

**Appendix 1 – Initial Analysis of the Impact of COVID-19 on Birmingham's
Communities: supplementary details and early findings**

Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit (NDSU) research

In May, Locality was commissioned by the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit (NDSU) to undertake research and analysis on Birmingham's community sector's incredible COVID-19 response, as well as looking at impact, transition and recovery, with a focus on how key issues and learning can be aligned with the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper going forward.

Aims of the research:

- To understand how community organisations have mobilised during the COVID-19 crisis
- To understand relationship changes, brought about by the crisis, between community organisations and the Council
- To explore how lessons from this crisis can support greater impact of the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper across the Council's working practices
- To identify the role community anchors can play in city-wide recovery with relevant strategies and policies, such as inclusive growth

Summary:

- 25 community organisations were selected, including Pioneer Places, Perry Barr and Selly Oak Neighbourhood Network Schemes plus additional organisations put forward by the Equalities team. There was geographic cover across all of Birmingham. Interviews were held during June.
- An additional roundtable session with key Members is taking place in July
- An additional roundtable session with cross-directorate officers is taking place in July
- The draft report is expected in July

YouGov Panel Survey looking at the impact of COVID-19 on health and wellbeing

An initial YouGov Poll looking at the impact of COVID-19 on health and wellbeing was conducted on behalf of Public Health in May. Findings from the 650 respondents were used to frame conversations at Health and Wellbeing Forums and other meetings to inform the next phase of the COVID-19 response.

Summary of key findings:

- The proportion reporting poor general health (14 per cent) was higher than previously reported by ONS for Birmingham (7 per cent reported in the 2011 Census)
- The proportion reporting low levels of happiness (21 per cent) was higher than previously reported by ONS for Birmingham (16 per cent reported in the 2019 Annual Population Survey)
- The proportion reporting low levels of feeling that activities are worthwhile (23 per cent) was higher than previously reported by ONS for Birmingham (8 per cent reported in the 2019 Annual Population Survey)
- The proportion reporting high levels of anxiety (70 per cent) are higher than previously reported by ONS (63 per cent reported in the 2019 Annual Population Survey)
- The proportion reporting low levels of life satisfaction (11 per cent) are slightly lower than previously reported by ONS (14 per cent reported in the 2019 Annual Population Survey)
- The proportion reporting completing less than 30 minutes moderate physical activity a week (21 per cent) was lower than in the Sport England Active Lives Survey 2018/19 (30 per cent)
- In terms of changes in levels of physical activity, since lockdown, a slightly larger proportion of the sample are doing more exercise than those doing less (38 per cent compared with 34 per cent), and 34 per cent are achieving five or more days of 30 minutes or more of moderate activity

- Only 23 per cent reported eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. This is lower than reported in the 2018/19 Sport England Active Lives survey for Birmingham (48 per cent)
- 31 per cent reported eating a less healthy diet than before lockdown compared to 27 per cent who reported eating a healthier diet
- 3 per cent (20 people) reported using a food bank since lockdown started
- 1 per cent (8 people) used a food bank for the first time
- 43 per cent reported being more worried about their financial situation than they were at the start of 2020
- 7 per cent of respondents had quit smoking or vaping while 6 per cent said they were smoking or vaping more

Public Health COVID-19 impact survey on BeHeard

Public Health are running a survey between 22 May and 31 July to capture insight into health and wellbeing behaviours of citizens during the COVID-19 outbreak, including multiple demographics, self-expression and belief questions that will enable insight into the diverse population of Birmingham. It was launched on 22 May 2020 and ends on 31 July 2020. As of 19 June, 1,841 people had responded.

Analysis on the first tranche of data (22 May to 5 June) already started to provide insight into changing behaviours such as increased feelings of loneliness, some deterioration in self-reported mental health, a reduction in levels of physical activity, changing friendship and family dynamics, potentially unhealthier food habits, and valuable insight into community connection and cohesion.

Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate which sources of information they could trust, and the Council fared well, scoring similarly to local health services but slightly lower than NHS England and Public Health England.

Engagement on the survey is continuing through Members and partners to ensure that we reach as many people as possible to hear their views as well as trying our best to reflect the diversity of Birmingham, including hard to reach communities.

**Partnership with University of Birmingham (UoB) to explore the impact of
COVID-19 on education**

Education colleagues are working with University of Birmingham to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on education, including gathering insight through a parent/carers survey.

The Council and UoB are working together to ensure that:

- We have a clear picture of the evolving education offer in the city
- We know what pupils are accessing and how they and their parents are doing
- Schools have the best possible support and resources

This partnership is looking to take lessons learnt during COVID-19 to improve education in the longer-term.

Public Health social media analysis

During June, Public Health was in the process of producing a thirty-day social media sentiment analysis. An anonymised data sample, retrieved from Twitter, will be analysed across multiple language processing software programmes to identify, categorise, and quantify changes in health trends as a result of COVID-19. In particular, this will look at the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on net positive and negative changes in health behaviours for the local population.

The initial trial phase will focus on the following areas of health:

- Mental health (anxiety and depression)
- Social isolation and social prescribing
- Smoking and substance use
- Physical activity
- Diet

A full, in-depth sentiment analysis from March will be conducted if the sample results show there has been a significant change in health behaviours.

Regional Taskforce review into BAME deaths from COVID-19

A regional Taskforce (co-chaired by Councillor Hamilton) was established to gather evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities, including conducting a series of public hearings to listen to first-hand accounts of people's experiences.

The purpose of the Taskforce is to create a clear picture of the impact on COVID-19 on BAME communities in the region; to gather testimony about why the impact has been disproportionate; and, to develop recommendations for safeguarding our communities for the future - for both the short and long term. It looks to gather both the stories of lived experience as well as the statistics. The findings will contribute to a review, launched by the Labour Party, into the coronavirus impact on BAME communities.

The Taskforce brings together community leaders from across the West Midlands Combined Authority area along with expert supporters who are helping to guide a series of events and activities to gather data and testimony on how COVID-19 has affected the BAME community, what questions need to be posed to government, and what actions and lessons can be learnt to prevent another tragedy.

While this inquiry has been established by Liam Byrne MP and is drawing on the expertise of the BAME leadership within the Labour Party, it is not intended as a party-political activity.

Health and Wellbeing Forums

Together with key partners, Public Health are positioning the Health and Wellbeing Forums to support the Birmingham population through the next phases of the COVID-19 path, working to use insight to understand the inequalities created and to create opportunity within these areas or with individual community groups. The Forums are developing forward plans for their respective areas as well as considering how they can guide partners using intelligence to ensure partners are well-placed to support recovery.

This includes, for example, the Creating a City Without Inequality Forum which is chaired by Councillor Cotton. The Forum was established in autumn 2019 with the overarching purpose of reducing health inequalities across the city by working with partners to develop and deliver a joint plan.

The group is currently engaging with partners to expand their understanding of how the coronavirus pandemic has affected communities. This work is particularly focussing on vulnerable groups (including those experiencing domestic abuse, those with multiple complex needs, BAME groups, people with disabilities, those that identify as part of the LGBT+ community, and migrants, asylum seekers and refugees) to consolidate data and evidence of COVID-19 impacts on health inequalities.

Director of Public Health engagement with faith communities and other groups

Engagement with faith groups started at the beginning of March to support Public Health messaging on the crisis. COVID-19 information was shared with places of worship and weekly meetings were set up to understand risks and issues faced by the Muslim community. This has led to engagement and consultation regarding the closure of Mosques and social-distancing guidelines around Ramadan and Eid and has helped the Council's messaging through lockdown.

The engagement was extended to include weekly virtual meetings with wider faith groups (including the Birmingham Black Led Churches and Birmingham Faith Leaders Group) and one-off meetings with other community groups (for example, engagement with the African Caribbean community, those under 50 years old, and women's groups). These sessions focussed on understanding the impact on BAME communities, women and young people. These meetings are now fortnightly, and discussions have started around what recovery might look like.

The purpose of the meetings has been to enhance community, female, and faith leader engagement on health issues specific to COVID-19 as well as developing a

considered and safe response to religious obligations. This has included support to help partners to better understand funeral and burial guidance and guidance on religious festivals across disciplines. These partners have been invited to a focus group with Dr Justin Varney (Director for Public Health) to ensure that females working in faith and community settings are engaged in public health discussions and that messaging reaches hard to reach communities.

Public Health and community organisation engagement with BAME, disabled and LGBT communities

Birmingham is a diverse and vibrant global city. The Council recognises that different BAME, disabled, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) communities may have specific concerns or issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with limited access to the relevant official information and guidance. This outbreak has disproportionately affected different communities and throughout the crisis the Council has worked hard to engage directly with communities to ensure that national guidelines are reaching all of our diverse communities.

Public Health commissioned a range of organisations working with BAME, disabled, and LGBT communities to develop deeper communication and engagement work to:

- Further understand specific issues around COVID-19 faced by those communities
- Work with Public Health to develop appropriate messages to tackle the spread of COVID-19 and provide the most appropriate wellbeing advice
- Use effective and appropriate culturally sensitive methods, which do not rely on face to face engagement, to get these messages out into these communities.

Public Health experts within the Council have partnered with organisations such as Citizens UK, the Chinese Community Centre Birmingham, the Refugee Migrant Centre, Birmingham Disability Resource Centre, and Birmingham LGBT, in order to discover the best methods of reaching the community and understanding how they are affected.

This builds on existing engagement with young people through a partnership with Beatfrees and the ongoing engagement with faith leaders which started before lockdown. There has also been targeted partnership between the Council and key providers working with care homes, homeless hostels, food banks, and substance misuse providers.

The providers have supplied feedback relating to their communities. Many common themes arise:

- Increased health risks of communities
- Inaccessible support services
- Social isolation, including domestic violence and mental health
- Financial wellbeing and access to benefits
- Accessibility of food provisions and the need to use food banks
- Employment challenges, including furlough, loss of employment, and zero hours contracts
- Education, including home education, GCSE's and A levels and concerns about returning to school
- Language barriers for information provided from local and national resources
- Lack of access to religious buildings

Each community has also particular and differing priorities:

- In June, First Class Legacy observed that many within the African and Caribbean community have disregarded COVID-19. There has rightfully been massive media attention around the Black Lives Matter movement, but it seems as though COVID-19 has slipped off the radar of Black people and they feel the recent Public Health England report has been lost in the noise.
- Polish and Eastern European communities worry about family in their home countries and that they are unable to visit them. People called back from furlough in these communities are concerned they will not be able to return to work due to lack of childcare. They are concerned they will need to give up

their employment without after school club support. This issue is mostly affecting women.

- Many people with sight loss have concerns about going outside and experience difficulties when shopping. They expressed that they were not always given priority in a shop and asked to queue in long lines with everyone else. It has been reported that someone was asked to prove that they were blind when shopping.
- COVID-19 information has not been readily available in large print or Braille. People with sight loss have been reliant on information they have been able to access on the internet. However, not all people with sight loss are able to use available technology without support.
- Language is a major factor for deaf and Chinese communities, particularly for older people. This has led to false information being shared and people going out for shopping who should have been shielding. Many elderly Chinese people are unable to understand changes in medication or medical treatment and need family support.
- Many older Chinese people are superstitious. The Chinese community generally makes extensive use of alternative remedies. Regular health forums have not been available to combat superstitions and beliefs in false remedies. Some older people have cancelled appointments through fear of catching COVID-19 on public transport or in hospital, even when hospital staff reassured them there are no COVID-19 patients in their facility. Community rumours include that hospitals are not treating anyone over 70. Funeral arrangements have not been able to follow some cultural practices, including the oldest son carrying a framed portrait of the deceased at the funeral, causing distress for families. Gambling is prevalent in the Chinese community. Closure of casinos during lockdown has impacted on social activity which could lead to other issues, including domestic violence.
- Many people with learning difficulties have struggled to understand the changing situation during COVID-19, not fully understanding why they need to follow government guidelines, including social distancing. Due to the closure of services, people lost support both they and their carers relied on. More

people are isolated at home and at greater risk of exploitation. People have become carers to others with learning difficulties or have had caring responsibilities increase overnight. Carers need improved access to information and each citizen with learning disabilities needs varied forms of easy read and support to understand and implement information. Some may not identify themselves as carers. These hidden and mutual carers need to be identified so they can plan and make sure that both the individual with learning disabilities and the carer are supported. Individuals will need additional support to adapt to more changes when their support networks return and day services may not be fully open.

- Individuals and dependents of Gypsy Roma heritage interviewed by the Refugee Migrant Centre stated that they and all their family had lost their jobs due to COVID-19. Individuals described how they were about to exhaust any savings and all other possibilities of securing a means to live. Some had accessed Universal Credit (UC), were still in the process of applying, or either thought they did not qualify or did not actually qualify. Some were living on tax credits or with no income, living on food parcels financially, or supported by friends. They most wanted support in accessing low skilled jobs and/or work from home.
- Following several announcements of the easing lockdown rules, members of these communities engaged with felt anxious about the prevalence of the virus in the city with no real understanding why BAME households were particularly affected.
- Citizens have found access to primary care services is a problem. Local GP practices online/via telephone methods disadvantages many older people, those with language barriers, and those who do not have technology available. In Lozells, where there is a high percentage of Kashmiri and Pakistani households, the local community is calling for a taskforce to look at years of under-investment of primary care services.
- Citizens UK's highlighted strong feelings of racism and other forms of hate.

- Migrant and refugee leaders report care workers/nurses had been told by a minority of patients that they did not feel safe having a BAME staff member attend them.
- There is still a nervousness about attending A&E at hospitals. Citizens UK has been told of patients not calling an ambulance when they otherwise would have.
- Migrant and refugee community leaders have advised Citizens UK that their communities are least likely to seek help from mainstream charity helplines and, in some occasions, may be reluctant to contact their own community sources of help due to stigma. This has been made hard by lack of access to face-to-face community networks via places of worship, cultural, and diaspora events.
- The Pakistani and Kashmiri communities have highlighted that COVID-19 has affected households of self-employed taxi drivers who have seen a huge drop in income from initially being in full lockdown to having to navigate being 'COVID-19 safe' when accepting new passengers. Some have also become delivery drivers for online and takeaway food outlets to supplement their income. Small business owners who have been able to access government grant have found it helpful but many are not online and have not been able to access various current options for business owners and those who are self-employed.
- Reopening places of worship is a big topic for communities. The Council's regular online briefings with faith institutions have been welcomed. Return to congregational worship is the main goal, with some disquiet around the safety of organised worshippers observing social distancing in a hall to pray together.
- The loss of income that places of worship have faced due to closure during lockdown is an issue in the community, as donors are local and coincide giving with congregational worship. There is strong interest on the newly announced discretionary funds by the Council to support places of worship.
- The visibility, activity, and ability to meet chaplain services at work, on campus, and in prisons is a concern. Green Lane Masjid is providing a part-

time Muslim chaplain on University of Birmingham campus to support students.

- There are differences between a small cohort of Mosques and Churches who have embraced digital life, maximising alternative methods of online giving and building following. This move is leaving behind some older worshippers and those with care commitments unable to participate in accessing online services.
- Very little known in these communities about the Government's free tuition offer and accessing help with technology at home.
- Attending post-16 and higher education is a cause for concern for parents since most families cannot afford to defer starting University.
- Travel on public transport is making people anxious.
- Launch of the Clean Air Zone concerns communities as income has been affected.
- Narrow high streets with busy frontages spilling on to pavements is making some elderly people nervous as they cannot move out of the way easily.
- Young people gathering in groups as lockdown eases, without structured opportunity for spending their time has been highlighted as a community concern.

Public Health ethnographic studies of Birmingham residents

Public Health are commissioning ethnographic studies of Birmingham residents to explore the prolonged impacts of COVID-19, their experiences of the system and specific services, and what support is needed for them as individuals as well as for communities and the city overall. This work is due to be completed in November 2020, with the findings included in the Director of Public Health Annual Report (published in early 2021).

Public Health want to present a compelling narrative to capture the complex views and experience from different citizens in the city. The Council is keen to obtain a breadth of representation of different identity aspects. For instance, older adult, working adult, unemployed adult, teenager, white British, white non-British, African-

Caribbean, South Asian, Chinese, LGBT, disability, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian faiths. The ethnographic research will be entwined with local and national evidence to highlight the gaps, need for services, and successes from the perspective of those men and women.

The purpose of this report is to identify areas of need to better support recovery and minimise inequality experienced in the city as a result of COVID-19.

Public Health deep dive into inequalities affecting African and Caribbean communities

COVID-19 has highlighted the impact of health inequalities on ethnic groups in the context of infectious disease but evidence also shows that wider inequalities in the determinants of health, such as employment, education, and criminal justice, exist.

Led by Dr Justin Varney, Public Health have embarked on an 18-month partnership with Lewisham Council to explore health inequalities affecting African and Caribbean communities and a range of broader issues, including access to treatment and management support, specific health conditions, and wider determinants (such as deprivation, employment and housing).

Public Health sharing of good practice on engaging with minority communities

As part of the work by the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) to support the national review of COVID-19 risk factors, Dr Justin Varney (Director for Public Health), is leading work for ADPH on consolidating and sharing good practice on community engagement with minority groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an initial step, Directors of Public Health have been asked to participate in a short survey to help shape the approach for this work to ensure that we are recognising the challenges of engaging with ethnic and other minority communities. This survey has helped us to understand what minority community work has been done and what approaches have been used by various Public Health local authorities.

Following this initial survey, the various Public Health departments will be invited to contribute to case studies for their engagement with minority community groups. This will help in sharing the best practices of engagement across the ADPH and to create a learning pool community.