



Report by the Empowered DIG Chair

West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership Management Group - February 2021

Subject: Empowered DIG Update - Wellbeing

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of wellbeing focussed activity being undertaken under the auspices of the Empowered DIG.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The CPP Management Group is asked to
- Note the contents of the report and the work undertaken and planned.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Empowered DIG action plan spans three local outcomes: We live in engaged and cohesive communities; Citizens are confident, resilient and responsible and Carers are supported to address their needs.
- 3.2 This report provides members with an update on the key wellbeing focussed activity undertaken during the operational year to date. Additionally, it provides an indication of the focus of activity moving forward as we progress through Covid response to recovery.

4. Main Issues

COVID Response

- 4.1 The announcement of the initial Covid19 Stay at Home Order (Lockdown) on March 23rd 2020 saw a comprehensive community response to help support community resilience and safeguard the welfare of vulnerable residents. The service packages offered provided support in 3 main areas of need – reducing loneliness and isolation (via daily resident welfare calls and service-specific user check-ins), ensuring food security (via supported shopping, foodbank services and community meals initiatives) and medicine compliance (via prescription collection support).

4.2 Community planning wide partnership engagements were strengthened via the operation of the Local Response Management Team (LRMT) structure and the positive links made with the local authority Picking Up the Pieces (PUTP) crisis line team, where appropriate. An infographic outlining the scale of activity in the first lockdown period (until August 2020) is included at Appendix 1.

4.3 Examples of wellbeing impacts achieved through these inputs include the following:

May 2020: Welfare call volunteer concerns were expressed regarding an elderly man who continually politely declined offers of shopping delivery support. The volunteer felt that as he had no visitors or close family, it was unlikely that he would have been able to gain shopping during the early pandemic period. After several follow-up calls with WDCVS staff, it was determined that the person had no access to available funds and had been embarrassed to ask for support when he 'couldn't pay his own way'. After reassurance that he was not alone in this position and that his welfare was the paramount consideration, a shopping list was agreed that supported his dietary needs and a delivery of 2 weeks food was made available, funded through WDCVS secured resources.

July 2020: Referral information received via the local authority PUTP service suggested a resident living with depression and reporting having no access to sleeping or cooking facilities and would like someone to speak to. A mobile number was provided, which was initially not answered. Attempts to contact the client continued over a 24 hours period and when successful, quickly identified a need for more supportive contacts, leading to successful referrals to two local third sector organisations. Staff also contacted Duty Social Work colleagues regarding the issue of access to domestic amenities. The Duty Officer contacted the client, ensuring he had adequate food provision and helped ensure the welfare fund was accessed; feeding back to the staff in a timely manner, allowing the provision of welfare calls to continue effectively.

4.4 Volunteer support proved crucial throughout the period, with over 350 confirmed volunteering offers received as a result of the Scotland Cares national initiative. Entering the autumn and with a general return to work for many, this resource significantly reduced, however a number have maintained volunteering.

4.5 While a number of residents receiving initial support were able to return to self-sufficiency/family support as the initial lockdown restrictions eased, a number of clients retained ongoing support and were signposted and referred to local support services. All supported clients received a 'Thank You' card from WDCVS expressing thanks for their trust as a partner in their care during the period and reinforcing contact details should any further need be experienced.

4.6 As West Dunbartonshire has progressed through varying levels of restrictions, and now entering a second period of national restrictions, humanitarian support services have again been stepped up in anticipation of renewed demand.

- 4.7** The response to the Covid emergency has presented an opportunity to reflect on wider community resilience issues and has helped placed focus on how responses to adverse weather, health or other incidents could also be better supported via community level engagement and volunteer assistance. Work is underway to develop a more long-term 'West Dunbartonshire Cares' community and volunteer resilience network to help support such activity including details of skills eg. profile of sector-led community halls and venues, specific service offerings, and for individuals, PVG scheme members, first aid trained volunteers, holders of driving licences etc.

Community Empowerment

- 4.8** In support of this, and as part of the Empowered DIG Community Empowerment Strategy led actions, work is underway to populate the LinkUp West Dunbartonshire community portal <https://www.linkupwestdunbartonshire.org/>. This site allows community organisations to publicly share information on available services, projects, resources and opportunities. When fully developed, this site will be a valuable to allow increased individual awareness and promote better sector connectivity.
- 4.9** Following a cross-sector meeting in December, work is ongoing to progress the Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan, postponed from March 2020. Led by the WDC Communities Team, activity in the coming period will include the development of a Project Board and Delivery Group. Short life task focussed working groups will also be established to address key activity areas as the action plan is finalised.
- 4.10** Emerging evidence highlights the significant and unequal negative impacts of Covid (both the direct effects of contracting the illness, and the indirect harms arising from lockdown measures required to control the spread of the virus), exacerbating many pre-existing inequalities and exposing the vulnerability of some population groups to adverse shocks.
- 4.11** DIG partners have identified the need to prioritise recovery actions which consider a life-cycle approach to challenging poverty experienced by individuals, families and communities across the authority area. The Child Poverty Action Plan is a key local document in this regard and planned DIG actions including the development of a West Dunbartonshire Anti-Poverty Network to ensure the voices of lived experience are heard and that their experiences are effectively represented in actions taken to help address poverty.
- 4.12** In the first phase of activity (calendar year 2021), the network will look to focus attention on engaging the following groups:
- People with a disability or suffering ill-health
 - Lone parents, larger families
 - Carers.

Digital Connectivity

- 4.13** Digital connectivity is an important element in reducing isolation and increasing community resilience, with many services from GP appointments to service engagements rapidly moving into the on-line space. The Scottish Government Connecting Scotland scheme has assisted in ensuring that digital availability is increased.
- 4.14** West Dunbartonshire has been successful in securing and distributing a significant number of new devices and data packages across both phases of the initiative – phase 1 focussed on older people (autumn) and phase 2 on children and families (winter). Examples of wellbeing reach locally include the engagement of Kinship Care West Dunbartonshire, using technology to maintain regular contact and support with members and also allowing cared for children to maintain education and friendship links.
- 4.15** Moving forward, DIG actions include an emphasis being placed on increasing support capacity to allow local residents to feel more confident getting on-line and being safe on-line. Volunteer recruitment and training is being progressed, with a view to offering a range of training and support options when Covid restrictions allow.

Carers Strategy

- 4.16** A refresh of the local Carers Strategy commenced in autumn 2020 with a corresponding implementation plan due by March 2021. This refresh seeks to further promote the role of unpaid carers, ensure access to appropriate respite to support life alongside caring and raise awareness of carers rights and the role of the Young Carers Statement and Adult Carers Support Plans. Lessons learned from the Covid interruption have also been reviewed and will be considered as means of strengthening the plan moving forward.
- 4.17** Carers Scotland estimate that 17% of adults and 9% of young people are unpaid carers. An ageing population with improved life expectancy for people with long term health conditions or complex disabilities will mean that higher levels of care will be provided for longer across West Dunbartonshire communities.
- 4.18** Caring responsibilities can have an adverse impact on the physical and mental health, education and employment potential of those who care, and can result in poorer health and quality of life outcomes; highlighting a need to ensure carers have access to a range of flexible options which can support a life alongside caring. Without this, a carer's ability to maintain their caring role can diminish and lead to the admission of the cared for person to hospital or residential care.
- 4.19** The draft action plan seeks to address this, prioritising actions such as partner agency engagement and ensuring that all staff have received Equal Partners

in Care training (EPiC). For carers, the action plan seeks to increase awareness of:

- Carer specific benefits
- Access to services
- Short breaks and respite services
- Self Directed Support options.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no personnel issues

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising at present. The introduction of Covid specific funding has assisted delivery during the 2020-21 financial year, however should the interruption and subsequent restrictions continue into the 2021/22 financial year, financial implications may come into focus.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There are no specific unassessed risks relating to this report

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 Equalities Impact Assessments are carried out in all key action areas as required.

9. Consultation

9.1 Ongoing consultation activity with both providers and service recipients is undertaken allowing for flexibility of approach as needs throughout the pandemic progress alter.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The contents of this report could impact on all community planning strategic priority areas.

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Background Papers: Empowered DIG Action Plan 2020-22

Wards Affected: All