

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET	5 August 2020



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
South Ribble Together Community Hub	Leader	Director of Neighbourhoods and Development

Is this report a <b>KEY DECISION</b> (i.e. more than £100,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	<b>No</b>
Is this report on the <b>Statutory Cabinet Forward Plan</b> ?	<b>Yes</b>
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council?	<b>No</b>
Is this report confidential?	<b>No</b>

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To update Cabinet on the work of South Ribble Together Community Hub.
2. To advise Cabinet on the plans to sustain COVID-19 related community support going forward.

#### PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

3. To acknowledge the work of South Ribble Together Community Hub.
4. To note plans to sustain COVID-19 related community support going forward.
5. To request that Cabinet investigate the impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health within the South Ribble area and how this is being responded to.

#### REASONS FOR THE DECISION

6. This report provides an update to members on the work undertaken by the South Ribble Together Community Hub and it also details the plans on how the hub will be sustained in the future. The report also recommends further work to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of the residents in South Ribble. It is apparent in the work undertaken by both the Community Hub and Business Hub that the impact of COVID-19 on mental health is a cause for concern and that it requires further investigation.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Excellence, Investment and Financial Sustainability	
Health, Wellbeing and Safety	x
Place, Homes and Environment	x

Projects relating to People in the Corporate Plan:

Our People and Communities	x
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## BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

8. South Ribble Together Community Hub was initially set up in March this year, as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff from services across the Council were brought together to be able to communicate with and engage vulnerable residents.
9. The purpose of the hub was to work with local partners, community groups, charities, services and volunteers to provide help and support. Principal priority has been given to the following people:
- Those on the NHS Shielded list. The names of the residents on the shielded list were provided by the government using criteria set by the government.
  - Those in need with no support from friends, family, neighbours or carers
10. Support offered by the hub includes:
- a) Proactively contacting residents who may be vulnerable or struggling, using NHS data as well as the Council's own records (e.g. those registered for assisted bin collections or in receipt of Council Tax Support.)
  - b) Provision of emergency food parcels / practical support with collection and delivery of shopping, if no other support available or the person is in hardship.
  - c) Provision of local trader lists (South Ribble businesses offering delivery / contactless purchases.)
  - d) Collection and delivery of prescribed medication, if no other support is available or the person is in hardship.
  - e) Referrals to appropriate statutory agencies, e.g. LCC social services, mental health team.

- f) Supported signposting for financial advice, e.g. DWP, Citizens Advice Bureau.
- g) Welfare calls for a friendly chat. Referrals to relevant agencies if there are more significant issues arising from isolation and loneliness.
- h) Help with accessing primary health services, e.g. walk in clinics, GP registration.
- i) Help with pet care such as dog walking, pet food or vet appointments.

**11.** The numbers of interactions to date are as follows: (Also shown as an infographic at Appendix A)

Total no. individuals we have made contact with via outbound calls	6083
Total no. individuals we have made contact with via inbound calls	2826
Total no. individuals we have sent postcards / letters to	13,800
Total no. individuals that have received support	882
Total no. individuals that have received support on multiple occasions	376
Total no. food parcels requested and issued	722
Total no. individual prescription collections	296
Total no. repeat prescription collections	52

**12.** Appendix B shows a geographical breakdown of demand, with a direct correlation between the highest need for COVID-19 related support and social / economic deprivation.

**13.** The Council has continued to deliver its Holiday Hunger Scheme through the pandemic. This totalled 350 children at Easter, 505 in May half-term and the Summer programme for up to 1000 children is now underway.

**14.** In addition to supporting individuals and families, the hub has worked closely with local foodbanks, charities and community groups to enable them to maintain and evolve their services. Examples include:

- Food and toiletries supplied to foodbanks to sustain their stock levels
- Freezer space provided for Age Concern's ready meals for older people
- Easter eggs and paper towels distributed to care homes by members
- Temporary accommodation offered to TippyToes BabyBank at the Civic Centre.

**15.** Existing relationships with other public services have been strengthened through joint working. Officers from the Police and Fire Services have been critical in helping the hub to identify potentially vulnerable households; sharing information and carrying out door to door checks.

**16.** As shielding draws to a close, the sustainability of community support is being considered on a South Ribble footprint by the Council and its partners.

## **PROPOSALS**

### **Partnership Working**

- 17.** South Ribble Together Hub has been supported throughout by South Ribble Partnership and its partners who have been able to provide additional capacity and services that can be referred in to.
- 18.** Building on the strengthened relationships and the need to sustain the hub and its support network over the coming weeks, through the lead of the hub and with support from South Ribble Partnership, plans are being developed to:
  - a) Implement a 'single front door' approach providing a triage-based system with our partners from Citizens Advice. This will help to not only with the customer's presenting issue for support, but identify other (often underlying) matters which contribute, providing an early action and prevention type of approach.
  - b) Review the core purpose of South Ribble Integrated Team (SRIT) as an early intervention method where there may be risk of harm or complex vulnerability.
  - c) Make greater use of Refernet to help agencies and services refer between each other, in a secure and structured way. More partners have joined refernet over the past weeks, which has included Progress Housing Group, Key Unlocking Futures and Lancashire Carers N|Compass.
  - d) Developing our local support for volunteer and community led groups by providing a central platform where they can post volunteer opportunities, as well as providing access to digital tools to assist groups manage their volunteers, access training and support. This is provided by Tempo and we are actively working with Our Lancashire and Community Futures in developing our local support offer.

### **Tackling Digital Exclusion**

- 19.** Responding to emerging needs, the increase and more pervasive use of digital technology, could lead to greater digital exclusion. South Ribble Partnership is working with the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership to support a scheme for access to digital devices and connectivity to those most in need.
- 20.** There has been widescale acknowledgement by public services during the pandemic of the need for access to a digital device and wifi (or an alternative data source) to be able to access key services such as Universal Credit accounts and online medical appointments.
- 21.** Full criteria are being developed, but the role of the hub will be to identify individuals in need of a device/connectivity in order to receive ongoing support/advice or access to services which cannot be accessed elsewhere.
- 22.** A summary of planned functions is set out below:

Retain	Transfer	Develop
<p>625625 helpline – SRBC staff will continue to run the established hub helpline.</p> <p>A further 2,500 letters were sent to residents on the Shielded list to inform residents that the hub is continuing after 1<sup>st</sup> August.</p>	<p>Complex queries – helpline calls requiring a multi-agency response will go through refernet.</p>	<p>‘Single front door’ approach to be customer friendly, secure and accountable.</p>
<p>Emergency food parcels – a stock of food parcels will be held for emergency deliveries, including evenings and weekends via the on-call service.</p>	<p>Long term food support – those in need of regular food parcels post shielding will be referred to foodbanks.</p>	<p>Foodbank Network to be established; scope to share resources and good practice, create a standard referral approach across the borough.</p>
<p>Welfare calls – members will continue to make welfare calls at their discretion and be supported if any issues arise.</p>	<p>Shopping and prescription collection / delivery requests will be referred to local NHS Volunteer Responders.</p>	<p>Digital inclusion work to build confidence and open up equality of access to those currently excluded.</p>

### **Mental Health impact of COVID-19**

23. Anecdotally, staff from across the Council are being informed of mental health pressures and challenges being brought about by the pandemic. This ranges from exacerbation of pre-existing conditions to new and/or escalating anxieties. To understand more about how these issues are affecting residents, and to look at ways to mitigate, address and support them, further research is needed.

### **CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

24. Consultation has been carried out on an ongoing basis, with conversations taking place at every opportunity to find out what support is needed, what other organisations are doing, and requesting feedback from people the hub supports.
25. Outcomes from these conversations have ranged from minor tweaks to service delivery, though to major decisions such as the continuation of the Holiday Hunger scheme through the Summer Holidays.
26. To sustain the Hub consultation has been carried out with our partners such as the Police, schools’ networks, Housing Associations and LCC and members of the Voluntary sector.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

27. None

### **AIR QUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

28. None.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

29. The diagram below shows the data flow around risk. On an operational basis, the hub has a thorough risk register for work inside the Civic Centre and in the community. Business Continuity Management Team (BCMT) monitors and communicates strategic risk for the organisation.
30. Lancashire Resilience Forum is the sub-regional lead for COVID; the hub provides a weekly return on demand levels, number of contacts and possible risks / threats to delivery. National statistics, patterns and concerns are fed into this group by a central government representative and disseminated down.



31. Although staffing levels are now reduced as demand had fallen, the Council has employees who are trained and experienced should activity need to be upscaled again.
32. If required, space at the Civic Centre could be reinstated as a distribution hub, and SRBC vehicles committed for hub use.

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

33. No adverse impacts on any of the protected characteristics. Positive impact on those people who have been shielding for reasons of age, disability and / or maternity. The work of the hub directly supports the Council's objective of reducing inequality.

## COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

34. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. The costs involved with operating the hub are being monitored and funding has been received from central government that can be used to support this work. Thorough details regarding the financial impact of Covid-19, both to date and the forecasts for the rest of this year and beyond, will be reported in the next budget monitoring report for quarter 1.

## COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

35. There are no legal implications directly arising from the report.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

36. There are no background papers to this report.

## APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Map showing demand for hub services.
- Appendix B – Infographic – numbers of people supported
- Appendix C – Sample case studies

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