

**ITEM No ...13.....**

**REPORT TO:** POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 24 AUGUST 2020  
**REPORT ON:** LOOK BACK ON DCC COVID-19 RESPONSE  
**REPORT BY:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
**REPORT NO:** 189-2020

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Elected Members with detail around the City Council's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Recognises the key workstreams that have contributed towards caring for citizens, and in particular those falling to be considered as vulnerable or very vulnerable, during the COVID 19 Pandemic.
- (ii) The council continues to prepare for the requirements that would be necessary in the event of any isolated outbreaks of COVID 19 in the City, or further waves of Pandemic, and will maintain the ability to scale up resources in the event of isolated outbreaks

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Continual and ongoing financial assessment will be needed to manage the financial sustainability of the Council with the aim being to bring back a financial equilibrium to the Council. During the 2020/21 financial year a funding strategy will need to be developed to ensure that the financial impact of both the incident itself and the recovery phase is minimised and managed. Financial management and financial sustainability will be a critical factor in terms of governance and decision making across the Council moving forward.

**4. BACKGROUND**

COVID-19 is the greatest public health emergency that the UK has faced for a generation. The pandemic has had an enormous impact on Dundee's communities and the Council has been working closely with its partners to mitigate these impacts and to help protect the most vulnerable people in our communities. This has involved substantial changes in the way the Council operates, with many staff undertaking essential roles that are different to their normal duties. Some are making use of IT to work from home, while others are having to self-isolate. This report provides an overview of the Council's response to date, demonstrating both the scale and breadth of the work undertaken by staff in collaboration with partners and local communities.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was necessary to establish workstreams and processes for the council to provide humanitarian assistance to citizens across the City, including the shielding group. A range of workstreams have been overseen within this programme and reported regularly to IMT, CMT and Elected Members.

It quickly became apparent that a coordinated cross service planned approach was necessary to deal with the multiple demands placed on the Council. Section 5 within this report details the way in which this work was coordinated, with subsequent sections highlighting particular responses from within existing service structures across the Council. The scale of reorganisation across the Council, required to respond to this humanitarian need, should not be underestimated. Whilst resilience response and business continuity arrangements are long established, they are normally focused on one or two concurrent events with several impacts, which are traditionally managed by the service closest to the incident. UK resilience structures did not fit easily into a single incident with multiple critical impacts across the entire fabric of society. As Governments across the UK triggered response and humanitarian activity around Covid-19 the Council was required to develop a flexible, multi-disciplinary, multi service approach to meet the demands placed on it. The detail around what the Council was required to provide help to Dundee's citizens is outlined in section 5 below.

## **5. COVID-19 SUPPORTING DUNDEE PROGRAMME**

### **5.1 Community Support Centres**

Dundee decided to operate a reduced number of schools as Community Support Centres from 30 March 2020 for providing care for vulnerable children, children of key workers and supporting communities. Incorporated in this approach was the requirements to Shielding of High Risk People from Coronavirus and under contingency planning to establish Humanitarian Assistance Centres (HAC) as outlined by the Scottish Government.

The eight Community Support Centres provide coverage across the city and cover areas where there are a high proportion of key workers and areas of high deprivation. The buildings were identified based on their location, suitability, safety and greatest need, taking into consideration the Scottish Government's guidance and the data collected by Children & Families service regarding pupils attendance during the week of 23–27 March 2020.

Head teachers and school staff, alongside staff from our Communities teams and Leisure and Culture Dundee, planned for the opening of our Community Support Centres in the following locations: Tayview, Balgarthno Campus, Coldside Campus, North East Campus, Rowantree, St. Pauls Academy, Claypotts Castle and Grove Academy.

The centres are open from 8.00 until 18:00 to allow parents to continue to deliver vital services across their workplaces. Sessions offered for vulnerable pupils are responsive to individual needs, so the sessions vary in length and the number offered throughout the week. For those attending, free food is also available across the day. In the initial weeks of operating the centre the numbers in attendance averaged around 350-400 per week but this has increased to just over 600 per week, being well above the Scottish average of 300 per week. Support continued over the summer holidays with between 350-400 in attendance each day.

An integral part of Dundee's approach to how it operates its community support centres has been to act as a focal point for the Communities teams and voluntary sector as they gathered intelligence on local needs and issues arising during the crisis. This has allowed Dundee to ensure the right supports, connections and signposting to local and national services are happening in our most vulnerable communities. Particularly in relation to food and mental health needs

One of the community support centres also deals with the Council's free delivery of period products. Requests are made by telephone on 01382 433132 or emailed to [sanitaryproducts@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:sanitaryproducts@dundeecity.gov.uk). This service offers a non-contact delivery to homes using volunteer drivers. Each delivery consists of 3 months' worth of products to anyone requiring delivery. 291 deliveries have been made since it commenced on 13 April 2020.

## 5.2 COVID Helpline, Advice & Signposting

Initially the Council established a helpline (0300 123 1403) week commencing 30 March for the shielded individuals. In the shielding guidance it is referred to as a 'local assistance centre'. The following helpline services are in place for the shielded group:

- A helpline with a free phone number 0300 123 1403 for people in this category in Dundee and is open from Monday-Friday, 8.00am-8.00pm staffed by the Council's Customer Services. This has been live since 3 April 2020.
- An [online form](#) to request assistance on the [Tayside Cares website](#)
- A triage team staff by Customer Services and IT (Welfare Rights) who contact each person calling the helpline/completing the online form to ensure they get the right support
- An urgent food service through the voluntary sector if they cannot wait for the national service
- Forwarding data to the national food delivery service when the national emergency food delivery service required
- Forwarding data to the local pharmacy service to organise medication delivery
- Local [advice on the Council's Website](#) and guidance on the [Tayside Cares website](#)

Initially, there were 3,061 shielded individuals in Dundee and this has increased to 4,783 (as at 24 July 2021). The Council undertook an exercise to contact each individual in Dundee to ask if they needed any assistance or support. Of this group 1,365 received weekly food boxes from Brakes, 1,150 are registered for priority supermarket deliveries, 369 for support with medicine deliveries and 2,766 have stated that they do not need any assistance at this time.

The team has worked with NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) who manage the texting service for the NHS, ensuring those people on the shielding list and entitled to food boxes have been registered and liaising with the food suppliers, Brakes, when necessary. This has proved to be a vital lifeline for many vulnerable people in Dundee.

The Scottish Government launched a national helpline (0800 111 4000) on 14<sup>th</sup> April encouraging those in Group 2 (disabled people, those receiving mental health support, over 70s, pregnant, receiving flu vaccine for health reasons, etc) to call where they have no other support. These calls are routed to customer services also.

Since 30 March 3,563 calls have been received via the Council's helplines and 5,765 outbound calls have been made to the shielded group. 1,022 requests have been made via our online service and 806 to our Communities teams.

The Helpline advisors use a process that captures details of anyone who is in need of support. Following contact through the helpline or online form, the data gathered is passed to a triage team who collate the information, alongside information gathered through outreach work, and prioritise requests, ensuring that category 1 shielding individuals details who need a food package are extracted and put in the right format for sending to the Scottish Government.

For individuals contacting our helpline and presenting with a food need, the Council has ensured that they are triaged through either our helpline or Communities staff, to ensure that all their financial needs are understood and supported appropriately; Money Advice, Energy Advice, Scottish Welfare Fund and Crisis Grants. Access to wellbeing supports is also tied into this process.

In addition to the COVID helpline the Council's contact centres continue to provide citizens with the wide range of supports and are dealing with the large volumes of enquiries each day. As lockdown was entered this team was quickly mobilised to working from home and continue to provide this invaluable service remotely.

### 5.3 Food Supports

There have been a range of activities co-ordinated by the Council across the City to ensure that the most vulnerable citizens are supported during the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

#### **Free School Meal Entitlement**

From 23 March the Council has been paying £11.25 per week per child for those children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) or for P1 – P3 pupils who are eligible for the school clothing grant. The families of 6,857 children & young people are receiving these weekly payments (6843 direct payments and 14 receiving vouchers). This has provided each eligible family with an additional £157.50 per child over the 14-week period from the 23 March until the end of term. This support continued over the summer period due to additional funding being received. This is the equivalent of 473,020 meals as at 24 July 2020.

#### **Community Support Centres**

Since the centres opened on 30 March, attendance has been increasing steadily to over 600 children attending daily this has reduced to between 350-400 over the summer holidays. Children attending the 8 centres have been receiving meals on site every day. A total of 42,207 meals have been provided at the centres up to 31 July 2020.

#### **Home Delivery Service**

To provide a food safety net for some of our most vulnerable children a small-scale meal delivery service was initiated. Demand increased substantially to 361 delivered daily during term time. A total of 15,340 meals were delivered up to 26 June 2020.

#### **Partnership with Third Sector**

From 30 March the Council has been working very successfully with Dundee Bairns, supporting community organisations to provide packed lunches to families with 740 lunches being distributed daily across the whole of the City during term-time. This work is supported by a strong network of community-based organisations, Communities staff and School and Family Development Workers. During the summer holidays this has continued with increased capacity if needed. A total of 51,237 meals have been provided as at 24 July 2020.

#### **Wider Community Provision**

Since the beginning of lockdown, the Council has been working closely with Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action (DVVA) and our third sector food providers to provide a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to families in financial need across the City. This saw the establishment of the Food Insecurity Network that works with the Council to provide emergency food across communities. The Council committed to procuring a total of £10k worth of food per week for them to distribute since mid-April. This has assisted these community food providers to help a total of 17,853 people during the month on May, an average of 4463 people every week. 24 local food organisations of varying sizes have been involved in this effort to date and have brought in an additional £25,359 of funding to supplement this effort. As at 24 July 2020, the Council support has provided the equivalent of 430,596 meals.

#### **Marginalised Groups**

The Council has also been directly providing weekly food packages for 84 people (Travellers/Gypsy, homeless, early release prisoners & those requiring substance use support.) This has helped to ease some of the pressure on the local emergency food providers as these were often repeat clients. As at 24 July 2020, this support has provided the equivalent of 21,966 meals.

## Shopping Service

In addition to all of the above a gap was identified where individuals had no support and could not access food, but could afford to buy it. DVVA has now established a service to meet this need.

The Council is also supplying appropriate dietary substitutes for 3 shielding individuals (2 x diabetic and 1 x vegan) who have been in contact to request this service and supporting the third sector providers by delivering food parcels to households where a potential safety risk has been identified.

### 5.4 Medicines & Prescriptions

An early process to be established by Dundee City Council was one to ensure that people were still able to receive essential medication during the COVID-19 emergency, significant work was undertaken to boost and adjust community pharmacy provision across Dundee.

Working with Community Pharmacy Scotland and local NHS pharmacy lead, a process was designed to allow people to contact the council if they needed medication delivered from their pharmacy because they were shielding or isolating and unable to attend to collect it. 369 citizens have registered for this service.

Using a network of volunteer drivers, these deliveries are made daily to people in need to allow them to safely remain in isolation while getting access to the medication they need.

### 5.5 Distribution Centre

In collaboration with a key local business, Michelin, the Council established at short notice a distribution centre which could receive food and PPE packages, break them down, repackage the food into food parcels for those in need and distribute PPE and food parcels to centres where they would be delivered to those who needed them.

Michelin provided the site and staff to support this operation and the distribution centre on behalf of the council and work was carried out to get this site and staff ready to take on this operation.



### 5.6 Transportation

To support COVID-19 projects around the city, the Corporate Fleet team have been working to ensure that transport is available, when needed, for the transportation of goods around the city and delivery of food and medical packages to vulnerable citizens in the communities.

### 5.7 Volunteers

Dundee City Council has close partnership arrangements with Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action (DVVA), with the Chief Executive being a member of the IMT. Working in close collaboration, DVVA identified and co-ordinated volunteers who could help with a range of different support services during the COVID-19 emergency.

Through national and local campaigns nearly 1,900 people volunteered. DVVA prioritised the processing and deployment of the 689 volunteers registered via their local process, with 335 currently deployed.

Offers of support by volunteers and requested by clients include; food distribution, shopping pickup and delivery, prescription delivery, pet walking and telephone support.

## 5.8 Business Community

Officers within City Development are managing the information on resources/offers from the business community via the COVID 19 Business Support Register. Additionally, any specific asks to businesses are also directed through them in the first instance. This has ensured information is captured, held and managed in one place and also provided oversight of the range of support that our local business community is able to contribute. The team also has knowledge of many local businesses and contacts they can follow up if specific needs are identified for which there may be no match currently. The initial offers were filtered and forwarded to relevant Workstream Leads, with PPE and food offers actioned as priorities.

## 5.9 Additional Deaths

Impact projections from the NHS indicated Tayside body storage options across the NHS and police mortuaries and in funeral directors' facilities would become overwhelmed if infection rates were not sufficiently controlled. Additional death plans were invoked and a council owned industrial unit with large chiller rooms was prepared. Significant work to replace chiller units, install a back-up power supply, build storage racks and provide suitable accommodation from which to administer the operation was completed by City Development, Construction Services and local contractors working within social distancing rules and covering extended hours. Council staff volunteers were forthcoming from the Construction service to move the deceased and from Corporate Services to provide administration officers and an external volunteer with mortuary experience was employed as a consultant to provide professional support and advice. The facility was declared ready three days ahead of schedule and ahead of the projected critical point.

A process to store and administer the deceased was developed by the Resilience team based on advice from the consultant and the NHS mortuary at Ninewells using equipment and resources sourced at pace from the Council finance team, equipment loans from the NHS and improvised facilities by City Development. Council Health and Safety officers reviewed the processes and provided detailed risk assessments and support.

The North of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership Police lead on additional deaths visited the facility before adding the capacity for 135 bodies to the national plan commenting "What the team has been able to achieve there is nothing short of remarkable". Subsequently the facility also became the issue point for PPE provided to funeral directors experiencing supply shortfalls.

Dignity and respect for the deceased was at the forefront of all the preparations despite the improvised nature of the facility. At the time of reporting the facility has closed and volunteers returned to normal duties however it remains ready to re-activate if required. Whilst it was open it received two bodies that were stored for short periods before being returned to the funeral directors. The asset remains available, should resurgence of the virus put pressure on body storage capacity across Tayside.



Council staff volunteers rehearsing the administration and handling process

#### 5.10 Provision of Testing Sites

The Resilience team was asked to identify and assess a suitable site to host mobile testing by military personnel at the Michelin Athletic Club. A program of testing continued on an alternate week basis with Arbroath High School. The Council Communications team promoted relevant dates to the public.



More recently the team was tasked with delivering arrangements for the Regional Test Station in Dundee which previously has been located at Perth College. The Station is now fully operational at the west car park at Dudhope Castle.

#### 5.11 Test, Trace, Isolate & Support (TTIS)

Test and Protect, Scotland's approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support' strategy, came into place from 28 May. It is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of COVID-19 in the community.

With its launch Dundee City Council will be helping to support its citizens with local support for those who need to safely isolate. The established helpline processes have been adapted to support any citizens who must isolate and have no family or friends who can support them. Supports in place include food deliveries or access to shopping services, medicines deliveries and if needed support with alternative accommodation. The Resilience team is leading the co-ordination of the pathways to ensure people can isolate safely, including potentially away from their home, if directed to do so by a clinician. As at 31 July 2020 there have been no requests for isolation accommodation.

#### 5.12 Digital Inclusion

Working with the Connecting Scotland initiative, the Council worked to allocate certain groups of individuals with digital devices to ensure they can access services, support and connect with friends and family. This programme aims to connect 9000 digitally excluded people so they can access services and support and connect with friends and family during this pandemic. Dundee City has been allocated 195 devices (85 chrome books and 110 I pads). Relevant LA staff/teams and third sector organisations will apply to the LA lead contact for devices.



### 5.13 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Following guidance from Scottish Government issued on 27 April 2020, Health and Social Care Chief Officers and National Services Scotland agreed the following changes to distribution of PPE in Dundee to providers of social care, unpaid carers, and personal assistants:

Providers of care should continue to source and order their own PPE stock through their normal procurement channels – where this fails, local “hubs” will provide PPE to the care providers in their areas with stock being delivered weekly in accordance with recorded issue of stock to carers.

After assessment the local hub was established at West Office Dundee, with the assistance of staff from the central Procurement team, HSCP colleagues and overseen by the Council's Resilience manager.

- PPE supplies have consistently been distributed (following the guidance issued) to the whole social care sector (internal and external) and the provision will extend to unpaid/family carers and paid personal assistants. It is anticipated demand and supply will continue until at least the end of 2020.
- All requests from carers requesting PPE are triaged to allow carers to be offered ongoing support and advice;

Section 6 onwards within this report considers some of the key responses by services:

## 6. CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

### 6.1 Children's Learning Supporting Engagement in Learning at Home

Following the Scottish Government's announcement of school closures on 20 March 2020, staff from across Dundee's early learning centres, nurseries and schools have endeavoured to maintain children and young people's engagement in learning through a range of digital and creative non-digital approaches, including pupil home-learning packs.

Central to the Service's support for staff in facilitating learning is a city-wide Microsoft Team which staff can join via Glow, the national online learning environment for all learners and teachers in Scotland. This team provides support for Dundee teachers offering access to training materials, guides and links to national Education Scotland resources. Such support includes a range of webinars to build practitioner skills in using tools to engage with learners through Glow. Schools are using Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom within Glow to engage with learners, and share learning activities and opportunities with children and young people.

In addition to the above, secondary schools have also created a Parent Portal to help parents support their children in using digital tools. This includes links to learning sites, such as SCHOLAR (on-line learning provision for National courses), which ensure young people can access learning resources and information at their appropriate level.

Throughout the pandemic the Service's Pedagogy Team have continued to support the facilitation of pupils' learning through the provision of resources and ideas to staff. Members of the pedagogy team are working with Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC) colleagues to provide information and support for the planning and delivery of effective models of learning in these changed circumstances. A Sway tool for HTs and practitioners is being developed with some examples of possible learning experiences, considerations for adapting learning and teaching strategies e.g. 'Assessment Is for Learning' (AiFL), using pupil/teacher/peer dialogue effectively, and other practical suggestions for planning learning in and out of school.



Senior managers and staff continue to monitor levels of pupil engagement with learning and have been proactive in providing remote support through telephone, text, letters to pupils/parents and social media interventions for children and young people experiencing difficulty in maintaining engagement in learning. The engagement of children and young people throughout the pandemic will continue to be monitored, both at school and Directorate level, to ensure that children, families and staff receive the right support where and when required. This will inform decision making, planning and actions taken at all levels across the education system.

An extensive survey of all schools and early years establishments carried out in May 2020 on Microsoft Forms by the Digital Learning Team has shown a positive picture of online learning provision and uptake across the city. Such work has been duly recognised by Gayle Gorman, Chief Inspector and Chief Executive of Education Scotland who has commended the work which Dundee City Council has been doing, including its impressive use of Glow to ensure that learning continues for children and young people.

Support for children with complex and significant additional support needs has continued since schools closed. Volunteer staff from Kingspark Special School have provided support for some keyworker families as well as to a few parents/carers who require daily respite given the complex needs of their children. School transport is still being provided to those who are coming in and require it. During the first week of the Easter school holidays 18 children with significant and complex needs in total were supported.

Early in the Service response to COVID-19, the Chief Education Officer was proactive in facilitating the bulk purchase of lap top computers to address the equity gaps that existed across schools for pupils unable to access e learning. Work in this regard, continues with the support of other Council services.

The Accessibility and Inclusion Service (AIS) has continued to keep in contact by telephone with all Anxiety in Motion (AIM) pupils to support their wellbeing and learning.

In spite of COVID-19 an additional INSET day intended to focus on Additional Support Needs (ASN) planned for Thursday 21 May was successfully reconfigured by the Education Support Officer Additional Support Needs to allow staff access to training virtually and at a time best suited to their own needs. All staff were expected to complete training by the end of June 2020.

On 2 April 2020 the Scottish Qualifications Authority announced the suspension of this year's SQA examinations and the introduction of an alternative certification system. Central to this year's bespoke arrangements were the submission by schools of grade/refined band estimates of pupil's achievements. All Dundee schools/SQA centres successfully submitted such estimates by the due dates of 29 May 2020 (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) and 12 June 2020 (National 4 and free-standing units).

In support of schools' robust internal quality assurance of pupil SQA grade estimates a process of central scrutiny was conducted by central officers. Such scrutiny included use of an intricate analytical toolkit devised by the Senior Information Analyst Officer. The toolkit enabled analysis of historical trends over a 5-year period of schools' grade estimates with pupils' actual attainment. Following such scrutiny, feedback was provided to school/Head Teachers and adjustments, where appropriate, made prior to submission.

## 6.2 Children's Social Work

At the start of lockdown, the service prioritised critical service areas to ensure support to the most vulnerable children and young people could continue to be delivered, with contingency plans in place to transfer staff from some teams to others should it become necessary. The Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH), Intake Teams, New Beginnings, Locality Teams, Children's Houses and Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) have been

particular priorities. Out of a total of 320 staff from all teams providing direct support to families, 228 (71%) are providing face to face support either from one of 5 hubs on a Rota basis or from home, with 74 providing regular phone contact from home. All staff have been provided with guidance and support on Public Health measures, have access to PPE and can be tested in the event of them being symptomatic.

The MASH has, in partnership with Police Scotland and NHS Tayside continued to screen Child Protection referrals and coordinate responses, without a need to re-deploy staff. This has meant that some families have received enhanced available support from universal services such as Health Visitors, the Community Support Centres or the Third Sector and that the Social Work Intake Teams have continued to complete more in-depth assessment of others, leading to targeted Social Work support for some. The Out of Hours Service has similarly continued to operate and provide services to both vulnerable adults and children in Angus and Dundee. All Initial Referral Discussions, Child Protection Case Conferences, Looked After Child Reviews and Fostering and Adoption Panels continue to be held, albeit remotely, including with parent/carer attendance. Feedback shows this has been working well and to inform longer-term developments, LAC Review invites now include information on a research project on their experiences of the pandemic.

In relation to families already receiving Social Work support, the service introduced new Minimum Practice Requirements which promote a frequency of face to face support to families in accordance with assessments on the risk of harm to children and young people. Out of a total of 1,200 vulnerable families receiving support, 163 (14%) are seen weekly; 317 (26%) are seen fortnightly; and 720 (60%) are seen monthly. Within this, close to 100% of children and young people on the Child Protection Register and Care Leavers are seen at least fortnightly. In some teams supporting particularly vulnerable families, such as New Beginnings which supports pregnant women and families with vulnerable babies, over 80% are seen at least fortnightly. This support is often augmented by regular, sometimes daily, telephone contact with families. Managers have carried out a weekly quality assurance exercise on the risk rating and level of support, with over 90% considered appropriate and guidance provided in relation to others

For families with children with a disability, before the outbreak 140 were receiving respite delivered or coordinated by the service, often in partnership with the Third Sector. All of these families have been contacted by the service, with a view to ensuring that some continued support can be provided within the context of the Public Health constraints. There have been no overnight breaks due to general amenity closures and social distancing but children can continue to attend Kingspark School and families have been provided with various forms of Self-Directed Support (SDS), including financial, practical and emotional support. For instance, funding to purchase play equipment, garden fencing and trailer bikes. A national relaxation of requirements enabling children with disabilities to go out more often also helped. Over 120 children and young people with disabilities are also supported by a specific Social Work Team, which provides face to face support to 40 (33%) families at least fortnightly and at least monthly support to the others, alongside regular telephone support.

At an early stage of the outbreak, the service carried out a risk assessment of all placement types for Looked After Children in kinship care, foster care and Children's Houses. Support has similarly been provided in accordance with needs, including through home visits and socially distanced conversations in gardens. As the annual Foster Carers Week coincided with the outbreak, normal celebrations were interrupted but there was social media and press activity to thank carers for their important role, made more challenging due to school closures. This has generated expressions of interest in the role. A total of 21 children and young people have been accommodated, compared with 22 over the same period last year and we are managing to continue with family finding processes. The Children's Houses have experienced some difficulties with teenagers not adhering to requirements and this has been managed creatively. Contact between parents/carers and non-resident children has also occurred creatively, largely through telephone calls and video link.

In partnership with other services, the service has supported exercises to identify and directly deliver or coordinate responses to potential hidden harm and risks which could increase as a result of the pandemic. This has included, for instance, work with education colleagues to support vulnerable children to attend Community Support Centres; with ISMS to support parents/carers with a substance misuse problem receiving treatment in the community and/or at home; with various partners on reviews of Non-Fatal Overdoses; reviews of known perpetrators of domestic abuse living with a partner; and reviews of known perpetrators of sexual abuse living with a partner and child. Levels of face to face contact have been provided accordingly and changed in response to any newly emerging information, with relevant staff adapting support. In order to encourage continued reporting where concerns are identified by the public, there has been an active and regular communications campaign relating to all vulnerable groups.

### 6.3 Community Support Centres

In line with Scottish Government guidelines, initial eligibility for CSC provision was dependent upon both parents being deemed as key workers or the child/young person being identified by Children and Families Service staff as vulnerable.

Pupils who attend these centres are allocated according to the school or nursery that they normally attend. A small number of private nurseries are also open providing a service in partnership with Dundee City Council

Community Support Centres have been staffed by volunteers including teachers, support staff, ELC staff, Accessibility & Inclusion staff, School and Family Development Workers, Instrumental Music staff and other Council Services including active schools' staff. Significantly, 16 childcare services in the private, voluntary and third sector including childminders have afforded support with the provision of emergency childcare for key workers. In addition, each CSC has a link Educational Psychologist and the rest of the team are available for telephone consultation, advice and support for parents, young people and staff on request via email or Twitter.

In addition, flexible support for children living in our residential children's houses continues with children/young people attending when required.

Following consultation with key stakeholders, plans to ensure continuity of provision within Community Support Centres over the summer holiday period were established with over 600 staff volunteering their services. Community Support Centres remained open from the commencement of the summer holidays (Mon 29/6/20) until Wednesday 4 August 2020. Closure from 4 August 2020 will allow for significant cleaning of schools to take place and for final preparations for schools/nurseries to be completed before staff return on Monday 10 August, for one day's INSET, and pupils return from Monday 17 August.

A revised application process for summer provision within CSC closed on Wednesday 10 June 2020. Whilst CSC will remain open throughout the summer holidays from 08:00 – 18:00 places are available for single parent/carer families where: the parent/carer is a Category 1 Key Worker, the parent/carer cannot work from home and the family has no other option for childcare. Families with two parent/carers will access CSC services where both parent/carers are Category 1 Key Workers, neither parent/carer can work from home and the family has no other option for childcare.

At an early point in the Service response to COVID 19, Head Teachers and Social Work colleagues jointly identified young people deemed as vulnerable and requiring high levels of support and safeguarding through a judicious combination of contact, outreach support and, where appropriate, attendance at a Community Support Centre. The engagement of all identified vulnerable young people continues to be jointly monitored and adjustments to interventions made on an ongoing basis.

Throughout the Children and Families Service response to COVID 19 the support of partner providers including the third sector has been invaluable in supporting the wellbeing of families and the learning of young people. Such support has included:

- the maintenance of contact by speech and language therapists with children and families
- the provision of 5 virtual engagement options to continue mentoring for looked after/care experienced children supported by Breakthrough Dundee
- support for young carers by telephone, video call and the provision of e cards for carers who have to travel to carry out their caring role, or have responsibilities for shopping or collecting medication. 50 young carer cards and over 100 adult cards have been issued to date.
- continued support for young people and families by Includem through the provision of telephone support, food deliveries, supply of tablets/phones, maintenance of the 24-hour helpline and supply of play equipment
- the provision by Mary's Meals of fantastic learning materials based on their founder Magnus MacFarlane including the book The Shed that fed a million children
- the establishment with the Chief Executive's Service of a distribution centre for period products within Grove Academy
- the provision of a virtual drop in by the Corner to support young people's emotional health and aspects of sexual health.

In addition to the above PPE visors for healthcare staff have been produced by school staff through the use of laser cutters within Grove Academy. Over 1300 have been produced and delivered.

#### 6.4 Schools Reopening

Following publication of 'Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis' and related Scottish Government announcements including the phased reopening of nurseries and schools from 11 August 2020, work has continued apace in connection with the Children and Families Service's recovery plans. The overarching purpose of the Service recovery plan is to outline the current and evolving position of how maintenance and recovery of the Education and Social Work functions within the Children and Families Service and ELC Partner Providers may be taken forward, with reference to the necessary partnership working in key areas such as vulnerable children and young people. The focus of work is on key inter-related areas associated with Protecting People, a phased return for nursery and school communities, and takes account of the national key areas identified by Scottish Government, ADES and Social Work Scotland, as well as local recovery plans for the Dundee Partnership.

Complementing the above, an Education Recovery Plan containing guiding principles and exemplars has been articulated to guide the strategic planning of school bespoke recovery plans for the planned and phased reopening of schools.

Draft school recovery plans were due for submission to the Chief Education Officer on 15 June 2020. All plans will be scrutinised for compliance with key guiding principles and matters of health and safety/risk assessment with feedback, thereafter, provided to Head Teachers.

Whilst the majority of children/young people will not return to school until 17 August 2020, school staff returned from 15 June to prepare for evolving learning approaches and help establish new learning environments. The commencement of targeted approaches to school induction, for small groups of priority pupils including new P1s and S1s, children with additional support needs and children/young people identified as hard to engage throughout lockdown to date commenced from 15 June 2020.

## 6.5 Community Justice Social Work

In CJSW, Friarfield House operates as one of the 5 hubs maintained by Children's and Justice Social Work across the city like the other hubs, staff have worked from the building on a rota basis to comply with Public Health measures. The support and monitoring of people subject to Community Payback Orders (CPOs) with a supervision requirement or on release from short or long term prison sentences has similarly been carried out in accordance with a risk rating exercise, with 134 (38%) out of 352 individuals seen on at least a fortnightly basis and the remainder seen at least monthly, alongside regular telephone support. When visiting, some food parcels, mobile phones and food vouchers have been delivered. The service has also been closely involved in partnership arrangements for the Early Release of some short-term prisoners. Nationally, Unpaid Work has been suspended but these Orders remain live and will resume in accordance with the recovery process.

In terms of distinct services providing support from within CJSW, all Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) meetings have been held with colleagues from Police Scotland, NHS Tayside and other relevant services, albeit remotely, with risk assessments carried out and risk management plans implemented and reviewed. The NHS Tayside substance misuse nurses based with the service have continued to offer telephone and office-based appointments to clients with a substance misuse problem and have been involved in home delivery of prescribed medication to people who were shielding. The accredited group programmes of Moving Forward Making Changes for sex offenders and Caledonian for domestic abuse offenders have been affected by social distancing requirements but are being delivered remotely on a 1:1 basis. There has been no reported sexual re-offending and enforcement action has been taken for non-compliance with CPO requirements or License conditions.

## 7. Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership

Services delegated to the Partnership form a critical part of the overall health and social care system, particularly the wide range of community-based health, social care and social work supports and services. Partnership services have not only supported efforts to rapidly increase the availability of beds in the acute sector to respond to COVID-19 positive patients requiring hospital admission, but have also been integral to providing responses to COVID-19 positive people in the community, both within their own homes and within residential settings such as care homes. As well as working to establish new COVID-19 pathways and responses, a range of services and supports have been the subject of rapid redesign to enable continued operation in the context of social distancing regulations and public health advice. A range of essential, non-Covid services have also continued to be delivered, including face-to-face contact on a risk assessed basis.

Changes to operational arrangements have been overseen and supported by a rapidly established incident control structure. The Partnership's Silver Command has led internal response planning and implementation, supported by a range of subject / issues specific Bronze Groups. This has been supplemented by arrangements for senior management cover across weekends. The internal Partnership structure is co-ordinated with those in place in NHS Tayside and Dundee City Council. There are also direct links to the Tayside Local Resilience Partnership through their Care for People Sub-Group which is chaired by the Head of Service for Health and Community Care. The Chief Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Head of Service for Health and Community Care are active participants in a number of national groups / meetings, both within Health and Social Care Scotland and with the Scottish Government.

### 7.1 Prioritisation of Services

The partnership developed prioritisation matrix's for key services such as Community Adult Mental Health Service; Psychiatry of Old Age (Community/Inpatient) Services; Substance Misuse Services, Community Health Services, Social Care and Residential Care services. This

ensured that those requiring assistance were offered assessment, an appropriate support and admission where required. All services continued to accept new referrals and shifts included:

- Suspension of the Direct Access Clinics for substance use with a move to direct referrals; support to people in their own homes and support at pharmacies. Service recipients who receive support to access Medically Assisted Treatment were clinically reviewed to minimise risks related to Covid restrictions and support offered at the pharmacists for those attending. Home delivery of naloxone established.
- Establishment of the Safe Zone Bus evening service to support those who would have previously attended local community support service and whose access to resources had diminished.
- Redesign of hospital inpatient pathways to support Covid and non Covid care regimes (Royal Victoria Hospital, Centre for Brain Injury, Roxburgh House and Kingsway care Centre).
- Redesign of the Integrated Discharge Hub to support a Tayside approach to discharge and build on the Discharge to Assess Model.
- Establishment of a Dundee Mental Health Discharge Hub for Adult Community Health services to support those discharged from hospital.
- Development of a Community Assessment Centre at Kingscross to assess patients presenting with Covid symptoms.
- Development of a Covid Palliative Care response Team including both nursing and social care response for those who have palliative care needs and who are cared for in the community. This is further developed to support non Covid end of life pathways by specialist palliative care services and single point of contact to palliative consultants.
- Implementation of digital modes to continue support and treatment
- Day services and respite services were suspended in line with the Scottish Government's advice and will recommence as directed by the route map to recovery. Staff were redirected to provide outreach support.
- A range of services establish remote support and help services including group support, individual contact and resources packs for carers.

## 7.2 Third, Independent and Commissioned Services

Engagement with the Third, Independent and Commissioned sectors were crucial to ensuring that core services continued and a dedicated providers communication email box was established on the 16 March 2022. This was used to provide regular briefings (local and national information), and responses to queries. Many services were required to either suspend service delivery or amend the model of service delivery. As lockdown commenced many families cancelled normal services. The Chief Finance Officer has maintained communication with partners and managed the allocation of resources from the Scottish Government to providers in line with the 'Financial Support for Commissioned Providers of Social Care Services and Supports Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance'. This funding has addressed any shortfall in earnings which could have destabilised the care market. This has included:

- Paying for planned social care services rather than actual service delivery.
- Maintaining contractual payments for suspended services.
- Paying for vacancies in care homes (80% of the cost of a bed)
- Support to reclaim cost of full payment for staff absence due to Covid-19.

## 7.3 Shielding

People identified as required to shield and who were known to the H&SCP were managed through the normal care and support systems while also supported to access food and medicine support where this was required. Where shielded persons were receipt of care packages, additional information was added to the electronic case record to ensure all staff took the necessary cautions and care packages adjusted to address any changes to the person's routines or normal support networks.

#### 7.4 **Care Homes Strategy**

Early discussions were held with care home managers and it was agreed that no new resident would be admitted to a care home without having undergone 3 clear Covid Tests. This was implemented at the commencement of Covid-19. The advice relating to the use of PPE developed over the early stages.

The partnership has a well-established care home support team which includes both clinical and social care support. This team maintained regular contact and provided specific support for services.

Tayside introduced keyworker testing from the onset of the outbreak and residential/nursing staff has access to this testing from the beginning. This was only for those staff with symptoms. At this time, we did not fully understand the asymptomatic presentation of the disease.

Despite best efforts, care homes were impacted by the infection and Public Health Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and DH&SCP have worked with the care homes to support the management and response.

NSS push stock for PPE was delivered through the PPE store for care services developed at the West District Hub.

Directors of Nursing were given clinical responsibility for Care Homes and an oversight group established. The group includes Chief Officer and CSWO representation from each partnership. At a local level, daily huddles were established to review information, monitor and support care homes. Weekly staff testing is now established and a programme of surveillance testing of residents is in place.

#### 7.5 **Social Work/Social Care/Staff Testing**

NHS Tayside introduced SARS-CoV-2 testing for health and social care (HSC) staff and their symptomatic household members (SHM) early in the pandemic with the first tests arriving in the local laboratory on 17 March 2020. Testing is later expanded to include other key workers including local authority, police, prison and fire and rescue staff. The testing programme has also accommodated investigation of asymptomatic staff in the context of a ward outbreak (week 7) and enhanced testing within care homes following guidance published by Health Protection Scotland (weeks 9 and 10).

### 8. **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

#### 8.1 **Repairs and Maintenance**

The Housing Service in partnership with Construction Services have delivered an Emergency and Urgent Repairs service since 19 March 2020. Safety both for our staff and residents have remained at the core of service delivery. Our teams engaging with tenants reporting these repairs have ensured they capture as much detailed information to allow for the tradesperson to undertake the repair as quickly and efficiently whilst ensuring residents understand the safety measures in place for when the tradesperson arrives on site including social distancing.

#### 8.2 **Gas Servicing**

Gas Servicing remains essential work and required by law to be carried out within tightly prescribed timescales. This service has continued to be delivered by our Housing and Construction teams throughout lockdown. The service continues to engage with all tenants prior to their gas service to clarify if anyone in the household is shielding and to discuss and alleviate any concerns our tenants may have before we undertake the service.



As with all repairs and trades services, our gas engineers continue to take all necessary precautions to protect tenants and their families by wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and adhering to social distancing measures in line with revised risk assessments.

We continue to achieve 100% of all gas services within their 12-month anniversary period, despite lockdown.

### 8.3 **Vulnerability Contacts/Housing Support**

The Tenancy and Estates Team have been contacting Council tenants who we have assessed may need some support, assistance or reassurance at this time. This also includes our tenants who are in the shielding category. The team have been asking how our tenants are coping and seeing whether they might need any support. That might be, for example, to get essential food or medicines, or perhaps even just for a reassuring phone call from time to time.

To date we have contacted or attempted to contact (telephone call and follow up letter sent) over 3600 of our tenants through this process. The team are keeping a note of all contacts made and any issues/concerns raised so that we can ensure we deal with these appropriately.

### 8.4 **Gypsy Travellers**

The Housing Service continues to deliver services to Gypsy Travellers in the area and our Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer is in daily contact with this community. Our Liaison Officer has coordinated support for individuals during this unprecedented time, including emergency food provision where required. We continue to liaise with our partners in Health and Education to enable individuals or families to engage with their services and are engaging with COSLA and Scottish Government regarding future policies and guidance due to be issued.

### 8.5 **Sheltered Housing**

Since 20 March 2020 our Sheltered Complexes across the City have remained closed in line with national guidance. However, we have continued to engage closely with our sheltered tenants and appreciate the impact that Covid-19 will have had on them in particular. Our Sheltered Wardens have continued to work safely from our complexes and are in contact with all their tenants on a regular basis to make sure they are okay and provide support as required. Even those sheltered tenants who are a bit more able and tend not to call on the Wardens are also being contacted. We have made a few small changes to how the laundry facility operates so that those tenants, who wish to, can continue to use the laundry safely and, very importantly, in compliance with all relevant Scottish Government/NHS guidance.

### 8.6 **Homelessness/Temporary Accommodation**

The Housing Options Team continue to deliver critical services and ensure we meet our statutory duties in line with Homelessness legislation. Although we have seen a decrease in homeless applications in comparison to the same period last year, we have noted an increase in demand for temporary accommodation. As a result of this increased pressure, our teams continue to establish new units of temporary accommodation across the City and work closely with Construction Services and partners in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector and Registered Social Landlords.

### 8.7 **Early Prisoner Release Programme**

Following Scottish Government's announcement in April 2020 regarding the Early Prisoner Release Programme commencing in May 2020, the Housing Service successfully established a virtual team including partners from Criminal Justice, Scottish Prison Service, Department of Work and Pensions, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector, DHSCP (ISMS and Health) and Police Scotland. The purpose of the team was to ensure that all the issues around prisoner release were fully considered.

During May there were 24 prisoners released to Dundee as part of the Early Release Programme, in addition to 16 planned releases.

While the virtual team was established in response to Covid-19 and its impact on service users, the joint working provides a good model for more normal times particularly since Dundee historically has a fairly high level of returning prisoners. This partnership working has allowed for a planned, person centered support service to be implemented for those engaging with the service.

#### 8.8 Voids/Allocations

Since lockdown we have stopped permanent allocations, initially in line with national guidance, allowing us to focus efforts on Homelessness presentations and the provision of temporary accommodation. However, assessment of current voids is ongoing to ensure Construction Services can safely resource trades/materials to undertake the required works to make properties lettable.

#### 8.9 Parks and Streetscene Operations

Following notification of the lockdown and the associated Government advice, the following activities were suspended from week commencing 23 March;

- Parks, and Open Spaces grounds maintenance
- Access to play areas
- Closures of public toilets
- Mechanical street sweeping services
- Routine maintenance activities

The environmental impact of the suspended services was evident within a few weeks; however, a limited service was maintained through the initial lockdown period to allow a number of essential services to be provided throughout. The Rapid Response Team responded to issues relating to litter and fly tipping and a core service was provided to ensure that street litter and dog waste bins were regularly serviced.

Burial operations were identified as an essential service from the onset of the crisis. Particular focus was placed on the importance of maintaining this service with an emphasis on ensuring that sufficient resources were able to cope with additional pressures being placed on this service. Arrangements were made for supplementary staffing to be organised through training of wider frontline staff in order to provide continuous service cover. In relation to burial ceremonies with Dundee's cemeteries, clear communications were developed in order that Government guidance was followed to allow funerals to take place with immediate family only present.

The phased return of the Grounds Maintenance Scheme came into place from Monday 1 June. A recovery programme was prepared which defined the operational areas to support a managed resumption of ground operations, according to community priorities being identified.

Phase 1 identified the following priorities from week commencing 1 June;

- House Garden maintenance service, grass cutting and hedge trimming;
- Sheltered housing grass cutting; Cemetery grass cutting;
- Maintenance of grass areas to maintain safe sight lines at road junctions and carriageways;
- Street weed management;
- Litter and bin management.

Phase 2 works were also identified to get under way following the first cycle of the initial phase being completed. This was undertaken ahead of schedule allowing the following works to restart from week commencing 15 June;

- Housing grass areas;
- Wider Grounds Maintenance
- Parks and open areas maintenance

#### 8.10 Allotments

There are various allotment sites and community gardens across Dundee and these facilities provide benefits for the mental and physical wellbeing of plot holders while supporting food growing initiatives. Careful consideration has been given to maintaining continuity of the operation of allotment sites across Dundee, taking account of government guidance. All allotment sites have remained open with a range of additional safeguards in place. Additional guidance was issued to plot holders and associations in early April, which included closing communal spaces while allowing plot holders to access their individual plots safely. To date, plot holders have abided by the guidance, particularly in terms of maintaining social distancing. Operational procedures are reviewed regularly.

#### 8.11 Playparks, Multi-Use Games Areas and Skateboard Parks

There are over 100 sites across Dundee. Due to the government guidance all the sites have been closed. Signage has been erected at each facility highlighting they have temporarily been closed. The public have largely abided by the guidance and sites have periodically been checked. Parks and green spaces remained open for exercise, in line with Government advice on physical distancing.

#### 8.12 Domestic Waste Service

High staff absence relating to COVID-19 was being experienced in the domestic Waste Service in the lead up to lockdown and this was further exacerbated following notification of the lockdown. At that point separate food waste collections were suspended, along with bulky (special waste) uplifts, to ensure that the residual waste and other recycling services could be maintained on an uninterrupted schedule.

The Council's Special Collections bulky uplift service resumed on Monday 1 June, with booking arrangements being available to the public from Wednesday 27 May.

#### 8.13 Household Waste Recycling Centres

Dundee's two Household Waste Recycling Centres at Baldovie and Riverside were closed on 24 March. The Centres re-opened to the public on a restricted basis from Monday 1 June, subject to national guidance from the Scottish Government. The recycling centres are initially running on restricted hours of Monday to Sunday, 9am to 4pm. Residents being asked to use the facilities for essential purposes only which include general waste, garden waste, wood, metals, rubble, fridges and freezers, and gas cylinders and bottles.

The operating hours are under weekly review, with the intention to extend opening hours and allowing a wider range of materials to be accepted.

#### 8.14 Regulatory Services

Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers were authorised as 'relevant persons' under the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 in order to oversee compliance with the regulations by businesses. This involved dealing with complaints, concerns and requests for advice on matters such as who could operate and social distancing

requirements for those business who were operating. A proportionate approach to enforcement was taken, in line with normal practice and Police Scotland's 4E approach: Engage; Explain; Encourage; Enforce. Liaison arrangements were put in place with Police colleagues. As at 31 July, officers had dealt with 401 enquires from businesses and members of the public.

As we move through the phases of easing of lockdown, officers monitor emerging guidance and keep up to date with amendments to the Regulations so that appropriate advice can be given to both businesses and consumers.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) responded to a request from colleagues at NHS Tayside Health Protection Team to support their contact tracing work in the first few weeks of the Test and Protect initiative. EHOs are well placed to do this, given their role, in liaison with HPT colleagues, in following up cases and investigating outbreaks of communicable diseases. Eight Officers completed the contact tracer training and were available to provide support if required.

Trading Standards Officers have continued to be vigilant for scams or unfair trading practices during the lockdown period.

## **9. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICES**

### **9.1 COVID Programme and Support for Workstreams**

The service took the lead on the COVID programme as outlined in section 5 and on the Communications response as detailed below.

In addition to this due to the skills and expertise in the service officers were deployed across a number of the COVID workstreams to support with project management, partnership connections, process design and data collection. The data demand was extensive due to the need for national and local data.

### **9.2 Communications – External**

A Coronavirus (COVID-19) page was added to the Council website in early March, and quickly grew into a section covering all aspects of the crisis response. This included a services affected page which was updated daily by the communications team to reflect the fast-moving impact of the pandemic on Council services, as well as areas focused on business advice, schools information, and support for vulnerable people and more.

Users on the corporate website in March/April increased by 17% compared with the previous month. The most viewed piece of content on the website since mid-March has been a daily Coronavirus briefing produced by the Communications team, which to date has been read well over 50,000 times. The main Coronavirus section, school's information, recycling centre updates and welfare services were also among the most-read content.

The Council communications and IT teams also led a Tayside-wide project to create a new online hub – Tayside Cares – to signpost people to services including support for those shielding. This was promoted by the three councils and other relevant agencies across their branding and social media channels.

A new Firmstep process was created to allow members of the public to request support online. This could be accessed from both Tayside Cares and the corporate website, and was accompanied by an extensive FAQ about the support available to vulnerable people.

Dundee City Council's social media platforms have seen significant increases in usage since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. On Facebook, followers have increased by 16%, with record levels of engagement during the first week of lockdown. Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn have also grown significantly in following and engagement over the period since mid-March.

Digital has been at the heart of the public communications effort during the lockdown period, sharing community news and public information, signposting to support and updating on changes to Council services. A suite of images, videos and animations was created and adapted to the changing restrictions.

There has also been a noticeable trend towards citizens using social media as a customer service channel, to request information about services or flag up issues in their community.

In addition to this, a key focus has been on ensuring that critical information gets to people who may not have access to digital services. Over 15,000 flyers signposting citizens to support services, from welfare advice to adult and child protection, have been distributed. This included drops in lunch bags, in partnership with Dundee Bairns, and packages distributed by foodbanks.

A series of radio adverts were created, covering Protecting People services, lifeline support for shielding and vulnerable people, welfare help and employability. And there has been regular engagement with broadcast and print media to help disseminate important information.

Public communications have been co-ordinated with a range of national and local agencies through existing resilience structures, to help ensure clarity and consistency of information given to the public.

This will continue through the recovery and renewal phases, including the creation of signage to encourage social distancing and good hygiene in public areas such as the city centre, as well as Council premises.

### 9.3 **Communications – Internal**

Use of the corporate intranet has increased significantly, and is the prime channel for council-wide staff information. Through One Dundee on the Move, which was launched last year, it is available to any member of staff with an internet-enabled device (Council-issued or personal). Page views on the Intranet were up 24% year on year in March, with the largest growth being seen in the “one the move” version which saw a seven-fold increase in usage compared with an average month.

The three most-read features on the intranet were all Covid-19 related, and there has been significant use of online learning resources.

Information distributed to employees has included regular updates from the chief executive, arrangements for staff and health and safety advice. The daily briefing is also shared with all staff via the intranet. A weekly summary of key updates is now also being issued through the all staff email system.

Employees report feeling informed by the Council. Results from the wellbeing Pulse surveys showed that only around 12% of respondents felt they needed more corporate information, although a higher number were seeking more information from their line manager.

As part of the recovery and renewal phase, an animation for employees returning to their workplace has been created, and consistent signage for Council buildings is being deployed.

## 10. **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### 10.1 **Finance Overview**

The financial position of the Council was already a significant challenge and providing a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, has brought an additional financial burden arising from both increased costs as well as a major loss of income. The financial impact of the recovery phase is likely to continue to result in increasing costs for the Council. There is potential for

social distancing measures to continue to impact on the level of income the Council receives, for example, from areas including car parking and out of school childcare. Income may also be affected by increasing numbers of individuals and businesses finding themselves in financial difficulty and facing difficulties in paying for goods and services, bringing the risk of increasing levels of bad debt. There is also likely to be a major impact on the Council's capital plan because of delays, and sites being brought back into operation but with potential restrictions that could impact on the way that construction sites operate going forward. This will require a full assessment as part of the next capital plan review.

## 10.2 Payments to Suppliers

In March payment terms for external suppliers were accelerated as follows:

Dundee Suppliers from 14 days to prompt payment

All other Suppliers from 30 days to 14 days

The performance result from this of payment within 14 days was as follows:

	March	April	May	June
Dundee Suppliers	96%	98%	98%	99%
All Suppliers	88%	94%	94%	96%

## 10.3 Finance Services

Accounting teams ensured unaudited Annual Report and Accounts were submitted to the Scrutiny Committee within the normal timescales despite the possibility of being able to ask for an extension.

Internal Audit provided support to services across the Council to advise on short term changes to procedures whilst maintaining appropriate internal controls.

Corporate Fraud worked closely with payment processing teams to review possible fraudulent grant claims"

The Council cash offices closed to the public on 27 March but skeleton staffing remained to provide essential cash support to HSCP clients and other operational requirements.

Alternative collection facilities were already in place for all Council service payments, and their active promotion by Customer Services has seen a minimal reduction in collection levels of Council Tax in comparison to other local authorities.

Wherever possible, Scottish Welfare Fund crisis payments were made directly to bank accounts. However, for citizens without access to bank accounts, e- shopping vouchers were provided. In addition to this, an immediate contingent arrangement was made with RBS (the Council's bankers) to enable cash to be paid from its Chief Office. Dundee City Council were the only Scottish council to put this facility in place and this short-term solution allowed time to introduce a digital solution which enables citizens to collect emergency funds from local retailers that operate Paypoint outlets. In the three months from introduction on 23 April, over 1,200 crisis payments have been delivered by this method. The retailers also benefit from the commission received for this service as well as increased footfall. This solution has now been rolled out to support other Council services requiring payment to citizens.

Banking processes and systems were immediately adapted to support the Council services in delivering accommodate the large volume government initiatives such as Business Support Grants, Self-Employed Hardship Grants, and Free School Meals. The agility of the new system

design and pro-active response from Banking staff has enabled the rapid service delivery with immediate payments on receipt of successful application.

With schools being closed, there were a significant number of parents who had children leaving schools but had paid for future meals, trip and activities. The Client Services Team have worked with schools and parents in successfully processing over 1,100 refunds direct to parents at a value of over £130,000.

#### 10.4 Tayside Pension Fund

All necessary contingent arrangements were in place for Tayside Pension Fund to operate fully from point of lockdown. A number of changes to processes and documentation had been made to enable members and employers to communicate electronically and all processes have been adapted to suit remote paperless working with a full audit trail. This has enabled the fund to successfully prioritise the payment of pension and death benefits as advised by the Pensions Regulator.

Lockdown had an immediate impact on the Fund's 46 employers, and in March, the Fund's officers pro-actively communicated with the employers to provide support and advice in relation to contributions. An application process is now in place for employers who require to make alternative payment arrangement, and the Fund continues to advise employers on their responsibilities during furlough and on options for these members who have suffered from their income being reduced.

The Fund has managed to meet statutory requirements in producing the Annual Report within normal timescales and is currently in the latter stages of the Annual Benefit Statement exercise which has to be completed by 31 August. A full internal audit has been conducted by PwC during the time of lockdown., This was only possible by utilising the Council's digital facilities. These facilities are now being used to deliver pensions training to staff working from home.

#### 10.5 Benefit Delivery

Since the commencement of lockdown the Benefit Delivery Team have all been deployed and supported to work from home. Those households who have been financially affected by the pandemic have been able to use the Council's online form to apply for Council Tax Reduction. The Council Tax Reduction caseload has increased 17,183 to 18,295 (as at 27 July), despite the increase in applications the team working from home have processed applications within 10 days, ensuring accurate bills are issued. Included with every bill is a flyer offering further support with payments to households impacted by Coronavirus.

In addition to the ensuring Council Tax Reduction applications are assessed timeously the team have also assisted in the change to make cash payments for Free School Meals, this involved contacting over 2000 families to ensure accurate bank details were held and assisted by Corporate Finance making weekly payments to over 6600 children.

As a result of the pandemic all Council Tax recovery was suspended, the Benefit Delivery Team adapted procedures, sent text messages and "soft reminder letters" offering help and support where payments were missed.

#### 10.6 Business Support Grants

On the 18 March the Scottish Government announced a grant funding scheme to help businesses in Scotland during coronavirus.

- A one off £10,000 small business support grant
- A one off £25,000 to rate payers of properties in the retail, hospitality or leisure sector



Local authorities were responsible for administering the grants and ensuring procedures were suitably robust, including due diligence to mitigate fraud. Since the introduction the scheme has continually evolved and currently has three phases.

The scheme was administered by the Corporate Debt team, all staff had been deployed to work from home and worked 7 days per week to ensure business within Dundee received the necessary grants. To date (28 July) 2,783 applications have been submitted, with 2,270 successful awards resulting in £25.5m having been paid out.

In addition to the Business Support Grants, changes were announced to Non Domestic Rates, the team have successfully completed annual billing and all 20/21 bills have been issued with all new reliefs applied where applicable.

## 10.7 IT

The Councils IT and Telephony provision had to flex and adapt as the majority of IT users moved to either a home working environment or from different premises. This was achieved with minimal investment or reconfiguration as the number of remote connecting staff rose by an average of 1300 per day. The Councils robust network and citrix based infrastructure accommodated this without impacting on security or performance with the only small outlay required being to provide additional 2 factor authentication tokens to the majority of new external users.

The Councils telephony also flexed to allow Contact Centre users to work from home connecting through the Councils telephony system. With up to 80 home-based contact centre workers connecting in.

A number of newly based home workers required equipment to work from and 200 devices were reallocated to home workers with procurement of new devices being severely impacted by the crisis with the increased nationwide demand for laptops etc.

Noticeable increases in potentially malevolent network traffic was seen at the Council firewall. The Councils security infrastructure preventing this heightened activity from impacting on the Councils day to day work.

Access to core Council infrastructure was maintained at over 99% in the face of the increased home and remote working requirements.

A significant number of new online forms were required to enable customers to interact digitally with the Council both for existing services and for newly added services supporting individuals and business most effected by the crisis. These included:

- Coronavirus Business Support Fund : 31083
- Hardship Fund for Self Employed: 289
- Food and Medication Pickup and Delivery 5084
- Pharmacy Collection Service: 210
- Key worker childcare: 2754
- New online forms for licensing including taxis

## 10.8 Welfare Support

Due to face to face support having been suspended across the majority of advice providers in Dundee since mid-March 2020, Council Advice Services advice workers have continued to provide a full range of essential welfare benefits and debt advice supports to citizens using Council laptops and working remotely from home throughout the pandemic. For the duration of this current period of emergency planning, Council Advice Services have concentrated their time on providing the following supports by telephone in the main:

- Providing frontline support and information on benefits that can be applied for and solutions in terms of indebtedness and options in relation to employment and food insecurity
- Providing guidance/assistance and support in relation to making online applications, e.g. for Universal Credit and Scottish Welfare Fund;
- Troubleshooting when expected benefit payments are delayed, decisions on benefits are delayed or issues such as deductions from benefits require challenges via mandatory reconsiderations or appeal. here are issues with deductions from benefits;
- Advocating on customers' behalf with other services such as Housing, DWP, Scottish Welfare Fund or Social Security Scotland where there is a requirement to support individuals with benefits/ payments;
- Assisting by way of support for shielded individuals and those in financial difficulty through the work triaging customers coming through the National and Local Covid Helplines. This included assisting to arrange food and medicine deliveries and mental health supports as well as more traditional benefit and debt related support.
- Assisting customers to obtain fuel top ups, access fuel schemes offering financial assistance, switch energy providers to make significant savings in relation to ongoing costs and reduce debt by obtaining write offs and in doing so reduce levels of fuel poverty.
- Continue to process applications and assessments in relation to non-residential and residential charging regimes, corporate appointeeship. Continue to assess and income maximise customers' finances in such cases.

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) has seen a large increase in crisis grant applications. In April 2020 1,131 crisis grants and 136 community care grants were processed. In March 2020, 901 crisis grants, and 211 community care grants were processed. The average crisis grant application volume per week is normally 149, however in the five weeks from 23 March – 26 April 2020 weeks this increased to an average of 275 per week.

The increased workload on crisis grants did not however affect processing times for grant decisions. Decisions on crisis grants continued to be made within the required one working day time period. Community care grant decision making was adversely affected however, mainly because of the inability of applicants to actually move into new accommodation during the pandemic period due to holds on new tenancies being allowed to be taken up by social landlords. Where decisions could be made on Community Care Grants they were still made within the 15 days period required.

Processing times were maintained by drafting in redeployed staff and training them on assisting with applications and using existing staff within Council Advice Services to help cope with the demands of customer applications and queried. In this way trained decision-makers were allowed to concentrate fully on the decision-making process and turning over the decisions within the requisite times despite the increase in volumes.

With many more households struggling financially during this time, Dundee City's Council Advice Services ensured applicants were also offered access to benefits, debt and fuel poverty advice whilst accessing the Scottish Welfare Fund. Council Advice Services also produced new leaflets and information for their customers which is available on its website at

<https://www.dundee.gov.uk/service-area/corporate-services/customer-services-and-it/council-advice-services>

Welfare Rights and Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project also launched Facebook pages to assist Dundee citizens to access the latest advice updates during this period.

## 10.9 Our People and Workforce Matters Mobilisation

Consideration on how we engaged with and protected our workforce, started before the actual period of lockdown on 16 March 2020. Working with Services, key workers and service areas were identified and a large-scale mobilisation of our workforce took place, allowing over 2000 additional employees home access to continue to provide services from home.

A Deployment Team was quickly established within the Learning and Organisation Service and a Skills Profile developed allowing all employees not actively engaged in providing COVID-19 essential services, to provide details of their skills, qualifications and work experience. This allowed, the Team to fill gaps in front line service, particularly in the Health and Social Care Partnership. Over the course of this pandemic response, over 250 employees from Dundee City Council and Leisure and Culture Dundee, have been deployed into new roles. This deployment initiative also involved developing induction, robust risk assessments and training and development materials and courses which were COVID-19 safe.

### **Communication, Engagement, Recognition and Wellbeing**

Working with the Communications Team, a separate page on One Dundee was developed with COVID-19 related information specifically for our workforce. Using the tools available, the absence system was developed with COVID-19 related categories added which allowed us to have a full picture of our workforce status e.g. COVID-19 positive or Self Isolating with symptoms or without symptoms or Shielded or Chronic Medical Condition and whether they were working from home or not. Latterly, the category of Furlough was added.

To recognise the heightened focus on Health and Safety, specific information on revised risk assessments was also added to One Dundee to allow employees and managers easy access to vital documentation. Specifically, for those working at home, encouragement to undertake a full Display Screen Equipment assessment was provided, to help protect the workforce during this early emergency period and for those on the front line, clear risk assessments for PPE were developed.

A Wellbeing Service was launched, with information to help employees with a specific focus on how to manage anxiety and other mental health issues being experienced. Our first pulse survey was introduced with weekly feedback on 'you said – we did'.

HR continued to provide Manager and Employee advice but remotely and policy and practices were regularly reviewed e.g. Information on annual leave, flexi time, flexible working etc. was issued. The use of One Dundee as our main engagement tool was increased.

### **Engagement with the Trade Unions**

Early into lockdown, the Head of Human Resources and Business Support arranged a daily call with the trade unions to provide a 2-way communications channel. This has proven to be successful, with issues raised and dealt with quickly, risk assessment information agreed resulting in the calls reducing to twice weekly and issues being raised and dealt with locally at Service level.

## 10.10 City Registrars

Immediately following Lockdown, the City Registrars moved to telephone registering of deaths. During April and May, the height of the pandemic, all deaths were registered on time to ensure funerals took place timeously. Working sympathetically with the public and funeral directors, at times seven days a week, safe funeral arrangements were made throughout Dundee.

During Lockdown, no weddings took place, and all birth registrations ceased. The City Registrars were able to liaise with Ninewells Hospital and retained the details of over 800 babies

not registered during Lockdown. Since the easing of Lockdown, this backlog has been tackled and significantly reduced. During the first week of birth registrations, the City Registrars, through extended working hours, were able to register 198 young babies with just 5 registration staff. As it is vital that birth registration information is correct, it is not possible to remotely register a birth and all of these registrations have taken place with the attendance of the parent or parents, but in a way that ensured the health and safety of both parents and staff.

Throughout the COVID period, three members of the Legal Services staff have been drafted in to help provide valuable support and assistance to the registration team.

## **11. CITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **11.1 Support for Volunteering and Community Organisations**

Many voluntary and community groups are continuing to operate during this difficult time, some very much on the front line and others delivering their services in a different, socially distanced way. The Council's Community Investment Team has continued to respond to enquiries for funding for specific organisations and to produce the monthly funding bulletin, which is distributed to a wide range of staff supporting community groups, as well as to the groups themselves. In addition, a weekly bulletin has been issued providing information on funding opportunities to support both additional activities taking place in response to COVID -19 and to help provide resilience and meet ongoing costs. This work has been supplemented by additional mailshots when new funding programmes come on stream.

### **11.2 Economy**

The Scottish Government announced a package of support for small businesses on 18th March including a Business Support Fund to access grants, to be administered by local authorities. This formed part of a package of measures to support businesses, including access to Business Support Fund grants, loan financing through Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans (CBILS), third sector reliefs and supplier reliefs, and for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, 100% rates relief for the financial year 2020/2 and a general 1.6% rates relief for all non-domestic properties.

As of the last reporting period to Scottish Government on 16 June 2020, 2,476 Dundee businesses have applied to the Business Support Fund, with 2,073 applications approved, representing a total awards value of some £23.6 million.

On the 30th of April, Scottish Government also launched the Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund administered by local authorities with one off payments of £2,000. As of 22 June, 257 applications had been received with 161 applications meeting the criteria and being approved. A further fund to help Bed and Breakfast Businesses was launched on 15 June with limited uptake in Dundee in the first week of operation.

Dundee City Council has developed detailed COVID-19 Advice for Business webpages offering support to businesses looking for financial and other guidance. These pages are updated on a daily basis with updated information on available support schemes and officers have fielded a large number of calls seeking advice and sign-posting to available sources of support.

The Business Gateway Tayside Service, for which Dundee City Council is lead authority, has been at the forefront of providing support to affected businesses. The pandemic had an immediate impact on enquiry levels. Within the first few weeks of lockdown they dealt with 558 enquiries (198 in Dundee). Support has quickly been adapted with more virtual calls and online workshops.

The services available through Business Gateway have also been adapted in line with demand. In addition to providing advice to new start businesses and those seeking to grow and expand,

the service offering has been complemented with the development of a Survive and Thrive programme offering business resilience support to companies affected by the impact of COVID-19. During April and May 72 businesses (35 in Dundee) from across the region have signed up for this programme along with increasing numbers attending online workshops, webinars and events.

In recognition of the rise in interest in starting your own business in times of redundancy, Business Gateway has also developed a series of workshops around the theme of 'Redundancy to Recovery', which commence on 26 June.

### 11.3 **Tourism and Culture**

This sector has been profoundly impacted by the lockdown with travel restrictions, attractions forced to close and hotels and restaurants unable to operate. Work has progressed on a tourism recovery strategy through the new Dundee Partnership Tourism Leadership Group and this group is feeding into relevant strategies and work streams. The Council hospitality taskforce is leading on developing and publishing new guidance for licensing and outdoor eating and drinking is being led by this team. Meanwhile, under the brand Dundee Eats, the Council has been publishing details of Dundee eateries offering takeaway services.

The lockdown has had an immediate impact on the planned programme of both leisure and business events. Considerable work has been undertaken to cancel and rearrange events wherever possible.

### 11.4 **City Centre and Spaces For People**

City Centre retailing and footfall has also been severely impacted. A successful bid to Scottish Government for COVID 19 resilience funding has delivered an additional £20k to support City Centre recovery planning. A City Centre Stakeholder group has been convened and consulted on plans for investment of these funds. Areas being considered include signage, pedestrian flow, queue management, public realm, cleaning, safety, marketing and promotion, digital resources and an animation programme to encourage footfall back into the City Centre in a managed way.

Spaces for People is a temporary infrastructure programme, managed by Sustrans Scotland, offering funding and support to make it safer for people who choose to walk, cycle or wheel for permitted journeys and exercise, while physical distancing is in place during Covid-19 and as we transition out of lockdown. Two successful bids amounting to £2.45M for Dundee were made and awarded for a range of projects such as: physical distancing in District Centres, pop-up cycle lanes on commuter routes, upgrading the Green Circular and other cycling and walking infrastructure.

### 11.5 **Recovery Planning**

In addition to supporting the services and the City's COVID response, City Development, working in conjunction with Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce have taken the lead on behalf of the council in developing a multi-agency response to recovery through the Dundee Partnership's Fair Work and Enterprise Board with key partners all actively engaged in this process. Report 185-2020 sets out the impact that COVID has had and is anticipated to have, on our communities and economy and outlines the initial COVID Recovery Plan.

The Recovery Plan also sets out key early stage activities that will restart to support the City's economy particularly in relation to the council's construction sites and the plans for MSIP and the Waterfront.

**12. LOOK FORWARD**

Whilst the initial Pandemic peak has passed and cases of new infections remain low in Dundee and Scotland, there is wide agreement that COVID-19 remains in circulation and local outbreaks and/or future resurgence of the virus remain likely.

The national Test and Protect policy to keep COVID-19 suppressed will require people who have tested positive for COVID-19 to self-isolate along with their recent close contacts. Compliance with this strategy will lead to re-emergence of vulnerabilities in our Citizen's wellbeing.

To meet future anticipated demand a scaled back version of the response capabilities outlined in this report will be maintained by the Council.

A sitting COVID-19 response group of senior managers has been established. It will monitor local demand for support for people and report to a regular Incident Management Team, chaired by the Chief Executive.

As vulnerabilities or challenges around possible future localised outbreaks occur, the team will draw upon lessons learned from the Council's response to the pandemic so far to form their recommendations around appropriate responses.

**13. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

**14. CONSULTATIONS**

The Council Management and Incident Management Teams were consulted in the preparation of this report.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

DAVID MARTIN  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE: 13 AUGUST 2020