



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**



COVID-19
Recovery Framework **2021-22**

This framework will consider the ongoing impact and management of the COVID-19 pandemic on the **county of Nottinghamshire** and **Nottinghamshire County Council**.



Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges across the entirety of Nottinghamshire. The impacts have been varied and far-reaching and for many have led to personal grief and loss. In the face of the difficulties that we have all had to bear, it is to the credit of our residents, local partnerships, services and businesses that we have addressed these challenges together, and I have been struck by the generosity, kindness, hard-work and determination that has been shown by communities, voluntary organisations and public services as we have worked together to support one another and protect our most vulnerable.

Now, as the Government's roadmap continues to allow for the country to be eased out of lockdown, many are looking forward to the time when normal life will return. We know however that the virus can be unpredictable. The emergence of new variants shows that we need to be prepared for any scenario. This COVID Recovery Framework demonstrates that Nottinghamshire is well prepared, with experienced partnership response structures in place ready to be scaled up or down as the virus evolves, to protect and support our communities.

At the same time recovery and renewal processes have begun. Whilst in some instances this means a return to much missed ways of life, the new opportunities that have emerged through COVID-19 offer unparalleled opportunities to build back better and stronger than before. This will be vital as we support our communities and economy to recover and work towards a more resilient future for Nottinghamshire. It is within this spirit that Nottinghamshire County Council will continue to foster strong working relations with key partners and stakeholders, old and new, to ensure our County emerges from the crisis stronger for the future.



Councillor Ben Bradley
Leader of Nottinghamshire
County Council

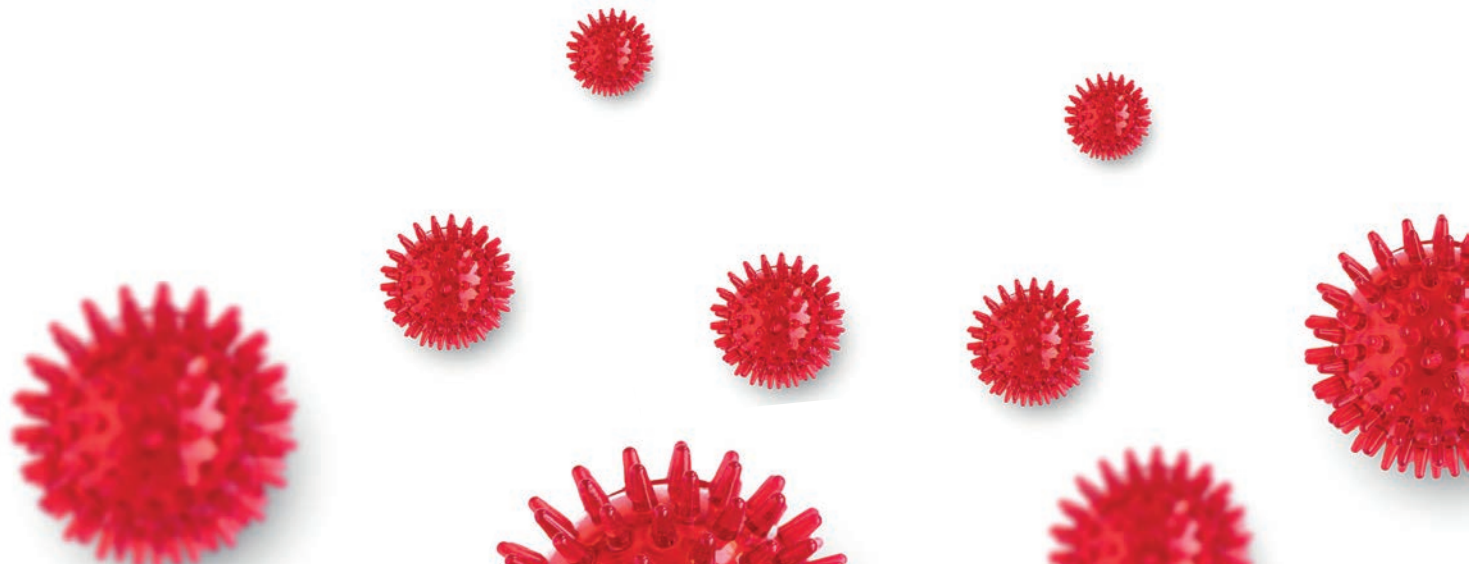
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Introduction

This framework will consider the ongoing impact and management of the COVID-19 pandemic on the county of Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire County Council. In particular, this framework maps:

- the structures the Council has in place internally and with partners to remain responsive to the pandemic through 2021/22.
- the potential scenarios the Council could face in the coming months depending on the evolution of the virus and the success of control measures.
- how the organisational and socio-economic impacts of the virus are being analysed and understood to inform the Council's response and recovery planning.
- planning for the short, medium and long-term measures that will be taken to recover from the societal and organisational impacts of COVID-19 in the context of the Council Plan 2021-25, including how the Council's learning from the pandemic will be captured and embedded into future ways of working.
- considerations for the long-term changes necessary to live safely and confidently with COVID-19 as the virus becomes endemic.





Continuing Partnership Response

The County Council has been working closely with its partners to provide an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The response structures in place are outlined below.

Local Outbreak Management Plan

The [Local Outbreak Management Plan](#) for Nottinghamshire County Council was first published in June 2020, following notification that upper tier local authorities would take on responsibility for the management of local outbreaks. The Plan was refreshed in March 2021 in response to publication of the national roadmap for easing of lockdown restrictions and the updated national [Contain Framework](#). The refreshed Plan was approved by the COVID-19 Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee in March 2021.

Underlying the Local Outbreak Management Plan is the evidence that, even with the widespread uptake of effective vaccines, COVID-19 is likely to be in circulation for the next couple of years and that vaccines alone are unlikely to be sufficient to entirely manage the hazard this presents. Therefore, arrangements must be made which enable people, employers, education and civic society to manage risk without repeated reversion to wide scale lockdowns. The Local Outbreak Management Plan identifies these arrangements to enable people in Nottinghamshire to live with COVID-19 in a way that is safe and confident. The Plan will be subject to review in the light of emerging evidence.

The Plan also outlines how the local authority will discharge key elements of the local outbreak response in accordance with the national Contain Framework, including:

- Outbreak management in higher-risk settings, communities, and locations e.g. care homes, prisons, hospitality, hospitals, education, and homelessness settings
- Responding to variants of concern (VOC)/variants under investigation (VUI)
- Data and surveillance
- Community testing
- Contact tracing and enhanced contact tracing, in partnership with Health Protection Teams.
- Support for self-isolation
- Support for vulnerable people and underserved communities, including the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)
- Compliance and enforcement
- Communications and engagement, including community resilience
- Interface with the vaccine roll out, including plans to tackle disparities in vaccination take-up.

In addition, the Plan details the partnership structures and governance involved in its delivery, based within the Local Resilience Forum and including working closely with Public Health England, the local NHS, Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue and other partner agencies.

To sustain the delivery of the Local Outbreak Management Plan, in the medium term, a dedicated [COVID-19 response service](#) has been established within Public Health. This service will provide capacity to sustainably deliver the full range of outbreak response elements during periods where incidence of cases and outbreaks remain relatively low. Surge capacity will be accessed from within the Public Health division and other teams if the incidence of cases or outbreaks increases, in order to maintain an effective response. A review will take place every six months to assess the current situation and likely ongoing need.



Alongside protecting health and minimising avoidable disruption to the local economy, schools and civic life, the service will also enable the Nottinghamshire County Council Public Health Team to re-engage with key agendas.

Vaccination>

The [UK's COVID-19 vaccination delivery plan](#) sets out the national strategy for the supply, prioritisation and delivery of vaccines to the population. Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group are responsible for the delivery of the vaccination programme across the County.

Nottinghamshire County Council plays an important role in supporting the vaccination programme, including supporting the vaccination of frontline social care workers, supporting communications and community engagement, supporting the uptake of vaccinations across all equalities groups and supporting the future delivery of the programme within core infrastructure.

It is anticipated that in Autumn 2021 some groups may need to be revaccinated to ensure that they maintain a high level of immunity against existing or newly emerging variants of COVID-19. The scope and delivery approach for this has yet to be determined but the local authority will wish to be assured of these arrangements and to contribute to addressing any inequalities in uptake as part of the authority's statutory duty to promote the preparation of appropriate local health protection arrangements.

Support for the most vulnerable

The health and wellbeing of Nottinghamshire's residents is of the utmost importance now more than ever. Work continues to be undertaken to ensure communities can receive the right support, at the right time, with initiatives continuing to seek to understand the developing needs of the most vulnerable, and to identify any gaps in provision.

[The Nottinghamshire Coronavirus Community Support Hub](#) is a virtual network of partners, established to meet the 'simpler' support needs of our communities. This includes, amongst other things, providing access to food, the collection of medicines, dog-walking or befriending.

The Hub went live on 23 March 2020 and is accessible over the phone, via websites or the [My Notts app](#). It provides a real-time online database, accessible to all partners, which enables residents in need of support to input their postcode and requirements and be 'served up' with a list of local groups and organisations able to meet their needs. If people cannot find support to suit their needs, or wish to talk to somebody directly, then telephone access is provided by the County Council's Customer Service Centre.



The Hub has enabled partners to meet local needs arising through the pandemic, as well as meeting the changing responsibilities that the government has placed on partners. These include, supporting the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to shield, deploying the Local Authority Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies and offering support to those self-isolating.



Partners have developed a suite of tools and approaches which enable partners to monitor the evolving situation and respond effectively. Systems are in place to communicate with those Nottinghamshire residents that are most vulnerable and ensure that they are aware of the support that is available and have access to this when required.

Public Engagement and Communications >

Public engagement and communication continue to play a vital role in managing the response to and recovery from COVID-19. Good communications have been vital in helping to disseminate information on the national direction, ensuring the Council and residents are kept abreast of the ever-changing restrictions and advice at a local level. As a result, key messages from the Council will continue to include:

- Awareness of evolving government guidance
- The continuing need to be vigilant to symptoms, get tested and isolate if necessary
- Encouraging infection control behaviours as routine

- Supporting the vaccination programme, encouraging uptake in specific communities
- The importance of COVID security where restrictions remain in place
- Promoting advice around outbreak management in specific settings
- Support that is available to those that are self-isolating
- Supporting the reopening of the economy through an engagement with our business representative groups and reviewing the requirements of our most impacted business sectors including the visitor economy, retail and the high street as well as encouraging residents to shop local, making the most of Nottinghamshire's services, shops and leisure attractions.

Local Resilience Forum

The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. It is the Government's national mechanism for emergency response and for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, this partnership delivers emergency planning, ensuring the establishment of an effective multi-agency response to COVID-19.

An evolving set of LRF response and recovery cells and their subgroups have been meeting on a regular basis to deal with the impacts of the coronavirus emergency at a local level and to address needs and wherever possible, build back better and enhance resilience in communities.

These groups and sub cells, which encompass a broad range of support apparatus across sectors include but not limited to transport, communications and finance.

Such Response and Recovery Cell structures are flexible to be 'wound down' or 'stood up' according to the needs posed by the evolution of the virus, with future changes to the management structure expected and out for consultation.



OPEN

OPENING HOURS

MON-FRI 8am-3pm

SAT-SUN 8am-4pm

Organisational Response

The County Council's organisational response has led to rapid adaptations to the way services are delivered and significant changes to the way staff work. Office based staff have worked from home throughout the pandemic, whilst the use of personal protective equipment has become essential for many who work on the front-line. The following outlines the internal response structures we have in place, together with scenario plans that will continue to enable us to navigate the uncertainty caused by living with the pandemic through 2021/22.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

As part of the immediate response to the Coronavirus outbreak, a [PPE recovery plan](#) for the County Council was established to ensure sustainability of supplies of PPE for staff in front-line services. One of the objectives of this was to ensure preparedness for a future wave of COVID-19, by the County Council maintaining a resilient amount of PPE. This stock is based on being able to meet four weeks of the peak levels of PPE demand observed during wave 1 of the COVID-19 response in Nottinghamshire.

Whilst the issues experienced around supply chains in the early stages of the pandemic have now largely been resolved and demand stabilised, it is currently understood that despite the size and scale of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, PPE will continue to be required for some time. This includes the County Council continuing to provide PPE to social care, health, education, and other settings at present, in line with Government guidance.

Moving forward, the County Council is working with Nottingham City Council, who are leading the procurement of a [Dynamic Purchasing System \(DPS\)](#) contract for ongoing PPE supplies. This will provide resilience to Government supplies, including PPE for non-COVID-19 related uses. This will be live from July 2021 and will be available on a call-off basis to regional partners.



Operating Model and Service Adaptations

The pandemic has led to a shift in operating context for the Council. The Council's efforts to adapt services and protect the most vulnerable have led to many changes in the way staff work and services are delivered. To adapt to Government guidance, some services have been temporarily suspended, delivered remotely or adapted to be delivered in a COVID secure way.

The Council's Risk Safety Emergency Management Board (RSEMB) is co-ordinating the County Council's response to COVID-19 across departments. The RSEMB also connects the Council to the multi-agency response through the LRF. The group is attended by the chairs of the departmental Risk Safety and Emergency Management Groups (RSEMG), to report on the response, escalate issues of a strategic nature and receive actions to be undertaken departmentally. RSEMGs have been responsible for managing the continuity of critical services within departments in line with established business continuity plans.

Consistent with government guidance, the Council's office-based workforce has been working remotely wherever possible. A system of redeployment has been established to support critical services during times of peak demand.

A record of such corporate and service responses and adaptations is available through the [COVID-19 Update Reports](#) to the Policy Committee and the COVID-19 Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee between May 2020 and July 2021.

Scenario Planning

Building on learning since March 2020, services have undertaken scenario planning for the remainder of the year. Considering both optimistic case and pessimistic case scenarios for the evolution of the virus, helps services identify the high-level planning, prioritisation and delivery decisions needed to navigate the uncertainty of living with COVID through 2021/22.



Detailed scenario planning is held by each Council department, but a summary of the scenarios considered, and service impacts, is included on the following pages.

OPTIMISTIC SCENARIO

- Good population immunity achieved, increasing among all adult age groups through summer 2021
- New strains do not significantly compromise immunity
- COVID defences insufficient to keep virus at background levels –resurgences likely in 2021 and in successive winters but at lower levels than Jan 21
- Low level societal restrictions seasonally
- Some ongoing impact on well-being and economy

Economy

- A quick and sustained economic recovery with strong growth and resurgence in some sectors.
- Variation in impact across sectors leads to risk of economic exclusion for some, with an end of furlough scheme risking increased unemployment.
- Funding Initiatives, support recovery, such as Levelling Up and the UK shared Prosperity Fund.
- Appropriate levels of support to most affected sectors, such as hospitality, visitor economy and SMEs.
- Work with partners to promote routes to employment, including re-training, start up opportunities and support services.

Communities

- The Council's Community Support Hub continues to develop increased community support and greater partnership with communities and voluntary sector.
- Recovery of the night-time economy and partial recovery of urban centre economies.
- Implementation of Social Recovery Fund projects to support community recovery work.

Children's Services & Education

- Schools remain open to all pupils, but occasional outbreaks may cause disruption to bubbles and online learning for self-isolating pupils.
- Catch-up schemes implemented, targeting those with most learning loss.
- Return to more after school and enrichment activities.
- A return to more traditional children's social care models while embedding learning from models tried during pandemic.
- Demand managements as restriction easing may reveal hidden harm.
- Availability of service placements for children increases.

Health Care

- Supporting our local NHS to address waiting lists and backlogs fairly.
- Ongoing pressures with regard to mental health issues.
- Emphasis on care in equal measure for those that have suffered both short and long COVID.
- Sustainable new operating models put in place to manage COVID in the medium term.
- Opportunities to take advantage of new normal and country's rediscovery of low level but high participation in outdoor exercise.
- PPE stocks remain high.

Adults Services

- People continue to receive their assessed levels of care.
- COVID outbreaks across Care settings minimal.
- Financial viability of providers sustained, maintaining levels of service.
- Increase in numbers of people able to be supported, with workforce capacity high.
- Employment opportunities as health and safety concerns are lessened amongst care home settings.
- Support to commissioned services to plan escalation points.
- Gradual reprioritisation of business as usual activities.

Place Services

- Gradual return of access to venues, large crowd events and the use of green space.
- Bus routes and patronage return to pre COVID levels.
- Pressure eased on additional waste tonnages during and post lockdown.
- Increased footfall and use of open access services, such as libraries.
- Demand Responsive Transport and new National Bus Strategy help breed further confidence in the use of Council fleets and passenger vehicles.
- Increased partnership working to reduce costs in areas of joint collaboration.

Strategic Co-ordination

- Standing down emergency response units and priority shift back to business as usual
- A return to office environments and adoption of hybrid working model.
- Supporting staff welfare during return to office spaces.
- Redoubling efforts on the transformation, change and financial savings agenda.
- Embedding service improvements and learning gained through the pandemic, particularly digital opportunities.
- Council tax and business rates receipts begin to return to pre-pandemic levels

Comms & Engagement

- Continued promotion of vaccination, including tackling vaccine uptake inequality.
- Campaigning to restore support local economic recovery and use of public services (transport etc).
- Ongoing communications about the 'new normal' and any lingering COVID restrictions.



PESSIMISTIC SCENARIO

- Limited population immunity achieved with effectiveness of vaccine poor
- New strains significantly compromise immunity
- COVID defences insufficient to control the virus with ongoing circulation
- Ongoing societal restrictions imposed
- Significant health and economic impact

Economy

- A double dip recession.
- Young people remaining disproportionality impacted.
- Pressures on public finances limit local government spending and recovery funding opportunities.
- Further business closures following the end of financial support schemes, leading to increased unemployment and reduced employment and training opportunities.

Communities

- Community Support Hub well established and prepared to offer increased support when/ if required.
- Ongoing burden of additional lockdown measures on communities, with some compliance fatigue.
- Potential for foundations of poverty to be established in new areas/ communities.
- University students remain away from Nottinghamshire as online learning persists.
- Increasing demand for front-line services that support vulnerable people and families.

Children's Services & Education

- Potential school closures or large number of children self-isolating, yet schools well equipped to blend online and in person learning.
- Risk of hidden harm continues.
- Falling demand puts early years providers at risk of closure.
- Children's Social Care service delivery models adopted during the pandemic continue.

Health Care

- High levels of coronavirus cases.
- Focus returns to critical service continuity (hospitals, care homes).
- Continuity plans put into action, drawing on regional & national support (e.g. Surge Rapid Response Team).
- Maintaining ability to spot COVID hotspots and bubble breaks from the outset.
- Focus on rolling out a new generation of vaccines if required.
- Significant impact on long-term health outcomes and health inequalities.
- Tighter restrictions exacerbate an already growing build-up of mental health issues.

Adults Services

- COVID outbreaks across Care Home settings or similar.
- Models adopted during the pandemic continue.
- Engagement with Emergency Care Home support hub and agencies to support workforce capacity gaps.
- Limited service availability for new requests and reduced for current packages of care.
- Provider costs increase to support maintaining service continuity, leading to fragility in the market.
- Increased demand for social care support as elective operations are delayed.

Place Services

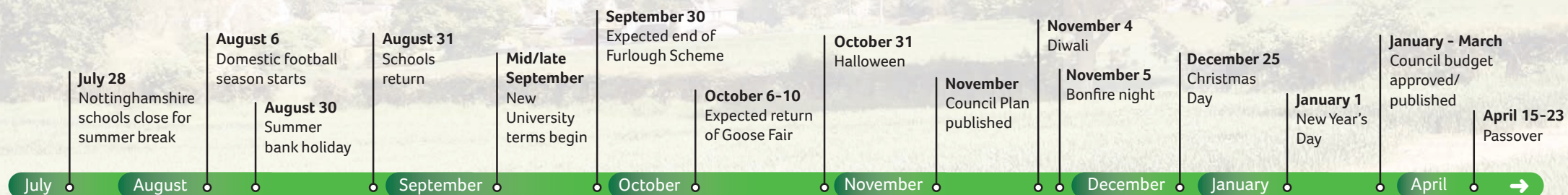
- Continued increase in demand for country parks and green spaces, but risk that some become focal points for anti-social behaviour.
- Potential reduced viability of some bus routes causing rural isolation.
- Waste sites forced to close alongside increased costs to kerbside collections
- Under use of Council buildings and estate, causing reduced income, contract failures.
- Compromised ability to respond to concurrent emergencies, such as flooding episodes.
- Continued rollout of broadband across the County to expand virtual communities.
- Continued outreach to address growing scam and fraud schemes.

Strategic Co-ordination

- Local Resilience Forum emergency response structure continues and builds on lessons learnt.
- Office based staff continue working from home.
- High levels of staff fatigue and increased levels of absence.
- Priority on critical service continuance, with some business as usual activities on hold.
- Ongoing pressures on public finance lead to uncertainty of local government finances long-term.
- Additional support for younger and new staff to gain skillsets in remote working environment.

Comms & Engagement

- Updating communities on changing restrictions.
- Directing communities and businesses to support available.
- Communications remain alert to a changing picture and has strong links with the LRF Communications Cell and Emergency Planning.





Recovery Planning

The needs of local residents will be at the forefront of recovery planning, as Nottinghamshire and the country more broadly, seek to establish ways to best mitigate against the impact of COVID-19, whilst also taking advantage of the benefits and opportunities it has presented.

Socio-Economic Recovery

The County Council continues to monitor the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on local communities and businesses. A summary of the impacts is as follows:

Inequalities

- The virus has had an unequal impact on mortality rates among different groups. *“Risks are much higher for those living in more deprived areas, in overcrowded housing, in key worker roles with close proximity to others, being from BAME groups, having underlying health conditions, as well as being older and male”*¹. The coverage of this in the media has led to an increased awareness of social inequalities among communities.
- Analysis shows that the social and economic impact of lockdown restrictions have been felt most severely in the most deprived communities. It is known that those communities which have struggled through the pandemic are likely to take the longest to recover and there is a risk of widening inequalities between communities in the County.

¹Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Marmot Review (December 2020).

Economy

- The economic impact in Nottinghamshire is broadly in line with the national average, but this conceals disparities between sub-areas of the county, with some parts of Nottinghamshire likely to see slower recovery than others. Falls in economic activity differ across sectors, with the hardest hit sectors being Accommodation and Food, the Visitor Economy and Wholesale and Retail sectors.
- The pandemic has also had a significant impact on employment. In August 2020, 31% of eligible employments were on furlough (7% [May 2021](#)). The proportion of residents aged 16-64 claiming Jobseekers Allowance plus Universal Credit ([claimant count](#)) peaked at 5.4% in May 2020 (4.5% May 2021), compared to 2.6% at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. The scale and pace of recovery will be reviewed in light of the withdrawal of financial support to businesses as the restrictions are eased, such as the tapering of the furlough scheme, alongside an overview of any additional barriers facing those seeking work and training.

- COVID-19 accelerated some longer-term structural changes, with town and local centres having been severely impacted by temporary and permanent business closures. The reimagining and reinvigorating of our townscapes, helping them adapt to changing consumer behaviour and new home-working patterns will be key to their successful futures.

Health and Well-being >

- In addition to the impact of the virus itself on people's health, societal restrictions have led to an exacerbation of the social and lifestyle determinants of poor health. Unemployment, reduced educational achievement, as well as increased alcohol consumption, poor diet and inactivity may have a very significant impact on health outcomes over the next few decades.
- Also, the number of people experiencing mental health challenges or loneliness has increased during the pandemic. Those most affected are the under 34s, women and White and Asian ethnicities. There is uncertainty around mental health needs in local communities in the medium term.

Education >

- Education has been affected by the pandemic, despite an excellent response by schools to manage onsite and online learning. Schools will face a challenge to recover 'lost learning' in the short and medium term to mitigate the risk that some children's life chances have been compromised.

Communities >

- The pandemic produced a surge in volunteering, highlighting the readiness of communities to step up to support friends and neighbours. While some of this was co-ordinated through the Nottinghamshire Coronavirus Community Support Hub, much of it is very local and informal. There is an opportunity to consider how the Council may nurture and harness this longer term.

Online Communication >

- The pandemic necessitated an extraordinary shift in the way communities live their lives. This led to a huge upsurge in remote working, digital communication with friends and family, and online leisure and retail. This brings many benefits such as increased convenience, productivity and reduced congestion and carbon emissions through less travel. These are opportunities which need to be harnessed. However, the pandemic has also highlighted levels of digital exclusion in local communities, which must be recognised and addressed.

Environment >

- The reduction in road traffic as a result of the shift to digital will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, there has been an increase in disposable 'single-use' items such as masks, gloves and cups, generating more waste. The pandemic has brought about an increased awareness of the impact of lifestyles on the environment.

Council Plan

The Council is currently developing a new [Council Plan 2021-25](#). The Plan will set the long-term vision for Nottinghamshire and put the County's COVID Recovery in the context of the organisation's goals for the future.

The priorities in the Council Plan will be based on the analysis of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Nottinghamshire's communities, ensuring that the Council directs its resources towards those activities that will make the most difference to residents and businesses and secure a strong recovery.

The Council is keen to take this opportunity to understand from communities what they consider to be the key challenges and opportunities as Nottinghamshire recovers from the pandemic, as well as what changes they would like to see for future generations. Connecting with communities in this way will be key to developing a shared vision for the County and ensuring that the authority's efforts to recover from the pandemic help towards achieving the Nottinghamshire we all want in the future.



This includes the Council undertaking an engagement exercise with residents and stakeholders in summer 2021. The engagement exercise will give residents the opportunity to inform the Council of the key impacts of COVID-19 for them, and the priorities that they see for Nottinghamshire as a consequence. The results of the exercise will therefore critically inform the content and emphasis of the Council Plan.



Economic Recovery Strategy

The COVID-19 Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee approved the [Economic Recovery Action Plan 2020-2022](#) in September 2020, highlighting the response to the economic impact of the virus, and what the Council and its partners must do in terms of regeneration to emerge from the challenges of COVID-19. In order to help build a more balanced and resilient innovation led economy, the Council has adopted the following five simultaneous approaches to recovery:

- **Response** - Supporting businesses to rebound by working with partners and central Government to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis
- **Recovery** - With our strategic partners, implement people centred measures to promote sustainable growth, integrating the green transition, digital transformation and drawing upon lessons learned from the crisis
- **Restore** - Direct activities and interventions towards minimising economic variation in different parts of the county and building productivity and resilience of key parts of the economy
- **Resilience** - Strengthen business resilience to enable planned, agile, and innovative responses to mitigate the impact of any future crisis or external change
- **Renewal** - Create and shape opportunities for longer term economic transformation through capital investment, connectivity and infrastructure, innovation and the creation of a responsive, skilled workforce.

A progress report on the Recovery Action Plan was given to the [June 2021 Economic Development and Asset Management Committee](#), reflecting on the developments being made in supporting Nottinghamshire's economic recovery as it impacts on people, businesses, the visitor economy, infrastructure, digital connectivity and our places.



Further to this, working in partnership with the [Growth Hub](#), the Council's Business Advisers have supported many thousands of Nottinghamshire businesses access the various grants and loans available via the Government, HMRC, the district councils and the British Business Bank.

Partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector

Building on examples of cross-sector collaboration during the pandemic, [The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Compact](#) has been developed to provide a framework for partners to work together going forward, to build capacity in local communities in addition to helping to generate wider debate that will shape a stronger future for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) across the county.

The Compact was presented to and approved by the Humanitarian Action Group partners on 20th April 2021. It asks public sector partners and the VCS to commit to a set of shared values and principles which support the long-term development of effective partnership working.

Social Recovery Fund

In order to better understand the developing needs of vulnerable communities and residents and to identify gaps in provision, an assessment has been undertaken to identify cohorts with particular needs that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. Partners have identified 10 priority groups, these being:

- Hospital and community care patients ready for discharge
- COVID-19 positive self-isolators
- Elderly residents with dementia/ frail/living alone
- Domestic abuse victims
- Residents who are digitally excluded
- Residents from minority ethnic groups
- Residents experiencing financial difficulties
- Younger people
- Residents experiencing loneliness and isolation
- Residents with less complex mental health needs.

There are a number of potential initiatives to meet the ongoing needs of these groups and wider communities as they recover from the pandemic, with further work required to fully understand this need and develop appropriate support to our communities. As a consequence, it is planned that an initial fund of £1m is established to ensure the Council is able to react flexibly to meet needs as they arise. This is to be expressed as the COVID-19 [Social Recovery Fund](#).





Organisational Recovery

The Council's workforce has shown an exceptional ability to meet the demands of the pandemic, adapting to new ways of working to ensure that local communities needs continue to be met. While this has presented many challenges, it has also led to great learning. It is within this context that steps will be taken to embed changes that have improved working methods and led to improvements for residents and businesses. The Council will use the opportunities that have emerged as a springboard towards better and more forward-thinking approaches.

Workforce Recovery Plan

In November 2020, Personnel Committee approved the [Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy and Action Plan](#). This strategy aims to ensure the Council has the right people with the right skills, at the right time, to deliver the Council's published priorities within the context of managing and delivering services in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It sets out to define the "new normal" for the Council's workforce in the short to medium term and how the Council will support its employees' wellbeing and organisational resilience.

Whilst seeking to shape what work will look like within the Council in a new world context, there is also a significant need to recognise the challenges our workforce have faced since March 2020 and the huge efforts which have been made to respond to the pandemic and the impact this has had on their physical and emotional well-being. Employee well-being is one of the key workstreams of the strategy and has been the focus of a recent well-being Check-in Survey undertaken in May 2021.

The strategy also sets out aspirations for the future of the Council's workforce and provides the foundations for future workforce planning, development and transformation which will be set out in the new Council Plan and underpinning Workforce Strategy in autumn 2021.



Embedding learning from the pandemic

The developing Council Plan will demonstrate how the authority will capture the learning from the pandemic, where changes have led to better ways of working and improvements for residents and businesses, and how the authority will embed this improvement into future operating models.

Departments have undertaken an exercise to capture the impact of COVID-19 on their services and how this may impact their service planning for the future. Services have considered:

Those activities they have had to do to respond to the virus but can stop once the response phase is over;

- Examples include initiating the Councils emergency response apparatus, establishing emergency planning measures through multi-agency response and recovery cells facilitated through the LRF, as well as regular COVID reporting to senior stakeholders, including the Council's corporate leadership team (CLT).

Those activities that they have stopped doing as a result of the virus that are now obsolete;

- Including but not limited to simple aspects such as printing and travel to and from office spaces, conferences or similar, as well as funding for services that had been commissioned but weren't necessarily being delivered to their full capacity and have since evolved.

Those activities that they have been able to try as a result of the virus that show promise for the future;

- Instances such as the effective use of virtual visits, social media and expanded digital connectivity to better engage with residents, alongside increased partnership working that includes more joint coordinated support to the care sector, and improved hospital discharge processes to minimise delays.

Those activities that they have had to stop doing as a result of the virus but will need to be started again in some form;

- Examples include long-term prevention programmes and activities, as well as a return to more traditional, face to face contact where necessary for critical service delivery.

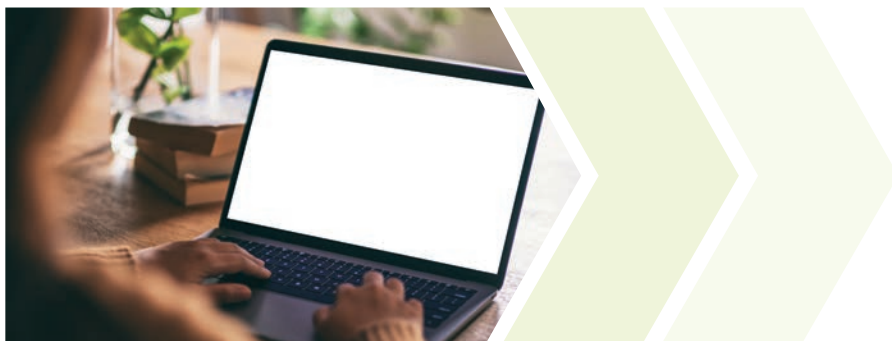
This information will be used by services to embed learning and improvement into their future operations and for service and business continuity planning over the coming months.



Hybrid Working Model

In line with Government guidance, the majority of office-based Council employees have been working from home, since the first lockdown in March 2021. Whilst certain sections of the workforce have continued to work as they did previously where necessary, all have responded phenomenally well and have gone above and beyond to support critical functions and protect the most vulnerable during this time, whilst working in new ways.

The Council's successful reputation for delivering smarter working across all departments, has been achieved by engaging and delivering positive changes alongside staff. The progress made over recent years with smarter working, alongside investment in new technologies, has meant that the County Council has had high levels of business continuity despite the COVID-19 restrictions.



In order to embed the learning from the pandemic and as a development to our Smarter Working model, the Council will adopt a new [hybrid working model](#) from October 2021. This means that staff will work flexibly from home in the long-term, with opportunities to use office spaces where this would be beneficial to individuals and teams.

Financial Impact

The pandemic has led to a shift in the finances of the County Council, including increased financial pressures to respond to changing service needs as well as a reduction in income from Council tax and business rates.

The additional pressures on the budget have been offset by the main COVID-19 grant allocations received from Central Government, and a range of additional specific grants and allocations to offset lost income. However, it is anticipated that the pandemic and the costs of living with COVID into the future, will lead to increased pressures on local government finances in the medium to long-term. The Council will need to redouble its efforts on transformation and change savings programmes, and keep the Medium-Term Financial Strategy under review to ensure delivery of its priorities in a financially sustainable way.

Reports setting out the latest forecast position, including the impact of COVID-19 on income and additional costs and implications for the Council's finances long-term, will continue to be presented to [Finance & Major Contracts Committee](#) on a regular basis.



Living with COVID-19 in the medium to long-term

Evidence to date indicates that vaccines have already been very effective at preventing hospitalisations due to COVID-19. Even so, on their own, vaccines are unlikely to provide sufficient protection against the virus. Therefore, it is likely that a combination of measures will be required to enable us to live safely and confidently with COVID-19.

The Association for Directors of Public Health has recently published [Living Safely with COVID](#): Moving toward a Strategy for Sustainable Exit from the Pandemic. This guidance for Directors of Public Health identifies four key principles to be focused on in the drive to enable safe living with COVID-19:

Transmission of the virus needs to be brought, and kept, as low as possible.

- This involves promoting and ensuring compliance with any ongoing social distancing measures and COVID-secure guidelines set out by Government. Clear communications with residents, close working with employers and engagement with communities will help to keep transmission of the virus as low as is possible. Council services may need to adapt their delivery models in order to prevent transmission in the longer term.

Surveillance of transmission and variant emergence must be optimal.

- There must be robust national and local arrangements to identify and respond to the emergence of new COVID-19 variants of concern.



Test, Trace and Isolate needs to work effectively, with a clear testing strategy.➤

- A robust local contact tracing system is in place, as well as a new Outbreak Identification Rapid Response system, which uses contact-tracing data to identify and investigate potential outbreaks. Residents will be supported to self-isolate where necessary.

Vaccines must be effective and delivered equitably.➤

- Support to the rollout of the vaccination programme will continue, with a particular focus on improving equitable access and reducing vaccine hesitancy in the local population.

Due to the far-reaching consequences of the virus on local communities, demand for Council services is unpredictable and may increase as a result of complications from COVID and/or the impact of prolonged restrictions and an economic downturn. It should also be recognised that the virus itself is unpredictable and there is more to learn about the disease. Services will need to remain responsive to changing needs and adapt accordingly.

In this context, prevention will become more important than ever. The County Council is committed to working with communities to ensure that it provides the right support early on, helping residents to help themselves and each other, retaining people's independence and reducing demand for more expensive services. This includes working with partners, including health partners, and the LRF structures, to support the County's ongoing resilience.



Conclusion



The pandemic has been and continues to be a global crisis, with far-reaching and severe impacts for people across the world. For the County Council and its partners, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge as, for our part, we have sought to find new and innovative ways to protect critical service delivery and the most vulnerable in Nottinghamshire's communities. These efforts mean that we are now well placed to adapt to the evolving situation, and take steps to address the immediate and medium to long term recovery challenges that lie ahead, including how we adapt our practice to live safely and confidently with COVID into the future.

The next Council Plan, due to be published later this year, will map our plans to support the immediate recovery needs of the County as well as deliver our long-term aspirations for resilience.





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