

# Wokingham Recovery Strategy

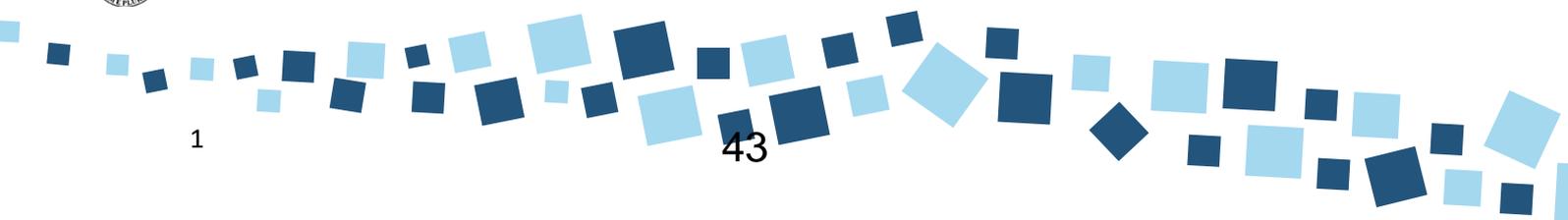
2021-2026

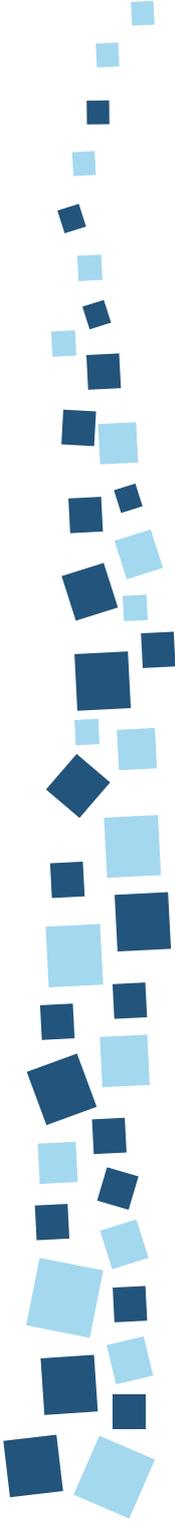


**A great place to live, learn, work & grow, and a great place to do business**



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**





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## Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on our borough, causing a loss of life and livelihood as well as wider social, emotional, financial and health impacts for our residents. This has led to a need for the Council to drive a strong and ambitious recovery for our borough, building on existing work carried out leading up to and during the pandemic in order to fulfil our vision for Wokingham to be '*A great place to live, learn, work & grow and a great place to do business.* We will do this through our recovery strategy which sets out our approach through nine pillars of recovery. This strategy will remain agile in its nature and will be reviewed annually to ensure we are responsive to emerging challenges and changes to the landscape we work in.

## Background & Context

Wokingham is a largely healthy and prosperous borough; The Office of National Statistics (ONS) Health Index recently named Wokingham as the healthiest place to live in England and we are also the most prosperous Local Authority area in the country. However, there are small but significant pockets of deprivation which have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

Across the course of the pandemic, our borough and residents have been challenged in unimaginable ways. Like the rest of the world, we have paid a heavy price; as of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021, 8,186 COVID-19 cases have been detected in Wokingham and sadly we estimate that around 300 residents have tragically lost their lives since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

COVID-19 has been much more than just a health crisis. It has come at a high cost to our residents, economy and communities resulting in an unprecedented strain on our services. Many of our residents are experiencing wider health, social and financial challenges as a result of lockdown restrictions and ongoing uncertainties to our way of life.

As we approach a national relaxation in restriction measures, outlined by the Government's Roadmap, it is imperative that we recognise the impacts on all areas of society, learnings from the last year and build on our successes during the response to form the foundations of a strong recovery.

At Wokingham Borough Council we have adopted a three-phase approach to recovery. This involves the immediate response, ongoing recovery and longer-term re-orientation.

This strategy highlights the impact of the virus on our borough, the work we carried out during the response and sets out how we will address recovery and re-orientation. This strategy is designed to remain agile and flexible during its course to ensure that we remain responsive to changes and continue to use the most recent data to inform our direction and decisions relating to recovery.



### Reorientation

**Ambitious, proactive** and **broad-reaching** in scope. Anticipating what the future will look like, implementing preventative measures and **shock-proofing** our services

### Recovery

Making services **robust** and **well-adapted** as we move out of lockdown. Aims to create **stability** while bolstering support to residents and the local economy so they can return to normal

### Response

Taking action that has an **immediate impact** and addresses issues as they arise to create **innovative** services at the point of use

## The Impact of COVID-19 & Our Response

Wokingham residents have shown incredible strength over the last year and we feel proud to see communities demonstrating high levels of social capital through volunteering and supporting one another.

At the start of the pandemic the Council quickly mobilised resources and utilised the Council's existing emergency planning processes to enact a coordinated, managed, and timely response to the crisis. In the early stages of the pandemic the Council redeployed 107 staff to support those services and activities of greatest need to the community. The response was carried out in conjunction with key partners including health, police, communities, the voluntary sector and the Town and Parish Councils.

The impacts of the pandemic have been felt widely across sectors and services, from health, local businesses, children & young people, care homes, communities and others. The pandemic has also exposed and exacerbated longstanding inequalities and brought into sharp focus the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society; in particular minority ethnic groups and those on lower incomes have been evidenced nationally.

This section will discuss some of the significant impacts of the pandemic and our response to support the borough which has laid the foundations for recovery and re-orientation. The information from this section has been drawn from the January 2021 report to Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) outlining the Council's Response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that some of the local and national data provided in the section below may have changed since the publication of the O&S report. The themes discussed below are just some of the areas impacted by COVID-19 and the Council's response to this; it is important to note that every sector, service and area of life has been impacted by the virus in some way.

### **Mental Health**

Good mental health is an asset which support positive outcomes for individuals and society. Nationally, self-reported mental health and wellbeing worsened during the pandemic and while Wokingham is the healthiest place to live in England, residents in our borough also experienced a rise in poor mental health. Locally, 15% of the Borough's residents had a formal diagnosis of depression with more than 40% of GP consultations relating in some way to mental health issues. In response, the Council launched a pilot mental health programme in partnership with Earley Plus PCN and Citizens Advice, encouraging residents to contact the One Front Door if they were concerned about deteriorating mental health or wellbeing. The Council also set up a mental health recovery college which helped residents to understand mental health issues and manage mental health in a positive way and also worked in partnership with the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to deliver community mental health services. Mental health challenges will continue into the recovery phase as residents deal with the lasting effects of bereavement, social isolation and poor mental health resulting from financial and economic pressures.

### **Adult Social Care (ASC)**

A key aim of the Borough's community response had been to reach out to isolated and vulnerable residents. The Council's Adult Social Care team, along with redeployed staff, carried out 7,000 initial welfare checks to clinically extremely vulnerable residents during the

first wave, in addition there were 2400 calls to adults known to social care and over 500 calls to carers. ASC also worked in partnership with the One Front Door which generated hundreds of referrals to the Link Visiting Scheme and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) who supported people throughout the pandemic.

To facilitate hospital discharge and avoid hospital admissions, we awarded block contracts to providers who provided a 7-day service to guarantee patients were safely and timely discharged.

We also implemented the 'Moving with Confidence' programme which is run by the Sports & Leisure Team in conjunction with Adult Social Care Team at Wokingham Borough Council and focuses on those residents that have been identified as being at risk of falls, loss of muscle strength and declining confidence. After a successful pilot, funding has been agreed to continue the Movement in Confidence offer to decrease falls & prevent hospital admissions.

To further support residents with physical activity, we jointly delivered The Mobility Project which supported more than 130 residents in their homes with exercise sessions as Day Centres were closed due to lockdown restrictions.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on those receiving and providing Adult Social Care and we will need to continue to support Adult Social Care and apply lessons learnt from the response to shape our services, the care market and address emerging challenges from the impacts of the pandemic.

## **Public Health**

Public Health in Wokingham have been playing a leading role in supporting the local authority response to the pandemic by working alongside the leadership team to shape the extensive work undertaken across the Council.

The impacts of COVID-19, both as a disease and lockdown measures to counter it, on health and wellbeing are likely to be great and varied. Missed opportunities for early diagnosis of diseases, waiting times for operations and other treatments have increased and it is likely we will see similar patterns for health service provisions, impacting a diverse number of areas such as vaccination coverage, sexual health service, contraception and pregnancy services, mental health services and cancer services.

Public Health will continue to use their expertise to carry out further data collection and analysis to understand the impacts of COVID-19 and the implications of this for Recovery.

## **Care Homes**

From the start of the pandemic, care homes and their residents faced a number of critical issues including the vulnerability of residents, access to PPE and risk of transmission due to the living environment as well as discharges from hospital. In addition, residents experienced the ongoing challenges of limited in person access to loved ones and family members due to restrictions.

To assist our Care Homes, we set up a Taskforce to work with homes to offer wraparound support to minimise infections and provide PPE. The Taskforce is a joint health and social care function and works in partnership with care homes. The work of the Taskforce is an example of best practice and has undoubtedly protected residents, saved many lives and strengthened our relationships with our care homes which we will continue to build on.

## **Children & Young People**

The impact on the pandemic has been felt by children & young people who have missed out on crucial time in school and the ability to interact with their friends and loved ones as a result of lockdown restrictions. We know that the true extent of how this pandemic has impacted on childhood development and mental health will not be understood for years to come. In the short term however, it was reported that there had been a period of suppressed demand for services during the first lockdown (March-June 2020). Demand began to increase again once lockdown restrictions ended. In September 2020, for example, the Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service's (CAMHS) rapid response team received 70% more referrals compared to September 2019. In response to the impact on children and young people's mental health we jointly commissioned Kooth; an on-line youth counselling service which, nationally, supported over 130,000 children and young people in 2019/20. As we look to recovery and the future it is imperative that we support the borough's children to fulfil their ambitions by supporting education, development and employment opportunities.

## **Businesses**

The COVID-19 impact on jobs and the local economy has been immense. Nationally, lockdown meant significant impacts on business turnover and on the workforce. In the 2-week period ending 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 employers were reporting that just over a fifth of the UK workforce was on furlough and just under a quarter of enterprises across all industries had experienced a decrease in turnover of more than 50%. Locally, we saw a 223% increase in claims for out of work benefits between February and August 2020 and a disproportionate impact is being felt on workers from the ethnic minority community, women, young workers, disabled workers and the low paid. In addition, there are 120 young people at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET), which was a significant increase on previous years. We have worked with key partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on our response to support jobs and the local economy. Some of our work includes providing financial support in the form of business and discretionary grants, additional advice and guidance through a Business Growth Hub and Business Taskforce and regular communications to businesses in the borough. As part of our continued work to invest in our borough we have, and will continue to, regenerate our town centres and look forward to growing our arts & culture offering through the arts & culture strategy as part of the borough's recovery.

## **Communities**

COVID-19 had a significant impact on our communities; we saw a significant increase in demand for support from the Citizens Advice Bureau and a 220% increase in people accessing the Wokingham Foodbank during March - August 2020, compared to 2019.

In recognition of financial hardship being experienced by our residents we implemented flexible repayment plans for Council Tax, supported residents through the Community Engagement Team and supported Council tenants via the Tenancy Sustainment Team. We have recently approved a Housing Strategy which will work to ensure housing options for our most vulnerable residents. The Council is also developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy to ensure no one in the borough is left behind.

The pandemic has brought about a major shift in Wokingham's approach to rough sleeping. Whilst the Council was already working hard to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers, in

March 2020 the government instructed all local authorities to accommodate all persons from the street immediately; this became known as the 'Everyone In' policy. Wokingham's homelessness team sprang into action, sourcing new temporary accommodation facilities, ensuring a total of 84 homeless people were accommodated to protect them and others from the virus. At the time of writing, Wokingham has managed to ensure that no persons are sleeping rough in the borough.

During our response, the Council also worked with a wide range of partners including Citizens Advice, the Link Visiting Scheme, Age UK, Involve, First Days, Wokingham Volunteer Centre, Wokingham Foodbank, Churches Together, Just Around the Corner, Norreys Church food hub, Home Start, local community groups and the Borough's Town and Parish Councils. Our relationship with the voluntary sector has strengthened at great pace during the pandemic and we will continue to nurture and build on this as we move in recovery and beyond.

## Recovery & Re-Orientation

Our successes and learnings during the response to COVID-19 have set the blueprint for an ambitious and transformational recovery and re-orientation. We will continue to build on what went well during the response and drive accelerated action to maximise the positive impacts to arise from the pandemic, for example, positive environmental impacts and sentiments towards climate change, positive health behaviours, increased community resilience and people's willing to help one another. We will also recognise areas of importance for our residents and work in partnership to address these through our recovery activity and corporate priorities.

Our recovery planning will also take into account that there are many unknowns regarding the future and the worst of the impact may be yet to come. We recognise that some of the impacts on our borough have been significantly mitigated through central government funding and policies for example through furlough, business grants and eviction legislation. We will need to continue to horizon scan into the future to identify potential threats to our recovery and plan mitigating actions to address these.

We will also use national guidance and policies to inform our direction into recovery and beyond, for example the Government's Four Step Roadmap to ease restrictions and provide a route back to a more normal way of life.



## Purpose of the Recovery Strategy

Recovery is not simply returning to our baseline before COVID-19 or 'business as usual', it is about navigating the uncertainties, sustaining positive changes from the response and working alongside partners and communities to tackle the challenges laid bare by the pandemic.

In developing this strategy, we have used best practice and research from across the U.K to inform our approach. In addition, we have considered data, insights and evidence including the voice of our residents, partners and staff. This strategy is aligned to our Corporate Plan and Community Vision and provides an opportunity to strengthen our corporate vision to make Wokingham *'A great place to live, learn, work & grow and a great place to do business'*. This recovery strategy does not seek to replace the Corporate Plan; instead it will ensure we are fully cognitive of the impacts of COVID-19 and what needs to be attended to in order to enhance, and where possible, accelerate its delivery.

Within the strategy we have set out our vision and nine pillars of recovery which will be addressed in order to maximise opportunities and build on lessons from the crisis to support our recovery and re-orientation.

Realism is central to this strategy. As a Council we operate within resources constraints which have been stretched due to the COVID-19 response. We need to deliver on a recovery plan within our budgets which is good value for money and within our means. We will be realistic and transparent about what we can achieve.

In order to effectively implement this strategy an accompanying action plan is being developed. The action plan seeks to capture areas of recovery activity across the organisation and will support to track and monitor progress against each of the nine high-level pillars, as well as identify and address any gaps.

Due to the unprecedented uncertainty of the current climate both the strategy and action plan will remain live and iterative to ensure that as an organisation we flex to emerging challenges and opportunities. We will regularly review and refresh this strategy in light of emerging data and intelligence.

# Our Vision for Recovery

We aim to ensure the best and most holistic deal for recovery for our residents and in developing this vision have been ambitious in the range of areas we wish to positively impact for our borough.

We have developed this vision in line with key principles from our Community Vision and Corporate Delivery Plan. We have also incorporated insights gathered from residents, partners and staff regarding the key impacts and opportunities from COVID-19.



## Key Strategies & Groups

The model for recovery is based on the Hub and Spoke model, with the corporate recovery group acting as a central hub with multiple spokes relating to each pillar of recovery. These spokes are in the form of key groups and partnerships as well as key strategies and policies which are being reviewed and reshaped through the lens of COVID-19.



We will build on existing networks and partnerships as well as strengthening those arrangements that have been set up during the response phase in order to jointly drive recovery and re-orientation of our borough. At a county level, we will continue work with the Berkshire Strategic Group to escalate recovery activity where appropriate and find opportunities for collaboration across the county.

The Corporate Recovery Group reports into the Council's Gold Group and is formed of 4 subgroups: Health & Wellbeing, Communities, Business & Economy and Our People and Accommodation. The nine pillars of recovery will feed into the central hub of the Corporate Recovery Group. In addition, we will work in partnership across all spokes identified to deliver on these pillars.

See Appendix A for a full view of key strategies, policies, documentation and key groups associated with the delivery of recovery against each pillar.



## Pillars of Recovery

Our recovery is underpinned by nine recovery pillars which we will work towards in order to drive our recovery and re-orientation ambitions.

These pillars of activity have been identified using data & insights gathered from our residents, partners and staff as well as research into best practice at a national level to understand priorities which will support us to achieve a successful and holistic recovery for our borough. Each pillar has actions to support its delivery however, it is important to note that these pillars do not operate in isolation, there are areas of overlap and interdependencies which have been considered when developing the actions and will remain a focus in further development of this strategy and any associated action plans.

We will view each of our nine pillars through the lens of three key principles: data, equality and partnerships, as well as and an overarching consideration for COVID-19. Although a significant proportion of adults have been vaccinated there are gaps in our vaccinated population and the threat of emerging variants pose the risk that we will be living with COVID-19 for many years to come; our approach to containing the virus is therefore an integral part of our planning. An additional consideration across each pillar is that we have learnt a great deal over the last year and wherever possible we will strive to use our learnings in our recovery approach.

The Contain Outbreak Management Framework (COMF) sets out how local and regional partners should continue to work with each other, in their communities, to prevent, manage and contain outbreaks of COVID-19. Successful prevention and management of local outbreaks will lead to a return to a more normal way of life; therefore, the successful application of the Contain Outbreak Management Framework in Wokingham will ensure a successful recovery. This is a temporary pillar, and subject to review, the activity in this pillar will be absorbed into other pillars over the life course of the Recovery Strategy.

The three principles spanning our recovery pillars are:

### **1) Harnessing the power of digital, data & insight**

- We will work towards realising our ambitions to be an insight led Council by utilising data & insight to inform decision making and strategic thinking to enhance performance. We will harness digital opportunities, technology and innovation wherever possible to deliver better outcomes for our residents.

### **2) Equality, fairness and social inclusion**

- We will actively champion our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through our recovery work to tackle inequality together. Our vision is to be a great place to live, learn, work, and grow and a great place to do business and this includes everyone. There is no place for discrimination in any society. It is our legal duty and moral responsibility to tackle inequalities. Wherever possible in the actions for our pillars of recovery we will ensure targeted action to support our underserved communities.

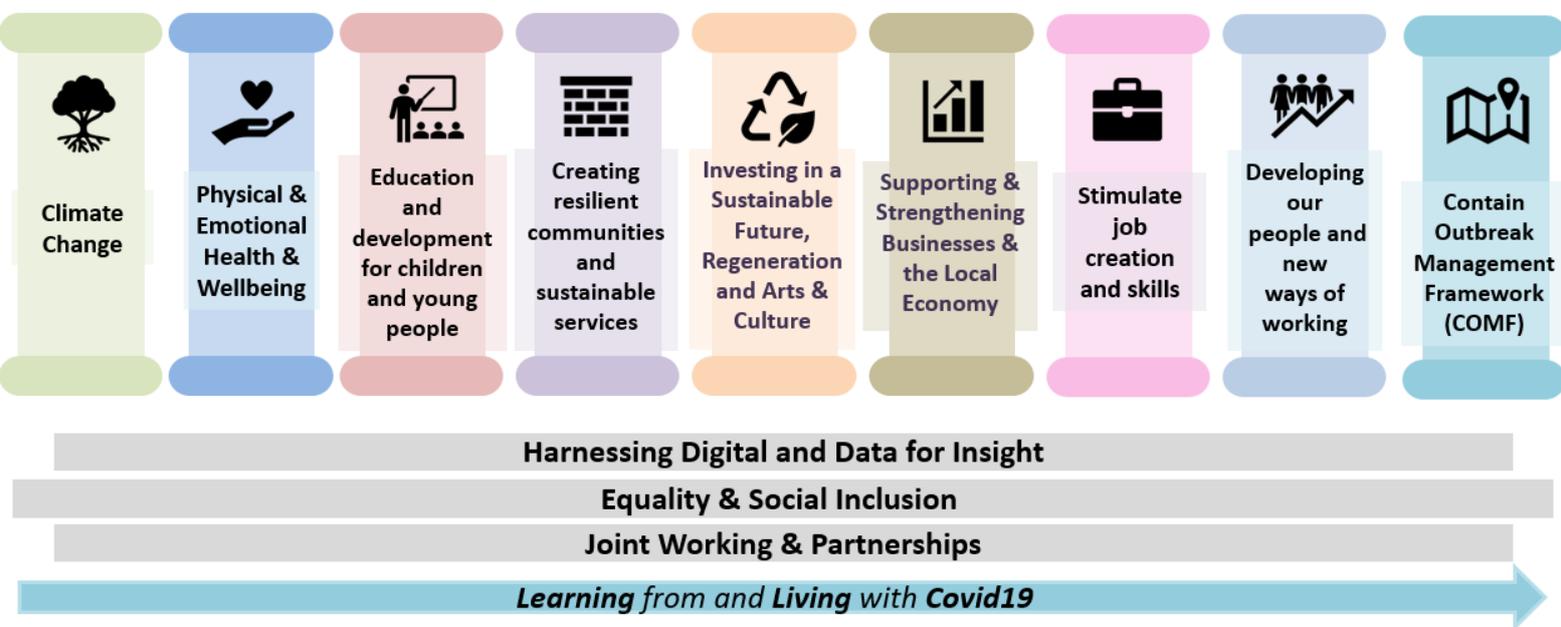
### 3) Joint working and partnerships

- We will build on existing networks and create new connections with partners across sectors to jointly work on recovery and maximise opportunities for positive and long-lasting change.

In this strategy, against each pillar, we have summarised the **impact** of COVID-19 in order to define issues arising from the pandemic, we have gone on to state the **opportunity** to recover and re-orientate within each pillar of recovery. We have referenced the high-level **actions** we will work towards in the short, medium and long term. These actions are statements of intent and are intended to provide a high-level view of what we will achieve within indicative periods of time. The actions and timescales may flex in response to emerging evidence, data and evaluation of each pillar. Finally, we have outlined **success descriptors** for each pillar, these success descriptors are based on our current position but are formative and will be reviewed along with this strategy to ensure they remain relevant. In addition, as part of the ongoing development of this strategy, we will identify further success measures and continue to develop these for each of the pillars of recovery.

A more detailed and comprehensive view of all recovery activity is being developed as part of the evolving Recovery Action Plan which complements this strategy.

## Pillars for Recovery





## Climate Change

### Successes to date

- Over £2million in grants awarded to support climate emergency projects, including tree planting, air quality, active travel and decarbonisation of buildings.
- Air quality monitoring through the pandemic has given insight into transport impacts on the environment and potential longer term solutions.
- Dinton Activity Centre is the first carbon positive building in the Borough
- First solar farm has received planning permission
- Schemes for retrofitting and energy generation up and running

### Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has brought about a shift in individual behaviours and social attitudes. There is a need for proactive action to maximise these changes in order to drive environmental benefits through encouraging new ways of working, living and moving around.

### Opportunity

**Tackling climate change and laying the foundations for a sustainable, clean and green future for our borough.**

#### Immediate Action (1yr)

- Continue to deliver the actions in our climate emergency action plan
- Continue to encourage the growth of green industries
- Continue to maximise the short term environmental benefits of lockdown restrictions based on data and insights
- Reflect the green agenda in all council policies
- Continue to protect our green spaces and natural environment
- Prepare our waste strategy to reduce waste, increase recycling and commence implementation of action plans

#### Action for Sustainable Recovery (2-4yr)

- Deliver environmental benefits to the organisation through the Workplace Re-Imagined programme and the WBC environmental audit
- Continue to build on the increased public awareness of climate change to change people's behaviours and reduce emissions
- Continue to support development of green infrastructure and protect our outdoor spaces
- Continue to implement campaigns to promote active travel including schools, residents and workplaces and develop plans to deliver better walking and cycling infrastructure.

#### Re-orientation (5yr+)

- Continue to invest in long term ambitious green projects such as solar farms, tree planting and a network of electric charging points
- Increase biodiversity and ecology through green corridors and tree planting, maximising use of available grants
- Ensuring the majority of people in the borough have access to affordable sustainable energy
- Meet our goal for both the council and the borough to be net zero carbon by 2030

#### We will know we are on the road to success when...

- Carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced further towards the Council's ambition to play as full a role as possible in becoming carbon neutral by 2030
- There is increased biodiversity and the council's plan to plant 250,000 trees is underway
- We have greater investment in sustainable transport e.g. electric vehicles, cycle routes and public transport
- All corporate buildings have achieved maximum energy efficiency

**Successes to date**

- Recovery College prospectus launched; the number of students has risen from 52 to 75 in the last month as a result of advertising
- Contract awarded to MIND to deliver services for mild to moderate MH needs for an 18 month pilot
- After a successful pilot by sports and leisure funding has been agreed to continue the Movement with confidence offer to decrease falls & prevent hospital admission
- Development of the Mental Health strategy and mental health needs assessment is in progress
- Kooth- an online counselling service was commissioned jointly across West Berkshire for children & young people
- Little Blue Book of Sunshine revised to address COVID-19 impacts and circulated to schools in the borough
- Setting up partnership action groups for delivery and reporting on the Wellbeing Board priorities. The action groups are; Promoting Physically Active Communities, Social Isolation & Loneliness and Health Inequalities
- Public Health Services maintaining delivery and supporting health & wellbeing of our residents throughout the pandemic e.g. physical activity offers transferred to online when required
- Commissioned Tier2 weight management service in response to the government's Tackling Obesity report July 2020
- Introduction of trauma informed practice in Children's Services
- Adult Education Service delivered 26 courses (attended by 164 parents) aimed at supporting parents to build confidence in their children and manage their children's anxiety .

**Impact of COVID-19**

The primary health impacts of the virus have been felt by many of our residents, some of whom have tragically lost loved ones or their own lives. The secondary impacts of lockdown restrictions on poor physical and mental health & wellbeing have also had a detrimental impact on the quality of life of some residents. We have also seen health inequalities come into sharp focus and be exacerbated leaving some communities more vulnerable than others.

The full impacts of COVID-19 on the life course of a person can be seen on the diagram below.

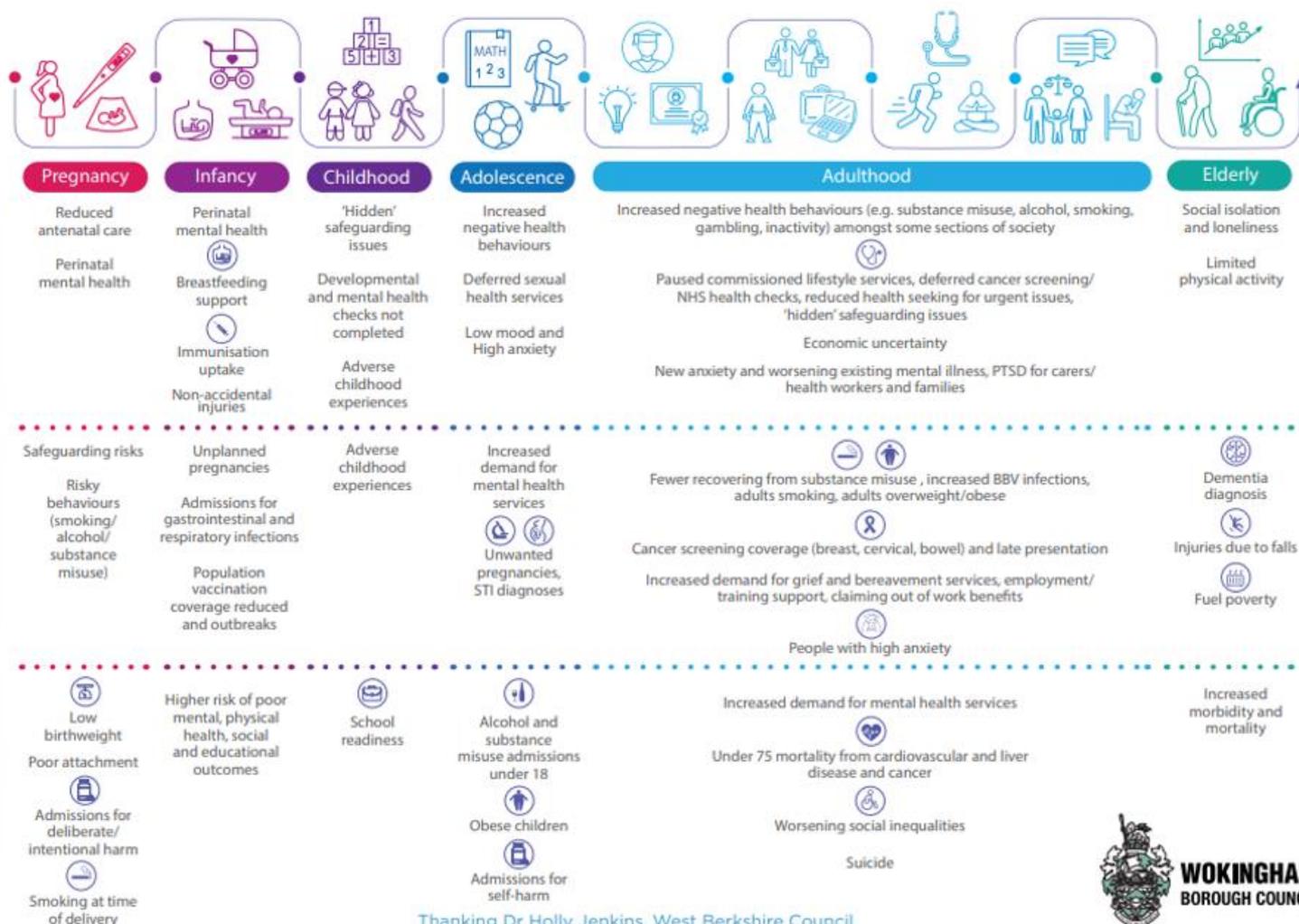
**Opportunity**

**Promoting the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of our residents and targeting action to support our most vulnerable communities.**

**Ongoing management of COVID-19 in conjunction with the Contain Outbreak Management Framework.**

**Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic across the lifecourse**

○ Symbol indicates PHOF indicator



Thanking Dr Holly Jenkins, West Berkshire Council



**Immediate  
Action  
(1yr)**

- Continue to address the low to moderate Mental Health service provision needs for adult's in conjunction with partners
- Continue to support the management of COVID-19, through the ASC, Children's and Communities Taskforce working closely with Public Health
- Continued monitoring and evaluation of vaccine rollout
- Development of Wokingham Strategy in Action as part of the Berkshire West Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Continue to use data to further understand and address the health & wellbeing impacts on residents with particular reference to underserved communities and emerging inequalities
- Continuing to support health & wellbeing services to return to full service delivery
- Implement redesigned Emotional Wellbeing model and offer for children and young people with mild to moderate mental health needs
- Review Emotional Wellbeing Strategy for Children and Young People in Wokingham
- Development of specialist CAMHS offer for children and young people in care
- Continue to deliver on our health integration programme
- Continuing the safe and vibrant re-opening of leisure centres, parks and open spaces
- Continue to develop a wider scope of online activities for residents

**Action for  
Sustainable  
Recovery  
(2-4yr)**

- Continue to work with our partners to strengthen and adapt the mental health offer in light of emerging evidence across the life course
- Continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on longer term health & wellbeing of residents through the ongoing collection and analysis of data and adjust action plans accordingly
- Continue service transformation projects to manage demand in ASC and improve efficiency and quality of services for residents
- Continue to embed a strength based practice approach in ASC
- Continuing to work to reduce, and prevent further, exacerbation of health inequalities during recovery long term
- Review impacts and outcomes of Emotional Wellbeing Model and Service to inform next steps
- Continue our work on building developments including Carnival Hub and Cantley Park

**Re-orientation  
(5yr+)**

- Development of longer term actions to address the physical and emotional health impacts on residents, particularly on vulnerable communities, based on data, evidence and evaluation
- Continue monitoring our actions against health inequalities to ensure effectiveness
- Continue to address the physical & mental H&W of Wokingham residents through the Wokingham Wellbeing Board's Strategy into Action Plan
- Continue with the development of leisure facilities throughout the borough

**We will know we are on the road to success when...**

- We have a strong mental health offer, underpinned by partnership working, for all our residents and greater numbers of residents are accessing support
- We have demonstrated a reduction in health inequalities and Wokingham continues to be the healthiest place to live in England
- We have identified and taken action on the COVID-19 related impacts on emotional & physical health & wellbeing through our service response
- We regularly review data and are agile and responsive as new evidence emerges in relation to COVID-19 and its wider impacts



## Education and Development for Children & Young People

### Successes to date

- School Attendance for eligible children has been high during periods of lockdown.
- Return to school has seen high level of returners.
- Asymptomatic testing arrangements have been in place with high take up.
- Remote learning has been successful with the vast majority of eligible children receiving equipment.
- Early Years settings have maintained delivery with no losses due to COVID-19
- Early Years Inclusion Service, Learning Support and EPS adapted their assessments and support to remote access
- Transition and Recovery guidance (based on research and evidence-based strategies for recovery using national excellence materials provided by Education Endowment Fund) sent to all schools to prepare for children returning after the first lockdown
- "Drop -ins" supported by the School Improvement Service during lockdowns, supported key school leaders to review curriculum provision to ensure effective educational recovery, focused on positive mental attitudes, the language of success and moving forward rather than a deficit model

### Impact of COVID-19

While children have not been as impacted by direct mortality from the virus the pandemic has had an unquestionable detrimental impact on many children with regards to emotional health, development and education. Due to lockdown restrictions many children have missed key opportunities for social, emotional, behavioural and educational development.

The gap may widen for our most vulnerable pupils with respect to progress and attainment, with new groups of pupils potentially emerging with vulnerabilities and concerns.

The full extent of how children have been affected and the implications this will have on their future will not be known for many years.

### Opportunity

**Tackling the impacts of lockdown restrictions on childhood development and education to ensure all children and young people have opportunities to be successful.**

#### Immediate Action (1yr)

- Continued engagement and support for schools to tackle the challenges of COVID-19
- Continued support for remote education and use of technology to support remote education outside school environment when needed
- Recommissioning of the Wokingham Healthy Child Programme
- Continue our work to develop a schools estate that meets the needs of the population

#### Action for Sustainable Recovery (2-4yr)

- Continue reviewing the educational impact of lockdown and impacts on children's development in light of emerging evidence
- Continue to review and monitor educational inequality to ensure appropriate action planning and interventions to support children & young people
- Action planning to address the impacts on childhood development and education in the medium term

#### Re-orientation (5yr+)

- Continue to use data & insights to assess the longer term impacts of lockdown restriction on childhood development and education

#### We will know we are on the road to success when...

- Families and carers feel confident that children can get back to school and access the education they need
- Children are back at school but have access to a robust remote learning environment if needed
- Most children can complete a full academic year, without a significant impact on their results
- Most children's results (appropriate to their key stage) return to expected levels as performance reporting resumes.
- Children and young people will be experiencing less anxiety and will be able to say their emotional wellbeing is better following the pandemic.

## Successes to date

- The creation of the Wokingham COVID-19 Taskforce to support providers throughout the borough
- Distribution of the sustainability fund and PPE for providers
- Regular provider communications including the set up of a provider hub
- Ensuring the care and support market is able to continue to provide care for the most vulnerable
- One Front Door supported an average of 320 residents each week
- Wokingham VCS Hub on track for opening in September 2021
- Over 9000 children visited face to face last year (financial)
- Bridges residential provision for disabled children remained open throughout the pandemic
- Delivery of a Digital Donations project to get donations of technology out to residents who need it
- Production of the Borough / Parish Charter



## Impact of COVID-19

## Opportunity

**Creating strong and resilient communities.  
Thinking creatively about managing  
increasing demand for frontline service  
delivery.**

COVID-19 has placed an immense pressure on services; for example, increases in early help referrals and increased demand on the Adult Social Care market.

Our communities have also been heavily impacted; we have seen an increased demand in CAB referrals, Home Refuge and unauthorised encampments.

COVID-19 has also highlighted and exacerbated inequalities within our underserved communities in our borough, with some groups of the community being adversely affected more than others. Despite the challenges, the pandemic has placed a spotlight on the great work of our communities in bringing people together. Volunteering has been a really positive outcome, for example we have seen a 164% increase in new members for Adopt a Street, a litter picking scheme.

### Immediate Action (1yr)

- Continue to work closely with providers to understand the impact of Covid 19 including capturing data via contract management tools to make decisions
- Continue to work with community based and universal services to provide early intervention and reduce the demands on statutory services and interventions
- Creating a more sustainable market and managing increased demand within limited resources
- Continue to build on any alternative service delivery models that have had a positive impact and embed these as 'the norm'
- Continue to provide clear and simple ways for our residents to access services and support – offering the right support at the right time
- Continue prioritising direct face to face engagement, and relationship based practice with children and their families
- Continue strengthening our work with partners and networks to ensure that commissioned services manage demand and meet the needs of our residents
- Continue to keep residents at the heart of all decisions during the response and recovery, whilst keeping our staff safe and well supported
- Ensure that we have the appropriate infrastructure to host, accommodate and support our work and delivery
- Continue to work with the VCS and partners to continue to identify and build on social capital
- Continue our work to ensure a flexible and adaptive workforce and robust systems that can respond to any future external 'shocks'
- Continue to deliver on the ASC Transformation Programme
- Continue our work to reduce crime rates and anti-social behaviour

### Action for Sustainable Recovery (2-4yr)

- Continue to develop and respond to any trends or patterns resulting from the long term impact of the COVID-19 period and restrictions
- Continue to ensure care and support services (including accommodation) are appropriate to the different needs of our communities (including those with dementia and learning disabilities)
- Better integration between health and social care and colleagues across Berkshire West to develop joint commissioning strategies
- Development towards a permanent workforce with manageable case loads
- Continue to build on learning, design and development of digital offers that meet future needs and enhance the customer experience
- Develop an in house fostering offer to reflect the demands and needs of our children in care
- Design and develop high quality and ambitious service provisions to safeguard and support children and prevent them requiring local authority statutory intervention.
- Continue to develop a robust and sustainable care market
- To review our day service provision and further develop our offer of high quality day opportunities for vulnerable residents in the borough

### Re-orientation (5yr+)

- Continue work to build strong partnerships and services informed by needs, with a focus on early intervention and prevention
- Continuing to ensure residents are at the centre of all decisions across the council
- Infrastructure investment to grow digital capabilities across the borough
- Working in partnership to support an integrated and sustainable system that provides high quality, cost effective care to meet the demands of the community

## We will know we are on the road to success when...

- Greater numbers of our communities are supported through social action, mutual aid groups and volunteers to deliver solutions to local priorities
- Our most vulnerable communities impacted most by COVID-19 receive the support they need to sustain resilience against any future impact
- There is sufficient market capacity and our residents are able to access high quality services
- We have adopted and embedded a range of alternative delivery models, building on best practice from the pandemic response
- Our partnership working has been strengthened and enables us to better work across systems to meet the needs of our residents



**Investing in a Sustainable Future, Regeneration and Arts & Culture**

**Successes to date**

- Completed the first stage of the Thinking Places Programme as part of developing a local brand identity
- Set up the Cultural Alliance and developed an arts events programme
- WBC has delivered one of the most successful affordable homes programmes in England – building 1499 since April 2017
- Sourcing new temporary accommodation facilities, ensuring a total of 84 homeless people were accommodated
- The Emergency Active Travel fund was used to encourage social distancing in Wokingham Town Centre and we have since received further funding to develop active travel schemes in the borough
- Wokingham Town centre regeneration programme continues to be a success with new retail units opening and new homes selling across the scheme
- Despite COVID-19 11 new businesses opened in the town centre since March 2020

**Impact of COVID-19**

With the rise of remote working and people spending more time in their local area due to lockdown restrictions, residents have had the opportunity to reflect on the places they live. The importance of open green spaces, space for home working, a local arts & culture offering, a diverse high street and sustainable transport have all been highlighted as areas of importance for recovery.

**Opportunity**

**Invest in the regeneration of local areas, support housing growth, digital infrastructure, sustainable transport and revive arts and culture in the borough**

**Immediate Action (1yr)**

- Develop a shared vision of place and celebrate the uniqueness of the borough.
- Re-imagining sustainable transport across the borough
- Continue to communicate the strengths of the borough to attract investment
- Continued development of the arts & culture offering to attract visitors to town centres and key sites throughout the borough
- Continue building the right homes in the right places
- Continue our work to keep the borough moving
- Continue our work with partners on developing a 5G and superfast broadband offer

**Action for Sustainable Recovery (2-4yr)**

- Review our actions from year 1 to identify areas of success, further development and use our learning to inform next steps
- Continue to build the right homes in the right places and ensure we can meet the housing needs of the Borough's key and essential workers
- Enhance our temporary accommodation provision
- Continue to ensure that we have comprehensive digital infrastructure across the borough
- Continue joint working between the council and towns & parishes
- Delivery of reimaged sustainable transport solutions
- Implement the arts & culture strategy to attract visitors, support economic growth, and promote well-being of residents

**Re-orientation (5yr+)**

- Continue to invest in the regeneration of our town centres, commercial and residential areas
- Continue to create well planned places that make Wokingham a great place to live and work
- Continue to plan and prepare for the impact of emerging technologies in particular relating to transport

**We will know we are on the road to success when...**

- We have established Wokingham's reputation as a 'cultural hub' with accessible opportunities for all to participate
- Our town centres are thriving with low vacancy rates and a vibrant offer that is valued and well used
- New affordable housing design addresses changes in requirements following COVID-19 such as the need for more outdoor space and space for home working
- We have delivered more housing for key workers and essential workers on low incomes who support the local economy
- More people are using sustainable transport modes and enjoy our open spaces and country parks



**Supporting & Strengthening Businesses & the Local Economy**

**Successes to date**

- Digital newsletter now being distributed to over 5100 businesses on a regular basis.
- Direct engagement with over 121 new businesses since January 2021.
- Total business grants worth approximately £50m distributed to businesses, including the full allocation of discretionary grant funding.
- Established a COVID-19 Marshals service working closely with PPP to support businesses to operate safely and to instil public confidence.
- Hosted two successful online virtual markets to support local craft traders and provide a different offer for residents at Christmas and Easter.

**Impact of COVID-19**

The spread of COVID-19 and the measures to contain it have had severe economic impacts across the world and local businesses have not been exempt from this. Ongoing economic uncertainty and the prospect of a recession will exacerbate the challenges and impacts felt by our local businesses.

**Opportunity**

**Cultivating a business friendly environment in order to sustain a strong economic recovery.**

**Immediate Action (1yr)**

- Continue to analyse the impact of the pandemic on our local businesses and identify trends in the economy through gathering data and insights
- Increase our level of engagement with the business community to understand their needs and provide support where we can, particularly in managing COVID-19 related issues
- Continue to distribute grants and signpost businesses to specialist business advice

**Action for Sustainable Recovery (2-4yr)**

- Create initiatives that support businesses that are re-evaluating and adapting to the new trading environment post COVID-19
- Work in partnership with anchor institutions, such as the University of Reading, and business parks to stimulate business growth.
- Support new business start-ups and flexible working trends e.g. through the development of innovative co-working spaces in the borough

**Re-orientation (5yr+)**

- Develop longer term strategies based on the growth opportunities presented by green industrial and media sectors
- Encourage businesses to invest in the borough, through relocation (FDI) and joint development projects with the private sector

**We will know we are on the road to success when...**

- The number of businesses and the proportion of high growth businesses is growing.
- We have strong business networks and the Council has established positive relationships with a high proportion of the business community.
- The green economy and media sectors are a growing presence in the Borough supporting a range of supply chain businesses and providing employment opportunities for local people.
- There are significant Levels of Foreign Direct Investment and major relocations into the Borough



**Stimulate  
Job  
Creation &  
Skills**

**Successes to date**

- Employment & Skills Hub proposal approved by the Executive and DWP actively engaged as a delivery partner
- The number of young people who completed statutory education in summer of 2020 and returned to full time education increased from 92% to 94%
- 650 IAG sessions delivered remotely since the start of the pandemic and 44 young people 16-18 have moved from NEET to EET
- More young people have engaged in Traineeships with strong relationship built with new providers
- WBC approved to deliver the Kick-start programme with an initial target of 30 placements for unemployed young people.
- The council has co-funding with other Berkshire Authorities the Berkshire Opportunities Portal – a digital service to support local job seekers find work and training

**Impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 has reshaped the job market and job losses resulting financial hardship have impacted many residents. The job market is changing and we need to ensure our residents have the right skills for life long prosperity

**Opportunity**

**Work with our partners to support people through skills and learning to get back into employment.**

**Immediate  
Action  
(1yr)**

- Create an employment hub to help residents seeking work into employment
- Continue to provide high quality careers information, advice and guidance is available to residents
- Continue to provide advice to businesses seeking to support their employees with their emotional health & wellbeing
- Continue to use data to understand and address the impacts on residents in poverty
- Identify those jobs that find it hard to recruit and help businesses match skilled candidates to jobs
- Continue to support our armed forced covenant agreement and peruse our ambition to be a bronze award employer
- continue our work with partners to identify skills in high demand and the right skills needed for growth.
- Continue to work with partners to ensure opportunities are available for skills development across the borough to meet these needs

**Action for  
Sustainable  
Recovery  
(2-4yr)**

- Continue to work with schools, local colleges and businesses to identify the skills and knowledge that local businesses need to grow
- Continue strengthening the social value conditions on suppliers to help create local jobs and keep council spend within the borough
- Continue to ensure that businesses and residents get the most out of schemes such as the Government's apprenticeship programme and Kick Start
- Continue to work with partners to understand our armed forces community and their needs regarding jobs & skills

**Re-orientation  
(5yr+)**

- Continue to ensure all sectors of society benefit from economic growth and the opportunities to access employment and training that support lifelong prosperity and independence
- Continue to identify the emerging skills needs of the future and ensure there is sufficient training available for residents in these sectors

**We will know we are on the road to success when...**

- Unemployment levels fall to pre-COVID levels (historically the lowest in the sub-region)
- We are sustaining very low levels of young people who are NEET and actively working with those who are to secure positive education or employment outcomes
- Levels of employment for those with additional barriers such as disabilities are high compared to our neighbours, regional and national averages



**Developing our People & New Ways of Working**

**Successes to date**

- Over 1000 of 1300 members of staff engaged with return to work training.
- Launch of a new Mental Health First Aider scheme – seeing nearly 50 colleagues from across all directorates, plus 8 Members take part.
- Creation of a dedicated intranet wellbeing page for staff
- Launch of the new virtual Wellbeing Café for staff to raise profile of MHFAs and informally discuss topics relating to positive mental health – great feedback to date.
- The Big Chats have enabled senior leaders to stay connected to how people are feeling and how the new ways of working have impacted staff
- Launch of “Thriving in virtual world” series of learning to support and enable colleagues to adjust to new ways

**Impact of COVID-19**

Changes to working patterns arising from lockdown restrictions have fundamentally changed the way we work. There has been a shift from employee experience to employee life experience (financial, health & wellbeing) as well shifting from location & time to focus on outputs.

**Opportunity**

**To recognise & develop the strengths and skills arising from new ways of working and align these with our corporate vision. To encompass the whole person at work including health & wellbeing as we develop our Workplace reimagination programme.**

**Immediate Action (1yr)**

- Update the Council's risk plan to ensure our workforce have a safe work environment during recovery
- Promote, support & monitor colleague wellbeing & performance through recovery
- Continue to optimise opportunities to embed new ways of working digitally & flexibly that ensure we meet the needs of our residents & communities
- To ensure our strategy reflects the Government's Roadmap and colleagues are supported during the recovery phase

**Action for Sustainable Recovery (2-4yr)**

- Continue to maximise the opportunities that COVID-19 has show us in relation to our workforce & accommodation
- Refresh our People Strategy to make sure we have the right skills for the future, including digital skills
- Changes to our operational model, including working hours, to ensure we are a responsive council and meet the needs of our residents and communities
- Agree equality, diversity & inclusion strategy to support a high performing, representative workforce

**Re-orientation (5yr+)**

- Continue to use data & insight to inform our approach to staff health & wellbeing and ways of working
- To develop a fit for future accommodation & workforce strategy

**We will know we are on the road to success when...**

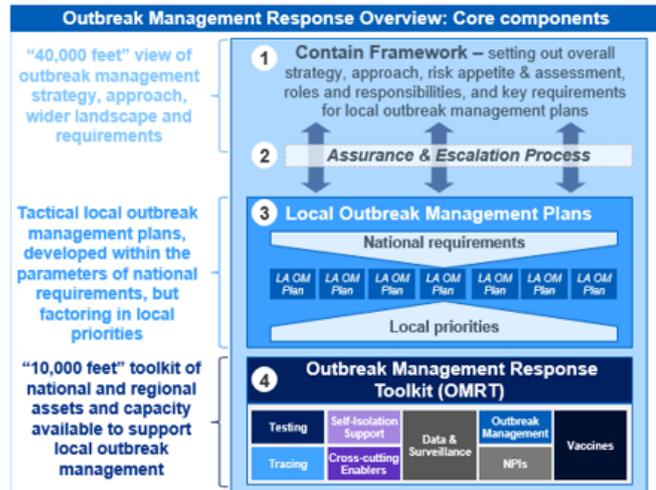
- Metrics show improved colleague wellbeing, inclusion & engagement levels
- Insights gained through COVID-19 inform our reimagination strategy
- We have a substantiable and resilient workforce that meets the needs of our residents and communities
- The cost and carbon footprint of the Council's property has been reduced
- We have a future accommodation and workforce strategy for the longer term 5 years +
- We are becoming an employer of choice for those wishing to develop their career in local government



## What is the Contain Outbreak Management Framework?

The government's Contain Framework sets out how local authorities and partners will work to continue to manage COVID-19, beyond the immediate response and into recovery.

The Contain Framework contains guidance on the development of a local action plan known as the Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP); this plan sets out guidance on Wokingham's approach to preventing and managing COVID-19. The action of this pillar will be delivered through this action plan which is a statutory document to ensure safeguarding and protecting the health of our residents. This is an active document which is reviewed and updated monthly in light of government guidance in order to ensure it remains fit for purpose. To ensure that we work towards achieving the government's Roadmap and a successful recovery, all of COVID-19 activity must intersect with the Contain Outbreak Management Framework.



Summary of core components	
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Contain Framework:</b> The overarching framework off which all outbreak management components 'hang'. The framework will set out contractual agreement &amp; risk appetite, along with the overall outbreak management response strategy, approach, responsibilities and requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Assurance and Escalation Process:</b> Core product that clarifies the assurance and escalation processes across the three outbreak 'lenses' (ET, BAU, VOC).</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Local Outbreak Management Plans</b> that will be developed in line with the parameters of the framework, but to meet local priorities and plans.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Outbreak Management Response Toolkit (OMRT):</b> Sets out national and regional tools, capabilities, levers and deployment mechanisms available for managing response to a Covid outbreak, including detail on actions, processes, the pathway for these to be implemented and key contacts.</li> <li>The OMRT is <b>comprised of assets and capabilities across Testing, Tracing, Self-Isolation Support, Data &amp; Surveillance, Outbreak Management (E2E), NPIs and Vaccines</b></li> </ul>

### The action plan centres on the following themes:

- Higher-risk settings, communities and locations e.g. care home, prisons, hospitality, hospitals and education
- Vulnerable and underserved communities
- Compliance and enforcement
- Governance
- Resourcing
- Communications and engagement, including community resilience
- Data integration and information sharing

### The action plan reflects the approach to the core aspects of the end-to-end COVID-19 response including:

- Community testing
- Contact tracing
- Support for self-isolation
- Outbreak management (Responding to an outbreak of two or more linked cases)
- Surveillance

### Furthermore, the action plan addresses the following developments:

- Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC)
- Action on enduring transmission
- Enhanced Contact Tracing, in partnership with HPT
- Ongoing role of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)
- Interface with vaccines roll out
- Activities to enable 'living with COVID' (COVID secure)

## Successes to date

- The first Berkshire authority to adopt local test & trace
- Care Home Task Force, founded during April 2020, proactively contacts care homes across the Borough at least weekly, coordinates response and follow up within care settings, records all cases (even single cases) and advises on contact tracing and management in setting
- Using a data led approach to target mobile testing to try and capture underserved communities
- WBC were an early adopter as a pilot site for LFT testing.
- A 'One Front Door' single point of access for support from the Borough's voluntary services to support those who are having to self-isolate
- Early adopter of self-isolation calls, calling all residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 from January 2021, in most cases being the first agency to make contact and referring on average 20-25% of residents contacted to our 'One Front Door' services
- A WBC Data Cell was established towards the end of 2020 which leads on ensuring that there is a data led response to COVID-19 across the Local Authority

### We will know we are on the road to success when...

- People can return to and maintain a normal way of life with COVID-19
- COVID-19 has been embedded in practice across the organisation
- We are completely responsive to policy changes and local events
- We have minimised the impact the COVID-19 including on underserved communities

# Appendices

## Appendix A

Pillar	Key Strategy/ Policies/ Documentation	Key groups
<b>Climate Change</b>	Climate Emergency Action Plan Spatial Strategy and Design Framework (as part of the LPU) Tree Strategy (in development) Waste Strategy (in development) Electric Vehicle Strategy (in development) Low Carbon Transport Strategy (in development) Intelligent Traffic System Strategy (in development) Local Transport Plan 3 Home to School Transport Policy LCWIP (in development) Air Quality Action Plan ROWIP	Climate Emergency Officers Group Climate Emergency Officer subgroups Climate Emergency Advisory board Climate Emergency Investment Board
<b>Stimulate job creation &amp; skills</b>	Thames Valley Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan WBC Economic Development Strategy WBC Economic Recovery Action Plan (Skills and Employment) Berkshire Local Skills Report 2021 WBC Apprenticeship Policy Adult Education Strategy NEET Reduction Plan ASC Workforce Strategy	Employment Skills Group Wokingham Business Task Force Berkshire Economic Development Officer Group (BEDOG) Berkshire NEET Mangers Group DWP Stakeholder meeting
<b>Contain Outbreak Management Framework</b>	Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP)	LOEB (Health & Wellbeing Board) COVID Taskforce Leads Meeting
<b>Creating resilient communities &amp; sustainable services</b>	Customer Strategy VCS strategy Integration Programme Plan Market Position Statement Anti-Poverty Strategy (in development) OFSTED framework Directorate CIP Programmes COVID Contain Work programme Equalities Strategy	Learning Disabilities Steering Group Rapid Community Discharge Group Urgent & Emergency Care Programme Board VCS Group Berkshire West Vaccinate Cell ASC Covid-19 Winter Plan Berkshire DASS Meeting Wokingham Integrated Partnership PHM Steering Group Corporate Recovery Group Community Response Group Joint Commissioning Board Provider Forum ASC Taskforce
<b>Supporting &amp; Strengthening Businesses &amp; the Local Economy</b>	Thames Valley Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan Economic Development Strategy Economic Recovery Plan	Business Task Force Business Engagement Monitoring Group Berkshire Economic Development Officers Group (BEDOG) LEP Berkshire Placemaking Board
<b>Developing our people &amp; new ways of working</b>	People's Strategy HR Action Plan	Workplace Reimagined Group People's Strategy Working Group
<b>Physical &amp; Emotional Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	Mental health strategy Autism Strategy Social Care Strategy Public Health Service plan Wellbeing strategy Joint Wellbeing Strategy	Recovery College Steering Group Health & Wellbeing board Berkshire West Mental Health Managers Meeting Berkshire Healthcare Trust management Meeting Berkshire West ICP Children's Programme Board CYP Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Review Group
<b>Education and development for children &amp; young people</b>	Children & Young People Strategy	Berkshire West Partnerships Children & Young People's Partnership SEND Improvement Board Schools Forum LAP Senior Leadership Team Children's Services Leadership Team Children's Services Task Force Group
<b>Investing in a Sustainable Future, Regeneration and Arts &amp; Culture</b>	Arts & Culture Strategy Housing Strategy Leisure Strategy Spatial Strategy and Design Framework (As part of the LPU) Local Transport Plan 3 Rights of Way Improvement Plan Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (in development) Economic Recovery Plan Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Plan Economic Development Plan	Thames Valley Berkshire Smart City Cluster Berkshire Digital Infrastructure group Berkshire Place Making Board Wokingham Arts Alliance Wokingham Borough Business Task Force Local Plan Officer Meeting Highways and Transport Management Team

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