

Amesbury Community Area Status Report

“What Matters in Amesbury”

Executive Summary

This paper captures the most up to date information about communities living in the Amesbury community area including data associated with the economy, environment, housing, education, health and wellbeing, community safety, transport and gradual recovery from Covid-19.

The Amesbury Community Area covers 314.22 km² of mainly rural countryside in the south-east of Wiltshire. There are a number of settlements, the largest and oldest being Amesbury itself situated on a hill overlooking the valley of the Salisbury Avon.

From May 2021, the area consists of the town of Amesbury and the parishes of Berwick St. James, Bulford, Durnford, Durrington, Enford, Figheldean, Fittleton cum Haxton, Great Wishford, Milston, Netheravon, Orcheston, Shrewton, South Newton, Stapleford, Tilshead, Wilsford cum Lake, Winterbourne Stoke and Woodford.

The villages of Bulford and Larkhill have a strong army presence, and the community area is dotted with military sites. The army plays a key role in the area's economy and prosperity.

62% of the population in Amesbury are of working age, this is higher than the Wiltshire average and is a reflection of the military presence across the community area and the type of economy which is predominantly MOD, professional, technical and scientific with some retail and hospitality.

Wiltshire does not have the levels of deprivation that some other areas of the country experience, with 70% of Local Authorities being more deprived than Wiltshire. Nevertheless, there are pockets of deprivation concentrated in geographical areas. This can be seen in the Amesbury community area, in particular in the Amesbury East North Central LSOA (Lower-Layer Super Output Area), which is amongst the 40% most deprived in the country.

Research and consultation has found that the following are emerging as the top issues for the Amesbury community area:

- Mental Health – across many groups including 10-12 yrs, 13-19 yrs, young adults, older & disabled people, low-income families.
- Digital inclusion – including equipment, broadband and knowledge.
- Climate Change / environment – waste and recycling, biodiversity & wildlife, fly-tipping
- Opportunities & Activities for young people, especially around positive activities and including future training and employment.
- Loneliness and isolation – young people and older & disabled people alike (this is linked to Mental Health & digital inclusion above)

- Anti-social behaviour – this was a top priority in one survey (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment March 2020) – more detailed information is required on this issue.

The Amesbury area board sets local priorities every 3 years. This document will support this process over the next 6 months, in conversation with parish councils, community groups, schools, businesses and residents. It is vitally important that the issues summarised above, and the further detail below is used to inform how those priorities are reshaped, and even more importantly, how they are tackled along with our partners.

This status report is a dynamic document and will be amended according to feedback. All in Amesbury are encouraged to engage in this priority resetting process, and in helping us to collectively tackle these issues.

Many of the contributors to this report have suggested projects and initiatives to solve the issues raised, such as a Men's Shed, village celebrations or fayres for small businesses. In addition, there are hundreds of projects already operating across the community area which are tackling these issues, albeit in a slightly reduced way due to the pandemic. However, this report focusses on identifying the key issues. There will be a corresponding action plan to accompany this document.

Background and Context

The overarching aim of this document is for the Amesbury Area Board to understand how to support local responses from communities, businesses and organisations and link this to the work of Wiltshire Council, it's partners and agencies, so that collaboratively we can tackle issues including those arising from Covid-19.

The process of identifying and agreeing the key concerns is not an exact science and both statistical and anecdotal evidence has been gathered. This report should therefore be viewed as an informed indicator regarding the Amesbury Community Area.

The Amesbury community area has seen an incredible response to the COVID19 pandemic with volunteers leading the response and strategic partners working collaboratively to support our communities. Every person within the area has access to support from one of the many community groups that were set up, some of which are continuing to offer additional support.

As we now look ahead, this short document provides a summary of information that can be utilised to help inform the local community response. It brings together the differing data and information sources from across the community area that will help us to understand the state of our community and the impact of COVID-19. It also highlights communities that may have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and it considers how the actions, projects and plans that are emerging will be collated and supported.

Over time this document will be regularly updated in response to changes, new information and actions undertaken.

Through a mutual exchange of support and facilitated dialogue since the start of the pandemic, town and parish councils and neighbourhood volunteers and Wiltshire Council continue to work together to rebuild our local communities. Whilst the impact of COVID-19 is considerable, it is recognised that some local issues already existed and that these will need to be tackled as well.

Whilst it is natural to focus on the issues that require improvement, it is important to recognise and build on the positives that have arisen during the pandemic. These include the closer working between organisations, increased community cohesion, new volunteers and the wider use of the internet / social media.

Community data and information

Local data is being collected from a range of sources to provide an overview of the current situation within our community. This is being combined with the outcomes of consultation and discussions on the impact of COVID-19 to inform the key issues emerging and where resources should be focussed.

- [JSNA local data sets](#) (collected in winter 2019)
- [JSNA 2020](#) – Demography and overarching indicators
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment October 2019 survey findings
- [Children and young people mental health needs Assessment](#)
- [Gypsy, traveller and boater populations health needs assessment Wiltshire](#)
- [Office for National Statistics](#)
- COVID19 support groups discussions – (April - July 2020)
- Amesbury Area Board discussions and with Councillors (ongoing)

- Consultation with Town and Parish Councils- (Nov & Dec 2020)
- Meeting of COVID19 support group leads (Nov 2020)
- Meeting with Amesbury Youth Forum (Nov & Feb 2020)
- Health and Wellbeing group meetings (ongoing)

- Meetings with strategic partners (every month ongoing) (includes police, housing associations, care homes, Wiltshire Council colleagues, MOD, voluntary sector).
- Meeting with MOD (Nov 2020)
- Local survey to be undertaken with MOD on lived experience

Additional Partner organisation data:

- I. Business Community
- II. Link scheme data
- III. Wiltshire Money
- IV. Citizen's Advice Wiltshire
- V. Wiltshire Community Foundation
- VI. Town and Parish Council plans / Neighbourhood Plans
- VII. Carer Support Wiltshire
- VIII. Age UK
- IX. Alzheimer's Charities

Additional local information and the impact of COVID-19

Context

This section is a brief summary of some of the data and feedback that we have received to aid our understanding of where improvement is required and where and to whom the impact of COVID-19 has been felt the most. It is therefore important to read this with the following in mind:

- The Amesbury Community area is an excellent place to live and work. It is recognised that a tremendous amount of good work and substantial improvement has taken place over the past few years due to the

dedication and hard work of so many within our community and the Amesbury Area Board wishes to thank everyone for their continued hard work to make the Amesbury area the best it can be for all.

- Some of the areas highlighted from the JSNA data where the Amesbury Community is not doing so well, needs to be looked at in the context of the findings. For example, Wiltshire is consistently one of the **safest** counties in the country and there are no areas where there are significant safety concerns. Equally the variance between data in all community areas may not be of any great significance and the reality on the ground can seem at odds with data presented.
- Further investigation will be required with some of the data as they may not tell the whole story. Equally in some cases the most recent data available is a few years old. The report provides an indication of the issues but may not be the complete story.
- It needs to be recognised that due to COVID-19, some of the issues highlighted are not just a local problem but of concern nationwide. Debt and financial challenges are examples of this.

Economy

- 62% of the population in Amesbury are of working age, this is higher than the Wiltshire average and is a reflection of the military presence across the community area and the type of economy which is predominantly MOD, professional, technical and scientific with some retail and hospitality.
- Amesbury has the highest percentage of people working within professional, technical and scientific jobs with 33.4% in this category (10.2% Wiltshire-wide).
- The Amesbury area sees 444 per 10,000 apprentices which is the 2nd highest in Wiltshire – probably a reflection of the type of work available described above. This is most certainly a positive and it is hoped sustainable post COVID-19.
- The impact of COVID-19 on retail and hospitality in the area is uncertain as yet but there are likely to be casualties which will impact on the economy and potentially cause financial vulnerability. Some evidence for this is already appearing in the increased number of people contacting the Citizen's Advice Bureaux from the area.
- The impact of COVID-19 to remote businesses is often underestimated as it is assumed that they are already set up from home working. However, issues around clients including uncertainty, orders being cancelled and an inability to pay for services have all had a substantial impact.
- Businesses have and continue to require support to 'COVID proof' themselves and adapt to new ways of working. In some cases that means transformation to home working whilst for others altering their offer or business environment

- Some businesses, particularly smaller ones, are looking for support in areas such as business transition and marketing. Advertising is also expensive and small businesses may not be able to afford it. Consultation with the business community has seen suggestions of business fayres to aid publicity.
- There are also some positives that have resulted from the pandemic. Many businesses have helped others by sharing their knowledge and expertise. Not all support is financial and is required to come from central or local government. In addition, the pandemic has resulted in a level playing field with meetings taking place on Zoom rather than the boardroom. Consequently, businesses have grown in confidence to approach one another and work together. Some businesses have transitioned well adapting their offers to suit the new markets and their business needs and many small businesses, especially online, have been created.
- Businesses see the benefit of a Lifestyle Card and encouraging local shopping including on-line
- The Army basing programme means that many former MOD employees may be looking for civilian roles. This is also true of military wives. Spouses of serving personnel who are looking for employment have additional pressures around childcare and transport which can act as barriers to obtaining a job.
- Bulford and Larkhill, part of the Tidworth Garrison are also interested in supporting the families of serving personnel families to find employment.

Community Resilience

- Before the current pandemic, anti-social behaviour was reported as slightly below the Wiltshire average (13 incidents per 1,000 people as opposed to 14 on average in Wiltshire). Similarly, hate crime and domestic abuse figures are slightly below the Wiltshire average. Reports from the police suggest that crime and anti-social behaviour has reduced in the Amesbury community area over the pandemic. There seems to be a perception within Amesbury that anti-social behaviour is more prevalent than the actual figures show. This may be due to sporadic and sometimes historic incidents around the town centre of Amesbury. Respondents in the recent JSNA survey chose anti-social behaviour as the top priority for the area.
- The MOD are refurbishing the community centre & community café in Bulford to be open for all and there is a new ICT suite at Larkhill. The MOD also wish to see their other facilities including sports pitches used by both military and civilian.
- Most village halls are not operating due to COVID restrictions, but it is expected that they will continue once restrictions are lifted.
- The leisure offer in Amesbury consists of Durrington swimming pool and Amesbury leisure centre, with many independent sports organisations. The leisure centre, along with the Redworth Centre is in need of

refurbishment. A leisure review is in progress and will be included in this report in due course.

- Bus services within the community are generally considered good. Salisbury is the nearest rail station. The volunteer link scheme may need support including recruiting volunteers. The Amesbury Hoppa service is well used by the local community.
- The Pandemic has acted as a catalyst to remote working and meetings. Whilst there are many advantages of this, certain sectors of our community are being excluded. The lack of a suitable laptop or tablet, access to affordable broadband, a fear or lack of understanding of how to use this technology all contribute to this. Those excluded are often the people who need support the most.
- The villages have all responded well to the pandemic and put support in place for residents. The Amesbury community hub had over 300 volunteers during the first lockdown and continue to offer help and support to vulnerable people.
- A strong theme that emerged from local conversations is that a fresh approach to volunteering may be required. Volunteers are vital for a resilient community, but they need to be valued, achievements celebrated, and opportunities offered that are appropriate to modern life. The MOD have also raised concerns that those serving who wish to volunteer are finding it difficult to do so.
- Amesbury community area has a relatively large BAME population and with the recent army rebasing programme, this has almost certainly increased. The largest group are the Nepalese. They are well organised and had their own COVID support group during the pandemic. Other BAME groups include Fijian, Ghanaian, Indian, African, and Rastafarian, particularly associated with the MOD.
- There are some health issues that affect BAME groups disproportionately. It is recognised that it is important for appropriate information and education that acknowledges cultural differences and overcomes language barriers especially amongst the more elderly residents.

Children, education and young people

- Young people in the area face additional mental health difficulties which have been exacerbated through interruption to school and uncertainty about the future. A reduction in being able to meet up and attend regular activities has caused additional stress, loneliness and isolation. Parents of younger children have reported difficulties with behaviour. Families with children who have special needs have seen their support systems fall away during the crisis putting particular strain on them. The Amesbury area has 16% of pupils with Education and Health Care Plans (for special needs) opposed to 13% Wiltshire wide.
- The loss of teaching time, limitations on how they may operate, and lockdown of year groups has put added strain upon our local schools. The

feedback received is that despite this they are managing well, attendance is good, and the measures put in place are working.

- The JSNA data suggests that educational attainment is slightly below the Wiltshire average. In 2019, the percentage of children who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of primary school (Key Stage 2) was 62% in Amesbury and 64% in Wiltshire. Some schools have also reported a lack of ICT equipment to enable remote teaching.
- The Amesbury area has the 4th highest level of childhood obesity in Wiltshire.
- The area has the highest rate of hospital admissions for young people due to accidental injury.
- Some children and young people have been affected by the additional pressures that parents have been under during the pandemic such as financial challenges and strained parental relationships. Some parents of younger children have been reporting difficulties with behaviour.
- Activities for young people including clubs and organisations have largely been unable to operate for most of this year. It is hoped that most will be able to start up again, but it is acknowledged that this may not be possible where there are financial obstacles or where there is a shortage of volunteers.
- Many young people in the area have and are likely to continue to face challenges such as finding employment, poor mental health and access to positive activities.
- Youth activities have struggled to continue during the pandemic. Amesbury youth café have been offering outreach support and socially distanced initiatives to support vulnerable young people. The Elements café which runs a club for vulnerable young people had just started running when the second lockdown was announced. It will be up and running again soon, following government guidelines. Durrington youth club have been offering street-based youth work wherever possible.
- Amesbury Youth Forum was recently re-established and has agreed to meet 4 times a year to network, work together and share resources and ideas.
- Bulford Community Centre is being refurbished and will offer a venue for a community café and regular youth activities.
- Similarly, the Larkhill community is operating youth activities and plans to expand this in 2021.
- Sports and arts groups are also offering youth activities such as the Newbourne Players and Amesbury Rugby Club, along with guides and scouts.
- Amesbury leisure centre is in need of refurbishment and the Redworth Centre is currently closed and some groups are therefore unable to start up again.
- There remains a need for further youth activity provision in the town and surrounding villages.

- Many local charities are reporting that they are facing financial pressures alongside increased demand for their services. For example, the Portage service for vulnerable families with young children now has a long waiting list.
- **Health & well-being of older and vulnerable people**
- A high level of community support has been offered to those who have had to self-isolate, particularly from the parish councils and Covid Support groups. However, amongst older residents, the need to stay at home as much as possible has had a negative impact on mental health, and an increase in loneliness, isolation and some depression. Those living with dementia have been one of the most vulnerable groups along with their Carers. Not everyone has been able to embrace digital solutions for keeping in touch or shopping and there is an increasing need to make sure everyone can access services and support remotely.
- The area has the second lowest number of older residents 65+ due to the military community in the area.
- The area has the second highest number of hospital admissions due to accidents.
- Mental Health – there is plenty of evidence that mental health difficulties are increasing across the board and particularly in some groups such as older people and younger people as discussed above. The area has slightly higher numbers of people with depression at 12%, compared to the Wiltshire average of 10%. During the Pandemic, those adults suffering from some form of depression or mental health issue has doubled nationally so it is likely to have increased within the community area. Younger people, women, poorer families and those already living with a disability are proportionately more at risk.
- Substance misuse – there is evidence that some people have turned to alcohol during this time and some have become dependent or addicted resulting in severe ill- health for a few people.
- Prior to the pandemic, there were numerous clubs and activities for older and vulnerable people in the Amesbury area. These included regular day activities, Carers Cafes, lunch clubs, day centres and lunch clubs including the Redworth club for people with a learning disability. Almost all of them were shut down and have not re-opened at the moment. There is a strong need and desire to begin to open these clubs and activities in a safe way as soon as possible.
- There is a particular need for activities that enable men to get out and about and to socialise within the community. There are reports of older men and not so old men feeling isolated and lonely with fewer activities on offer for them to attend.
- The two surgeries (Barcroft and St. Melor) in Amesbury are particularly keen on the social prescribing model that treats people holistically and have managed to provide excellent service whilst also addressing current issues such as a drive through flu clinic and preparations for the COVID-19 vaccination. This is also true for Till Orchard Surgery in Shrewton and Larkhill medical centre.

- The practises are organising a team of specialists to address both health and wellbeing. These include social prescribers, pharmacy technicians and first contact physiotherapists who are beginning to work with other partners and the community to provide holistic care
- The area is well served by the foodbank operating from the community shop in the town centre, along with the pantry partnership.
- Gambling is a known issue amongst some in the armed forces where those serving in the army nationally are 8 times more likely to have a problem than civilians. For those struggling financially, there is a knock-on effect for their families including housing, mental health, employment and other issues.
- The Coronavirus crisis has put many carers under even greater pressure than before both mentally and physically. Many people do not even consider themselves as carers and are not receiving the support they need and are entitled to. Carers Support operate a project called “Courage to Care” that covers the Amesbury area and is aimed at identifying and supporting those carers in the services including their families.

These are some of the issues emerging and further detail is provided in this table:

Possible Emerging Issue & local survey priority	Impact of COVID-19	Supporting evidence source
Anti-social behaviour given as the top priority in the Community Survey. Community Safety – cyber crime.	Perception of high levels of ASB which is not always borne out by the data. Cyber crime has increased.	JSNA 2020 Community survey Police Amesbury Youth Forum
Highway infrastructure and maintenance - identified as a the 2nd highest priority .	Some backlog.	CAJSNA 2020 Community survey results
Positive activities for all age groups – identified as the 3rd highest priority from the Community Survey	Evidence that activities have decreased for older people and younger people alike due to Covid-19. Likely to be a corresponding impact to mental health in some. Amesbury leisure centre is in need of refurbishment. Durrington pool is well used. The Redworth Centre is closed at the moment and was used by local groups. The Youth Forum / LYN is now re-established.	Amesbury Youth Forum Health and Wellbeing group Strategic partners

Environment – fly tipping can be an issue. Community area is a wildlife rich area due to Salisbury plain. Waste and recycling is the 4th highest priority.	Likely increase in fly tipping due to restrictions on recycling centres	CAJSNA 2020 Community survey results JSNA 2020 data
Mental health issues are likely to be increasing. This is identified as the 5th highest priority.	Deterioration in mental health caused by COVID including isolation and loneliness – affects young people and older people disproportionately	Data from local agencies. Discussions with Covid-19 volunteers, area board and parish councils
Support for older people and carers, including those with dementia.	Significant impact	Health and wellbeing meeting. Strategic Partners.
High hospital admissions (accidental, self-harm and alcohol related) amongst whole population and children.	Covid-19 is impacting upon mental health. Reports of increase in substance misuse, particularly alcohol.	JSNA 2020 data Barcroft Medical Centre.
Serious injury or death on the roads is higher than the Wiltshire average.	Uncertain impact as yet. Roads are less busy but driver behaviour may have changed.	JSNA 2020 data
Mortality rate from preventable illness is higher in Amesbury than the rest of Wiltshire.	Likely to have a significant impact	JSNA 2020 data
Slightly lower educational achievement in the area with a higher level of special educational needs than rest of Wiltshire	Disruption in education due to closures and isolation likely to have an impact. Impact on families with special educational needs documented.	JSNA 2020 data Amesbury Youth Forum Strategic partners.
Business support and Employment – 444 apprenticeships per 10,000 16+ year olds compared to 139 as Wiltshire average	Unemployment may be rising and some business are struggling. Possible that apprentices are down but this could be a strength to build on the higher numbers	JSNA 2020 data
Library use – Only 19% of residents are members compared to 34% as Wiltshire average	Libraries currently closed (Nov 20) Opportunities to explore as reopening commences as a core community service	JSNA 2020 data

Broadband Capacity / Digital Inclusion is a reported issue	Increased use but not all people can access it, whether because of connectivity weaknesses or because of financial/other barriers	Health and Wellbeing group Strategic partners
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It is important that this is an inclusive process as possible with special attention to ensure that the villages and minority groups have equal opportunity to feed in and partake in this recovery work. However, it is recognised that some may choose not to engage, and that work will take place that is not captured in this document.

How local actions can be supported

The local response within the Amesbury Community Area is one of co-production recognising that to rebuild our communities, it is important that we work together, sharing information and resources where appropriate.

The Area Board covers the whole community area and is responsible for this document. It links local delivery to Wiltshire Council, the Police, Public Health and other partners. It is an accountable body with influence and powers. It has its own funding to help support local initiatives. The Area Board will use this document to support local recovery and also encompass issues that were existing prior to COVID-19.

Wiltshire Council's thematic approach to the county's recovery is structured around the 4 themes discussed above and it will be helpful to use these as we progress our local recovery in Amesbury:

The Area Board, working with existing and new sub-groups, leads from parish councils, community groups and organisations, will carry out further investigation on the community issues, themes and priorities from the table at section 3 above, bringing together work currently happening and identifying gaps.

The Area Board will have updates of how this work is progressing as a standing item at its meetings.

Next Steps

- I. This report was accepted by the Area Board on 14^h January 2021
- II. On June 10th, the Area Board will confirm the 5 top priorities. The suggested top priorities are:

1.Mental Health – across many groups including 10-12 year olds, 13-19 year olds, young adults, older & disabled people, families - especially low-income families.

2.Digital inclusion – including equipment, broadband and knowledge – both older and younger old groups.

3.Climate Change / environment – waste and recycling, biodiversity & wildlife, fly-tipping.

4.Opportunities & Activities for young people, especially around positive activities and future training and employment, to include young people with a disability.

5. Loneliness and isolation – young people and older & disabled people alike (links to Mental Health priority)

- III. An **Area Board work plan** will be presented to the Area Board at the first opportunity following selection of priorities. This will consist of the 5 issues where the Area Board will focus efforts and resources and where it feels it can make the greatest difference. The CEM will engage with partners and stakeholders so that they understand the report and can consider how they will play their part in responding
- IV. Updates will be a standard item at future area board meetings