



Northumberland

County Council

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

9 DECEMBER 2021

COVID 19 INEQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Report by: Philip Hunter, Interim Senior Service Director

Cabinet Member: Cllr Glen Sanderson, Leader of Council

Purpose of report

1. This Report presents an analysis of the impacts of Covid 19 – how the pandemic has affected residents, communities and businesses across Northumberland. This is set out at Appendix A. The Impact Assessment (IA) is a first draft and is intended to be an ongoing area of work which will be refreshed and added to as new and more up-to-date information becomes available. Partners from the Board and beyond may wish to consider whether an inequalities impact assessment of their own area would be helpful to inform future planning and contribute to a richer picture of this issue. We will also gather more information on people's perceptions of the impacts of covid on their lives and the wider community.
2. The intention is to use this analysis to inform policy and decision-making by the Council as part of our recovery process. Moving forward, this IA may also be used to shape our conversations with regional partners as well as Government.

Recommendations

3. Health & Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
 - Consider and comment on the Covid IA document in Appendix A;
 - Consider how partners and communities can contribute to a broader assessment; and,
 - Agree to receive regular updates on this work.

Link to Council's Corporate Plan

4. This Report is relevant to the following priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan:
 - **Thriving** – we will vigorously secure more and new investment and good quality jobs into the county.
 - **Living** - We will care for our residents, support the most vulnerable in our society and help people to live healthy lives

- **Learning** - We will ensure the best education standards for our children and young people.
- **Enjoying** - We will maintain, protect and enhance the environment, prioritising our commitments on Climate Change.
- **Connecting** - We will deliver high-quality services in all our communities and secure investment in housing and transport across the County.
- **How** - In everything we do, we will listen to and communicate with residents, businesses and partners and, ensure value for money in our services. We will pull our weight regionally and nationally, working with our partners to secure maximum benefit for residents and businesses.

Key Issues

5. We know the Covid pandemic has had profound impacts on individuals, families, communities and businesses across Northumberland. First and foremost, there have been the immediate impacts on health and wellbeing resulting directly from Coronavirus. In addition, the unprecedented pressure on health services during Covid has created a backlog of hospital treatments and we are already seeing increased demand for GP appointments and emergency care as well as delayed presentations of cancer and other diseases.
6. Alongside the immediate health impacts, there have, of course, been wider social and economic impacts from Covid through: restrictions on economic activity; limits on social interaction; interruption to education; and, constraints on community life. Pre-Covid, we knew there were inequalities between the most and least disadvantaged areas and groups in Northumberland. The pandemic will have exacerbated some of these inequalities although it is too early to be certain about the long-term trends.
7. Health and wellbeing are determined by a wide range of factors such as employment, poverty, housing, education and environment and that many of these factors have been adversely impacted through Covid. For example, many people have also had to cope with a reduction in income and increased financial pressures as businesses closed during the lockdown periods. The wellbeing of young people has been particularly impacted by interruptions to school, college and university terms as well as lack of interaction with their friends at critical stages in their development.
8. There were also some unexpected, short-term positive benefits. In particular, the initial lockdown period saw a reduction in vehicle emissions as many people had to work from home. Less traffic and fresh air encouraged more people to get out and enjoy the benefits of walking and cycling in their local areas. It is important that we also identify and seek to build on some of these unexpected, positive impacts as well as addressing the negative impacts.

Supporting recovery, understanding the impacts and adding to our knowledge

9. As our communities continue to recover from the Covid pandemic, the Council has committed to working with all partners to reduce health inequalities in our

communities. Everything the Council does - providing education facilities; ensuring new, affordable homes; tackling climate change; keeping neighbourhoods clean and safe; helping vulnerable residents; providing parks, open spaces and leisure & cultural facilities; funding benefits advice working to ensure the best start in life – these all have an impact on our residents’ health and wellbeing.

10. A Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HIIA) is a means of assessing the impact on people of applying a proposed, new or revised policy or practice. A HIIA prompts thinking about potential differential impacts based on income, employment, social and cultural status. The aim of this IA is to identify areas where inequalities and/or health and wellbeing has deteriorated but also those areas where Covid 19 might have had a beneficial effect. The scope of the IA is focused on those areas which are within the Council’s sphere of influence as the purpose of it is to inform the Council’s recovery plans and a review of elements of the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
11. As we move forward with partners to support recovery, we will use our understanding of the social, economic and health impacts of Covid to underpin decision-making and to targets help and resources where it is needed most. As more data and research becomes available, the IA will develop further. To provide a wider view, H&WB partners may wish to consider (if they haven’t already done so) how the pandemic has affected their areas of operation and how that is going to inform future service planning. Sharing that information will create a richer picture of the Covid impacts on communities.
12. We intend to share a refined version of the IA with communities to explore whether the findings resonate with the experience of communities. A third stage would be to work with communities, building on existing assets to co-design solutions aimed at addressing these inequalities.

Implications

Policy	Whilst this report does not set out any direct policy implications, the intention is to use this analysis to inform policy and decision-making by the Council as part of our recovery process. Moving forward, this IA may also be used to shape our conversations with regional partners as well as Government.
Finance and value for money	Whilst this report contains no direct financial implications, the intention is to use this analysis to inform future policy and decision-making by the Council (alongside other considerations) which could have financial implications. Any such implications would be the subject of further reports.
Legal	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the intention is to use this analysis to inform future policy and decision-making by the Council (alongside other considerations). Any legal implications arising from future decisions will be brought forward in future reports.
Procurement	N/A.

Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	The Council's Corporate Plan is committed to driving social and economic recovery and tackling health inequalities across the County. It contains numerous priorities which will have a potentially positive impact on inequalities. Where future decisions or changes to services are required, these will be subject of Equalities Impacts Assessments which could be informed by this analysis (alongside other considerations).
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	This report does not set out any direct crime and disorder implications.
Customer Consideration	This report does not set out any direct customer implications.
Carbon reduction	This report does not set out any direct carbon reduction implications.
Health and Wellbeing	A key cross-cutting theme in the Council's Corporate Plan is tackling health inequalities that exist in communities. The Council is committed to harnessing its services and functions to address the factors which have the greatest influence on health and wellbeing, including housing, employment, education, access to leisure and environment. We intent to use this analysis to help inform our approach to tackling health inequalities moving forward.
Wards	All

Background papers:

Report sign off.

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	All
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Glen Sanderson

Author and Contact Details

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