway to look at the potential for further local testing sites and sites for mobile testing units.

Mass Vaccination

12. The government has asked that local systems are ready to deliver a Covid-19 vaccination programme for England from December 2020, so that those at greatest risk will be able to access vaccinations as soon as they are available.

13. The NHS have been asked to lead this programme with BSW CCG leading on the roll out locally, in collaboration with NHS England and partners across all public services on the development of these plans.

14. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's most recent advice is that vaccines should first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people aged over 80 and health and social care workers, before being rolled out to the rest of the population in order of age and risk. This advice will continue to be updated as more information becomes available on vaccine effectiveness, safety and clinical characteristics. This will in turn be reflected in the NHS's plans.

15. For care home residents and staff and people who are housebound, the NHS will establish roving vaccine delivery services in care homes and people's own homes, working with local councils and social care providers. For others and

as eligibility is extended, this will be supplemented by local vaccination sites, which could be within existing NHS buildings or temporary standalone services.

16. A national public communications campaign will commence shortly, focusing at first on the safety and effectiveness of vaccines in general. This will be supplemented by localised communications across Wiltshire and targeted engagement with communities who traditionally experience health inequalities.

Mass Testing and new technologies

17. The government's top priorities for testing are to allocate testing where it is needed most to save lives, protect the most vulnerable, and enable health and care services to operate safely. As new technologies become available pilots across the country are being used to identify where these types of new tests can be used to best effect and enhance the current national testing programme.

18. Lateral Flow Test Devices (LFD) can enable results from swabs to be ready in 20-30 minutes, which could help to identify and isolate asymptomatic people and minimise transmission of the virus.

19. There are significant resource implications for the roll out of any pilot using LFD, clinical protocols must be in place, covid secure asymptomatic testing sites must be set up and staff trained to safely run the sites and report the findings.

20. We are currently working with our regional colleagues to ensure that there is a good variety of pilots to test these technologies in different settings and identification of local pilot approaches is underway through the council's Gold response meeting.

Outbreak Management

21. The in-house process for outbreak management has been enhanced to support an increasing number of schools and businesses requesting public health support and management of positive cases. The Local Outbreak Management Plan suite of exercises has been completed and the feedback and learning from these is now being used to update the plan accordingly.

22. The public health information hub has also been reviewed and enhanced with surge capacity that can be called upon to support with the increasing volume of queries for assistance with guidance, risk assessment and support.

23. A weekly tactical group has been initiated to review our system response to rising case numbers, events and outbreaks which complements the fortnightly COVID19 health protection board which sets the strategic direction for outbreak management

Community spaces

24. During lockdown we continue to provide key services and mechanisms that help our communities remain resilient including:

- 17 libraries remain open with an order and collect service and bookable computer access ensuring residents without internet or computers are able to get online.
- Leisure centres have closed to the public but remain open for school use, pre-school and after school services, and Day Care access.
- Online exercise sessions with specific classes for those on our active health and exercise on referral programme are taking place.
- In partnership with the Community Foundation work continues with community groups to support them with guidance to open community spaces safely both for those eligible to open during lockdown and those preparing to reopen post lockdown
- A gap analysis of youth provision during lockdown has been undertaken working in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector to see how gaps can be addressed

Wellbeing hub

25. The wellbeing hub was started during the first lockdown and its objective is to implement a county wide initiative offering support, guidance and signposting to the local population. It runs 7 days a week. Contacts into the hub are starting to increase in the last few weeks.

26. All shielding residents were contacted during the first lockdown. All 3,100 new people recently identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable have been written to.

27. The hub will also support members of the public who raise queries around current lockdown guidance and will refer concerns or issues relating to business and organisations to the public protection/ public health team.

28. Wellbeing hub weekly meetings and fortnightly multiagency/partner meetings have been re-established to ensure a multiagency responsive system is in place.

29. Since its inception in March, the hub has had around 35,000 contacts with Wiltshire residents.

Care Homes

30. The Council, working in partnership with Wiltshire Care Partnership, the CCG and CQC, has been proactive in implementing a support programme to Care Homes. This has included the dedicated COVID team, regular webinars, thematic webinars to provide advice and support e.g. infection control, use of PPE, weekly newsletters, a Care Home Clinical Advisory Group and a BSW CCG Care Home Oversight Group chaired by the Director of Nursing & Quality.

31. The CCG and Council also worked together to offer all care homes across Wiltshire the Infection Prevention and Control 'Train the Trainer' programme. The most recent webinars have included business continuity and infection prevention and control.

32. As of 17 November there were 22 care homes reporting new COVID positive cases, the same as the previous week. There was a total of 91 cases, with the majority being amongst staff.

33. Multiple cases in a single setting continues to be a rare occurrence, although has increased, showing how infection control measures supported by regular testing continue to be effective measures preventing widespread transmission in the majority of settings.

34. Wiltshire Council responded at an early stage to the financial pressures faced by the care home sector. The Wiltshire response was developed in consultation with Wiltshire Care Partnership and all local providers. Wiltshire Council did not restrict its financial response to Local Authority funded customers or to care homes with whom we have a contract. To date, the Council has made payments of £2.7 million to care homes and domiciliary providers to ensure their financial resilience in the face of the additional expenditure they have incurred.

35. Since mid-April, the Council has worked in partnership with the CCG and CQC to review risks and support all local care homes.

36. The Health Protection Board reviews outbreaks in care homes fortnightly and considers whether there should be any restrictions to visiting. The Council is encouraging care homes to allow visiting but have advised them to review their risk assessments and ensure that infection prevention and control measures are in place to ensure COVID safe visiting.

37. It should be noted that the Council's support to care homes is not in isolation and key to its success has been the partnership with Wiltshire Care Partnership, the CCG and CQC. Care Homes themselves have worked tirelessly to provide excellent care for their residents and have worked with the Council to ensure appropriate measures to prevent and control infection are in place. The care home managers and workforce have faced significant challenges, not only in protecting the most vulnerable Wiltshire residents but also in the financial uncertainty that many face.

Health and Care

38. In response to the lockdown the Health and Care cell has implemented a new multi-agency operational response structure. There are now two Community Flow multi-disciplinary team meetings per week involving a range of health and social care professionals. These are focused on supporting people to move on from our Discharge to Assess beds, Intensive Rehabilitation beds and the Community Hospitals. This in turn allows people to be discharged from the acute hospitals as soon as they medically ready to do so thereby improving their ability to manage any increasing infections from COVID and seasonal pressures.

39. The three acute hospitals across BSW are continuing to experience pressure in terms of their occupancy rates which are high. However, the rates appear

fairly stable although this can change very rapidly if there were to be a sudden surge in demand.

40. We are experiencing increasing demand for care home beds that are able to support people with more complex needs and multiple health conditions. We are therefore seeking to rapidly source additional capacity on a short-term basis to address this demand.

41. Our current supply meets the PPE demands of the business across Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council have sufficient stock across lead PPE items which is calculated at the current rate of usage. Fortnightly monitoring of current stock against usage rates seen in April/May, at their highest, continues which would equate to Wiltshire Council having approx. 3 months' supply across lead PPE items. The same monitoring and calculation process is also being carried out across the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) resulting in a similar 3 month supply.

42. Department of Health and Social Care is providing monthly PPE supplies to assist with demand across certain settings, should the need arise, to those who are ineligible to register on the Govt PPE portal. These services include children's and adults social care, rough sleepers team, CCG staff, Direct Payment employees and more recently education and childcare settings. Monthly reviews with procurement are in place to ensure commercial suppliers have adequate stocks/lead times.

43. The Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) has recently been established whereby Wiltshire Council updates the meeting with the current PPE status relating to the LRF. Assistance from the TCG would be provided if needed.

Education

44. Attendance continues to be monitored and schools continue to be supported to achieve full attendance. The weekly attendance data survey of early years providers indicates that of the 94% of settings that respond 92% are open.

45. There is sufficient childcare provision currently, although there are concerns about the sustainability for a small number of settings. A hardship fund is open for settings that have fewer children this year and who need additional help to maintain viability.

46. There were a total of 55 positive cases across 44 school settings in Wiltshire as of 17 November. A total of 2895 pupils were self-isolating. Early years settings have been less affected by infections than schools with only 3% having had a positive case in either staff or a child.

47. The process for support for schools with a confirmed case of Covid-9 is now well-established and continues to be well received. Schools use the Internal Action Cards for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), schools or post-16 when they receive confirmation of a positive case and initially work with Public

Health. The 'Team Around the Bubble' ensures that arrangements for home-learning are in place, digital devices are accessed where required, arrangements for free-school meals are in place and all safeguarding issues are identified.

48. The 'Well-being for Education Resilience' (formally 'Return') programme is currently being delivered to all education establishments in Wiltshire

49. Extensive guidance has been reviewed following the most recent government guidance received on the 5th November relating to home to school transport. The guidance did not require Wiltshire Council to do anything different to what has already been implemented . There continues to be no requirement for social distancing on home to school transport as per the updated government guidance, but Wiltshire Council has introduced:

- Additional cleaning of vehicles with particular attention being paid to frequently touched areas such as door handles, bells pushes, arm rest etc
- Good ventilation should be maintained at all times
- Face coverings should be worn, where pupils can wear them (government guidance is only a recommendation to wear them).
- Worked with public health to determine a process should a school bubble be closed down

50. We are working with schools, parents and the bus companies to increase awareness on the importance of the wearing of face-coverings and will review continually. All taxi drivers and Passenger Assistants are required to wear a face covering.

51. Ofsted visits have commenced and are currently being conducted remotely; graded judgements are not made, and a letter is sent to the school community following the visit. The visits have focused on the current attendance in the school, the curriculum including face-to-face and remote learning along with the provision for the vulnerable children.

52. With the new national restrictions that came into place on the 5th November additional guidance was published for schools. The changes have been shared with schools via the weekly newsletter and webinars. Schools have adjusted risk assessments and arrangements to implement the guidance.

Safeguarding Implications

53. Adult and Children's social care continue to maintain all statutory requirements.

54. The Council continues to see an increase in demand for both children's support and safeguarding services. We forecast growth and for this to continue at least until the end of the financial year with a significant increase in the number of children who become subject to child protection plans or looked after by the end of the financial year and into the next. We are in the process of reviewing this in light of the number not meeting the expected level at this stage. Similarly,

a significant increase in referrals is forecast through December into Adult social care.

55. Planning continues to ensure statutory social care demand can be met and demand modelling draws data and intelligence from a wide range of providers and partner organisations to enable a system wide response. Regular sit-reps are obtained from across the safeguarding partnership so that demand readiness can be assured.

56. Work is underway to understand the recent government announcements for Ministry of Housing, Communities and local Government (MHCLG) funding being made available (in-year) to support the local authority's response to domestic abuse and support to victims and their families. In preparedness of the new Domestic Abuse Bill coming into effect in April 2021, plans are now in place having been reviewed through Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnerships as well as the Vulnerable People Stakeholder's group.

57. Lessons learnt in relation to domestic abuse from the previous lockdown are being used by providers of domestic abuse services. Christmas and New Year is usually the time where demand and pressure is highest on domestic abuse services with volumes already higher than normally anticipated, and awareness of helplines and communications is being raised.

Economy

58. As of 19 November 413 applications for the Self Isolation Payment Scheme (SIPS) have been received and 111 payments have so far been awarded. Payments are £500 and are to support those in financial need as a result of being required to self-isolate. A team is in place to administer this payment scheme.

59. The Kickstart Programme provides apprenticeship support to 16-24 year olds who are in not currently in employment or training. We have coordinated a multi-agency approach to the Kickstart Programme, with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership now taking the lead on this via the Growth Hub. There has been a lot of interest in the scheme from potential employers and training providers, who are now being matched up with eligible Wiltshire residents.

60. A total of £95m was awarded to 8000 Wiltshire businesses under the Small Business and Discretionary grant schemes. These schemes are now closed. They have been replaced by two schemes which have been launched recently.

61. The first of these is the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG), which is to support businesses who have had to close during the current four week lockdown. This is a £7m fund which was launched on Friday 13th November and we received approximately 800 applications over the first four days of the scheme. These grant applications are now being processed.

62. The second scheme is the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), which is aimed to support businesses who aren't eligible for the main LRSG funding. This is a £10m scheme, with the funding being for the remainder of the 2020-21 financial year and all of 2021-22. The first tranche of this scheme was launched on 20th November, with payments to be made in November and December.

63. The second tranche will be launched in the new year following an assessment of the priorities of the fund. The first few months of the new year will be particularly challenging for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and consideration is now being given on how to best target support. It is envisaged that further tranches of payment will be made on a rolling basis in the new year.

64. The team are continuing to support Wiltshire's larger businesses where redundancies are planned or announced.

65. A multi-agency bid is being developed to secure investment under a public sector green energy scheme for Wiltshire, and we continue to encourage Wiltshire businesses to register with 'Trustmark' to provide Green Home Grants Scheme.

66. Wiltshire Council Cabinet has recently announced its plans to build zero carbon homes and retrofit all its council housing, creating a long term demand for green jobs across the county. Cabinet has also given the go ahead to the Salisbury River Park which will support climate resilience in the city.

Safe Spaces

67. We continue to work closely with our partners in town councils to evaluate the effectiveness of social distancing schemes that have been implemented and have a clear structure in place with weekly meetings overseeing all schemes for creating safe space for walking and cycling.

68. The schemes funded from the first tranche of government's Emergency Active Travel were delivered to ease the pressure on public transport by providing alternative walking and cycling routes. The government has announced that local authorities should carry out consultation for the next set of walking and cycling schemes, pushing back the original deadline for delivery well into 2021. The Council is proposing five schemes and is due to start consultation as required.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

69. This report will be considered by the Wiltshire Covid-19 Response Task Group on 26 November 2020, with members of the Executive and senior officers in attendance to answer members' questions. The Chairman will report any comments and findings of the task group at the Cabinet meeting.

Procurement Implications

70. A sequential approach to supplier relief was agreed earlier on in the response phase of the pandemic, ensuring that suppliers were pointed to central Government support where possible first and work with us on an open book basis when necessary. The Council has established an internal Commercial Board to provide oversight and assurance on the end to end procurement process around future contract activity and management.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

71. Work continues to understand the impact of the pandemic on those with protected characteristics. Equality implications are being considered in the Council's decision making and any change to service provision. Recovery theme leads have embedded the use of a Health Equality Assessment Tool. The Community Resilience theme working with partners is leading on the work to enable Wiltshire's communities to be cohesive places where difference is celebrated.

72. Further information about some of the work undertaken by the Community Resilience theme is outlined in Appendix 1.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

73. A new Climate Strategy will be developed in the coming year to set out how the council is going to meet its challenging targets to become carbon neutral by 2030. As part of developing the strategy, each Recovery Theme will need to consider the environmental impact of its activities and identify opportunities to contribute to a green recovery. Key external meetings have recently been held with both public sector partners and town and parish councils to ascertain how we can all work together on our carbon neutral ambitions and the green recovery. The council also took part in a Wiltshire Climate Alliance workshop with young people on 12 November to hear their suggestions for a green recovery.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

74. A new partnership risk register is in place and owned by the Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). This comprises risks identified by each of the themes and risks being managed in the workstreams. Recovery partnership risks are managed in themes on separate registers with an escalation procedure for significant risks to be reviewed by the RCG.

75. Wiltshire Council specific risks around recovery are managed within the Organisational Recovery programme on a separate register. That register will feed into the Council's Strategic Risk Register. Wiltshire Council's Performance and Risk Management reporting will resume for quarter two 2020/21.

76. Internal management of risk during the current response phase has lead to the identification of new risks and the creation of a Council-wide risk register managed by Gold CLT.

Financial Implications

77. At the Cabinet meeting on 3rd November the quarter 2 budget monitoring reported a forecast small overspend of £0.467m, a continuing improvement on the previous forecast position. In addition, £4m was set aside in a specific earmarked reserve to deal with the challenges of setting a balanced budget for the financial year 2021/22.

78. This report provides an update on the Councils financial position as at the end of period 7, projecting the forecast position as at 31 October 2020, detailing any significant changes in the variances since the quarter 2 position and updating on any announcements from Government.

79. Since the last budget monitoring report additional funding has been announced for general support, new duties and to support the impact of the national lockdown intervention that was announced on 31 October and implemented with effect from Thursday 5 November.

80. The additional grants are an additional £4m for Contain Outbreak Management Fund, £1.108m for COVID Winter Grant Scheme, £0.128m for Rough Sleepers, £10m for Additional Restrictions Support Grant, £7.223m for Local Restrictions Support Grant and £0.050m for Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Fund. These grants are all assumed to be fully spent to support the activity for which they have been awarded or ring-fenced for these purposes and therefore do not impact on the overall financial forecasts for the council.

81. As a result of the lockdown restrictions it is forecast that an additional £0.840m of fees and charges income will be lost across services such as Leisure, Libraries and Car Parking. It is anticipated that in the region of £0.600m will be reimbursed through the Governments income loss compensation grant scheme, leaving an overall pressure of £0.240m from additional income losses.

82. In some service areas there are some more significant changes to forecast variances and where these are evident the forecast total spend has reduced by £0.778m thus improving the Councils overall position. The main areas of this reduction are Highways (£0.250m) as a result of less activity and contract negotiation on the Idverde grounds maintenance and street cleaning contract; Children's Commissioning (£0.180m) due mainly to staff vacancies; and Families and Children's (£0.348m) due to lower than expected Looked After Children (LAC), as a result of lockdown activity during the financial year, which has seen the timing of the expected latent demand for services and correlation in the increase in LAC being pushed back into next financial year.

83. The net position of the additional pressure of the income losses and the additional favourable movements in service spend results in an overall forecast underspend for the council of £0.071m. Any underspend at the end of the year will be transferred to the General Fund Reserve which currently stands at £15.456m and any overspend will be required to be funded by this reserve.

84. As detailed in the Q2 Budget Monitoring Report 2020/21 presented to Cabinet at their last meeting a new earmarked Budget Equalisation reserve was created with approval to contribute £4.165m, made up of the £1.232m balance remaining on the pay award budget and the tranche 4 COVID-19 emergency

grant of £2.933m. This sets aside some capacity in reserves to help support with the budget setting process for 2021/22, affording some time to implement any changes to services as part of recovery and the timing and delivery of savings required in the 2021/22 financial year.

85. Given the uncertainty as we move into the winter months and the uncertainty of further response and recovery costs during this period the spending control measures will still continue until the situation becomes clearer and to ensure we continue to protect the General Fund Reserve and where possible bolster earmarked reserves for future resilience.

Legal Implications

86. The Council's legal team continues to provide advice on the application of new Covid-19 legislation and all aspects of recovery.

Workforce Implications

87. Government guidance about employment matters affected by the pandemic continues to be applied. The COVID-19 policy implemented in March 2020 sets out information for staff, including the application of policies and procedures to support response and during recovery, and will continue to be reviewed and updated following consultation with the trade unions.

88. The organisation recovery programme is taking steps to assess, evaluate and review the way in which the workforce operated during lockdown so that we can embed some of the positive changes and identify new opportunities to deliver services differently.

Conclusions

89. Wiltshire Council continues to play a critical role with its partners and the local community in responding to the impact of the coronavirus in the county.

Terence Herbert, Chief Executive

Report Authors: Layla Bridger, Recovery Project Support Officer
Lizzie Watkins, Head of Corporate Finance
19 November 2020.

Appendices: Appendix 1: Additional detail on work under themes and on Organisation Recovery

Appendix 1

Health and Wellbeing – additional information

Homelessness

- Bids for both short term rough sleeper accommodation and long-term capital funding of £619k for housing were successful and includes a 3-year full time post to support both. The service has also supported Alabare with a bid aimed at making its homeless hostels COVID-19 safe. The outcome of this is awaited and if successful will help accommodate more people in winter.

- The focus on prevention of homelessness has seen workloads significantly increase and staff levels have been increased as a result. It has also meant we are not seeing a large increase in statutory homeless and temporary accommodation provision. Demand for housing services significantly increases over Christmas and New Year so this will be monitored.

Mental health work

- Community crisis support that covers 2 – 3 weeks to complement the lower-level roles is a priority. A pilot is being planned which will use existing resources in the community, including those provided through Primary Care Networks additional roles scheme, so that they can be tailored to provide a more intense package of support.

Anti-social behaviour

- Initial work on understanding the complexity of ASB through stakeholder interviews, operational shadowing and data capture is in progress, with a priority on Salisbury City Centre.

Health Inequalities

- A presentation on health inequalities affecting the Wiltshire population has been given to all recovery theme groups and feedback on how they have incorporated this into their work will be gathered early 2021.

Care, Safeguarding and Education Theme – additional information

Education

- All early years settings in Wiltshire are being contacted to confirm that 24-36 month progress checks that were missed during the disapplication of the statutory requirement to complete have been caught up and completed. Any children that are showing delay or raising concerns in their development are being referred to relevant services and interventions put into place in the early years settings.

- The 'Well-being for Education Resilience' has been adapted for the local Wiltshire context by a multi-agency collective to ensure it complements existing initiatives (e.g. Five to Thrive training programme). It provides an opportunity to provide immediate support for education settings in managing the emotional health and wellbeing of their communities during the pandemic, and to take a more co-ordinated approach longer term, clearly promoting and signposting people to local support. There has been positive engagement from primary and secondary schools, as well as Wiltshire College. A multi-agency directory of services and programmes that support children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health also went live in November and is being promoted to schools.

- Schools continue to be supported to achieve full attendance through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and a multi-professional 'team around the school' approach. There is a specific focus on monitoring and supporting the attendance of vulnerable children (those with a social worker and those with an EHCP). Schools have been given clear guidance on actions to take if vulnerable children are absent from school, with follow-up from the LA multi-professional team in place where support needs are identified.

- The number of electively home educated (EHE) pupils has increased since the start of term with most occurring in September. Education Welfare officers continue to follow up to ensure children and young people are receiving a suitable education. We are exploring the introduction of a ten-day cooling off period to allow time for a meeting to be held with education welfare, school staff and parents so that the full implications and guidance can be outlined and discussed before taking pupils off roll. The term 1 rates of fixed term and permanent exclusions are lower than the previous year.

- School transport continues to operate as normal. Through a government grant, Wiltshire Council is managing 20 additional buses to ensure that peak journeys are able to either maintain appropriate social distancing on public transport or provide additional dedicated transport for school pupils. There have been a further 40 changes to bus timetables to support the same outcome.

FACT
- The FACT Executive and Operational Boards continue to oversee the delivery of the revised programme structure focussing on the agreed priority projects;
  - Early Support Assessment - implementation plan
  - Inclusive approaches - alternative education provision
  - Young People's Service - multi agency staffing, Contextual Safeguarding and data sharing related to Child Exploitation
  - School Readiness - speech, language and communication in the early years
  - Integrated Working - MH/LD/ASD
  - Transitional Safeguarding - older adolescents and young adults

- The projects are at varied stages of development and operating to different timescales in terms of their predicted end dates.

- The Early Support Assessment was formally launched on 1st November with training available for multi-agency staff via the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership website; there is a partnership group in place to oversee and evaluate the implementation.

Additionally, the Council's Community Engagement service area is overseeing the implementation of the Integrated Earliest Support in Communities projects that were previously held within FACT. These projects will establish multi-agency approaches to the following strands of work, all with the intention of enabling residents to access support at the earliest point via community/universal resources wherever possible, thus reducing demand on statutory or specialist services:

1. Community Connectors/Navigators
2. Wiltshire Together online portal
3. Provision of services at a community level

The current focus is on ensuring each project has an effective multi-agency project board driving its progress and a clear set of objectives and milestones.

Community Resilience Theme

- With the move into response the Community Resilience recovery theme has reprioritised work focusing on activity that addresses inequalities deepened by COVID-19 and on enabling and supporting communities to undertake compliant activity during lockdown to support, in particular, loneliness, isolation, youth provision and mental health.

Community Engagement

- Building strong relationships, connections and networking continues to improve cross partner working and activity and has been instrumental in our ability to be fleet of foot as we move from recovery to response. Regular meetings and partnership working continues with VCS partners, Town and Parish Clerks, Community groups and Faith Leaders.

- 36 Leisure staff have been redeployed as part of the Wiltshire Together Champions programme. They are providing on the ground support to Wiltshire businesses and residents to help maintain compliance with the current lockdown measures.

- We are providing guidance and advice to the 341 county wide active Community COVID response groups. All are now able to access and network via the Wiltshire Together Platform run by Wessex Community Action.

- Local community recovery plans are in development led by Area Boards supported by Community Engagement Manager

- Recovery community engagement activity across the partnership system has been mapped seeking to enable a joined-up approach to connecting activity.

Inequalities workstream

- We continue to collate and monitor the data on the impact of COVID19 on inequality groups in Wiltshire. This ensures we are able to support our communities to target activity to address emerging issues, and link into other Recovery themes as needed to provide targeted support.

- Communications have been targeted to the Wiltshire LGBTQ+ community signposting LGBTQ+ residents to specific support. The data is showing a disproportionate impact on the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ residents from lockdown for example experiencing significant anxiety where they have been in lockdown with family who do not accept their sexuality.

- Key issues emerging from the data so far:

  o Data from Wiltshire Citizen's advice is showing a threefold increase in the proportion of non-white British clients asking for employment advice since the start of the COVID19 pandemic, 15% of all employment advice requests.
  o After taking account of age and other socio-demographic characteristics and measures of self-reported health and disability at the 2011 Census, the risk of a COVID-19-related death for males and females of Black ethnicity was 1.9 times more likely than those of White ethnicity.
  o As of May 2020, the proportion of deaths in care homes due to COVID-19 was higher for Black (54%) and Asian (49%) residents, compared to White residents (44%) and those from mixed or multiple ethnic groups (41%).
  o Since the start of the pandemic there has been an 11% increase year on year of racial hate crime reports; a 25% increase in hate crime related to sexual orientation; and a 32% increase in disability related hate crime in Wiltshire.

- A survey of Wiltshire food banks was undertaken during the October half term with all reporting demand having at least doubled compared to the same time in 2019, but also all reporting donations and funding having also increased in line with demand.