

# Report to Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item:

**A.3**

Meeting Date: 25 February 2021  
Portfolio: Cross-cutting  
Key Decision: No  
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes  
Public / Private: Public

Title: A year of responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic  
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive  
Report Number: PC 13/21

## Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of the report is to update the Panel on the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Carlisle, a year on since the declaration of a global pandemic.

## Recommendations:

That the Panel are asked to note:

- The organisational and partnership work highlighted in the report.
- The ongoing and medium term impacts and activity.

## Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Scrutiny:	Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel
Council:	N/A

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This is the third report on the Covid-19 Pandemic response to the Panel, previous reports were scrutinised in July 2020 and October 2020.
- 1.2. The Cumbria Local Resilience Forum (CLRF) response began in February 2020 with Multi-agency Assessment Teleconferences, to monitor the disease in Cumbria and share situational awareness. 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.
- 1.3. The CLRF has now been responding to this public health emergency for over a year, adapting the response to meet the changes in restrictions, guidance, and legislation, all driven by local rates of infection, transmission, hospitalisation, and death. As well as meeting partners requests for support in the roll-out of the vaccination programme and tactics to ease the difficulties in hospital discharges.
- 1.4. This report is both a stocktake on the response and forward look at likely issues arising from the public health and economic impacts, over the medium term. A particular focus has been requested by the Panel on the topics of:
  - Work by the welfare subgroup
  - Horizon scanning: future challenges for local people.

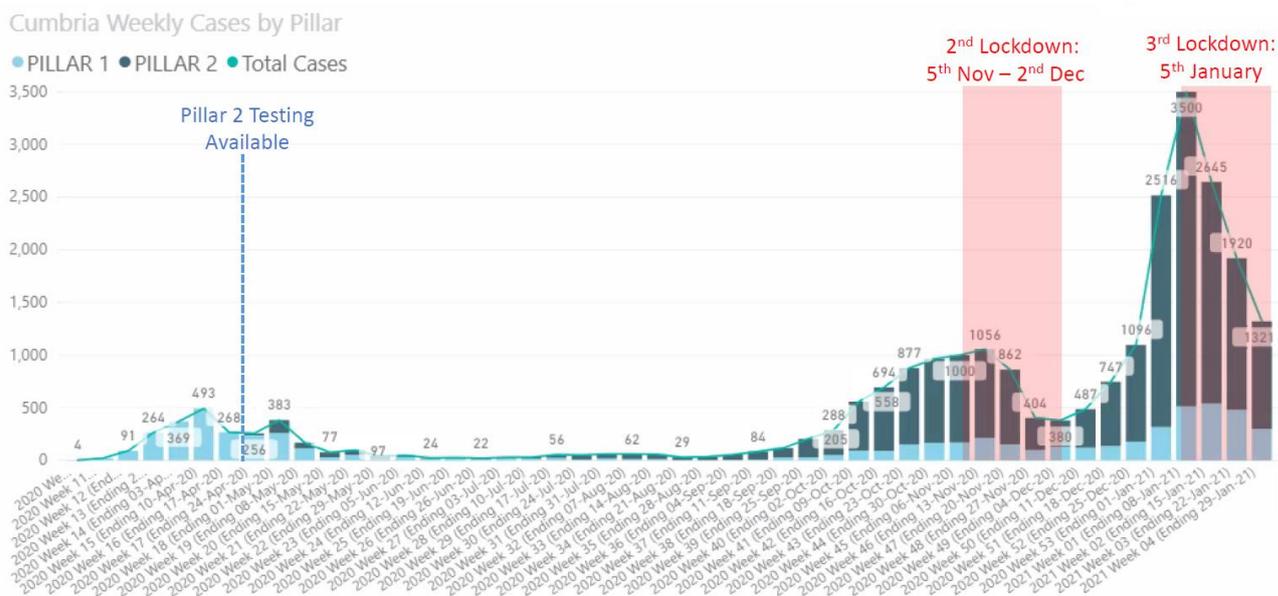
### Overview

- 1.5. The past year can be broken down into two waves of infection and three lockdowns, each with different restrictions. The graph illustrates the most recent of these waves and the two lockdown events. The graph on the following page shows the total cases identified through the testing regimes (Pillar 1 and Pillar 2<sup>1</sup>). Appendix A summarises the changes to policy over the span of the pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Pillar 1: swab testing in Public Health England (PHE) labs and NHS hospitals for those with a clinical need, and health and care workers

Pillar 2: swab testing for the wider population, as set out in government guidance



Source: PHE (data represents the number of people with a positive test result)

Figure 1: Cumbria weekly cases and Lockdown 2 & 3, Cumbria Health Protection Board Weekly Covid-19 Summary 2021 Week 4 (Ending Friday 29 January)

1.6. The local data shows there the peak of Covid-19 related deaths occurred in mid-January but at the time of writing North Cumbria hospitals were still experiencing exceptionally high demand.

### Response update

- 1.7. In response to the unprecedented pressure on health and care services in North Cumbria as a result of Covid-19, arrangements have been put in place to allow people who are medically fit but not yet able to return home to be discharged from hospital into Temporary Care Accommodation in the Station Hotel, Carlisle.
- 1.8. The Vaccination Programme in North Cumbria has progressed well, targeting the cohorts listed for prioritisation. Members have been kept briefed on the progress through the Chief Executive's email bulletin.
- 1.9. The roll-out of Lateral Flow Tests has continued with district council services now included in the programme and further wider community testing planned. This new service has been delivered through a partnership approach.

### Risk of Concurrent Events

- 1.10. The CLRF has always had the concurrent risks as the highest risk in the Community Risk Register. This is the risk of two or more major incidents happening at the same time in Cumbria. The CLRF experienced this in 2020 with the concurrent incidents of Eden Valley Water Supply outage (10 - 15 February) and Storm Dennis (15 - 16 February).

- 1.11. The risk of concurrency during a pandemic presents significant issues for the CLRF and key partners; the extended duration of the response makes the concurrent incidents more likely to arise, especially during the Winter months.
- 1.12. To prepare for such incidents the CLRF has developed a concurrent incident plan with specific actions around the need to evacuate individuals who are self-isolating or are Covid-19 Positive and those shielding because they are Clinical Extremely Vulnerable. Staff have been briefed and trained on these new arrangements.
- 1.13. Storm Christoph had an impact on the county, with a small number of properties impacted in Carlisle district and the wider county. Lessons learnt from concurrent incidents elsewhere have been shared with CLRF. In the case of Storm Christoph flooding in Greater Manchester, a major incident was declared with the evacuation of 2000+ homes.
- 1.14. Concern over Winter weather and flooding remains high and a small feasibility bid was submitted to the National Lottery to test a Community Warden network approach (this has worked well in other parts of Cumbria and has served as a great platform to support the pandemic). The bid was not successful on this occasion and partners are now working together on other opportunities.

### **Community and partnerships**

- 1.15. The Cumbria Support Line remains operational to provide support and advice. The welfare booklet, 'Here to Help' was updated in January to reflect the challenges of the new National Lockdown and support on offer with input from multiple agencies, the CLRF subgroups and Welfare Reform Board. The booklet is being posted to every household in Cumbria in February. The Community Leaders Pack has also been updated and shared.
- 1.16. The Carlisle Community Resilience Group (CaCRG) continues to meet twice fortnightly with key partners updating the shared situation report with relevant news and information and where necessary issues being escalated.
- 1.17. Brampton Community Centre has received support in order to assist them to open as a vaccine centre in partnership with Brampton Medical Practice. This has proven to be a success. We have worked with partners to ensure the site is accessible and gritted so that the most vulnerable can get to appointments, sharing patient transport options to get people to appointments, and helping identify volunteer marshals to assist with signposting and queries.
- 1.18. A Carlisle Mental Health Directory of services has been compiled to support the signposting, mapping and knowledge of services available, following feedback from communities and partners around real concern and need. The directory lists over 150 groups that are active in Carlisle, North Cumbria and countywide, covering issues

such as bereavement, caring for others, disability, emergency support, family support, health, mental health, professional resources, safeguarding and wellbeing.

1.19. A regular email bulletin and funding newsletter continues to be circulated across networks to assist in supporting those most in need.

## Survey work

1.20. Healthwatch have now completed three reports based on surveys (versions 1,2 and 3) throughout the pandemic. The reports can be found at:

<https://healthwatchcumbria.co.uk/coronavirus-survey-reports/>

1.21. Initial findings from surveys<sup>2</sup> conducted by the University of Cumbria have identified the following:

- Shielding has a profound effect on some people's wellbeing with negative impacts on wider health, mental health and social outcomes. People missed the outdoors and reduced opportunities for exercise. Some expressed anxiety in not being able to manage everyday tasks for themselves (e.g. shopping).
- Lockdown had a negative effect on pre-existing health issues, and accessing medication was a cause for concern along with cancelled appointments and procedures. There was also concern over the negative impact that social isolation would have on physical or mental health.
- Lockdown had a negative effect on pre-existing mental health issues; many reported a worsening in their condition and experienced decreased services and or support due to the control measures. Deterioration in mental health state included reports of new onset, increased prevalence, or increased severity of five different issues: anxiety, stress, depression, mood swings and panic attacks. Family and friends reported being worried about how to look after the mental health of others.
- Lockdown, changes to routine, and on-going uncertainty increased the issues many people with additional needs faced, particularly children. Carers stated they were struggling to cope with the needs of those they looked after. Many carers found it difficult to work at home whilst supporting a child with additional needs, resulting in increased stress and isolation.
- Burden for older adults of caring for relatives during lockdown. Many missed contact with others, although some managed to keep in contact via digital media. Experiencing a lack of motivation was a problem for many.
- Impact on employment status and financial security, as a result of furlough or being newly unemployed, and / or having a partner furloughed or newly unemployed.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/research/centres/crihs-research-centre/covid-19-research/>

Uncertainty around furlough for the individuals involved, and a cause of stress and worry due to fears there would not be jobs to return to. Those self-employed were also concerned about future job security, reduction in income.

- Young people found studying at home difficult without the usual structure, support, and resources of school, especially where resources such as study space, PCs and laptops needed to be shared with other family member. Many children and young people were reported to be missing school, this caused distress for the young people and parental concern for their emotional wellbeing. Changes to the exam system caused worry.

## **Welfare Reform Board**

- 1.22. The Carlisle Welfare Reform Board (WRB) was formed nearly ten years to initially bring together multiple agencies to understand and respond to the impact and implementation of the Government's substantial programme of welfare reforms as we moved towards the full roll out of Universal Credit. The WRB now forms a two-way communication with the CaCRG and if necessary, the overarching CLRF.
- 1.23. WRB is hosted by the City Council and brings together Council services, housing associations, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Cumbria Law Centre, Department for Work and Pensions, Carlisle Food Bank and Carlisle and District Credit Union and meets on a quarterly basis. At the beginning of the pandemic the terms of reference were amended to include:

*“Commit to contribute to the stabilisation and recovery actions following Covid 19 in the Carlisle area”*

- 1.24. The priorities for action have been reviewed<sup>4</sup> and now focus on the following areas:
- Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs
  - Strengthen communities through targeted support to people who are more likely to experience welfare issues, hardship, and poverty
  - Promote an inclusive economy, by raising skills and improving access to a range of advice and employment opportunities for people on low incomes (including young people)
  - Improve access to affordable housing options, support households to sustain appropriate accommodation and prevent homelessness
  - Improving health and wellbeing of people on low incomes.

## Medium term impacts and activity

1.25. The CLRF's Multi-Agency Information Cell (MAIC) meets weekly and has been identifying and analysing the impacts of the pandemic on Cumbria, bringing together intelligence from other agencies and CLRF sub-groups. A summary of the current impacts relevant to Carlisle is below:

- A connection with nature and the outdoor environment can have a positive impact on physical and mental well-being. The pandemic has provided a greater appreciation of what's on our doorstep and a renewed valuing of "local".
- Increased uptake of services has been felt across the community organisations as rates of positive cases has risen in the area and further lockdown measures are implemented.
- Increased use of foodbanks and requests for financial advice following national lockdown from December 2020.
- Closed attractions and accommodation during lockdowns and resulting negative economic impact which is likely to be felt for years to come. Businesses unable to operate at pre-Covid capacities, leading to reduced levels of profitability. Lower spend than anticipated in an already fragile economy.
- There has been a more diverse visitor profile and new "first time" visitors to the county. It is hoped these new visitors will make return visits to the area, providing a boost to the economy.
- Hundreds of individuals stepped up during the first few weeks of the pandemic to offer their time as a volunteer through Support Cumbria. There are now a record number of volunteers registered to support communities and agencies.
- Up to the end of December over £40m has been paid out to Carlisle residents through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).
- At the end of December 5,900 jobs were furloughed in Carlisle. This is a large reduction from a peak around 10,000 in the Spring/Summer. However, Cumbria's furlough rate once again become the highest of the 31 county areas in England in November.
- By December 2020, the Universal Credit claimant count in Carlisle had almost doubled to 8,742 claimants compared to December 2019. This is over 13% of the working age population. Rates are highest in the 18-24 age range.
- The number of free school meals in Carlisle between April and December 2020 increased by 50% compared to the same months of 2019.
- Increased demand for Revenues and Benefits services and other Council services, especially around any new grants and support.
- Increased household waste as result of closed schools and people working from home.

- 1.26. A national roadmap for exiting the current Lockdown restrictions is expected by late February. This will inform the Panel on the next national steps in response and recovery.
- 1.27. Overseeing the recovery from Covid-19 is the Strategic Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG) which is made up of a wide range of partners. The SRCG has put together a Draft Recovery Strategy. This document describes our strategy for recovery in Cumbria from Covid-19, it outlines what good recovery could look like, our priorities for recovery and high-level performance measures to evidence progress. This strategy is now open for public consultation until Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The SRCG want your detailed feedback to make sure that the voice of our communities, the public, and our partners are heard and considered. An online survey can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/yylj5gw>

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**Appendices**

**attached to report:**

- None

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

- None

## Appendix A: Covid-19 Timeline<sup>3</sup>

COVID TIMELINE	Date	Action
Wave 1: Mar-Aug 2020	4th March	First Covid case in Cumbria
	12th March	Declared Global Pandemic
	16th March	Social Distancing begins in UK
	19th March	Schools closed
	21st March	CEV list introduced
	23rd March	LOCKDOWN 1.0 begins in UK
	30th March	Community Hubs established, call centre set up and phoning CEV and vulnerable
	10th May	Easing of lockdown - leave home to go parks and exercise more than once a day
	11th May	Garden centres open and unlimited exercise
	28th May	Test and trace launched
	1st June	Lockdown measures are eased, with school children in England in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 returning to the classroom
	15th June	England's retail parks, high streets and shopping centres open
	19th June	Alert level 3 for England
	29th June	Local Lockdowns introduced
	4th July	Pubs open, holiday accommodation open
	13th July	Beauty salons open
	17th July	Working from home eased
	24th July	Face Coverings are mandatory
	31st July	Measures lifted across England
	1st August	Shielding advice paused in England
	3rd August	Eat Out To Help Out launched
	14th Sept	Social gatherings of more than six people made illegal in England
	24th Sept	New Restrictions including 10pm curfew on pubs, bars and restaurants

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/covid-19-policy-tracker>

Wave 2 - Tiered approach	14th October	LOCAL 3-TIER SYSTEM, CUMBRIA Tier 1
	15th October	Barrow move to Tier 2
	29th October	Carlisle move to Tier 2
	5th November - 2 December	LOCKDOWN 2.0 Pre-Christmas Lockdown nationally for 4 weeks, L3 to L4 - schools remained open, CEV NSSS Open
	2nd December	NATIONAL 4-TIER SYSTEM introduced & reviewed every 14 days, national restrictions removed - CUMBRIA placed in TIER 2 - hospitality settings that serve alcohol must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals. NSSS available for registrations in T3
	8th December	Vaccination roll-out begins
	20th December	Christmas Restrictions in other areas who became T4, household mixing only on 25th Dec, CEV NSSS OPEN
	22nd December	New Covid Variant in Cumbria
	30th December	Cumbria moves to Tier 4 - NSSS open again for CEV
	31st December	Helpline open longer hours for CEV
	5th January 2021	LOCKDOWN 3.0 BEGINS, Other areas in lockdown from 20 and 26th Dec. Cumbria one of the last areas.