

Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:

A.2

Meeting Date: 16th July 2020

Portfolio: Cross-cutting

Key Decision: No

Within Policy and
Budget Framework Yes

Public / Private Public

Title: Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Carlisle

Report of: Policy & Communications Manager
Partnership Manager
Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager
Funding & Development Officer

Report Number: PC 15/20

Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Covid-19 Pandemic initial response, stabilisation and steps towards recovery.

Recommendations:

- The panel is asked to consider and comment on the report.
- The panel is asked to consider what additional information it would like to see included in a future report, later in the work programme.

Tracking

Scrutiny:	Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel 16/7/20
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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Covid-19 Pandemic initial response, stabilisation and steps towards recovery. The focus is on the panel remit, in particular, community resilience and homelessness. This report also provides an update on the last submission to the panel on 9 January 2019.

The Council has maintained business continuity for its critical services throughout this period, adjusting to continue essential services and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. A summary of the activity is presented as an infographic in Appendix B.

For information, the Corporate Director of Economic Development has submitted a [report](#) to the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel (9 July) which outlines the key work streams that will contribute towards Carlisle's recovery and renewal.

Emergency Planning is a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA), and this function is facilitated by the Policy & Communications team. Our ability to respond to an emergency is reliant upon cooperation from key roles within the Council and partnership working through the Cumbria Local Resilience Forum (CRF). The CRF brings together organisations to work together to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

1.2 Update on incidents and exercises since last report

Since the last report to the panel, the Council has been involved in the response and recovery from the following incidents:

- Storm Ciara: 9 February 2020.
- Eden Valley Water Supply outage: 10 - 15 February 2020.
- Storm Dennis: 15 & 16 February 2020.
- Covid-19 Pandemic (ongoing).
- Dry Weather Multi Agency Assessment Teleconference (ongoing).

All the closed incidents have been subject to a debrief, which is then finalised and shared for learning and improvement.

The Civic Centre hosted a Mass Fatalities Plan Training and Familiarisation Day on 26 February 2020, this was attended by over 50 delegates from across the partnership.

Exercise Wyvern, 12 March 2020, a desktop exercise around the City Centre Evacuation Plan was cancelled due to the escalation of the Covid-19 Pandemic, this will be rearranged once the partnership resumes its programme of exercises.

1.3 Covid-19 Pandemic overview

Coronavirus (Covid-19) is an infectious disease. On the 12 March 2020 the World Health Organisation categorised it as a pandemic, this was because of the rapid increase in the number of cases outside of China.

The global spread of the disease has been tracked by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) through a [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

The national extent of the disease has been published daily on the '.gov website', as a [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK Dashboard](#).

A detailed weekly [National COVID-19 Surveillance Report](#) is published, summarising the information from the surveillance systems which are used to monitor the pandemic in England.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have produced an [interactive map](#) that plots the deaths involving Covid-19 at a level lower than the Lower Tier Local Authority.

[Real-time tracking and Regional R-values](#), the measure of the rate at which the infection is spreading, have been published since the beginning of June. This is critical information for the Chief Medical Officers and decision-makers, it has formed the basis for the recent easing of restrictions. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has [updated the scientific advice](#) that is used to support the government's response to COVID-19.

The County Council is now publishing a [weekly update](#) on the COVID-19 situation in Cumbria, bringing together local and national data to provide an overview of what is happening locally. This weekly report includes details on:

- R-value and growth rate.
- Weekly rate of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 tested.
- Mortality data, by district.

1.4 Emergency planning response, stabilisation and recovery

The CRF response began in February with Multi-agency Assessment Teleconferences, to monitor the disease in Cumbria and share situational awareness.

The national planning principles were published as part of the '[Coronavirus: action plan](#)' on 3 March. In March, after a period of active monitoring, the CRF activated its Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), at this time the UK Government declared a pandemic.

The Recovery Advisory Group (RAG) was activated in April the with the purpose of developing the approach to recovery and ensuring decisions made by the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) did not compromise medium to long term recovery.

A national recovery strategy was published on 11 May 2020, titled '[OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#)'. This strategy set out the stages for lifting restrictions and the measures in place to reduce the risk of the continuation or repeat of the 'lockdown'.

The Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG), which delivered the tactical response to the SCG strategy underwent a review in May. The TCG identified one of following three statuses for each of its subgroups, Business as Usual (BAU), Recovery or 'existing governance mechanisms already in place'.

A Strategic Recovery Coordinating Group was established in June. It is recognised that this will mean managing the stabilisation¹ of the major incident as well as the long-term recovery. As the risk of a second wave of disease remains during the transition to recovery, there will be a need for on-going countermeasures to reduce this risk. It is vitally important that health surveillance is coordinated as restrictions are lifted.

On 19 June, the UK Chief Medical Officers changed the COVID-19 alert level from level four to level three following recommendation by the new Joint Biosecurity Centre. This drop means that the Covid-19 pandemic remains in general circulation, however the risk of high transmission is no longer considered as likely nor is the growth in cases considered to be rising exponential.

On 30 June 2020, as part of a national outbreak control strategy the newly formed county-wide **Health Protection Board** has published a **Local Outbreak Control Plan** for consultation. The Health Protection Board will oversee the local response to Covid-19 as the focus of that response moves from civil contingencies to health protection.

A message from Colin Cox, Cumbria's Director of Public Health, was included as part of the media release for the consultation on the Plan, this message helps put the plan into context:

"Over 400 people have died in Cumbria as a result of COVID-19 infection. It has been the largest mass fatality event the county has seen since WWII.

"Because people have followed the rules, observed social distancing and taken steps to protect their communities, we now have a low rate of infection in the county.

"The evidence from elsewhere, in the UK and internationally, is that we must continue to be on our guard. This highly infectious disease has not been eradicated and could spread again quickly if we do not take precautions.

"We must balance this with the vital need to reopen our economy and other institutions and allow people to live their lives as normally as possible.

¹ : '...the exercise of interim control following an incident in order to increase public safety, and to mitigate the risk of secondary impacts occurring.'

[A review of recovery processes following Storm Desmond's impacts on Cumbria \(5th/6th Dec 2015\)](#)

“But returning to how things were pre-COVID-19 is not possible if we want to prevent a second wave of infection, further damaging lockdowns and more deaths.

“To keep Cumbria safe, and our economy and schools open, it is critical that people continue to follow the rules – observe social distancing, practice good hygiene, wear face masks where appropriate, get tested if you have symptoms and self-isolate if necessary or if you are asked to by contact tracers.

“By all working together, following the approach set out in our Outbreak Control Plan, we can ensure Cumbria is COVID-secure and keep people safe.”

An interim review of the CRF response has been undertaken to capture the lessons learnt so far. The main themes from the response, which will lead to recommendations for future responses, are coordination, preparedness and future impacts.

1.5 Risk Assessment and Impact Assessment

To assist organisations to plan for the lifting of restriction the **Cumbria Observatory** has collated data and information to inform risk assessments.

To inform the recovery work the Cumbria Observatory is producing an Impact Assessment, drawing together information from across the whole partnership and the experiences of communities.

1.6 Partnership work and community resilience

This emergency has led to an unprecedented response from the community with new groups and existing organisations sharing information and coordinating local action. Carlisle has responded very well with through a range of partners and an exceptional local emergency response, through community groups, who are providing community level support. Communities have been very proactive with a significant increase in people volunteering, including many who haven't volunteered before.

Carlisle Partnership partners have played a key role, assisting in the wider response, for example Carlisle United offered a site to assist in testing and to share communications with their audiences for wider reach. Initial work in partnership with Cumbria CVS and Cumbria Community Foundation saw the launch of Support Cumbria and a Covid-19 Response Fund, the response then developed further with the Carlisle Community Resilience Group.

- **Support Cumbria**

Support Cumbria is a web-based system, developed to manage the process of spontaneous volunteering and donation of items during a major incident. It is an official collaboration of partners across Cumbria who are working together to provide community support to organisations or individuals who are struggling to access basic or essential services during the crisis.

- **Cumbria Covid-19 Response Fund**

The Cumbria Covid-19 Response Fund was launched in March with a donation from Cumbria Community Foundation of £100,000. The target is to raise £3,000,000 to support the most

vulnerable and isolated members of our communities through the coronavirus crisis. So far, the fund has raised: £1,459,319. CCF are working closely with the National Emergencies Trusts and British Red Cross who are raising funds nationally through the Coronavirus Fundraising Appeal.

- **Carlisle Community Resilience Group (CaCRG)**

CaCRG is one of six locality resilience groups across Cumbria that feed into the Cumbria Community Resilience Group. CaCRG was established at the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic and brings together a range of partners, organisations and community representatives. It forms part of the coordination structures established to respond to Covid-19. The CaCRG group is co-chaired by Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council via telephone conference calls and has facilitated exceptional partnership working and communication across the area.

The group membership grew quickly reflecting the diverse and growing needs of our communities. To support this pace of change and need for communications a shared online platform (SharePoint) and local agency situation report were developed. This enables effective communication of correct information between agencies and assisted in problem solving, signposting and exchange of intelligence. A Situation Report (Sitrep) is completed by each agency prior to the weekly meetings to ease the running of the virtual meetings and ensure accuracy of information. This information can then be disseminated across wider communications and used to develop newsletters, organisation bulletins and staff updates, partnership email circulars, social media content and funding newsletters. It also provides an opportunity to pick up on emerging issues and patterns.

Although unprecedented, and testing for all involved, the crisis has established new and effective ways of working across sectors. The virtual SharePoint and 'Sitrep' has enabled:

- problem solving amongst agencies,
- swift support to local emergency response groups,
- ensured the gap between shielding food parcels being delivered has been supported by local support networks,
- directing of local funds to the heart of programmes and those in need.

The group has also seen a number of partners come together to address local issues and need, an example being a programme to help support children and families struggling when not at school.

Moving forward the group is exploring sustainable local level community response structured to capitalise on the effective relationships, wider communities, and future challenges and opportunities. As well as how we utilise the volunteer and community response in the longer term for more sustainable and proactive emergency response across the whole district.

- **Newsletters and Partnership Email circulars:**

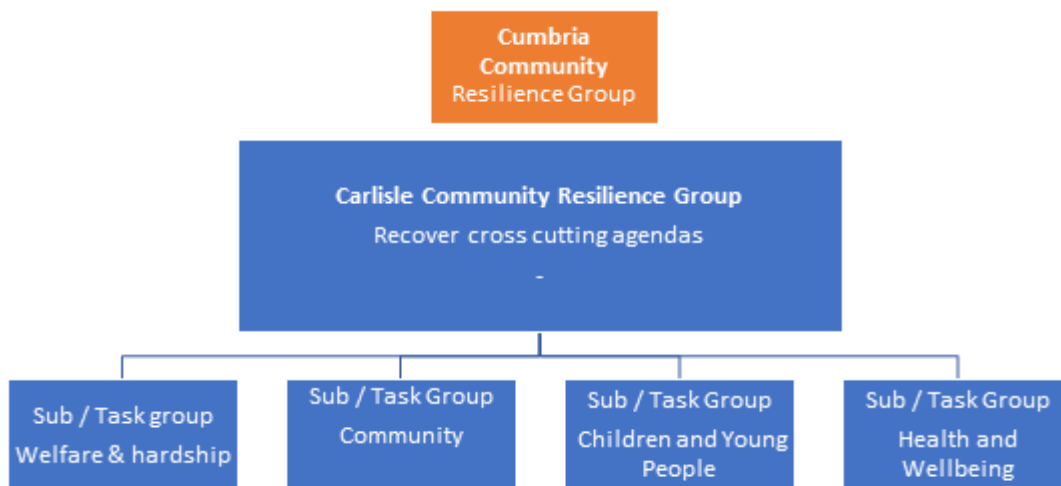
Agency newsletters were developed in partnership and promoted across the district. Weekly email news updates with the latest government and local information have also been shared.

- **Funding support**

Support has been provided throughout to support emerging issues and the many organisations involved in delivery who now face their own significant financial issues. This has included a newly developed funding newsletter, bespoke organisational funding reports, website and social media presence.

- **Community Recovery**

The diagram below highlights the development of the support structures from response to recovery phase.



It has been proposed that as we move forward, recovery subgroups should be explored by the CaCRG. This is subject to resources and availability, as many people are already stretched by the crisis and additional groups may be difficult to fulfil. A proposal is:

- Additional groups should be kept to a minimum to ease communication. Task groups were suggested, where outcomes could be brought back to a lighter version of the CaCRG. This will ensure a joined-up approach, coherent communication and efficiency use of resources.
- That current structures are utilised to avoid duplication, mapping of what structures or groups are already in place in the area is to be considered.
- A consideration that the term “renewal” may more appropriate than “recovery”, a renewal of how organisations and communities may work together.

From the themes identified and emerging secondary issues, to assist with longer term recovery, four subgroups have been proposed: Community (Emergency Response Groups), Children, young people and families, Health and Wellbeing and Welfare and financial hardship.

1.7 Homelessness response and service recovery

The initial priority for the Council's Homeless Prevention and Accommodation services was to move quickly to safeguard and minimise risks to staff and clients by reducing face to face contact where feasible to all frontline support delivery to vulnerable people. As such the benefits advice, homeless team, domestic abuse and rough sleeping officers all implemented service continuity plans working remotely and offering telephone assessments and advice.

In terms of the homeless accommodation services, this was of course not possible due to the nature of the service, however essential services continued to be delivered safely with additional measures in place such as health screening, PPE and limiting face to face contact where possible. Due to staffing pressures (shielding/ health vulnerabilities) and safety concerns, the 24 hour staffing on site provision at Water Street (women and family scheme) was prioritised in terms of safeguarding children; as such in line with emergency plans, the men's scheme was temporarily closed, and the wider dispersed provision reprofiled to accommodate males.

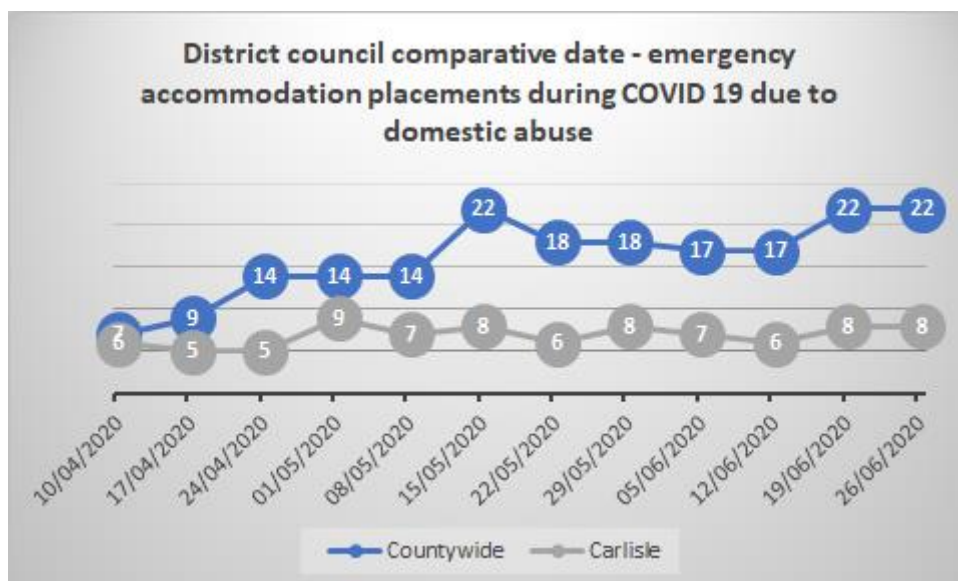
All opportunities to procure additional emergency accommodation were explored (including local and national hotels /B&Bs) but this was extremely limited; as such additional capacity was created via accessing additional 'move on' properties and fully utilising our dispersed accommodation, retaining and profiling self-contained bed spaces should there be a need for self -solation. Support throughout has been delivered via outreach to the properties, with additional interventions implemented, for example all residents issued with a mobile phone who needed it in order to maintain contact in emergencies, access to food supplies and emergency medication throughout the lockdown period.

Temporary emergency accommodation has continued to be provided to those in need of it throughout the lockdown, via both statutory and non-statutory placements, including 18 households in Carlisle who were at risk of rough sleeping (for example due to bail conditions or prison / hospital discharge but unable to return home due to others shielding) and rough sleepers following the mandate to 'get everyone off the streets' on 25 March 2020. In order to prioritise beds and minimise risks, additional checks have been undertaken in advance of placements in line with Public Health England guidance such as health vulnerabilities, travel, self-isolation alternatives (should it be needed), and health issues and symptoms.

Close partnership working has been critical, in particular with Cumbria County Council, Unity (drug and alcohol treatment services) and local housing providers (supported, social and private landlords) to access direct let / vacant properties for those who have a priority for rehousing, in order to create constant throughput.

The Council has offered additional assistance in terms of furniture packages, payments and transport to maximise 'move on' and to maintain emergency bed spaces as a matter of priority. To date, 42 households have been supported to move in to permanent rehousing options; in addition, 'move on' plans have been developed for all those placed in emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 Lockdown, regardless of whether they are owed a duty or not, in line with the current Government mandate.

'Safe zones' have been established within the schemes / properties should this be required for people who have symptoms to self-isolate, with additional safeguards and increased cleaning regimes. Three residents in emergency temporary accommodation with symptoms have been supported to self-isolate and access postal tests, food and medication – all have tested negative to date.



In line with statutory responsibilities, district councils have a responsibility under the homeless legislation to offer emergency accommodation to all households who are at risk of or are fleeing violence of any kind. Specialist emergency provision is in place with support, 24 hours a day, for those experiencing homelessness as a direct result of domestic abuse (DA); with specialist officers also supporting those in the community to prevent homelessness where safe and appropriate to do so. Average range of DA related emergency presentations are normally between 10-12% across the county; current levels are 18% countywide. All district LAs have developed additional provision to deal with a further anticipated rise in demand for services both in terms of accommodation and support; and are working closely with all key agencies / services to ensure that all who require DA housing assistance can access this in a timely manner including sanctuary support measures.

Key challenges both in terms of the crisis response and recovery are:

- Maintaining safe staffing levels.
- Balancing demand and availability of accommodation.
- Accessing suitable / appropriate wider support required to assist people with high needs to sustain accommodation placements safely.
- Managing infection controls with those individuals who may not comply with social distancing and other measures in a shared accommodation environment.

1.8 Covid-19 and health inequalities

The pandemic has renewed the focus on health inequalities. ONS analysis has reported the following risk factors relating to COVID-19: age & sex; deprivation; occupation and ethnic group.

The Cumbria Observatory has published [district reports](#) that displays a selection of national demographic, health and economic indicators that can be used to help services plan their response and these risk factors.

2. RISKS

Threats and hazards are assessed in the Community Risk Register. Operational risks relating to the Council's CCA duties are captured in the Policy & Communications Operational Risk Register. This register is currently being reviewed through a Risk Management Working Group.

3. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

Emergency Planning, particularly recovery, helps to improve the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of the people of Carlisle.

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Appendices attached to report: Appendix A: List of links
Appendix B: Supporting our Communities through Coronavirus

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL -

FINANCE –

EQUALITY – The Covid-19 risk factors include protected characteristic.

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE –

Appendix A: List of links

Item	Link
COVID-19 Dashboard	https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html
Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK Dashboard	https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/
National COVID-19 Surveillance Report	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports
interactive map	https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/articles/deathsinvolvingcovid19interactivemap/2020-06-12
Real-time tracking and Regional R-values	https://www.mrc-bsu.cam.ac.uk/now-casting/
updated the scientific advice	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-supporting-the-uk-government-response
weekly update	https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/publichealth/covid19outbreakcontrol.asp
Coronavirus: action plan	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869827/Coronavirus_action_plan_-_a_guide_to_what_you_can_expect_across_the_UK.pdf
Cumbria Observatory	https://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/health-social-care/covid-19/
Support Cumbria	https://supportcumbria.org.uk/
Cumbria Covid-19 Response Fund	https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/cumbria-covid-19-response-fund/
'OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy'	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy
Health Protection Board Local Outbreak Control Plan	https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/publichealth/covid19outbreakcontrol.asp
district reports	https://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/corona-district/?geographyId=61bb4160561047a9817190504e46c9c2&featureId=E07000028

Appendix B:

Supporting our Communities through Coronavirus

23 March - 12 June 2020



And since the 12 June... **495** Applications to the Discretionary Grants scheme

Supporting our Communities through Coronavirus

23 March - 12 June 2020

Environmental Health



154 Pest control treatments



32 Mandatory Disabled
Facilities Grants progressed



351 Environmental health requests -
noise/nuisance, hygiene and
housing including 99 Covid-19
environmental health investigations
regarding business closures and
social distancing in businesses



62 Licencing applications processed

Building Control



139 Building Regulations
applications received



91 Decisions made
(approve/conditional approval etc)



790 Site inspections carried out
(building Regulations)



456 Number of site visits



4 Dangerous structure
notified and inspected



2 Demolition notices processed



5 Interventions for
unauthorised work



9 Street naming
numbering applications