

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **HEALTH AND CARE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **COMMUNITY PLANNING HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND ANTI-POVERTY COVID-19 UPDATE**

#### **REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to provide the Health and Care PDSP with an update on the activity undertaken in response to social needs related to COVID-19.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Health and Care PDSP noted the contents of the report.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs
	Being honest, open and accountable
	Working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	None
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None.
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	Working in partnership.
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	We live longer, healthier lives.
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	None.
<b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>	None
<b>VIII Other consultations</b>	West Lothian IJB

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

In recognition of the potential long-term impacts of COVID-19, colleagues involved in the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Anti-Poverty Task Force and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership have worked together to gather evidence of activity in response to social needs related to COVID-19, to understand the COVID-19 policy landscape and also the potential policy and financial barriers and challenges. This process has captured key activity during the first phase of the pandemic (see Appendix 1) and helped to identify future needs which will support the CPP in planning for the future. This short paper provides an update on this work.

This work has been informed by community surveys and group activity. The West Lothian Council Regeneration team led on a community survey supported by Voluntary Sector Gateway. The Gateway also hosted the 'Covid-19 Recovery summit – 'Creating a new West Lothian''. The West Lothian Integration Joint Board Strategic Planning Group has also captured activity and future priorities. The council also facilitated community listening events on behalf of the Scottish Government's Social Renewal Advisory Board. The West Lothian Anti-Poverty Plan 2020-21 includes many practical measures that West Lothian Council and partners have agreed already to mitigate some of the challenges.

The initial consultation with CPP colleagues between July and September 2020 highlighted a number of social and economic challenges arising from the pandemic: income; employment (and unemployment) and business support; housing and homelessness; longer-term resilience arrangements particularly for third sector; mental health and wellbeing.

In July 2020, the HSCP pursued a number of actions to increase mental health provision including increased access to Community Wellbeing Hubs; a review of Third Sector mental health payments; and the completion of the West Lothian Suicide Prevention Action Plan. A new Third Sector Mental Health Collaborative Group has been established with the aim of ensuring mental health support providers and referral agencies work in a collaborative manner to improve services (see Appendix 1 for examples of activity).

Work focusing on the other major themes is being led by CPP partners as outlined in Figure 1. Income maximisation and support is part of the remit of the council Anti-Poverty service while the council's Economic Development service is leading work to support on employment and business support. The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is adjusting to needs presented by the pandemic, notably challenges around the availability of temporary accommodation and longer-term housing options. The Community Regeneration team has worked with other council departments and the Voluntary Sector Gateway and other key stakeholders to shape the pandemic recovery focus of the Voluntary Organisations budget and the new council Third Sector Community Support Fund.

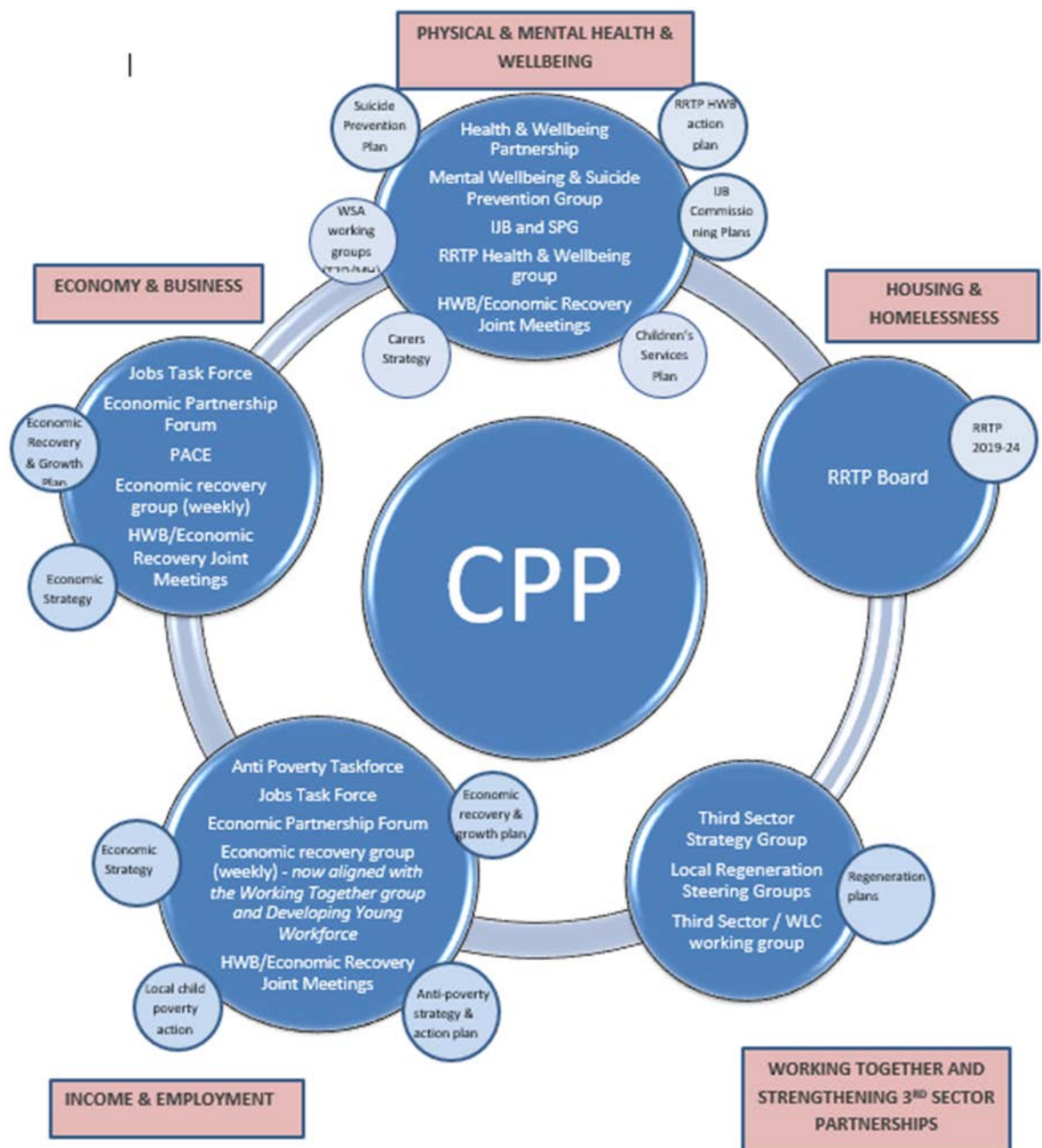


Figure 1: Mapping COVID-19 themes to CPP groups

The remaining work on the Community Planning pandemic priorities relates to physical health. This is being picked up by the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. All of these priorities will inform the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan review. This review has been delayed by the pandemic but the last CPP Board meeting agreed that work should resume on the LOIP in 2021. There was discussion of the pandemic impacts on physical health and the last Integration Joint Board Strategic Planning Group. It was agreed that this pandemic mitigation work could inform and shape IJB plans with regard to physical activity referrals.

A COVID-19 sentinel dataset has also been established by the working group. The paper presented to the CPP Board on 30 November is appended as Appendix 2 and an update will be provided at future CPP Board meetings. The data are intended to provide a snapshot over time of some of the high level impacts of COVID-19 in West Lothian. Key points include:

- Unemployment numbers doubling in the last year but currently at a plateau
- The unemployment among 18-24 year olds higher than the Scotland average
- A high proportion of people aged 51-60 years old being made redundant due to COVID-19
- Concern about more redundancies in early 2021
- More than 4,000 food parcels being distributed on a monthly basis
- More than £900,000 has been granted from the Scottish Welfare Fund between late March and the end of October 2020
- Strong economic activity in research and pharmaceutical sector in West Lothian

## **E. CONCLUSION**

It would be desirable to have up to date data in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Existing data tends to focus on service/input measures and acute mental health. There is less data and intelligence around whole population mental health and wellbeing. There may be some more useful information from the mental wellbeing hubs and this is currently being explored.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Appendices/Attachments:	Appendix 1 West Lothian Third Sector Mental Health Collaborative Group activity
	Appendix 2 West Lothian COVID-19 sentinel dataset commentary (WL CPP Board briefing paper, 30 November 2020)
Contact Person:	Martin Higgins, NHS Lothian (on behalf of the WL CPP Health and Wellbeing and Anti-Poverty COVID-19 response working group)
CMT Member:	Allister Short, Depute Chief Executive
Date:	18 <sup>th</sup> February 2021

## Appendix 1: West Lothian Third Sector Mental Health Collaborative Group activity

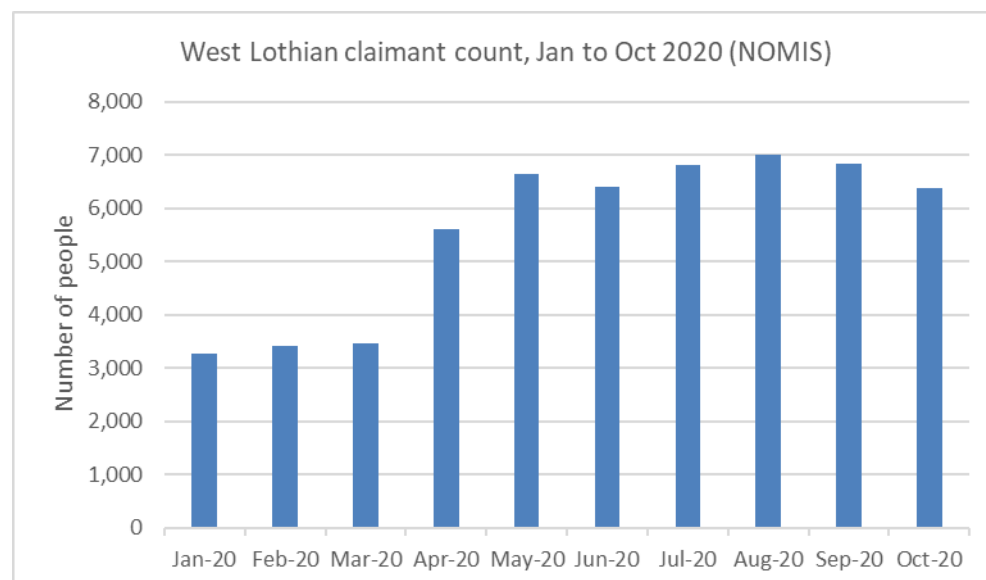
West Lothian Third Sector Mental Health Collaborative Group The Bridge Community Project	1:1 Counselling for adults living in the West Lothian area.
Positively Able CIC	Professional Peer counselling for adults experiencing disability
Beechbrae	Branching Out, an outdoor woodland programme to support mental health
Carers of West Lothian	Support and counselling to disabled adults and unpaid carers (including young carers).
Mood Project - Mental Health & Well-being	Group activities and telephone support for mental health
EnvironMentalHealth CIC	Support plus Learning & Development including First Aid For Mental Health training
The Brock Garden Centre SCIO	Therapeutic activities in the garden centre for people with chronic mental health conditions
Polbeth Community HUB	Person Centred Counselling for adults living and/working in the Polbeth area
S.M.I.L.E Counselling	One to one Counselling to children and young persons aged 11 years to 24 years
Men Matter West Calder	Primarily social and peer support although signpost to partners who deliver counselling
Neil's Hugs Foundation	Support groups for people bereaved by suicide
Cyrenians OPAL	Support to clients age 60+ with low mood

## Appendix 2: West Lothian COVID-19 sentinel dataset commentary (WL CPP Board briefing paper, 30 November 2020)

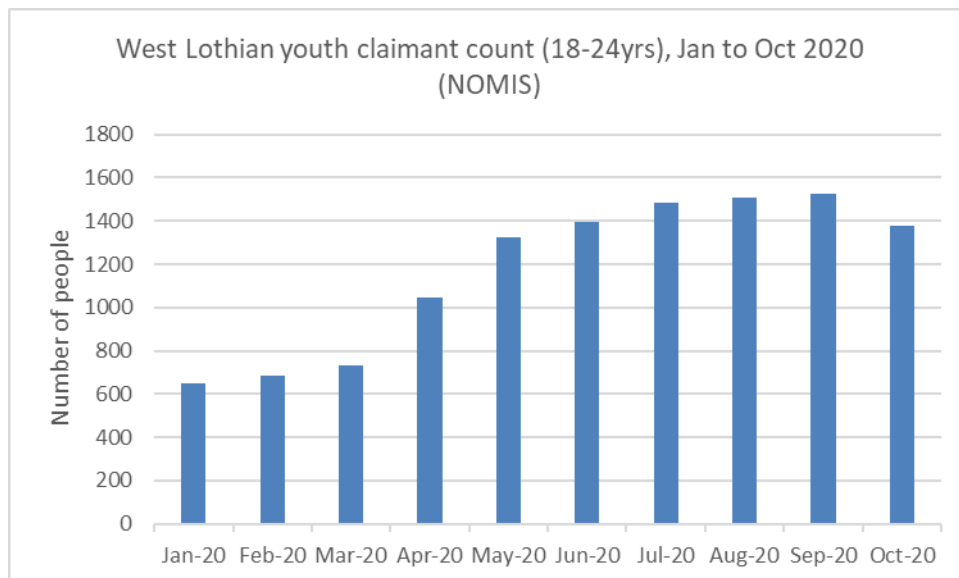
### Claimant Count

Since September 2019, unemployment claims have doubled in West Lothian. This upward trend started in April 2020. There were almost 7,000 people claiming unemployment related benefits September (6,835), but have dropped back down closer to 6,000 in October. At 5.5% for October, the West Lothian unemployment rate is still below the Scotland average of 6.0%.

From the claimant count data and the fact that the Claimant Count statistics for September and October are slightly lower than those recorded in August it would look as though the initial shock to the labour market has dissipated and, at least in West Lothian, a stabilising of the situation. The end (and restart) of furlough may have had some impact on September and October numbers; there is also an annual reduction in unemployment claims as universities and colleges return in September. Most economic forecasters had suggested that there may be a significant rise in unemployment in January and February as seasonal employment comes to an end. The extension to the Job Retention scheme announced by the Chancellor on the 5th November should support jobs at least until the end of January or possibly to the end of March.



The 18-24 age group has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 economic downturn. Since September 2019, unemployment claims in this age group have also doubled. This upward trend started in March 2020 and now there are just under 1,400 young people claiming unemployment related benefits. At 9.8%, the West Lothian unemployment claimant rate is higher than Scotland (8.8%) and UK (9.2%) although a decrease in the rate from September 1,525 (10.8%) and August 1,510 (10.7%). Many young people have been employed in sectors such as the hospitality and the retail sectors, which have both been hard hit by the lockdown. At the same time, job vacancies in the UK between April to October 2020 have been at the lowest levels since the ONS vacancies survey began in 2001.



We can drill this data down to a more local level and we are currently investigating this as we go forward.

It should be noted that many West Lothian residents work in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Job cuts in Edinburgh may have impacted the West Lothian claimant count numbers.

### **Job Retention Furlough Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support**

By August 2020, 27,600 West Lothian jobs had been protected by the furlough scheme. But gradual withdrawal of support meant that the number of jobs protected dropped significantly to 7,800 in September.

The Self-Employment Income Support Grant Scheme began on 13 May 2020 and has provided support to the self-employed in West Lothian. Take up rate has been substantial, with 73% initial take up to June (4,400), peaking in in July and August at 76% (4,600). In the latest month, take up of support has dropped slightly to 69% (4,100). The average value of grant claims was £2,800, although this has dropped off to £2,500 in the last couple of months. Uptake is likely to increase over the coming months with the extension of SEISS in the form of two further grants, each available for 3 month periods covering November 2020 to January 2021 and February 2021 to April 2021.

### **Total Employment**

The economic development team has been monitoring key employers in West Lothian. These 207 businesses employ almost 21,000 people in the area. 103 companies provide no cause for concern; 66 businesses are at amber status and 28 businesses are showing cause for concern. There is no information on the other 10 companies. There has not been much change in the status of these companies over the last two months.

There are signs of business growth in the pharmaceuticals and life sciences sector.

### **PACE data**

The PACE scheme means that Skills Development Scotland works with local economic development teams to support employees who face redundancy in companies with more than 20 staff. It is, however, difficult to monitor the economic wellbeing of smaller businesses as there is no system to identify their difficulties. The West Lothian Business

Gateway support team has identified some smaller companies that have made redundancies and is providing support to staff in these organisations. In addition, a local PACE line via West Lothian Council's contact centre has been introduced.

### **Food Support**

Since food support started in mid-May until the end of September, 73,624 food parcels have been delivered in West Lothian. This equates to more than 3,600 per week. It is worth noting that the 'nature' of the need relating to food has changed. During lockdown (April to June) the need arose from the fact that people could not access food. More than 4,100 food parcels were delivered on average during each week in June. In recent months, the need has been due to people having less money and unable to afford food.

### **Scottish Welfare Fund**

There has been a significant increase in the amount of Scottish Welfare Funding disbursed in West Lothian. More than £900,000 has been granted between late March and the end of October with a significant increase in the crisis grants awarded and, as the 2020-21 financial year has progressed, and there has been movement in rented housing stock a steady rise in community care grants.

People can apply for grants if they are advised to self-isolate by Test and Protect. But successful applicants are low, mostly due to difficulties in meeting all the criteria; in the first three weeks of the scheme, less than 10% of applications have met Scottish government criteria for the grant.

### **Schools: Education Maintenance Allowance, Free School Meals and Clothing Grants**

The Education Maintenance Allowance figures are not complete until the end of the academic year however there will be an increase in figures when the second cohort of the school year becomes eligible (January).

There is an increase of 1,674 (37%) in the total number of children eating free school meals in this academic year. During the lockdown period prior to summer break, free school meal uptake increased; uptake then levelled out during the summer holiday period. Average uptake in May was 60% which fell to 55% in June and to 42% in July. Uptake of free school meals during the September and October holidays was notably lower than during lockdown and the summer holidays.

The eligibility criteria for clothing grants have been extended to include those receiving council tax reduction so that more children can receive this grant. This may have contributed to the increased uptake of almost 10% for this grant; 7,714 children in West Lothian have benefitted from this award.

### **Rent and Council Tax Arrears**

Housing continues to maintain a high collection rate for rent, with the 2019/20 collection rate at 98.23%. Income management is being monitored continuously and corrective actions taken as needed. Income so far this year has been higher from customers and the average transaction value has increased. Both of these increases are over and above the previous year even after adjusting for the rent increase applied in April 2020.



Rent arrears has increased since March. The rise is within the forecast projections made each year and includes known rises due to customers paying on a monthly schedule and charges being applied on an accelerated schedule due to non-collection weeks which will resolve by the end of the year.

The largest real debt driver is the transition of customers from legacy Housing Benefit onto Universal Credit due to the break in benefits during the initial Universal Credit assessment period. Maximum debt on accounts has increased largely due to the removal of eviction actions while court processes are suspended.

Most wards are within target with only one ward, Breich Valley, underperforming at this stage. There are historical debt issues with this area so this underperformance cannot be attributed to the pandemic pressures.

There has been an increase in council tax arrears which is complemented by an increase in the council tax reduction caseload. The council's Revenues team is projecting a loss on council tax receipts due to COVID-19.

### **Ongoing Work on the Data Set**

Data for many of these indicators is only available at a West Lothian level. Further work is ongoing to look at where robust, reliable data can be captured at a more local level.

There is a lack of useful, up to date data in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Existing data tends to focus on service/input measures, and the more acute aspect of mental health. There is less data and intelligence around whole population mental health and wellbeing. There may be some more useful information from the mental wellbeing hubs and this is currently being explored.

More work is also required to capture indicators pertaining to community physical and mental health and wellbeing. There are many third sector organisations that support their communities to address many of the health and wellbeing issues that are key to any preventative approach. But this work may be under the radar and many organisations may not even see their work in this light. For example, befriending, sport and exercise, community events, older people groups and youth activities all play a key role in prevention of poor health and promotion of wellbeing but are perhaps not captured statistically or reported elsewhere. It would be desirable to capture this activity needs so that it can be recognised, better integrated and understood by the CPP.