

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 08 March 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	The Impact of Coronavirus on our Communities - March 2021
Purpose of Report:	To provide an update on the impact of Coronavirus on communities in the Vale of Glamorgan and seek approval to disseminate this work to partner organisations.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Rob Thomas, Managing Director
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Consultation has been undertaken with Senior Leadership Team
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated Community Impact Assessment explores how the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact communities in the Vale of Glamorgan based on the latest data and research available at the time of writing. • The Community Impact Assessment was initially considered by Cabinet in 2020 and provided an important evidence base to inform the Council's Recovery Strategy. • The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that have been necessary to protect those in our communities most vulnerable to the virus and to try to limit the pressures placed on the National Health Service and Social Care have been critical to tackling the spread of the virus. However, there have been wide ranging effects as a result of both. This report builds on the picture developed in the initial analysis published in September 2020 to further explore, through national and local research, data and findings, the impact that the last six months have had on lives in the Vale. A summary of the headline findings against key themes has been included within this Cabinet report. • The information and analysis within the Community Impact Assessment have been used in developing the Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22. 	

Recommendations

- 1.** Cabinet note the contents of the Impact Assessment and approve it for publication.
- 2.** That the Impact Assessment is shared with all Members, the Vale of Glamorgan Public Service Board partners and Town and Community Councils via email and the findings are used by Council services in the future development of policies and services.
- 3.** That Cabinet receive a periodic update on aspects of the Community Impact Assessment throughout the year in parallel with the reporting of Corporate Performance.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.** To ensure the findings from the Impact Assessment are shared and used to inform work across the Council.
- 2.** To ensure that partners are aware of the significant and wide-ranging impacts that COVID-19 has had on the community.
- 3.** To enable Cabinet to maintain oversight of the different impacts arising from the pandemic and consider the Council's response in parallel with the cyclical reporting of Corporate Performance.

1. Background

- 1.1** The first Community Impact Assessment published in September 2020 focused on the impact of the pandemic and first national lockdown and was used to inform the Council's Recovery Strategy.
- 1.2** Since the publication of the first Impact Assessment, a range of different COVID-19 restrictions have been introduced at the UK, Wales and Vale of Glamorgan levels. These restrictions culminated in the re-introduction of Level 4 national Lockdown restrictions in Wales from 20th December 2020. The March 2021 Community Impact Assessment provides an update on the data and research presented in the initial Impact Assessment and introduces new data, analysis and findings that has been published in the last six months. The report is structured by the data and research available; where possible data and research is presented at a U.K., Wales, Vale of Glamorgan level. Where not possible to provide local data and research, this is presented at U.K or Wales level as it will still be relevant to communities in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.3** Data and research included in the report is drawn from a number of sources and is the most up-to-date information available at the time of writing.
- 1.4** The updated Community Impact Assessment has been developed to support the Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 and related 2021/22 Service Plans. The

assessment is presented to Cabinet on the same agenda as the Annual Delivery Plan for this reason.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Assessment is structured under the Council's four Well-being Objectives by headline areas where many pre-existing challenges and issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19. The 4 Well-being Objective are:
 - 2.2** To work with and for our communities
 - 2.3** To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
 - 2.4** To support people at home and in their communities
 - 2.5** To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment
- 2.6** The Community Impact Assessment can be accessed [here](#). A summary of the findings for each area is provided below.

Demographic Profile

- 2.7** The population of the Vale of Glamorgan in mid-2019 was estimated to be 133,587. This is estimated to be made up of 68,753 (51.5%) Female and 64,834 (48.5%) Male. 24,743 are estimated to be aged 0-15, 80,497 aged 16-64 and 28,347 aged 65 and over. There are slightly more females than males in both the 16-64 and 65 and over age groups. It is estimated that there are 16,900 people living in the Vale of Glamorgan aged 16-64 who identify as disabled, the majority (57.4%) of these people are Female. 4,600 (3.6%,) people in the Vale of Glamorgan are estimated to be from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background (BAME). The impact assessment highlights how COVID-19 has affected people in different ways and this section provides context for the full report.

Cases, Deaths and Vaccinations

- 2.8** There were 7,245 deaths involving COVID-19 in England and Wales in the week ending 15th January 2021 - an increase of 1,188 compared with the previous week. The week ending 15th January represents a key week in mortality data as deaths involving COVID-19 accounted for 40.2% of the 18,042 deaths registered that week, the highest proportion since the start of the pandemic. Reflecting the national trend the highest number of weekly deaths in the Vale of Glamorgan was recorded on 15th January 2021 with 23 deaths from COVID-19 recorded in this week. In the Vale of Glamorgan, the total number of deaths for 2020 exceeded the number of expected deaths in March, April, May, November and December. The number of observed deaths in April, November and December are significantly higher than the number of expected deaths for those months against the five year average, the majority of these excess deaths may be attributed to COVID-19. Although data can be provided on the number of deaths it is not possible to assess how these deaths have affected their families, carers, friends and colleagues.

Workforce Changes

- 2.9** The unemployment rate has risen across the United Kingdom and in Wales. Modelled data for the Vale of Glamorgan mirrors this rise. The latest forecasts from the Bank of England suggest that the unemployment rate will continue to rise in 2021. In tandem with rising unemployment rates, data shows a consistent fall in the number of paid employees in the U.K and Wales. In November 2020 the redundancy rate in the U.K. reached a record high. Vacancies data for October to December 2020, at the U.K level show job vacancies have reduced when compared to the same period in 2019. As such it may be said that while unemployment is rising, there are fewer job vacancies for those who have become unemployed and are seeking employment to apply for.

Changing Incomes, Economic Support and Rising Living Costs

- 2.10** Increasing pressure is being placed on household incomes as a result of the pandemic. Due to reductions in working hours, employments furloughed or job losses, 21% of Welsh households have reported a reduction in incomes. Research has indicated that these changes have impacted young people, the lowest paid and disabled workers in particular. Those who have lost their job are able to claim unemployment related support. In the Vale of Glamorgan, the number of people claiming unemployment related support has increased by 103% since March 2020.
- 2.11** This increase has been mirrored by the numbers of people claiming Universal Credit. In the Vale of Glamorgan, from March 2020 to November 2020 there has been an increase of 4,844 people in receipt of Universal Credit. The largest proportion of people in receipt of Universal Credit can be seen in those areas of the Vale of Glamorgan which have been identified as 'Most Deprived' in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019. Alongside increased pressures placed on household incomes, there have been increases in living costs as a result of the pandemic, with increases in energy bills, food costs and digital connectivity costs reported.

Education

- 2.12** The re-introduction of Level 4 lockdown restrictions in Wales on 20th December 2020 was also accompanied by the closure of all schools and education settings. At the time of writing, education settings remain closed except for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, with plans for a phased return for pupils to schools after the February half-term, dependent on falling infection levels. The closure of education settings has raised concerns for all learners; there are particular concerns for male learners, learners from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds, BAME learners, learners from more deprived backgrounds, and for learners who need more support in education. In some areas of the country, there are concerns around access to devices for remote learning and the gap in attainment between learners from more and less deprived backgrounds increasing further as a result.

Housing

- 2.13** Research has suggested that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on different housing tenures. Across Wales research indicates that adults are reporting falling behind on their rent and mortgage payments. Social renters however, were more likely than private renters and mortgage holders, to report having fallen behind with their payments. The most recent data has shown the median price paid for housing in the Vale of Glamorgan has increased during the pandemic; however, the turnover of housing has reduced significantly in 2020 when compared to previous years.

Tourism

- 2.14** Most tourism businesses reported that they were able to re-open following the easing of lockdown restrictions in the summer months. The re-introduction of restrictions, including stay-local restrictions has had a direct impact on tourism businesses.

Crime

- 2.15** Within the Vale, antisocial behaviour has continued to increase at the same time as lockdowns have been introduced. As the country's lockdown restrictions tightened over the winter months, the increases in ASB incidents grew in the Vale to levels much higher than the previous year. Across the UK survivors of domestic violence have reported the pandemic has impacted their abuse and many living with their abuser report the abuse has worsened. A number of Welsh domestic abuse support organisations have seen increases in demand for online services and communications over the summer period.

Mental Health

- 2.16** ONS research shows levels of anxiety in Great Britain have changed as the pandemic has progressed. As initial lockdown restrictions were lifted anxiety levels improved; however, since October 2020 the average anxiety rating has again seen an increase. People of all ages have reported increasing worries and anxiety. In Wales fewer people reported feeling lonely over the summer period compared to earlier months. There are known links between age, ill health, mental illness, sexual orientation, material deprivation and marital status and increased feelings of loneliness. There are concerns that suicide rates may increase (as seen in previous international epidemics) as the pandemic continues to spread and longer-term effects on the economy and people become apparent, many of which are recognised risk factors with suicide.

Physical Health

- 2.17** Data suggests the majority of adults in Wales are doing the same amount of exercise in recent months as they did before the first lockdown. People from higher socio-economic background and without a long-standing health condition or illness are more likely to be exercise more than before. In Wales most adults

report their children are doing more sport/physical activity outside of school than before COVID-19. When comparing behaviour in lockdowns across the UK people reported doing less exercise in the winter lockdown compared to the first in April/May.

- 2.18** Across Wales and the Cardiff and Vale UHB attendance at A&E departments rose over the summer, approaching pre COVID levels in August, but have since decreased again to lower levels than 2019.

Social Services

- 2.19** There continue to be widely reported national concerns around the difficulties of protecting vulnerable children when home visits were severely restricted and many vulnerable children were not in school or early years provision. In the Vale 14 hub settings were established for vulnerable children and those of key workers to attend whilst national restrictions were placed on schools. Since all children initially returning to school in September 2020 there has been an increase in contacts received by Children and Young People Services in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.20** New figures show the pandemic has resulted in 196,000 new unpaid carers in Wales. Research suggests carers caring hours have increased, their mental health has been affected and they are feeling more exhausted as a result of COVID-19.

Homelessness

- 2.21** Data shows there has been an increase between August - October in the number of people presenting as homeless that were placed into emergency accommodation in Wales. Figures for England show White households are less likely to be homeless with Black and Mixed/multiple ethnicity disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

Changes in Pollutant Levels and Air Quality

- 2.22** As a result of restrictions introduced to limit the spread of COVID-19, across Europe and the United Kingdom there has been a reported drop in greenhouse gas emissions linked to road and air travel. Data available for the Vale of Glamorgan has shown a significant drop in travel against baseline data.

Access to Green Spaces

- 2.23** Data available for the Vale of Glamorgan has shown that in the summer months there has been an increased use of parks and greenspaces, the use of these spaces has fallen in-line with the re-introduction of stay-local restrictions and poorer winter weather and shorter daylight hours. Survey data has shown that people feel more confident taking part in physical exercise in these greenspaces than in swimming pools or other inside spaces.

Waste and PPE

- 2.24** Although there has been a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions linked to travel, reductions in global oil prices linked to the fall in industrial output has made it easier to produce disposable plastic items such as Personal Protective Equipment from virgin fossil fuels rather than from recycled materials. In the Vale of Glamorgan, with more people working from home and with people receiving more home deliveries, there has been an increase in waste being produced by households.

Digital Exclusion

- 2.25** For many people digital access has been incredibly important in coping with the isolation caused by COVID-19 restrictions. A national survey found for those aged 50 and over TV news was the most relied on source of information and updates in lockdown followed by online sources. 93% of respondents in the Vale agreed it would have been helpful to have access to the internet during the first lockdown. Data shows 90% of people in Wales have internet access at home however internet access differs depending on age and housing tenure.

Community Spirit and Volunteering

- 2.26** Research has found during the first lockdown that people were doing more than before to help their communities and made new intergenerational connections. Between May 2020 - January 2021, 860 calls were answered by the Vale Heroes Support Team with the largest number of calls taken in May (451). The number of calls decreased over the summer and autumn months but has since increased in January (76). Fewer people report volunteering compare to during the first lockdown. Work is ongoing to explore how to sustain the volunteering seen across communities in response to COVID-19.
- 2.27** The pandemic continues to have a direct impact on people's lives across the Vale of Glamorgan. The growth in the infection levels which prompted the re-introduction of Level 4 Lockdown restrictions has resulted in higher rates of mortality from the virus, although, recent falls in infections, mortality and the introduction of vaccinations suggest hope for the future. The restrictions that have been necessary to prevent the spread of the virus have resulted in increased pressure being placed on people's well-being. Whether financial, social, educational or health related, there are particular concerns in both the short and longer-term, about the impact that the pandemic is having, and will have on people across the Vale of Glamorgan. While the pandemic has had an impact on all lives, there are indicators that suggest that this impact has been experienced disproportionately by some people, groups and communities. Many who prior to the outbreak may have reported good economic, social, and mental and physical well-being will now have experienced hardship. For those who were struggling prior to the pandemic, research and data suggests that their experiences will have worsened as a result.

- 2.28** The Community Impact Assessment provides detailed information about the impact on the community as a result of COVID_19 and the associated restrictions. Work will continue to refresh this Assessment as more information becomes available and to reflect changes in the regulations, for example the reopening of schools and the hospitality industry as and when they happen and information becomes available.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Community Impact Assessment is structured by the Council's Well-being Objectives and as such has ensured that the social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts that COVID-19 is having on communities across the Vale of Glamorgan are considered.
- 3.2** Information within the Impact Assessment has been used to develop the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22. The Annual Delivery Plan outlines how the Council will contribute to the national Well-being Goals as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act through the delivery of the Well-being Objectives contained in the plan. The Annual Delivery Plan details how the Council will contribute to the national Well-being Goals through delivery of its year 2 commitments in the Corporate Plan 2020-2025.
- 3.3** The Annual Delivery Plan has been developed in accordance with the five ways of working and they are also reflected in the content of the Plan.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no direct resource or legal implications associated with this report.

Employment

- 4.2** There are no direct employment implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** Information within the Impact Assessment highlights how people in the Vale of Glamorgan have been impacted by COVID-19. Throughout the report research and analysis has been included where possible to highlight the differing impacts the pandemic has had on protected characteristics.

5. Background Papers

[The Impact of Coronavirus on our Communities - September 2020](#)