



Public Service Reform Board

Date: Tuesday 15 December 2020

Time: 2.00 pm **Public meeting** Yes

Venue: This meeting is being entirely held by video conferencing facilities
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Membership

Councillor Maria Crompton (Chair)	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mike Bird	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Brookfield	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Karen Calder	Shropshire County Council
Councillor George Duggins	Coventry City Council
Councillor Karen Grinsell	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Brigid Jones	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Sebastian Lowe	Rugby Borough Council
Councillor Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council
Henrietta Brealey	Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
Laura Caulfield	Higher Education
Sue Ibbotson	Public Health England
Vanessa Jardine	West Midlands Police
Paul Jennings	Chief Executive NHS Birmingham & Solihull CCG
Tom McNeil	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Catherine Mangan	Higher Education
Sarah Middleton	CEO Black Country Consortium
Jatinder Sharma	Further Education
Alison Tonge	Director of Commissioning ,NHSE
Phil Loach	West Midlands Fire Service

Quorum for this meeting shall be one third of its members

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact:

Contact Wendy Slater, Senior Governance Services Officer
Telephone (0121) 214 7016
Email wendy.slater@wmca.org.uk

AGENDA

No.	Item	Presenting	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	Chair	None
2.	Declarations of Interest Members are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they have in an item being discussed during the course of the meeting. In addition, the receipt of any gift or hospitality should be declared where the value is thought to have exceeded £25 (gifts) or £40 (hospitality).	Chair	None
3.	Appointment of Vice-Chair To appoint a Vice-Chair of the board for the remainder of 2020/21.	Chair	None
4.	Chair's Remarks (if any)	Chair	None
5.	Minutes - 10 September 2020	Chair	1 - 4
6.	Matters Arising	Chair	None
7.	Single Assurance Framework - Impact on Thematic Board Terms of Reference and Role	Jodie Townsend	5 - 12
8.	Recovery Co-ordination Group - Community Recovery Priorities	Claire Dhami	13 - 40
9.	Update on Inclusive Growth in Practice and Next Steps	Claire Spencer	Verbal Report
10.	Update on Homelessness Taskforce	Neelam Sunder/Jean Templeton	Verbal Report
11.	Punishing Abuse	Tom McNeil/Claire Dhami	41 - 46
12.	Learning from Lockdown	Claire Dhami	Verbal Report



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Public Service Reform Board

Thursday 10 September 2020 at 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Maria Crompton (Chair)	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Louise Miles	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Karen Grinsell	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Brigid Jones	Birmingham City Council
Laura Caulfield	Higher Education
Tom McNeil	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Lina Martino	Public Health England

In Attendance

Jean Templeton	Homelessness Taskforce
Ed Cox	West Midlands Combined Authority
Carl Craney	West Midlands Combined Authority
Annie Kehoe	West Midlands Combined Authority
Claire Dhami	West Midlands Combined Authority
Anna Humphreys	West Midlands Combined Authority
Tanya Patel	West Midlands Combined Authority
Claire Spencer	West Midlands Combined Authority

Item Title No.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Jenny Wood (ADAS), Henrietta Brealey and Paul Faulkner (Birmingham Chamber of Commerce), Paul Jennings (Birmingham and Solihull CCG), Councillor Ian Brookfield (City of Wolverhampton Council), Catherine Morgan (HE representative), Jayne Kemp (NHS), Nick Page (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council), Sue Ibbotson (Public Health England), Councillor Izzie Seccombe (Warwickshire County Council) and Vanessa Jardine (West Midlands Police).

2. Nomination of substitutes

Rachel O'Connor had been nominated as a substitute for Paul Jennings (Birmingham and Solihull CCG), (Councillor Louise Miles had been nominated as a substitute for Councillor Ian Brookfield (City of Wolverhampton Council) and Lina Martins had been nominated as a substitute for Sue Ibbotson (Public Health England).

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made relative to items under consideration at the meeting.

4. Chair's Remarks (if any)

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to this, her first meeting as Chair of the Public Services Reform Board. She advised that it was also the first meeting of the Board to be attended by Ed Cox, WMCA Director of Inclusive Growth and Public Service Reform. She reported that due to time pressures, it would only be possible to consider one report at this meeting and invited the Board to determine which report should be selected. Ed Cox suggested that the report on 'Emerging PSR Directorate Strategy' would be useful in providing context to the Board and that if time allowed, the item on 'Recovery Coordination Group Community Recovery Priorities' could also be considered.

The Chair and Ed Cox also gave a brief resume of their respective roles and careers.

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters Arising

With reference to Minute No. 18, Ed Cox updated the Board on progress with the Design Charter and advised that meetings continued to be held with the Design Collective with detailed guidance and case studies being presented to the Housing and Land Delivery Board. He explained how the Design Charter would link to other WMCA workstreams with an operating manual being compiled and an on-line portal being created.

Councillor Brigid Jones expressed reservations on the relationship between the Design Charter and local authorities own individual planning policies. Ed Cox reported that this issue had been discussed at the Design Collective and it had been acknowledged that the sovereignty of local authorities was a key issue with no intention or pursuing a Design Panel to arbitrate between the two.

7. Presentation: Emerging PSR Directorate Strategy

The Board received a PowerPoint presentation from Ed Cox on the 'Emerging PSR Directorate Strategy' which outlined the Directorate's role as part of the WMCA and on the work undertaken to date.

Tom McNeill referred to the constraints on carbon reduction and advised on the steps being taken by West Midlands Police to take social value and carbon reduction together and that Consultants were to be appointed shortly to assist with this work. He suggested that an opportunity existed for the respective Teams at the WMCA and WMP to collaborate on this workstream. He also advised that the initiative on Health Prevention was supported and was mirrored in the Devolution submission made to Government.

Councillor Brigid Jones sought to distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' governance and the roles and responsibilities of: i) The WMCA; ii) Local authorities working in collaboration with the WMCA; and iii) Local Authorities acting alone. She commented that much of the work would fall to individual local authorities but that there would be opportunities to align and co-ordinate work with other partners. Rachel O'Connor suggested that there was a need to work through which footprints were most appropriate and to evaluate what improvements could be made.

Ed Cox welcomed the support offered to date and the commitment to joint working. He outlined the '4th delivery programme for PSR Reform' and commented on the negative views expressed in relation to what had been achieved from the Devolution Deals. He advised that this was unfair inasmuch as specific measurable targets had either not been set or funding commitments had not been offered. He assured the Board that, in fact, considerable progress had been made on the PSR agenda. He reported on the challenges going forward and on the need to build trust and develop a shared vision.

Councillor Brigid Jones commented that building trust and achieving consensus would only be possible if the local authorities and public sector organisations all bought in to the principles under consideration. Councillor Karen Grinsell advised that in the STP trust had been built but that this did not happen quickly. She queried whether the challenges were understood at all levels of the various organisations. Ed Cox acknowledged the challenges faced and assured the Board that while discussions were held with the upper levels of organisations, that his Team did engage at different levels.

Laura Caulfield suggested that an opportunity existed to learn from the experience on the work undertaken on social economy and the Covid-19 recovery as this had led to trust being developed at various levels of partner organisations. The Chair welcomed this suggestion and commented that examples of good practice could be considered at future meetings.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation be received and noted;
2. That arrangements be made for a special meeting to consider this matter and the outstanding Agenda items.

8. Recovery Co-ordination Group Community Recovery Priorities

Resolved:

That consideration of this matter be deferred.

9. Presentation: Inclusive Growth in Practice and Next Steps

Resolved:

That consideration of this matter be deferred.

10. Update on the Homelessness Taskforce

Resolved:

That consideration of this matter be deferred.

11. Update on Punishing Abuse Research

Resolved:

That consideration of this matter be deferred.

The meeting ended at 2.54 pm.

Public Service Reform Board

Date	15 December 2020
Report title	Single Assurance Framework - Impact on Thematic Board Terms of Reference and Role
Portfolio Lead	Public Service Reform & Social Economy - Councillor Maria Crompton
Accountable Chief Executive	Deborah Cadman, West Midlands Combined Authority email: deborah.cadman@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7200
Accountable Employees	<p>Ed Cox, Executive Director Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk Tel: 07788 224179</p> <p>Julia Goldsworthy, Director of Strategy email: julia.goldsworthy@wmca.org.uk Tel: (0121) 214 7941</p> <p>Tim Martin, Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer email: tim.martin@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7435</p>

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Public Service Reform Board is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the Single Assurance Framework requirements for Thematic boards.
- (2) Consider proposed Portfolio improvements for PSR Board.
- (3) Endorse the amended Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix A

1. Purpose

1.1 On 24 July 2020 the WMCA Board adopted a revised 'Single' Assurance Framework following an internal review. The Assurance Framework sets out how the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) will use public money responsibly, both openly and transparently, and achieve best value for money. The intent of the review undertaken was to streamline and improve decision-making, driving best practice and consistency.

1.2 The purpose of the Single Assurance Framework is to deliver the following:

- Deliver consistency and accountability within decision-making
- Ensure ability to develop projects at speed whilst maintaining required development standards
- Provide WMCA with Financial and Governance Protections for stewardship of public funds
- Improve standards of project initiation, development, delivery and oversight
- Ensure that there is alignment between organisational objectives and outputs - "the Golden Thread"

2. Single Assurance Framework – Implications for Thematic Boards

2.1 The Single Assurance Framework (SAF) has implications for Thematic Boards, it requires each Thematic Board to undertake a set of core roles. The intention of the core roles is to ensure that Thematic Boards are applying the appropriate oversight, support and portfolio development roles required to support the key principles and application of the SAF.

2.2 The proposed core roles for each Thematic Board are as follows:

- i. **Play a key role in developing and approving the Portfolio Annual Business Plan** - ensuring that it demonstrates a clear 'golden thread' to the WMCA Annual Plan and strategic objectives, highlighting prioritisation considerations where appropriate and then supporting and challenging delivery.
- ii. **Provide oversight of the Portfolio Project Pipeline** - taking ownership of supporting and challenging the Lead Member on the pipeline and monitoring its content, providing feedback to Business Areas (but not instruction) and performance managing bids and project development to ensure delivery of the golden thread.
- iii. **Advise on major policy change within Portfolio** - Consider and advise upon major policy change within their thematic area, delivering expert stakeholder engagement and ensuring ownership and accountability.
- iv. **Performance manage Portfolio project delivery** - at thematic level (below strategic), ensuring effective and appropriate challenge to the delivery of projects and programmes, ensuring the continued delivery of the golden thread

2.3 In order to support delivery of these core roles each Portfolio will be required to produce a Project Pipeline that sets out all bids, developing projects and projects in delivery within that Portfolio. The Pipeline will be expected to include key details about the project, the stage that it is at and be open for review, challenge and support through the relevant Thematic board.

2.4 Each Project Pipeline will be regularly updated and will be available to view by its Thematic Board. Each Project Pipeline will also feed into the WMCA Activity Register which is a new central register of all WMCA activity.

3. Thematic Board – Portfolio Improvements

3.1 As part of the work undertaken through the Single Assurance Framework Project, further review of Thematic Boards took place as part of the response to the Internal Project Governance Review which had highlighted inconsistent practices and approaches being taken by Thematic Boards and the negative impact this inconsistency has, alongside consensus opinion at a senior officer level that Thematic Boards were not contributing to the delivery of outputs and strategic objectives.

3.2 As a result the Senior Leadership Team tasked the Single Assurance Framework Project with developing proposals for a consistent role, purpose and approach to Thematic Boards to help drive effective, clear and accountable decision-making, ensure appropriate political oversight and support for Portfolio Leads and to support the intent to deliver a 'Golden Thread' from strategic objective through initiation, development, delivery and evaluation within the WMCA.

3.3 This work was in addition to the developing SAF core roles that would be required to be delivered at each Thematic Board.

3.4 This work has led to the drafting of a standardised Terms of Reference for Thematic Boards that is intended to deliver a consistent approach to Thematic Boards across the WMCA as well as support the Single Assurance Framework core role requirements.

3.5 The work undertaken to provide a more consistent approach across Thematic Boards and therefore deliver consistent application of standards recommends the following:

- Each Thematic Board to play a key role in the oversight and management of the development and delivery of Portfolio projects, ensuring that they are contributing to the delivery of WMCA Strategic Objectives.
- Relevant Portfolio Lead to chair each Thematic Board.
- Membership to consist of 7 Constituent Council representatives, preferably the relevant Cabinet Member for each Constituent Authority.
- Membership to consist of 1 non-con council representative per county area (Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire) and for the representative to be a relevant Cabinet Member where possible.
- Membership to consist of representative from each LEP (3 members).
- Membership to consist of additional portfolio specific membership dependent on each Thematic area.
- Minimum of 4 Thematic Board meetings per year in order to ensure consistent quarterly review of Portfolio Project Pipeline.
- Quorum of Portfolio Lead + a third of voting members.

- 3.6 As stated above the intention of the proposed consistencies and the SAF core roles is to provide a consistent role, purpose and approach across all the Thematic Boards to help drive effective, clear and accountable decision-making, ensure appropriate political oversight and support for Portfolio Leads and to support the intent to deliver a 'Golden Thread' from strategic objective through initiation, development, delivery and evaluation within the WMCA.
- 3.7 Engagement has taken place with the Executive Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform in developing the SAF and the Thematic Board consistency approach as set out above. In addition, this engagement has covered Portfolio specific opportunities to improve the application of the PSR Board and its role. This engagement has led to a recommendation that the following additions are also included in the terms of reference:
- Relevant Board Member to act as Deputy Chair.
 - Additional Board Members be sought from Local Authorities who have an interest in the portfolio area where there is no Cabinet Lead.
- 3.8 A key role for each Thematic board is to provide support to the Portfolio Lead, engagement with the Executive Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform has help develop an amended list of functions for inclusion in the Terms of Reference to provide this support.
- 3.9 All of the requirements set out in this report, the SAF core roles, the consistency improvements and the developments to better support Portfolio Leads have resulted in an amended terms of reference for the PSR Board being proposed for endorsement. These Terms of Reference are detailed in **APPENDIX A**.
- 3.10 The PSR Board is asked to consider the content of this report and endorse the Terms of Reference proposed in Appendix A.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct spend or budgetary implications as a result of the recommendations within this report. The assurance frameworks and delegated approval structures detailed within this report are considered to be appropriately designed to ensure WMCA deliver value for money against all its investments and that the financial controls and checks required to deliver those investments are robust.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 It is a statutory requirement that the Combined Authority has an assurance framework in place.
- 5.2 There are also statutory duties on the Authority in relation to best value and securing the best use of public money in terms of projects and spending. Failure to have a robust assurance framework in place would result in action by the Authority's internal and external auditors and would affect the value for money judgement provided on an annual basis. It could also result in action being taken by the WMCA Statutory Officers

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The composition of the Thematic Boards and other governance structures of the WMCA normally reflect the composition of the political leadership in constituent local authorities. To this extent, at the current time, they do not reflect the full diversity of the West Midlands region and decision-making might be skewed by unconscious bias. Where there is scope for local authorities to consider diversifying who might represent them on such Boards this could be considered and where there is scope for the Thematic Board to consider co-opting non-voting members on the grounds of their gender or protected characteristics then this too could be considered.

7. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 7.1 The WMCA has developed its own standards that it wishes to drive through its projects and programmes, one of which is consideration and development of Inclusive Growth. Continued regional inequalities and the impact of Covid-19 on some groups reinforces the need for the WMCA to continue to develop processes and initiatives to drive inclusive growth.

8. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 8.1 The Assurance Framework applies to any relevant activity across both Constituent and Non-constituent areas.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 None.

10. Schedule of Background Papers

- 10.1 ARAC September 2019
10.2 ARAC November 2019
10.3 ARAC July 2020
10.4 WMCA Board July 2020

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix A – Proposed Terms of Reference Public Service Reform Board

<p>Purpose:</p>	<p>The Board will play a key role in the oversight and management of the development and delivery of Portfolio programmes and projects, ensuring that they are contributing to the delivery of WMCA Strategic Objectives and the Annual Business Plan.</p> <p>The Board will be responsible for the oversight of delivery of the PSR Business Plan, contributing to its development and monitoring its delivery.</p> <p>The Board will assist in the accelerated delivery of public service reform across the West Midlands region.</p>
<p>Accountable to:</p>	<p>WMCA Board</p>
<p>Membership:</p>	<p><u>Voting Members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chaired by WMCA Portfolio Holder for PSR ○ Deputy Chair by relevant Board Member (to be agreed) ○ Constituent Members – Relevant Cabinet Member as determined by each Constituent Council ○ Non-Constituent Members – 1 Representative per county area (Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire) Representative to be a relevant Cabinet Member where possible ○ LEPs – Representative from each LEP Area <p><u>Non-Voting Members:</u></p> <p>The following subject specific guests will be invited to Board meetings as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No more than 8 additional Constituent Members, in total, for those elected members with an interest but no Cabinet Lead. ○ Chair of the West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce ○ Chair of the Social Economy Taskforce ○ West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner ○ Chief Constable West Midlands Police ○ West Midlands Chief Fire Officer ○ Director of West Midlands Combined Universities ○ Chair of the Institute for Community Research & Development (ICRD)Centre Director, Public Health England ○ Chief Executive NHS Birmingham & Solihull CCG ○ Director of Commissioning ,NHSE ○ West Midlands Head of Region, ADASS ○ West Midlands Childrens Services Lead
<p>Chair:</p>	<p>The Chair will be the Portfolio Lead for Public Service Reform</p>
<p>Functions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To review, monitor and approve the PSR Annual Business Plan, ensuring that it demonstrates a clear golden thread to the WMCA Strategic Objectives, highlighting prioritisation considerations where appropriate and supporting and challenging delivery of the Plan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the PSR Portfolio Project Pipeline in order to monitor its content, providing feedback to the Business Area and performance managing project development • To consider and advise upon major policy change within the PSR Portfolio • To performance manage the delivery of projects detailed within the PSR Portfolio Project Pipeline at Portfolio level, ensuring effective and appropriate challenge to the Business Area and stakeholders • To provide co-ordination and direction on strategic matters relating to the portfolio needs of the region. • To provide the forum for facilitating strategic conversations between the local authorities, stakeholders and WMCA • Lead and direct the development of critical enabling capabilities for public service reform, including workforce, digital, data, and research capabilities. • Identify and exploit opportunities for integrated working and investment to ensure delivery of programme objectives • Adopt and deliver the principles of PSR. • Nominate named lead individuals to oversee and contribute to the delivery of specific work- streams within the overall programme
Voting:	<p>All Members will have one vote each.</p> <p>The Chair will have a casting vote if required.</p>
Quorum:	WMCA Portfolio Lead + Third of Voting Members
Frequency:	Minimum of 4 times a year or more frequently as required to discharge its responsibilities

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Public Service Reform Board

Date	15 December 2020
Report title	Recovery Co-ordination Group Community Recovery Priorities
Portfolio Lead	Public Service Reform & Social Economy - Councillor Maria Crompton
Accountable Chief Executive	Deborah Cadman, West Midlands Combined Authority email: deborah.cadman@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7200
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk tel: 07788 224179
Report has been considered by	Recovery Co-ordination Group

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Public Service Reform Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note, and disseminate *Levelling-up the West Midlands: Our roadmap to community recovery and prospectus for government* and the next steps of the programme of activity to respond to the community recovery priorities and principles developed by the Recovery Coordination Group, and presented to the Recovery Forum.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update PSR Board on the programme of activity to respond to the community recovery priorities and principles presented to the Recovery Forum in July and September 2020.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting in July, the Recovery Forum endorsed a set of community recovery priorities and principles, and a process by which the Combined Authority would work with local authorities and other Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) partners on these matters. The Community Recovery Roadmap (attached) is a key milestone in that process. The Roadmap was endorsed by the mayor, leaders and portfolio holders at the Recovery Forum on Friday 20 November 2020.

3. Process

- 3.1 The Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) agreed the programme of work, led by Local Authorities, to align, enable, and support activity at a regional level where there is added value. This work has been sponsored by Nick Page (Chief Executive, Solihull) and Tim Johnson (Chief Executive, Wolverhampton), with the WMCA supporting the process.
- 3.2 The role of the Combined Authority has been - and will continue to be - one of co-ordination and support, developing a shared evidence base, facilitating and convening, and pulling together proposals to unlock access to resources and double devolution. Any involvement by the Combined Authority in delivery will be a mutually agreed regional approach or where this role is mandated by central government.
- 3.3 The community recovery priorities identified by the Citizens' Panel have provided a framework, but the nearly all delivery will be led by local authorities and their partners. Clearly there is scope for collaborative action but this must be decided and driven by local authorities and RCG partners themselves.

4 The Community Recovery Roadmap and Prospectus

- 4.1 The Community Recovery Roadmap sets out a united vision for the recovery we are seeking in the region – this is based on the 6 priorities and 4 cross cutting principles agreed by the Citizens Panel and agreed by the Recovery Forum.
- 4.2 The Roadmap includes 41 examples of good practice, 27 shared ambitions for recovery, 29 asks of government and 15 initial areas for future collaboration. Of the asks of government, over £2bn of these were set out in the WMCA *Recharge the West Midlands prospectus* for transport, affordable housing and skills programmes and these are repeated here. A further £203m is requested for programmes of work directly associated with community recovery on issues such as digital inclusion, radical health prevention and access to green spaces. All of the asks in this prospectus have been previously made in our Comprehensive Spending Review and Devolution White Paper and the primary recommendation is for a sustainable and fair funding settlement for local government.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Community Recovery process is deliberately permissive and open. Activity against any of the key priorities set out in the Roadmap will be led by local authorities and other agencies as appropriate.
- (1) Each of the 6 priority areas and the additional cross cutting theme of '*extra help for the most affected*' will benefit from a senior leader 'sponsor' from a constituent local authority. The sponsor will meet regularly with a priority area delivery lead to challenge and support progress and unlock barriers.
 - (2) We are developing 4 or 5 collaborative opportunities drawn from the roadmap with partners.
 - (3) The Combined Authority will be launching an open innovation competition aimed at gathering new ideas and supporting further good practice in community recovery.
 - (4) The Combined Authority will continue to lobby for funding and for devolution asks as part of its wider programme to secure Recharge, CSR and Devolution White Paper propositions.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are currently no financial implications associated with this report, but any new or extended activity generated by successful Comprehensive Spending Review asks will require officer time to develop and implement.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 The prospectus draws upon current and existing partner research – such as the State of the Region Health report – to ensure that the people who have borne the heaviest burden during the pandemic are prioritised for focus as part of community recovery. Local authority, public health and wider partners are working to ensure that the insight coming into this work reflects that.

9. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 9.1 There is a risk to inclusive growth if the people identified as part of 6.1 are not prioritised in the wider WMCA 'Recharge' document. As such, this community recovery-focused work is a vital 'bridge' between planned investments and those people, ensuring that everyone is benefiting from wider investments into the region.

10. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 10.1 This work is relevant across the WMCA 3-LEP region, but focuses specifically on the seven metropolitan authorities.

11. Other Implications

None.

Annex 1

Levelling-up the West Midlands: Our roadmap to community recovery and prospectus for government.

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Levelling-up the West Midlands

Our roadmap to community recovery and prospectus for government

November 2020



Introduction

This 'roadmap' addresses head on the issues that are causing great concern to communities across the West Midlands as we deal with the on-going coronavirus crisis. It sets out our shared hopes for the future and it calls upon government to match our ambitions with their support. It has been produced by the regional Recovery Co-ordination Group which was formed in June 2020 to address the wider social and community issues concerning the pandemic and to look forward to recovery. At the time of writing, 'recovery' still feels some way away, but unless we have a roadmap to address the key priorities emerging from pandemic response, it will be all the more difficult to achieve. There is much to do right now to level-up our region and build the foundations for future prosperity.

This roadmap focuses on the WMCA area as the economic centre of the wider West Midlands, though many of the opportunities to collaborate and asks of Government will benefit our broader region. It is a roadmap that offers multiple pathways for multiple partners not a single trajectory to success.

Strong relationships, joined-up place leadership and collaborative practice have been fundamental to the response so far.

This has occurred at all levels, in all of the places of the West Midlands. If there has been a golden thread in reflections from local partners at this time, it has been that this way of working – built on trust, shared adversity, and commitment to people and places – is something to continue beyond the crisis. In time, we must refocus this energy on the root causes of poor outcomes and building resilience against future crises.

Facing this crisis has taken an immediate reaction to safeguard lives and businesses, and a 'meanwhile' reaction to sustain that safeguarding. The shift from 'meanwhile' to recovery will occur at some stage in the coming months: being ready for that moment means planning for recovery before our citizens are living it.

We have made space for citizens of the West Midlands to shape our recovery because they are the experts. In summer 2020, the West Midlands Recovery Coordination Group convened a Citizens Panel, comprised of people from across the region, to ensure that recovery was aligned to their fears, hopes and experiences. The structure and content of our roadmap reflects their words, priorities and principles – and it is their expectation that their voices, influence and lived experiences will be part of the on-going recovery process.

This is a roadmap which captures the richness of the local response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the experiences and practices that citizens, the social economy, public services and local businesses want to learn from, as well as what should be strengthened and built upon as we emerge from the pandemic.

This is a roadmap that will be led by local authorities and their local partners. They have led the response to date, and they are best placed to lead the kinds of activity that will build back better. But to do this they need more sustainable support for future prosperity.

Government must lay solid foundations for real recovery through providing sustainable and fair funding for local government and unlocking a "double devolution" and "whole system" approach to level up the nation.

Six citizen priorities:

1. Living safely with coronavirus
2. Accessing healthcare and improving physical health
3. Mental health support and awareness
4. Education and young people
5. Jobs and training
6. Local businesses and high streets



Experiences of the pandemic have not been uniform, and it has been crucial to focus on people who have borne the heaviest burdens. Partners from across public services and the social economy have been working to understand which population groups have experienced the most serious consequences from the pandemic, reflecting on their own practice and next steps throughout. Their analysis – set out in the recent Health of the Region report – suggests that the main risk factors and inequalities included socioeconomic deprivation, ethnicity, occupation and prevalence of excess weight and diabetes. It is vital that these wider determinants of poor health are taken into account if we are to become a more resilient region in the future.

We have made asks of Government as to how they can support community recovery. Around £3bn of these asks were set out in the WMCA Recharge the West Midlands prospectus for transport, affordable housing and skills programmes and these are repeated here. **A further £203m is requested for programmes of work directly associated with community recovery on issues like digital inclusion, radical health prevention and access to green spaces.** We also need further devolved power. All of the asks in this prospectus have been previously made in our Comprehensive Spending Review and Devolution White Paper.

But Community Recovery will not depend on government funding alone. The success of our roadmap to community recovery will depend upon the region's shared commitment to working together to deliver on the wide range of community recovery ambitions set out here. We have much good practice to build upon and we have also identified a small number of areas where the potential for future regional collaboration is great.

This roadmap is endorsed by the following:

- **Andy Street** - Mayor for the West Midlands (Chair)
- **Cllr Ian Ward** - Leader of Birmingham City Council, WMCA Transport Portfolio Lead Member and Chair of the Met Leaders Group (Vice Chair)
- **Cllr Bob Sleight** – Deputy Mayor and WMCA Finance Portfolio Lead
- **Cllr Mike Bird** - Leader of Walsall MBC and WMCA Housing and Land Portfolio Lead Member
- **Cllr Ian Brookfield** - Leader of City of Wolverhampton Council and WMCA Economy and Innovation Portfolio Lead Member
- **Cllr Ian Courts** - Leader of Solihull MBC and WMCA Environment, Energy and HS2 Portfolio Lead Member
- **Cllr Maria Crompton** – Leader of Sandwell MBC and WMCA PSR and Social Economy Lead Member
- **Cllr George Duggins** - Leader of Coventry City Council and WMCA Skills & Productivity Portfolio Lead Member
- **Cllr Patrick Harley** - Leader of Dudley MBC and WMCA Culture & Digital Portfolio Lead Member
- **Cllr Brigid Jones** - Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council and WMCA Inclusive Communities Portfolio Lead Member
- **Cllr Izzi Seccombe** - Leader of Warwickshire County Council and WMCA Well Being Portfolio Lead Member, and WMCA Non-Constituent Council representative.
- **David Jamieson** – Police and Crime Commissioner
- **Cllr Matt Dormer** - Leader of Redditch Borough Council and Chair of the WMCA Non-Constituent Council Leaders Group
- **Cllr Greg Brackenridge** – Chair of West Midlands Fire Authority

Summary

Our Roadmap to Recovery

Working collectively across the region, even as the crisis continues to unfold, we must address the immediate issues facing communities to protect lives and livelihoods and build confidence and hope that that we will build back better.

Our case to government

As we rise to these challenges as a region, we call upon government to support and amplify our efforts with new investment and wider powers to level-up the West Midlands and secure the foundations for strong and sustained productivity.

Our six community recovery priorities have been identified by communities themselves and are being driven by our local authorities and their partners.



Living safely with coronavirus

Until a vaccine is widely available, we must minimise the spread of the virus and keep people safe and well.

Ambitions:

- Permanent shift to place-based public-private-voluntary sector collaboration to support the most vulnerable
- Responsible citizens supported by clear communication and successful local testing and tracing
- Well-resourced support to address domestic violence, loneliness and mental ill health

Asks of government:

- Voluntary & Community Sector Community Recovery Fund (£11m)
- Review of the Localism Act 2011 and its regulations**
- A new approach to support for vulnerable women**
- Uphold new public health duty to prevent violence**



Accessing healthcare and improving physical health

In the West Midlands there are significant health inequalities that have been exacerbated by the coronavirus. It is vital that recovery ensures that these are reduced so that our population is more resilient to future pandemics.

Ambitions:

- Closer monitoring of systemic discrimination and better BAME workplace representation
- A Health in all Policies approach to decision-making across the region
- Radical rethink to create more integrated and accessible primary care services
- Putting people at the heart of decision-making and the co-design of our health and care services

Asks of government:

- Support for the Radical Health Prevention Fund (£11.3m)
- Develop Digital Diagnostic Screening Hubs in high footfall locations (£13m)



Mental health support and awareness

The pandemic has worsened mental health inequalities, and it is essential that people receive the right level of support to combat barriers to improving their wellbeing moving forward.

Ambitions:

- More accessible and joined-up mental health services, especially in more deprived and remote communities.
- To ensure that each citizen, organisation and business has the space they need to embed positive wellbeing choices into the substance of daily life.
- To tackle the root causes of mental ill health, not least the levels of inequality in the region.

Asks of government:

- Extension of the Thrive-Into-Work programme across the region (£15m)
- To become the first WHO Trauma-Informed Region (£3.5m)



Education and young people

There has been huge disruption to education for children and young people, leading to disparity in the level of education that they have received. Young people's employment opportunities have also been diminished due to the economic climate.

Ambitions:

- Closing the attainment gap through intensive catch-up support and better provision for home-based learning.
- Children at risk of under attainment are identified and offered good quality, accessible early years provision.
- Successful pilot for the national cross-government programme for the introduction of Youth Partnerships.
- Provision of apprenticeship wage subsidies as well as traineeships, work-related experience and additional tuition for young people whose learning has been disrupted by COVID.

Asks of government:

- Support young people into and throughout training opportunities (£272m)*
- Creation of a WM Safe Centre to provide care for children (£39.6m)
- Increase Youth Justice Powers to create a single integrated service for vulnerable young people**



Jobs and training

The pandemic has led to a rise in unemployment across the region, causing economic uncertainty and financial constraints on many families.

Ambitions:

- Integrated and personalised employment support system with a focus on those who are most vulnerable.
- A world-class regional skills infrastructure, enhancing further and higher education estates and knowledge-transfer relationships.

Asks of government:

- A wide range of investments in job creation are outlined in the WMCA Recharging the West Midlands prospectus.
- Upskill our workforce for jobs for the future and improve FE facilities (£245m)*
- Getting people back to work through retraining (£33m)*
- Co-commissioning employment support with DWP and Job Centre Plus**



Local businesses and high streets

High streets and local businesses have been hard hit by the reduction in footfall and mandatory closures during the lockdown. Recovery needs to improve their resilience as they are at the heart of local communities.

Ambitions:

- Support for small businesses at the heart their communities.
- Reimagined town centres and vibrant city centres with coordinated public services which unlock new possibilities in supporting communities.
- A region where everyone can participate in and benefit from grassroots culture and sport.
- Doubling the size of the social economy in the next 10 years.

Asks of government:

- An SME Recovery Programme (£90m)*
- A Strategic Business Leadership Programme (£92 million)*
- West Midlands Town Centres Fund (£100m)*
- Culture & Placemaking Investment Programme (£80m)*
- A devolved, long term and flexible UK Shared Prosperity Fund to replace EU structural funding**
- Creating a single disposal regime for all public sector land and property assets in the region**
- Fast tracking the creation of local delivery vehicles and development corporations for major regeneration and housing projects**

* Also included in WMCA Recharging the West Midlands prospectus

** Included as part of the WMCA submission to the Devolution White Paper

Summary

Cross-cutting principles and issues

The Citizens' Panel identified 4 principles to drive our approach to community recovery.

- Extra help to the most affected
- Innovation and creativity
- Environmental focus
- Transparency and citizen voice

Building on these we have identified 8 further issues for collective action

Extra help to the most affected

Homelessness and affordable housing

COVID-19 economic uncertainty will likely lead to more people losing work, building up arrears, and potentially losing their home. This will add pressure for households on low incomes and place greater strain on services providing support to vulnerable households.

Ambition: To sustain the gains made through 'Everyone In' by designing-out homelessness across the region through move-on support and providing people with a settled home.

Ask of government: An expansion of the Housing First Pilot, recovery tenancy pilot to prevent evictions for households in rent arrears, and support for the introduction of an LHA+ pilot (£13.7m)

Digital inclusion

COVID-19 has highlighted the 'digital divide', with the factors underpinning digital exclusion often the same as those underpinning social exclusion overall. As society shifts more towards online systems, the inequality gap will widen, with many households becoming more excluded and isolated.

Ambition: To ensure that every household in the region has affordable devices and connectivity as well as the support and confidence necessary to access services online and with safety.

Ask of government: To be a pathfinder region for the Good Things Foundation Great Digital Catch Up programme (£8m)

Debt advice

The pressures of the pandemic have pushed many people into hardship. Recent research from Citizens Advice estimates that 6 million UK adults have fallen behind on at least one household bill during the pandemic.

Ambition: To make sure that everybody in the region has good access to advice, advocacy and support to prevent debts having knock-on consequences for health and well-being.

Ask of government: (See previous asks re VCS Community Recovery Fund and Housing First)

Criminal justice

The criminal justice system is at a tipping point, with a backlog in arrests and court cases worsened by the pandemic and prisons and probation services operating at full capacity. Confidence in the criminal justice system is critical at times of economic downturn.

Ambition: A robust, locally responsive criminal justice system which supports, diverts and effectively manages offenders, those at risk of offending and those affected by crime.

Ask of government: Greater devolution of policy to local leaders and a new duty to ensure the provision of good early help.



Environmental focus

Transport

Ensuring the mobility of key workers and providing resilience for our urban areas was highlighted during the pandemic. Maintaining and improving good accessibility levels in public transport and active travel for our most vulnerable citizens will be vital in our roadmap to recovery.

Ambition: To create safe and attractive conditions for cycling and walking, whilst reassuring customers our public transport network is safe.

Asks of government: £1.5bn capital over the next five years for transport, as part of a single pot for infrastructure funding. Enhanced local responsibility and powers for the development, management and operation of our transport system and enforcing moving traffic offences and pavement parking.

Access to green spaces

During and following the COVID-19 lockdown, government guidance has promoted outdoor activity and the enjoyment of our green spaces. However, the pandemic has highlighted that there is inequality of access to green spaces within society.

Ambition: To ensure that everybody in the West Midlands can access good quality green space within a 10 minute walk from their home.

Asks of government: To work with the region on plans to widen access to natural capital, including through the West Midlands National Park, and achieve biodiversity net gain (£97.2m)

Innovation and creativity

The Citizens' Panel were clear that the roadmap to recovery is a great opportunity for the West Midlands to be creative in its thinking about the future and not to continue doing things that weren't working before.

Ambition: Through our opportunities for future collaboration, we continue to adopt an outward-looking approach, drawing upon international expertise and tailoring it to the unique people and places of the West Midlands.

Transparency and citizen voice

The Citizens' Panel told us: "Listen to the voices of people in the community, particularly key workers and those most affected by coronavirus, so that you remain people focussed." The advantages of carefully considered and well-designed community engagement are obvious but very often they take time, effort and resource.

Ambition: Communities are placed at the heart of the community recovery process and are closely involved with policy-makers and practitioners in identifying and implementing new ways of working to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

Good practice map

These examples give a flavour of the wide-ranging and pioneering responses that have characterised the way in which people all over the West Midlands have pulled together to address the coronavirus crisis. Some of these are featured in the following pages but there are many, many more. Many of them hold lessons which will inform our recovery and enable us to build back better. All need to be celebrated and encouraged.





Priority 1: Living Safely With Coronavirus

What the Citizens Panel said:

“Keep the virus under control and reduce the impact, so that people can live without current fear and get normality back into daily life. This means making sure that everyone understands the rules and follows them and are held accountable.”

Until a vaccine is widely available, ensuring that we can live safely with COVID-19 is understandably a high priority for people across the West Midlands. This is reflected in local discourse, which has focused on helping people to do the right thing. Directors of Public Health have risen to prominence in local and national media, providing calm leadership and regular insights so that people, places and organisations can balance their desires to live, work, worship, and socialise, alongside stopping the spread of the virus. The highest risk settings – schools, nurseries, universities and domiciliary care – were quickly identified, with local authority and regional public health working together to try to minimise the risks through good practice, advice, and access to protective equipment. This was particularly challenging in care homes, where the spread of COVID-19 was severe, exacerbated by pressure on hospitals.



1. Support for the most vulnerable

Ever since the pandemic began, the response to support the most vulnerable showed the region at its best. The leadership from our public institutions has been matched at the grassroots: new mutual aid networks working alongside established faith, neighbourhood and community groups to do everything from food and medicine distribution to befriending. Both have gone with the grain of local strengths and assets and have used their diversity to ensure that no-one is left out. This has shifted the relationships between public services, local businesses and the social economy, as collaborative, people and place-focused working has become more commonplace.

Our ambition

Cross-sector collaboration is something that all local partners would like to retain and strengthen, during the remainder of the pandemic and into the future. We need to keep the focus on going the extra mile to support those people who have too often been overlooked.

There are more examples of great practice as part of the emergency response to the pandemic in the WMCA Health of the Region 2020 report available on the WMCA website.

Great practice: Hope Community in Heath Town, Wolverhampton

Based in the heart of the Heath Town estate in Wolverhampton, Hope Community was first off the blocks in delivering emergency food parcels to the estate’s vulnerable residents. As local support systems were established, Hope Community diversified its support. For example, once the delivery of the emergency food parcels started, Hope Community started a complimentary service called ‘Lockdown Lunches’ – a cooked meal, delivered once a week by volunteers, who could check in on the people they delivered to.



Great practice: Welcome to Coventry web app

Over the pandemic, the Welcome to Coventry web app¹ has been used to collate essential information for anyone with limited English language skills. The information is updated daily, and includes what to do if you have symptoms, how to shield vulnerable people, employment rights, and where to find mental health support.

Users can choose from a menu of several languages, instantly translating the site into the chosen language, available in both text and audio.



2. Test, trace and compliance

In the early days of the pandemic, the clear guidance (“stay home”), matched with enhancements to Universal Credit and ‘furlough’, and a strong sense of shared adversity and mutual responsibility, helped the country to control the virus. But this has been hard to sustain as loosening restrictions and changing rules have left more room for well-intentioned errors. Efforts to communicate effectively with all sections of the community have shown some success and local test and trace has been effective, but these efforts have been under-resourced relative to the national service.

Our ambition

Individual responsibility borne by our citizens to abide by COVID-19 guidance and regulations must be matched by clear, regular and accessible communication from public authorities, and the necessary resources to ensure that doing the right thing is safe and affordable and our local testing and tracing programmes are trusted and effective.

Great practice: test and trace in Sandwell

In July 2020, Sandwell Council established its own test and trace system. The Director of Public Health, Dr Lisa McNally, was concerned that the contacts missed by the national programme were feeding the spread of the virus. Feedback suggested that some areas were being served poorly because of insufficient translation services, and crucial workplace data was missing.

Sandwell’s public health team – which was already engaging with faith groups on a regular basis – reached out to people within the Council who could speak the community languages required, enabling them to reach people that the national scheme was missing.

International great practice: Taiwan

Learning from its experience with SARS in 2003, Taiwan was proactive in responding to COVID-19. Its approach was common – test, trace and isolate – but its speedy, joined-up response, use of big data, and sustained citizen buy-in, have been exceptional.

Taiwan made it easy for its citizens to access free and rapid testing, with temperature checks and masks a compulsory part of entering any public or commercial building. There are also fines for breaking regulations. Big data enabled both track and trace, as well as sourcing masks.

3. Domestic violence

Living safely with the virus goes beyond the risk of catching and spreading it. One of the hallmarks of lockdown was a rise in domestic violence – an international trend that the West Midlands was no exception to. Rising homelessness will make it even harder for women and children to leave their abusers: refuges are full, because many parts of the region lack the homes for them to move into when they are ready to start a new life.

Our ambition

The risks of the virus and risks of other harms need to be balanced – whether it is domestic violence, loneliness, or mental ill health – those organisations dedicated to addressing these immediate and growing problems must be resourced and supported to do their vital work.

Our asks of government:

- **Voluntary & Community Sector Community Recovery Fund (11m)** – in line with the recent Kruger Report, Levelling Up Communities, this fund will build the resilience of the VCS to continue to support the most vulnerable.
- **Review of Localism Act** - to empower Local Authorities to build the foundations for stronger and more sustainable services, and enable stronger collaboration with community groups and social enterprises.
- **Support for vulnerable women** - Local authorities, WMCA and the PCC will work with government to develop a whole system approach for vulnerable women to include women’s centres, liaison and diversion, out of court disposals, problem solving courts and custody.
- **Uphold new public health duty to prevent violence** - to ensure accountability through collaboration and partnership working led by the Violence Reduction Unit.

Opportunities for future collaboration:

- Building neighbourhood assets and collaborating with communities.
- Communicating with communities and public health and other issues.





Priority 2: Accessing healthcare and improving physical health

What the Citizens Panel said:

“Use face-to-face appointments only when necessary (and remote appointments where possible) to make sure that patients can be treated at Covid-free clinics and the healthcare system gets back on track to diagnose and treat people when they need it. It also means promoting healthy living to reduce demand for the NHS in the long-term.”

Even prior to the pandemic, there were entrenched and persisting health inequalities in our region. In line with national findings, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing health inequalities. The WMCA has a higher rate of cases overall than the region as a whole, with Birmingham and Sandwell most affected; rates are also high in Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The highest rates of COVID-19 related deaths are in more deprived areas, and areas with a greater proportion of residents from BAME communities. Lockdown and social distancing measures have had direct impacts on wellbeing and on health behaviours too.

In order to address the immediate and emerging health impacts of COVID-19 and take steps towards a happier and healthier population, more resilient to future pandemics, we need to adopt a ‘radical prevention’ approach. Radical prevention means taking action as a whole system to tackle the underlying causes of poor health and health inequalities (the ‘causes of the causes’) and shifting to more person and community-centred approaches to health and wellbeing.

1. Improving outcomes for people from ethnic minorities

As we have grown to understand more about COVID-19 as a country, it has become clear that some people have borne a heavier burden of harm than others. Public Health England has identified a number of reasons why case and death rates have been significantly higher amongst Black and Asian ethnic groups. Specifically, people from Black and Bangladeshi ethnic backgrounds in particular are more likely: to suffer from other chronic conditions; to work in occupations with higher risk to COVID-19 exposure; to use public transport to travel to their places of work; to live in housing conditions which exacerbate transmission and mortality; and to experience systemic, pervasive discrimination and racism which directly affects physical and mental health, and has been shown to affect access to health services.

Our ambition

It is already incumbent on all public institutions to monitor and evaluate the extent to which systemic discrimination affects their services and working practices, but more can be done. Notably, people from BAME groups need to be better represented at all levels in their workplaces, and NHS and other health and care bodies should commit to relevant race equality standards alongside more rigorous data collection, research and analysis on BAME health outcomes.

2. Tackling the wider determinants of poor health

In order that we might be more resilient to future pandemics, we need to make sure we create a society in which everybody can lead a healthy lifestyle. This means looking not just at the causes of ill health, but the causes of the causes: getting a good start in life, educational attainment, our jobs and incomes, our homes and where we live, our friendships and sense of purpose and belonging. These wider determinants of health have been shown to be the main drivers of health inequalities which in turn have led to some communities being more badly affected by COVID-19 than others.

Our ambition

In responding to and recovering from the pandemic, the health and wider system must put a strong focus on the root causes of poor health. One way to achieve this is through a Health in All Policies (HIAP) approach. HIAP encourages every public agency to consider the health implications of every decision it takes to find opportunities to promote wellbeing, avoid causing harm, and reduce inequality between groups. We are also committed to becoming a ‘Marmot city region’ to galvanise our shared commitment to preventative health and wellbeing and build a more collaborative system for achieving it.

3. Widening access to health and cares services

The crisis has put in sharp focus the inequalities in healthcare provision caused by disparities in access to good quality healthcare, especially for poorly managed conditions in vulnerable groups. As the NHS seeks to deal with a significant backlog of non-COVID-19 related morbidity, it is likely that the effect of this will serve to widen existing health inequalities. Take cancer as an example: across the UK it was estimated that by August 2020, 2.1 million people have missed out on screening, while a further 290,000 people with suspected symptoms have not been referred for hospital tests. Other concerns include access to mental health services; the future of care homes and domiciliary care; and the implications of moving towards a system that relies more heavily on telehealth.

Our ambition

Community recovery presents the opportunity for a radical rethink of the ways in which people access health and care services. Primary care services could be much better integrated within local neighbourhoods with clinics, pharmacies, housing officers, voluntary and community groups working together as we have seen in the crisis – particularly focusing on those who most need support and access. The opportunities created by the switch to virtual consultations to ramp up efficient, patient-centred digital screening services are there to be made, but only if we also focus on those people who don’t have digital devices or connectivity, or the confidence and skills to make the most of telehealth services. Importantly, we need a new vision for adult social care, addressing the crisis facing the care home sector and finding new ways to support people to live at home, connected to their wider community.



4. People-powered health

COVID-19 pandemic has made everyone consider their own health and wellbeing and lockdown has reminded many people of the benefits of daily exercise, and of the improvements to mental health that can result from spending regular time with nature.

People-powered health is an approach to wellbeing that puts people and prevention first. This could be as simple as encouraging people to walk or cycle more through safer streets and active travel schemes, or to socialise outdoors. It encompasses initiatives to tackle childhood obesity, build public awareness about healthy eating and tackle food poverty in poorer neighbourhoods.

Our ambition

People-powered health involves putting people at the heart of decision-making and the co-design of our health and care services. From healthy eating to social prescribing initiatives, we must encourage and support healthy lifestyles in every corner of the region. As we look forward to the Commonwealth Games, we must make sure there is a legacy around sport and physical activity that is experienced by every community.

Our asks of government:

The Radical Health Prevention Fund (£11.3m) will provide grants and repayable grants for innovation and scale-up in place-based initiatives to tackle the root causes of ill health such as housing, obesity, mental health and employment, including the use of 5G and other digital technologies promoting digital inclusion, and a social prescribing for walking and cycling scheme. This investment will:

- 25 innovation grants per year over 3 years;
- 8 scale-up grants and loans per year over 3 years;
- At least one quarter of all investment going to BAME organisations or projects that involve a significant level of BAME co-design;
- At least one third of programme beneficiaries will be from BAME backgrounds.

Developing Digital Diagnostic Screening Hubs (£13m) in high footfall venues will address concerns about missed screening appointments that will enable citizens to access speedy diagnostic interventions and treatment in places other than health care settings. This investment will:

- Reduce the NHS waiting time for Cancer Screening in the West Midlands by 10%;
- Reduce inequalities in access to screening by increasing options for attendance.

Opportunities for future collaboration:

In the recently published Health of the Region 2020 report, the WMCA and its partners made over 50 commitments to tackling the health inequalities that hold the region back. This includes, for the first time, the multi-agency regional Midlands 'STaR Board' which brings together health, public, private and voluntary sector partners from across the region to develop more collaborative approaches, standards and frameworks to tackle these issues head on.

Great practice: Solihull on the Move

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Solihull on the Move is a borough-wide campaign which aims to increase physical activity and create healthier, stronger and more sustainable communities. The activity framework takes a whole life approach, focusing on:

- Sustaining activity from childhood through adolescence and beyond;
- Inactive people;
- People with a disability or long term health condition; and
- People on low incomes.

– for example, developing a supported version of the 'Couch to 5k' – as well as distributing small grants to community organisations.

SOLIHULL
ON THE MOVE

Great practice: Birmingham's Neighbourhood Network Schemes

Birmingham's Neighbourhood Network Schemes (NNS) are an innovative approach to working with older people to access community activities through a person-centred, community-based approach to care, and through better co-ordination between social work teams, NNS workers, community groups and local residents. NNS lead organisations in each area hold a local commissioning budget which enables them to identify gaps, and encourage local organisations to receive investment to deliver specific projects within their local areas. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, work was undertaken with the Birmingham Children's Partnership to develop this network into an all age NNS, ensuring that people of all ages can benefit from support that goes with the grain of their local assets.





Priority 3: Mental Health Support and Awareness

What the Citizens Panel said:

“Make sure that anyone who needs mental health support knows where to find it and is guided to access support. There needs to be an extra focus on recognising the signs of mental illness in society. We should address the vulnerability of recently unemployed people, young people and the elderly. Teachers and employers should therefore also be trained to spot issues and offer support.”

There is no doubt that the people of the West Midlands have increasingly suffered with mental ill-health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The West Midlands Health of the Region report observes that inequalities in mental health have widened during this time, both because of the virus itself and the impact of the measures taken by society to tackle it.

The mental health crisis as experienced by local people has been multifaceted: borne of loneliness, bereavement, educational and economic worries, and of the trauma faced by many key workers in frontline roles where social distancing is impossible. Many frontline workers are often in low income occupations and feel overlooked or taken for granted, this is serious – both in its own right, and because poor mental health often sits at the root of life-limiting behaviours, poor physical health, and poor economic outcomes. It is a particular issue for people from black and ethnic minority communities, who face more barriers to treatment and tend to have a poorer experience of mental health services.

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1. Making it easier to access mental health support

Data from online mental health support services shows an increase in requests for support nationally compared to the same period in 2019, for children, young people and adults.

In areas that were most affected by COVID-19, there was a sharp increase in children and young people seeking support for bereavement and loss of family contact. In the wider West Midlands, support requests for children and young people increased for eating issues, education worries and suicidal thoughts. Among adults, the health of others was a key concern, as well as the pressures of changing work cultures and environments, and increases in loneliness, sadness and depression.

Our ambition

To ensure that mental health services and support are joined up and accessible, including remotely and in localities.

Great practice: Birmingham Mind helpline

Birmingham Mind had to work quickly to translate its face-to-face service offer, which it did by extending the hours of its existing helpline. This has since been enhanced through partnership with Birmingham & Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (BSol CCG), which was keen to develop a 24-hour service that could help citizens and frontline workers.

While the provider of support varies, the access point remains the same, regardless of who calls and when – ensuring ease of access.



2. Widening awareness of mental health support

Whether it is access to green space, time with friends, or headspace, people have grown to understand the extent to which the lives that they live contribute to their mental health. Thrive into Work is a great example of how the public sector can create the conditions for employers to build good mental health and wellbeing into life at work. However, in a time when many businesses are only barely staying afloat, and people in general struggling to balance increased demands with less social support, it is much harder for that sort of positive practice to be sustained.

WMCA currently offers the Thrive at Work toolkit to businesses across the region and is actively recruiting new businesses. To support this WMCA is working with delivery partners across the region to amplify the current mental health awareness programmes. Encouraging community members to sign up to the free NHS Every Mind Matters toolkit and create an individual mental health wellness plan. We are encouraging Businesses to sign up to This is Me, the free mental health stigma reduction campaign and we are also encouraging individuals to sign up and become a Mental Health First Aider to provide support to our work colleagues, friends, family or community members.

Our ambition

To ensure that each citizen, organisation and business has the space they need to embed positive wellbeing choices into the substance of daily life.

International great practice: Kia Kaha, Kia Maia, Kia Ora Aotearoa

New Zealand has developed a psychosocial and mental wellbeing recovery plan to help people manage, adapt and respond to the distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Maori title for the plan translates as “through strength and endurance our wellbeing will prevail,” recognising that many influences on health and wellbeing sit beyond health services.

The support element spans a wide range of interventions: from providing clear information, basic needs and community connection, through to delivering specialist mental health and addiction services.



3. The unequal burden of mental ill health

Inequalities in mental health have widened as a result of the pandemic, but they were not created by the pandemic.

In February 2020, The Marmot Review noted that the resilience and mental wellbeing of children and young people was a significant cause for concern, and noted deteriorations and widening socioeconomic inequalities in mental wellbeing. As unemployment rises and incomes drop, there is concern that these inequalities in mental health will widen further. It follows that people who have already impacted the most by the pandemic – in loss, stress, and loss of stability – will bear the greatest burden of mental ill health.

Our asks of government:

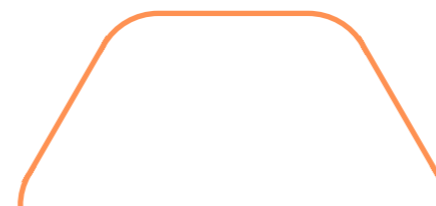
- **Thrive into Work extension (15m)** - an extension of the DWP / DHSC Work and Health Unit funded pilot to deliver high quality employment support to people with health issues or disabilities in the West Midlands. This will enable the programme to be delivered region-wide and disseminate learning to multiple organisations.
- **WHO Trauma-informed region (3.5m)** - to create the world's first WHO recognised trauma informed region which will empower and enable communities, civil society, public services and private enterprise to adopt an inclusive approach to trauma and adversities. This work will be overseen by a collaborative partnership board including the Violence Reduction Unit and build on existing partnerships in the region.

Our ambition

To tackle the root causes of mental ill health through a relentless focus on the causes of inequality and a much greater focus on early intervention and prevention, particularly amongst children and young people and those with multiple and complex needs.

Opportunities for future collaboration:

- Reconvening the Mental Health Commission and developing the wellbeing at work agenda
- Develop consistent, trauma-informed practice across the region





Priority 4: Education and young people

What the Citizens Panel said:

“Prepare children to go back to an adapted school environment, ensuring their safety and wellbeing. Make sure that every child is supported to make up for lost time so children from all backgrounds are equally able to achieve their goals.”

Well performing schools, colleges, early years provision and access to good jobs are critical to the 972,423 under 18 years olds and 404,906 18-24 years olds in the West Midlands Combined Authority. They are also vital to the economy, safety and wellbeing of a place. Good provision rooted in communities increases house prices, lowers crime and antisocial behaviour and it is intrinsically linked to raising aspirations. Before the pandemic, we were making good progress, with the number of young people not in employment, education or training falling, and the number of apprenticeship starts increasing faster than the national average.

The recent summer term exposed existing inequalities: only 4% of vulnerable children attended school alongside children of key workers, access to and the quality of online learning varied and free school meal provision remains a hot topic. The absence rate at schools in the first half term of the academic year of 2019/20 (last year) averaged under 5% across the WMCA area, the indicative figure for the same period of 2020/21 was over 11%. The immediate and ongoing priority of schools, colleges and early years provision of staying open is followed by the welfare and mental health of children and staff, and the pressure that both will be under as the pandemic continues, students catch up, and exams and Ofsted are rethought. Closing the attainment gap can only be achieved by provision remaining open, to ensure that disadvantage is not locked in for the most vulnerable children.

Adolescents have had a much tougher time through lockdown. Many of the usual outlets for both physical and emotional development and support have not been available or have changed significantly. Those who have been expecting to take exams have experienced significant disruption and anxiety and many continue to do so as the future remains unclear. Our young people who are exiting formal training or education know that entering the labour market will be very different for them compared with those in the years before them. Young people report a need for an acknowledgement of their experiences and tangible options for them to heal and refocus on their future.

1. Closing the attainment gap that has widened during lockdown

Ensuring good quality, inclusive provision remains open and focuses on improving the life chances of all children, with particular attention on the most vulnerable pupils (including the development of bespoke personal education plans in line with children in care).

- a. Local solutions based on school catchment areas could include: volunteers listening to reading; 1-1 tutoring; work experience for years 10-11; local industry / Chamber of Commerce input etc.
- b. Digital access and support: improving the home working with access to laptops, broadband, bespoke educational programmes for both pupils and parents and carers encouraging a love of learning and ability to achieve homework set by the school.
- c. Evidence based alternative education for those that don't seem to be developing well within a classroom environment on school sites so re-integration takes place.

Our ambition

Children in our region are provided with good quality and timely interventions and support from early years when children are prepared for school through to young people leaving year 12 prepared for work and the wider world. Whatever their background, environment, culture and circumstances, they must be given the very best chance to maximise their potential as positive members of society.

2. Renewed focus on early years and school readiness

Good quality, accessible, early years provision is valuable for social, emotional, language and physical development; and critical for social mobility providing a key opportunity before children start school to close the inequalities gap. The lack of access to early years provision during lockdown, and the reduced offer which has since emerged, risks widening the attainment gap and the number of children who are ready for school at age 5. Covid has resulted in many early years providers closing and under 5 year olds spending much more time at home. For many that experience has been positive, though for some, those with additional needs, vulnerability or whose parents could not provide learning or enrichment activities, or because of their own challenging lives, the inequalities risk widening significantly. The role of early years providers having 'eyes' on those children to safeguard, provide stability and offer a route to additional support is profound, but right now, many have dropped off the radar. We must urgently identify those children and bring them into good quality early years provision.

Our ambition

Children who are at risk of under attainment are identified and brought into good quality, accessible early years provision. Parents and carers have confidence and trust in our high quality, inclusive, early years provision built on positive relationships that helped them prepare their children to embrace learning and wanting them to be the best they can possibly be. Early years provision is well funded, professionally led and consistently good quality.

3. Youth 'offer' including intergenerational activities

The West Midlands is home to a young and ethnically diverse population, but at a time when they were needed most, many youth work projects stopped or became severely restricted. We have seen a decline in young people's mental health; the loss of wrap around targeted services; access to sexual health clinics, walk in clinics and youth centres; an absence of relational based practice offering good quality advice on personal relationships, safety, personal fitness and nutrition; summer holiday activities cancelled or scaled back. One in five youth clubs and services are predicted to not re-open. The pandemic has compounded inequalities that already existed and has hit vulnerable and marginalised children and young people the hardest, many of whom are in the already tricky stage of adolescence. A comprehensive and broad youth offer must be developed which empowers and upskills communities to meet the immediate needs of young people during the pandemic, such as mental health and wellbeing as well as the ongoing needs to support young people back into education, training and work.

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4. Supporting young people with training and getting into jobs

Employment rates for young people aged 16-24 have plummeted. Young people are more likely to be employed in the 'shut down' sectors and, when they do fall out of work and education, 75% are likely to remain disengaged for the long term. In the West Midlands the NEET rate is already higher than the national average, and is likely to rise further during this crisis. There is a risk that without urgent intervention, young people and new graduates are at risk of entering the labour market during a severe downturn, exposing them to the risk of unemployment and longer term scarring effects.

Our ambition

The West Midlands is a pilot for the national cross-government agreement for the introduction of Youth Partnerships, in partnership with the National Youth Agency to measure its impact and build on the good practice. This will bring full time Youth Workers based in school catchment areas supporting targeted youth support to deliver a wide range of activities. In addition we will build on our employment and skills regional Information, Advice and Guidance website for young people, parents and carers, other professionals. All of this designed, implemented and reviewed with young people at every level.

Our ambition

We will ask government for the funding to provide apprenticeship wage subsidies and providing traineeships and work-related experience. We must also provide training opportunities in higher level 3-5 courses for young people who might otherwise be unemployed, enhance tracking schemes and provide additional tuition for young people whose learning has been disrupted by COVID.



Great practice: REACT

The Regional Schools Commissioner's REACT group established new relationships with local authorities and schools providing support and challenge and a direct, swift route to Government to make swift decisions based on local intelligence. The locality based multi-agency group led themed weekly deep dives, for example into vulnerable children, transport to school and early years providers, sharing best practice across localities and regions and identifying issues and solutions early on.

Great practice: Base 25

Wolverhampton charity Base 25 quickly moved 80% of its face to face service online during lockdown. However, a significant minority were unable to access online appointments safely. As such, those appointments were conducted outdoors, socially distanced – Base 25 concluding that it needed to focus on what it could do to support their young people, rather than what it couldn't. Being outside ultimately worked really well for those young people: it was good for their health and wellbeing, and good relationships with neighbourhood police were developed, who helped them reach more young people who needed their support.

Our asks of government:

Supporting young people through jobs and training

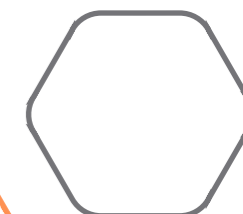
- **£167m** to redeploy existing Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) and apprenticeship levy funding to provide apprenticeship wage subsidies and providing traineeships and work-related experience
- **£105m** funding over three years to widen the guarantee for level 3 funding for 19 year olds to provide training opportunities in higher level 3-5 courses for young people who might otherwise be unemployed, enhance tracking schemes and provide additional tuition for young people whose learning has been disrupted by COVID.

WM Safe Centre (£39.6m) – we want to build a new 'safe centre' facility, purpose built for safe and secure care for children. It will be used for court-ordered care and custody, with the aim of short-term respite to grow stability and self-esteem. The Centre will be supported by a whole-system care solution, to ensure that vulnerable children – who currently experience dire outcomes – are not left behind.

Youth Justice powers – local authorities, the combined authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner want to work with government to establish the devolution of youth justice powers to put in place a single, integrated service for vulnerable young people, youth custody and a framework for safeguarding older children.

Opportunities for future collaboration:

- Collaborative work on early years
- Developing a consistent offer to care leavers
- Establish a future generation commission to develop and improve innovation in outcomes for children





Priority 5: Jobs and Training

What the Citizens Panel said:

“Create new jobs, with an emphasis on apprenticeships and entry-level jobs. Make sure that additional training is provided to give people the right skillset to enter the workforce. Get people who have lost their jobs for Covid related reasons back into work.”

Before the pandemic, the employment rate in the West Midlands was growing faster than the national average and wages were rising at the same rate as the UK average. We had a rapidly growing number of active businesses and the number of people with higher level qualifications was growing faster than the national average too. But by June 2020, 210,000 people in the West Midlands were claiming unemployment benefits - double where we were in June 2019. Young people in particular are more likely to lose their jobs and less likely to be hired as the economy recovers. West Midlands Women's Voice have also highlighted that “women still do the majority of unpaid care, and early data shows that mothers in opposite-sex couples were 50% more likely to have been fired, quit or furloughed than fathers during lockdown”. Getting people back into work has been a key priority for the region's Economic Impact Group and is at the heart of the 'Recharging the West Midlands' submission to Government. As indicated by the Citizens Panel, it has also been a consistent priority for citizens – with members of the public highlighting the relationship between a healthy workforce, a safe working environment, and getting people back to work.



1. Getting the West Midlands back to work

As home to a young and ethnically diverse population, our region has been disproportionately exposed to the negative impacts of the economic crisis. Without urgent intervention, young people are at risk of entering the labour market during a severe downturn, exposing them to the risk of unemployment and longer-term scarring effects. Similarly, many older workers, including those in the automotive and manufacturing sector have lost their jobs or have been furloughed. We need to support workers who are vulnerable to unemployment to return them to work quickly and track them in the labour market.

Our ambition

An integrated and personalised employment support system that works with individuals across communities and demographics, with a focus on those who are most vulnerable, to ensure they can access good work that meets their needs.

2. Future skills, future jobs

Alongside a focus on getting people back to work, we need to give people the skills and training to get new jobs – either to re-enter the labour market or for young people moving into the world of work. Our Citizens Panel argued that these jobs should be future-facing. Green jobs were a key focus, given the importance of reaching net zero and the region's tradition in automotive and manufacturing. Digital skills were also highlighted as particularly important, ensuring that all communities can benefit from new roles that leverage technology and digital connectivity. Our region's Further Education Colleges, Universities, and business leaders have a key role to play here, ensuring that we have the skills at all levels to match our economic ambition and boost economic recovery.

We must also support job creation, so the roles are there for skilled candidates to apply to. Our Recharging the West Midlands document outlines our plans for job creation, bringing together ambitious proposals around infrastructure and industry.

Our ambition

A world-class regional skills infrastructure, enhancing further and higher education estates and knowledge-transfer relationships, to deliver our shared ambition of world-class technical skills provision - alongside an economy that creates high quality, future-facing jobs.

Since March, WMCA has been using its existing devolved powers to secure new jobs and train young people – we have successfully completed the £5m Construction Gateway programme, secured a further £1.5m Government funding to scale-up the £5m Digital Retraining Fund, and continued to see apprenticeship starts despite the onset of COVID-19.

Great practice: Wolves at Work

This partnership between Wolverhampton City Council and the Department for Work and Pensions has supported over 5,000 people into work in the last three years, and is now central to tackling the COVID-19 jobs challenge. The programme offers unemployed people one to one support through a dedicated team of coaches, accessing vacancies and providing support through the interview and application process, and for a further 12 weeks when an individual enters employment. Employer Work Coaches also work with employers to ensure clients have access to vacancies before they are openly advertised.



International great practice: Brussels Region Recovery and Redeployment Plan

The Government of the Brussels Region has established a Recovery and Redeployment Plan with three main short-term measures - socio-economic and employment transition; social policies; and regional and environmental development. In the first phase of the plan, €500 million was allocated in aid measures to support people and businesses affected by the crisis (with a bonus for traders, self-employed people, artists, etc.). For the second phase, the government allocated a further €120 million to support and improve the living environment of local people during summer.

Opportunities for future collaboration:

- Filling employment gaps in frontline services
- Tackling structural barriers to the success of ethnic minority and female employees in the workplace

Our asks of government:

A wide range of investments in job creation are outlined in the WMCA Recharging the West Midlands prospectus.

This also outlines investment in our skills system including:

- **£33m** to get people back into work through retraining
- **£245m** to upskill our workforce for jobs for the future and improve FE facilities
- Support young people with training and getting into jobs (see previous section)

We have also asked for powers and flexibilities over skills and employment support in our Devolution submission, including co-commissioning employment support with DWP and Job Centre Plus.





Priority 6: Local Business and High Streets

What the Citizens Panel said:

“Promote and support business, especially smaller and/or local businesses and the self-employed (e.g. by encouraging people to buy local). Provide financial and business support to help them get back on their feet and protect jobs.”

One of the positives of the Covid period highlighted by members of our Citizens Panel, and supported by surveys across the country, is the way lockdown encouraged renewed engagement with local places. For many, a core part of their community is the local businesses that they relied on during this challenging period, and the high streets and town centres that host them. Recovery needs to focus on how we support these shops, nail bars, cafes, hairdressers, and pubs. It also needs to look ahead – to how we can create places that account for the changing ways we are living our lives.

1. Backing our region’s small businesses

When asked about their experience of lockdown, many Citizens Panel members highlighted local businesses. People across the region see ‘buying local’ as a lived manifestation of the community spirit which has brought so places together during the pandemic. Nonetheless, many small businesses have been hit hard by COVID-19, and a combination of decreasing demand, disrupted supply chains, and increasing rents means that many face closures. This will impact the most marginalised communities, who rely more heavily on local businesses for food and essentials. The social economy will be key to recovery, with many local businesses adopting or exploring co-operative or community ownership models in order to continue serving their populations.

Our ambition

Small businesses that have a key role in their communities – providing vital goods and services, creating work, and supporting thriving places and a doubling of the size of our social economy – building on the work of the Social Economy Taskforce.

The WMCA, local authorities and LEPs have also worked together through the Mayor’s Economic Impact Group to ensure that business support from Government is targeted to those sectors, firms, and workers that are most in need.

2. Creating thriving high streets and town centres

The future of small and local businesses relies on thriving high streets and town centres. This must be about more than economics, recognising that Covid has prompted a fundamental restructuring of how we work, live, travel, and play. This future must also be about the environment, recognising that green spaces and air quality are crucial to supporting happy and healthy communities.

Supporting changes to how we work will require new investments in mixed-use spaces in cities, reimagining the usual office commute. How we choose to live was already changing prior to Covid, with a focus on new residential developments in town centres and a focus on green and affordable housing. How we travel is crucial to realising our net zero targets, and we can invest more in walking, cycling, and innovations in ‘last mile’ transport. How we play has become more important than ever, with culture and experiences promoting belonging and positive identity in our communities and serving as the anchor for the footfall that helps small businesses thrive.

Our ambition

Reimagined town centres and vibrant city centres, with coordinated public sector intervention unlocking new possibilities and supporting communities.

3. Supporting grassroots culture, art, and sport

The West Midlands has a rich cultural heritage; through Diwali, Eid, Black History Month, Vaisakhi, Chinese New Year, Hannukah and Easter to its hundreds of unique festivals each year, giving a glimpse into the richness of spirit and unique DNA of those that live here. Our places thrive when we embrace participation in culture, and the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham and Coventry City of Culture 2021 provide a unique moment to encourage mass participation at the grassroots level. Yet the organisations delivering cultural activities have been hit particularly hard by Covid and need additional support to ensure they can continue playing a role in our communities.

Our ambition

A region where everyone can participate in and benefit from grassroots culture and sport, and where the organisations, artists, and freelancers who deliver this work are given the support they need.

Great practice: Birmingham City Council and the '20 minute neighbourhood'

The Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, has created an ambitious plan to phase out vehicles and create a "15-minute city". This concept ensures residents can reach key places such as grocery shops, parks, cafes, sports facilities, schools and workplaces within a 15-minute walk or cycle. Birmingham City Council have been exploring the '20 minute city' as part of their work on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and considering the changes that would be needed to make the idea a reality – including redefining libraries and schools outside of their operational hours into citizen kiosks, and transforming nightclubs into gyms in the mornings and afternoon. Central to this is to ensure places are created for people by people, emphasising the importance of a human-centric approach which is created using public participatory approaches.

Great practice: Covid secure premises

Wolverhampton City Council's 'Covid Compliant' Covid Support Advisors Scheme is providing reassurance to residents and businesses across the city that their shops are covid compliant. This offers a 'premises check' to any shop to check adherence to regulations. The venue is issued a window sticker, to demonstrate that they are a Covid safe premises. So far, over 1200 businesses have passed the scheme. This is hugely positive, as it is providing reassurance to businesses and residents.

The West Midlands Town Centre Taskforce has continued to meet and support local authorities in developing investment plans. The WMCA has also worked with Towns Fund recipients to develop their proposals and secure funding from MHCLG, whilst making sure that funds deployed through the Brownfield Investment & Acquisition Programme align with these local priorities.

Our asks of government:

The WMCA Recharging the West Midlands prospectus proposed:

- An SME Recovery Programme (£90m)
- A Strategic Business Leadership Programme (£92 million)
- West Midlands Town Centres Fund (£100m)
- Culture & Placemaking Investment Programme (£80m) to enhance the role of culture in towns and neighbourhoods, through investments in events, community schemes, and cultural infrastructure

And our Devolution submission made the case for:

- A devolved, long term and flexible UK Shared Prosperity Fund to replace EU structural funding.
- Creating a single disposal regime for all public sector land and property assets in the region
- Fast tracking the creation of local delivery vehicles and development corporations for major regeneration and housing projects

Opportunities for future collaboration:

- A research programme on the Future of Cities
- Town Centre Taskforce
- Doubling the size of the social economy

Great practice: Café Culture

Under the Business and Planning Act of 2020, temporary pavement licenses have been introduced, which allow food and drink venues to operate on the pavements outside their premises, without compromising the safety of pedestrians. Many of our local councils have worked closely with local businesses to create safe spaces for trade. Areas have been pedestrianized to continue service provision and increase the amount of places to walk in town centres. Promoting this 'Café Culture' has had a positive impact, as it has enabled local businesses to remain operational. It also presents an opportunity to consider whether these spaces can be pedestrianised permanently. While these decisions were taken out of necessity, they can inspire further moves to pedestrianisation across the region.



Cross-cutting principles and issues

The Citizens' Panel identified 4 principles to steer our approach to community recovery.

- Extra help to the most affected
- Environmental focus
- Innovation and creativity
- Transparency and citizen voice

Building on these we have identified 8 further issues for collective action.



Extra help to the most affected

1. Homelessness & affordable housing

Under 'Everyone In' close to 1000 individuals rough sleeping and at risk of rough sleeping were accommodated across the WMCA region, illustrating what can be achieved in partnership, with a shared will to support our most vulnerable citizens.

However, the broader economic impact of COVID-19 is yet to be fully understood and this economic uncertainty will lead to more people losing work, building up arrears, and potentially losing their home. This will add pressure for households on low incomes in both the social rented and private rented sectors. As eviction protections are lifted, the reasons for future homelessness will include rent arrears and wider debt accrued over the course of the pandemic. Analysis by the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce indicates that an estimated 8000 households who were not in rent arrears prior to March 2020 are now either in rent arrears or at risk of being in rent arrears in the foreseeable future. Without intervention, these households are at risk of losing their homes.

2. Digital inclusion

COVID-19 has highlighted the 'digital divide', with the factors underpinning digital exclusion often the same as those underpinning social exclusion overall. Just under 60% of individuals from lower income groups do not have access to the internet whereas 99% of individuals within higher income groups do. The barriers by which people are excluded fall into three broad categories: accessibility and affordability of technology; lack of connectivity through mobile or broadband; or lack of digital skills and education. As society shifts more towards online systems, the inequality gap will widen, with these individuals becoming more excluded and isolated.

This affects many aspects of daily life but is particularly critical in schools where many children have had extended periods of home-based learning; in healthcare where access to services has quite rapidly moved online; and in public transport where information and payment is increasingly digital first.

Ambition:

- To sustain the gains made through 'Everyone In' by designing-out homelessness across the region through move-on support and providing people with a settled home.

Our asks of government:

- An expansion of the Housing First Pilot, recovery tenancy pilot to prevent evictions for households in rent arrears, and support for the introduction of an LHA+ pilot (£13.7m)
- Affordable Housing Fund (£400m) move to homelessness section
- Building on the homelessness taskforce, develop a broader collaborative approach to designing out multiple and complex needs

Ambition:

- Regional efforts to ensure everyone has access to a device, an affordable and reliable internet connection, and the confidence to operate online

Our asks of government:

- To be a pathfinder region for the Good Things Foundation Great Digital Catch Up programme (£8m)

3. Debt advice

The pressures of the pandemic have pushed many people into hardship. Recent research from Citizens Advice estimates that 6 million UK adults have fallen behind on at least one household bill during the pandemic, including: 3.9 million on their credit card or overdraft repayments; 2.8 million on their energy bills; 2.8 million on their Council Tax; and 1.2 million on their rent.

The same research indicates that certain groups are more likely to have fallen behind on their bills: 21% of key workers, compared to 7% of people who are not key workers; 24% of people with caring responsibilities, compared to 6% of people without caring responsibilities; 31% of Black people, compared to 12% of white people.

This is consequential for people's health, resilience, and for the wider economy: people who would otherwise be spending money on local goods and services are instead repaying interest on their debts. Different types of debt require different approaches to alleviating arrears, many of which will need to be negotiated or otherwise resourced by central Government. However, access to advice and advocacy so that people can repay debt in a way that is reasonable and affordable is a cross-cutting requirement.

4. Criminal justice

Crest Advisory describes that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) was already 'running hot' before COVID-19, with an estimated backlog in the courts of c.104,000 cases in March 2019 nationally, and prisons and probation operating at full capacity. They described COVID-19 as pouring 'rocket fuel' onto an already combustible problem. Combined with longstanding legacy issues, rising crime and the police uplift, it has left the CJS on the brink of a 'tipping point', beyond which it may cease to function in any meaningful sense. When we move out of the pandemic and cannot sustain borrowing at current rates, we will inevitably become a poorer society. Increases in crime are well evidenced as being linked to economic downturn and is then that our CJS needs investment and rigour.

Ambition:

- To make sure that everybody in the region has good access to advice, advocacy and support to prevent debts having knock-on consequences for health and well-being.

Our asks of government:

- (See previous asks re VCS Community Recovery Fund and Housing First)

Ambition:

- A robust, flexible and locally responsive criminal justice system which supports, diverts and effectively manages offenders, those at risk of offending and those affected by crime.

Our asks of Government:

- Greater devolution over justice policy to locally elected leaders
- A new statutory duty and power for locally elected leaders to monitor and oversee early help, including school exclusion practice and policy across West Midlands.

Environmental focus

5. Transport

Public transport is a vital public service, this was highlighted in the pandemic in ensuring the mobility of key workers and providing resilience for our urban areas during this crisis. Better connectivity will improve people's access to job and training opportunities, raise productivity across the region and connect people to vital services including health care and well-being services. Our more deprived communities are facing the greatest barriers to travel. With a fragile public transport market, bought about by COVID-19 and continued funding pressures for essential travel concessions, further reductions will have a disproportionate impact on those who have already been hit hardest. Ensuring good accessibility levels in public transport and active travel for our most vulnerable citizens will be vital.



Ambition:

- To create safe and attractive conditions for cycling and walking, whilst reassuring customers our public transport network is safe. A COVID-19 Transport Action Plan provides a coherent plan for new sustainable infrastructure projects, transport innovation and enhanced local powers which in turn will support the wider efforts to boost our economic recovery.

Our asks of government:

- **£1.5bn** capital over the next five years for transport, as part of a single pot for infrastructure funding. This single pot approach has a specific focus on critical enabling infrastructure such as transport (as well as building on the opportunities of HS2 and UK Central Hub area), housing, energy, natural capital and digital connectivity.
- Enhanced local responsibility and powers for the development, management and operation of our transport system; including circa **£87m** revenue to support the devolution of all Bus Services Support Grants (including BSOG and CBSSG) directly to TfWM.
- Enhanced local powers for enforcing moving traffic offences and pavement parking, including the local retention of revenue generated from transport enforcement activities; delivering double devolution.



6. Access to green spaces

During and following the COVID-19 lockdown, government guidance has promoted outdoor activity and the enjoyment of our green spaces. However, the pandemic has highlighted that there is inequality of access to green spaces within society. The West Midlands is characterised by densely populated urban areas, which lack private gardens or parks within close proximity. As a result, the pandemic has (for the most part) had a disproportionate impact on lower socio-economic groups who are unable to reach these spaces for physical or recreational activity. For example, research by the RSPB indicates that people in the UK with an annual household income under £10,000 are 3.6 times more likely to have no outdoor space where they live, and about 40% less likely to live within a 10-minute walk of any publicly accessible natural greenspace than people with a household income of £60,000 or more.

There are considerable benefits to natural capital for physical and mental health, as well as for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA), funded by NERC, estimates the health benefits of living with a view of a green space are worth up to £300 per person per year, and that increasing green spaces could reduce run-off and urban flooding which costs around £270 million a year in England and Wales. Increasing access to high quality natural capital, in addition to associated measures around promoting active travel (cycling and walking) as part of the recovery plans, have the dual benefit of improving health and wellbeing, as well as retaining and enhancing improvements to the environment and air quality we have seen in lockdown.

Ambition:

- To ensure that everybody in the West Midlands can access good quality green space within a 10 minute walk from their home.

Our asks of government:

- To work with the region on plans to widen access to natural capital, including through the West Midlands National Park, and achieve biodiversity net gain (£97.2m)
- Community green grants (£4m)

7. Innovation and creativity

The Citizens' Panel were clear that the roadmap to recovery is a great opportunity for the West Midlands to be creative in its thinking about the future and not to continue doing things that weren't working before. They highlighted two particular concerns.

First, that the region should learn from other countries and be flexible and open-minded about new ways of working and new forms of collaboration. To support this, we have included a number of case studies from overseas within this roadmap document.

Secondly, that the recovery should be tailored to ensure that it is driven by local circumstances and shaped by what people in the West Midlands say they need. This is why this routemap has been developed through a process which has drawn upon extensive research with local authorities and their partners and features many example of local success.

8. Transparency and citizen voice

The Citizens' Panel was a deliberate initiative to ensure that citizens played a key role in determining the priorities and the approach adopted in our routemap to recovery. Having been invited to be involved – and having been empowered by their experience – the panellists made a clear plea for the future:

“Listen to the voices of people in the community, particularly key workers and those most affected by coronavirus, so that you remain people focussed.”

The advantages of carefully considered and well-designed community engagement are obvious but very often they take time, effort and resource. However, in co-designing all aspects of community recovery with those people most affected, it is far more likely that interventions will be successful, outcomes achieved and scarce public resources used to the best effect.

Ambition:

- Through our opportunities for future collaboration, we continue to adopt an outward-looking approach, drawing upon international expertise and tailoring it to the unique people and places of the West Midlands.

Ambition:

- Communities are placed at the heart of the community recovery process and are closely involved with policy-makers and practitioners in identifying and implementing new ways of working to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.



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Public Service Reform Board

Date	15 December 2020
Report title	Punishing Abuse
Portfolio Lead	Public Service Reform & Social Economy - Councillor Maria Crompton
Accountable Chief Executive	Deborah Cadman, West Midlands Combined Authority email: deborah.cadman@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7200
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk tel: 07788 224179 Claire Dhami, Head of Public Service Reform & Prevention email: claire.dhami@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7947 Tom McNeil, Strategic Advisor to the West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner email: t.mcneil@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Public Service Reform Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note progress on the research and approve progression to publication of the full report.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Punishing Abuse is unique and ground breaking research into the extent of childhood adversity, abuse, loss and trauma in children involved in the criminal justice system in the West Midlands. It provides the evidence base for key policy proposals and reform of youth justice services. It also provides the evidence for further discussion and collaboration between local authorities on wider reform of services for children. This action based research was jointly commissioned by the WMCA, PCC and Local Authorities in the West Midlands.
- 1.2 The research was led by Dr Alex Chard and his report **Punishing Abuse**, is expected to be published in January 2021. A joint policy reponse by the WMCA and OPCC will be published alongside the research report. A summary of which is provided here to update the PSR Board on the completed programme of research, key findings, actions undertaken to date and the proposed reforms suggested within the report.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2018 the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the West Midlands Local Authority led Youth Offending Teams (YOT's) (statutory multi-agency teams with the principle aim of preventing and reducing youth offending) commissioned and collaborated with Dr Alex Chard to facilitate action research through the West Midlands YOT's) into the extent of abuse, loss, trauma and the role of attachment and resilience in a sample of YOT caseloads.
- 2.2 The main research programme involved 70 case studies across the seven constituent local authorities (Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Solihull, Sandwell and Dudley). The West Mercia Youth Offending Service funded research into a further 10 children. The full report sets out details of the cohort's specific make-up, but these were young people currently known to the YOT workers engaged in this research. The children included those who had been through custody, been the subject of community penalties or were early entrants into the criminal justice system.

3. Key findings

- 3.1 Childhood adversity in the West Midlands is much wider than the well-known ACE factors (Adverse Childhood Experiences). In addition to the 10 traditional ACE factors, our research evidences that many children in the youth justice system in the West Midlands suffer significant adversity. This includes witnessing street or gang violence, some have transitioned here from countries known for genocide, many have been criminally or sexually exploited – or on occasions both.
- 3.2 Children in this sample had experienced significant parental loss and abuse. Some are parents themselves or have experienced the loss and trauma of a termination.
- 3.3 There were more children who had experienced 4 or more types of child abuse than those who had experienced no abuse represented in the study. For many children the abuse was sustained and for some extremely violent.
- 3.4 The sheer volume of school exclusions, disengagement and disenfranchisement from the education system was overwhelming, children had been excluded from primary schools, and others had been to over 10 secondary schools.

3.5 The numbers of children with unmet health needs, and parents with significant health issues was significant. Poverty is much higher in this group than in our general population.

3.6 The overwhelming majority of these children were well known to children's services and a significant number had been in public care.

4. Recommendations and next steps

4.1 Punishing Abuse makes over 40 wide ranging proposals for reform which include proposals for a renewed focus on developing the region's youth justice services. The report also argues for the need to tackle broader structural issues including, poverty, social exclusion and intergenerational disadvantage, which create an escalator into the youth justice system. We need to target resources to those families who are at highest risk of social exclusion and intergenerational disadvantage through a preventative lens.

4.2 The principles of **child first** and **getting it right first time for children** are intrinsic in the recommendations. The WMCA, PCC, YOT's and broader partners, including police, health and education all have roles to play in progressing reform both individually and collectively in order to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

4.3 In our devolution submission we have asked Government to work with local authorities, the WMCA and the PCC to establish the devolution of youth justice powers. Our proposals both reform the existing YOTs and would also put in place a single, integrated service for vulnerable young people, and a framework for safeguarding older children.

4.4 Through the comprehensive spending review as a region we are hopeful to secure funding to develop the "West Midlands Safe Centre" a new facility, purpose built for safe and secure care for children. It will be used for court-ordered care and custody, with the aim of short-term respite to grow stability and self-esteem. The Centre will be supported by a whole-system care solution, including intensive fostering, to ensure that vulnerable children – who currently experience dire outcomes - are not left behind.

4.5 We are developing our ambitions to create:

- An approach through *levelling up in the West Midlands: our roadmap to recovery and prospectus to Government* which could include a collaborative focus on early years and closing the increasing gap in attainment, widened through the pandemic.
- A renewed strategic priority for the Mayor and PCC to work with local authorities to help them make the strategic business case to government to secure sufficient funding for the growth of early help support in children's centres, communities and schools.
- A potential new approach in the region to monitor and oversee school exclusion practice and policy across schools in the West Midlands, with a further specific duty to support local authority schools and other state funded schools in reducing school exclusions with a target of eradicating school exclusions or providing comprehensive whole-family support to children excluded in extreme cases.

4.6 The proposals within the report also help substantiate existing and planned work on wider criminal justice reform being progressed by the OPCC. These include:

- **Intensive secure fostering:** as an alternative to children being sentenced to long-term custody. The PCC is engaged with major public sector stakeholders around a 'long term intensive secure fostering service' that might provide a modern and evidence based alternative to preventing future offending through a far greater focus on 'relational models'.
- **Problem solving courts:** initially through the development of two Family Drug and Alcohol Courts in the region followed by scoping to develop problem solving courts supporting young people away from crime.
- **Diversion hub:** Building on the PCC's existing partnerships and programmes in identifying and supporting opportunities to tackle the underlying causes of crime, to prevent reoffending and keep communities safe. The development of a diversion hub, where officers will think 'diversion first' will significantly increase the numbers of out of court disposals and learn from the success of rehabilitative diversion schemes.

4.7 As a result of the practitioner led, action research approach awareness around the lives of the young people being studied and others has increased significantly. This has enabled a deeper understanding of children's needs, and of the risks they may present. In addition, it has provided a catalyst for both practice based and strategic service development which have already yielded positive outcomes for children across the West Midlands. These include (but not are limited to) reduction in breach rates, numbers of children receiving custodial outcomes and improved educational outcomes.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are currently no financial implications associated with this report, but any new or extended activity generated by successful Comprehensive Spending Review asks will require officer time to develop and implement.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 Punishing Abuse raises significant concerns around disproportional representation of BAME children with the criminal justice system, however the way cases were selected and the regional basis for the research have prevented an in depth analysis of these issues. The girls who were studied within the sample were seen to be the most vulnerable and abused children who were studied. Children who had migrated to the UK also appeared to be disproportionately represented. The report proposes further investigation of these issues.

7.2 The West Midlands PCC has progressed targeted activity following The Lammy Review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system.

7.3 The WMCA continues to develop the work of the Leadership Commission, to scrutinise and improve diversity in leadership of the region.

7.4 The policy recommendations following publication of Punishing Abuse will include those which specifically target the inequalities implications highlighted in the research.

8. Inclusive Growth Implications

8.1 The focus on inequalities is aligned to the inclusive growth purpose and direction.

9. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

9.1 This work is relevant across the WMCA 3-LEP region, and both Warwickshire and West Mercia Youth Offending Services have participated in the research. The development of the next steps focuses specifically on the seven metropolitan authorities.

10. Other Implications

None.

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