

Committee: Community and Children's Services	Date: 28/09/2020
Subject: Recovery and Resilience	Public
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Summary

In the period ahead, the response of the City of London Corporation to support its communities will evolve from reactive emergency services to support the needs that reflect the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will require preparedness and resilience to further lockdown measures, and provision of support to those impacted by the social and economic consequences of COVID-19 to ensure future recovery. This report summarises the approach of the Department of Community and Children's Services to respond to this next phase.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Since March 2020, services within the Department of Community and Children's Services (the department) have responded to the restrictions and impact of COVID-19 on the City's communities. Delivery has been co-ordinated across the service divisions, adapting in real time to meet needs and comply with the latest Public Health England and Government guidance and direction.
2. As a result, key services such as our libraries, schools, leisure and community centres were temporarily closed, and our housing office and social care services were temporarily limited in their face-to-face contact with residents.
3. The progressive easing of restrictions, and the manifestation of wider economic and social impacts associated with the pandemic mark the transition to a new phase for our communities and the department's response.
4. The department's focus and planning is now to: first, ensure the resilience of services providing essential support in the next 'recovery' phase in the event of

further local, regional or national lockdown; and second, to respond effectively to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

5. In the circumstances of lockdown, the Government has required local authorities to ensure that those who must shield have social wellbeing support. Food support was delivered by Government, and medicine supplies by pharmacies. Of the around 200 individual residents shielding in the City, the department provided support to 10 individuals with food shopping, and nine with medicine collection. No shielded person required emergency food support during lockdown, but 28 requested Government food boxes at some point. Food provision to shielded individuals will become the responsibility of the City Corporation in a future lockdown, while the NHS Volunteer Responders will support medicine collection.
6. During the first lockdown period, the department's support extended beyond those shielding, by providing increased provision and welfare checks to a range of other vulnerable individuals, including those sleeping rough in the Square Mile. Communities in the City also benefitted from an extensive network of local volunteer responders, the emergence of a local food bank and the work of local voluntary sector services.
7. The phase ahead is very likely to see an increase in residents requiring additional support in response to the consequences of economic pressure, and the legacy impacts of lockdown such as an increase in mental ill health or family breakdown.
8. This report sets out the assessment of potential impacts, service mitigations and opportunities to strengthen the approach and identify any gaps or opportunities in provision in the context of growing or changing needs, or future COVID-19 restrictions.

Current Position – Local Lockdown Planning

9. The City and Hackney Integrated Commissioning Board has established a Local Outbreak Board to oversee the response to a local spike in COVID-19 infections. Its work is supported by a suite of standard operating procedures that have been developed for a variety of settings, and it outlines individual and organisational responsibility in the case of an outbreak of COVID-19. Further detail is available on the City Corporation's website:
<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-local-outbreak-prevention-and-management>.
10. This approach is supplemented by a City-specific Local Lockdown and Transition Plan developed by the department to ensure readiness in the event of a future lockdown. This plan can be found at Appendix 1.
11. The plan sets out the approach to:
 - a. identifying needs
 - b. access to food
 - c. access to medications
 - d. meeting wider needs

e. communications planning.

12. The department has the capacity to contact shielded individuals should there be another lockdown, although it is proposed that this will be led by primary care. Work is being continued to ensure that the ability to provide food parcels to shielded individuals who need them is in place. Community volunteers have provided essential and additional support in the period to date, but their capacity and availability cannot be relied on, as many will be focused on other priorities in the coming period.

Current Position – Recovery Phase

13. A departmental officer group (the Recovery and Resilience Group) has formed to identify possible changes in need and services demand in the period ahead. Such changes may include increased homelessness, poverty, domestic violence and unemployment. Several headline risks have been identified which fall within, and may need the support of, critical service areas. These are set out in the table below:

Critical Service Area	Potential Risks	Indicators
Adult Social Care (ASC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increased social isolation ii. Developing of acute needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of new referrals for ASC support b) Number of safeguarding enquiries
Children’s Social Care (CSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Increased safeguarding issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Number of CSC referrals d) Number of Education and Health referrals
Rough Sleepers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Increase in rough sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Number of new rough sleepers (flow)
Statutory Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. Increase in homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) Number of homeless applications
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi. Increase in number and length of arrears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) Number of Notices Seeking Possession h) Number of tenants in eight weeks arrears
Financial Hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vii. Increased financial issues leading to acute problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Number of successful Council Tax benefit claims j) Numbers of local housing allowance applications
Education and Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> viii. Increase in absence ix. Increased support needs beyond available capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> k) Number receiving Free School Meals (Aldgate School) l) School Attendance (Aldgate School) m) Number of Education, Health and Care Plans

14. The risks and related indicators, are not meant to be exhaustive, but indicative to changing patterns of community need that the City Corporation (and other partners) will need to respond to. There is also acknowledgement that some issues, such as social isolation, mental ill health and financial hardship can remain hidden in some groups.

15. A dashboard has been developed for the departmental leadership team to provide early warning of escalating needs, and to assess the capacity and breadth of responses in place to respond. The dashboard provides a high-level set of indicators that can be regularly monitored and provide monthly evaluations to support evidence-based decisions and service co-ordination. It can be found in Appendix 2.
16. The Recovery and Resilience Group has assessed the level of preparedness and the range of mitigating responses to the risks identified. This ongoing work will identify risks (such as limited capacity and/or resilience in services) and gaps in – or opportunities to improve – provision, and will identify cross-cutting enablers such as communication and digital access. In doing so, it will propose responses or escalate issues to the departmental leadership team for consideration as demand for support emerges or changes.
17. A summary of the service and support in place to respond to risks, and opportunities to strengthen support is set out in Appendix 3.
18. Gaps and opportunities identified include: delivery of outreach sessions and workshops by advice services; strengthened processes with the Guinness Trust to identify tenants at risk of eviction; greater diversity of communication channels and languages; better promotion of skills training, and staff training across partners to support a 'make every contact count' approach in signposting people to available support.

Cross-cutting issues

19. During the period of lockdown, key cross-cutting issues have emerged that are relevant to a range of risks and responses. These include digital exclusion and emergency food support for those experiencing acute or emergency financial hardship.
20. Digital exclusion is a feature of data, skills and device poverty. The City Corporation and partners have some initiatives to tackle this issue, especially in relation to skills, but officers are exploring options for a more strategic response, aimed at supporting digital access to tackle financial, social and health exclusion. Costed proposals will be developed and put to Members for consideration.
21. Food support to some City residents has been provided since the beginning of the lockdown by the Square Mile Food Bank – a volunteer-led group. To ensure that such support is resilient and targeted at those in greatest need, officers are developing proposals for a longer-term model that delivers targeted food support and welfare advice to those experiencing financial hardship. This will support those who lose their employment and are transitioning to benefits, those struggling with debt and other sudden loss of income.
22. Raising awareness of support services and practical help will remain critical. Communications will remain a key theme and deliverable across this work, and the need to reach all community groups will remain a key challenge.

Risks and Issues

23. The period ahead is very uncertain. The scale and nature of impact on the community remains unclear. While services are confident at this stage that there is capacity to meet needs, and a range of support is available to people, there is a risk that future demand could place significant pressure on services and budgets.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

24. The approach set out is consistent with the Corporate Plan objective to contribute to a flourishing society.

Conclusion

25. The work of the Recovery and Resilience Group seeks to provide assurance to Members and the department's leadership team that the City Corporation is prepared to respond to the challenges of future lockdown and economic recession. In doing so, its work will help maximise the opportunities for all in the City's communities to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Local Lockdown and Transition Plan
- Appendix 2 – Recovery Indicators Dashboard
- Appendix 3 – Service and Support Responses

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