

## COVID Pandemic Impact

### Winchester City Council

- **Safeguarding/Concern for Welfare**

There has been a significant increase in the number of internal and external safeguarding reports coming in to the council which showed a marked increase in those with suicidal tendencies, self-harm and poor mental health. The city council HR team is working in collaboration with the County to provide relevant training to frontline officers in relation to this topic.

- **Housing Services**

Housing Officers are still managing the same levels of casework and continue to complete essential home visits where required for tenancy enforcement and welfare and wellbeing concerns. There has been a notable increase in the number of low level noise nuisance reports and also the number of tenant's requiring additional support/intervention from the service as a result of the restrictions in place. The Tenancy Team have therefore had to adapt their way of working throughout the lockdown to continue to provide a pivotal housing service to tenants.

- **Neighbourhood Services General support provided**

Throughout the lockdown periods the Neighbourhood Services Team supported the assistance being offered via the Local Response Centre. In addition the team have also undertaken patrols and offered support in an advisory role to other Covid19 Ambassadors since the scheme launched in December 2020.

- **Anti-social behaviour**

- Since April 2020 there have been **4** reports of COVID 19 breaches linked to groups of people or in domestic settings, these were made via the City Council's ASB online report form system. The Neighbourhood Services ASB lead does not have the power to enforce Covid-19 regulations however she has provided advice to those reporting concerns and signposting to those who can provide a response for breaches.
- The impact of 3 national lockdowns has been reflected in the number of begging incidents identified via Winchester's CCTV operators between April and December 2020. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of begging incidents recorded, compared with the same period in 2019 (**472** incidents were recorded compared with **81** in 2020). During the reporting period there were **3** Community Protection Warnings issued for begging compared with **4** for the same period in 2019.

- **Neighbourhood Services - Fly Tip and Enforcement**

Covid 19 and the subsequent lockdowns have had an impact on fly tipping across the district in relation to reporting, amount of rubbish dumped, the clearance of the rubbish and the investigations carried out.

- **Increased reporting**

There's been an increase in the amount of reports received (the biggest increase was during June and August 2020). The increase is likely to be attributed to the COVID restrictions that were in place i.e. more people at home and taking walks in their local area so seeing things that usually they probably wouldn't. The increase in reports is reflected across the County, however it should be noted that any increase does impact on staffing capacity to deal with the increased case load i.e. whilst all officers can visit a fly tip site at any time they are not in a position to compile case files. It is important to note that as a council we will continue to encourage greater reporting of fly tip from the public and landowners.

- **Increase in the amount of dumped rubbish (reported issues)**

- Hampshire County Council closed all of their Household Waste Recycling Centres with immediate effect when the first COVID lockdown restrictions were announced. Although they reopened the sites in mid-May members of the public had to register their vehicles before they could book a time slot and attend to dispose of rubbish. This is still in force and means that if members of the public arrive at a HWRC without a booked time slot they will be refused entry, even if the HWRC is empty.
- Domestic rubbish collection services were impacted upon by the restrictions and staff shortages, due to sickness. Householders would have had a build-up of rubbish at their homes which they then dumped themselves or paid unscrupulous "clearance companies" to get rid of, doing little or no checks on them. This wasn't just in Winchester but also in neighbouring authorities such as Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, East Hants and Basingstoke. Due to these neighbouring authorities being in such close proximity to Winchester, WCC has seen a rise in reports and rubbish as residents of other council boroughs have come across the border to dump waste in country lanes.
- More people at home (on furlough) and with the good weather, people were making the most of the situation to complete DIY projects and gardening and they have had an excess of waste to dispose of, some of which has ultimately been fly tipped. There was also an increase in waste being dumped in communal areas in Winchester City Council owned properties and general waste. Households being home more showed an increase in general waste along with bulky items.

- **Rubbish clearance**

1. There has been a significant amount of an uplift in waste generated over the period of COVID. Across Hampshire as a whole there is about **10%** more residual waste being produced by domestic properties, and much of this is going into the street litter bins, which are effectively supplementing capacity at residential kerbside collections when householder bins are full. The incidence of fly-tipping has also increased.
2. Emptying litter bins is taking IDVERDE more time so is limiting their capacity to collect fly tips around the district. However, they now have an extra crew working on fly-tip collections, which should address the backlog issue, and assist in coping with the extra demand caused by the overall increase in waste being produced.
3. The resources we have are enough to cope with demand usually but the lockdown situation has seen demand and workload rise.

- **Court delays**

Due to the COVID restrictions Magistrates Courts initially stopped hearing cases, except for the most serious offences like murder. This meant many cases were postponed and caused significant backlog, unfortunately fly tip cases were amongst those which was the same for all local authority areas in Hampshire. Magistrate Courts are now hearing cases that were postponed earlier this year and also those that were due to be heard in 2020 from late 2019.

- **Welcome to the Neighbourhood Project**

The 'Welcome to the Neighbourhood booklet' was delivered virtually in 2020 in partnership with the Universities of Winchester and Southampton. Electronic versions of the booklet were sent out to **164** landlords via the University of Winchester Landlord Forum and **324** properties that are advertised directly via the University. In addition the booklet was sent directly to **3** of the main landlords (who do not advertise all their housing stock via the University) for them to send to their tenants. The University of Southampton sent the booklet to **565** undergraduates that attend Winchester School of Arts via email and also promoted it using social media channels during fresher's week. A link to the 'Welcome booklet' was posted on the Winchester Student's union website and Winchester School of Art website and social media during Fresher's week. In addition the Neighbourhood Services Team had a page on the virtual fresher's fayre page, this included a link to the City Council webpage that also hosts the 'Welcome booklet'.

### **West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group**

Recent data provided by West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group suggests that during the first national lockdown referrals to adult and older person's mental

health services dipped. Following two further lockdowns we have seen a return to previous levels and the signs are that pressure on services will increase in 2021.

### **Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS)**

From early 2020, Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service were proactive in developing 'Covid safe' working environments with as low as reasonable practical risk assessments (for activities and sites). Staff were well supported in regards to health and wellbeing. HFRS continued to support the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Strategic and Tactical coordination Groups and Cells with resources. HFRS continued to provide their statutory requirements. HFRS continued to support partnership requests from the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) if deemed appropriate and achievable and have provided staff to undertake a number of roles and activities to support the pandemic. Below are some examples of work undertaken:

- Provided assistance in developing temporary mortuary facilities.
- Logistical movement of PPE.
- Movement of the deceased.
- Face fitting testing (PPE).
- Provision of staff to drive and support Ambulance colleagues at South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS). We currently have 20 personnel detached to undertake this.
- Increase provision of co-responder and medical responder vehicles & appropriately trained personnel to support SCAS.
- Supporting vaccination sites (Basingstoke Fire Station will be utilised as a vaccination centre).
- Developing appropriately trained personnel to support Hospital ICU teams (currently in development).

Any partnership request is reviewed and submitted via the SCG/TCG process, it's then evaluated and if deemed appropriate, action plans with processes and risk assessments developed to be able to facilitate. Most Covid-19 related tasks utilise HFRS personnel in a volunteer capacity.

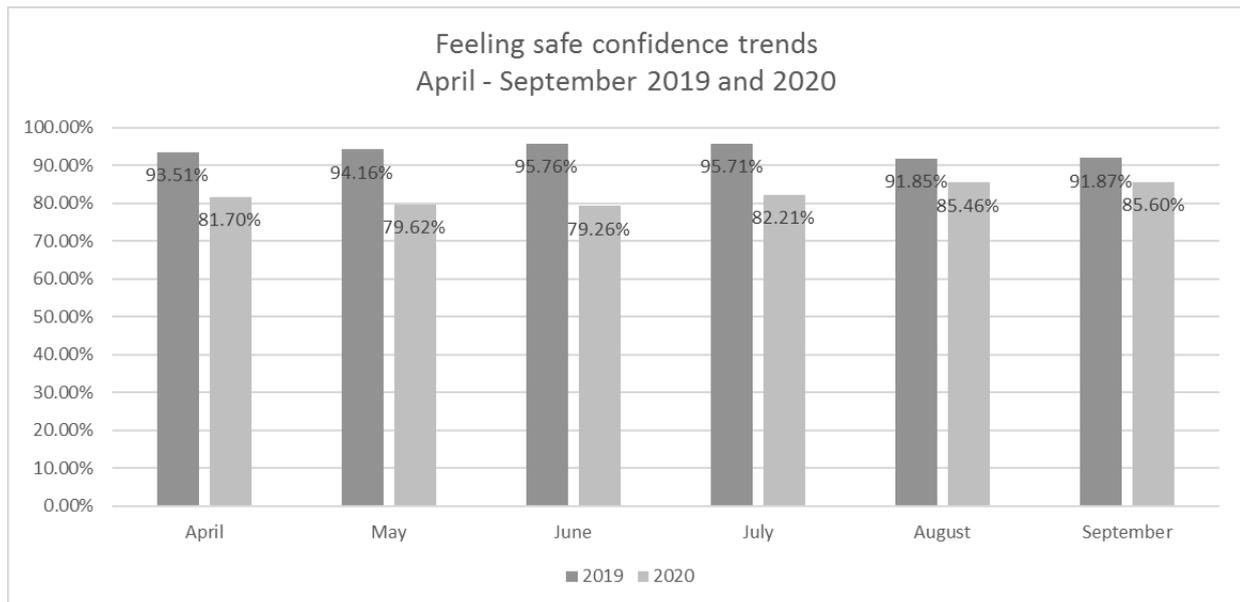
### **Stop Domestic Abuse**

Stop Domestic Abuse reported that self-referrals were down by over 50% which is indicative of the fact that individuals are finding it more difficult to reach out during lockdown. The average case length for the service has increased as there is a need for longer interventions this year due to the pandemic, which has as a side effect resulted in unhealthy coping mechanisms being used by some clients. The length of time spent in refuge by individual clients during 2020 increased due to additional Covid difficulties, hence there were fewer spaces available to new clients. Increase in access to community based victims were supported overall because of this which meant a shift towards higher risk cases being managed in the community this year. A reduction in the number of face to face and group sessions has been seen overall which reflects the need to suspend this type of work in March 2020. A switch was

made to running virtual groups and there are currently 15 virtual groups per week open to Winchester residents.

### **Feelings of Safety**

The chart below (using data from InterAct<sup>1</sup>) shows the feeling safe confidence trends for the Winchester district for the first two quarters of 2020 compared with 2019. Across the months there are some significant differences in feelings of safety in April to June 2020 versus the same period in 2019. It is unclear whether the Covid 19 pandemic is impacting on how safe people are feeling, however it is important to note that this is only a representative sample and therefore cannot be taken to reflect the feelings of safety for all residents.



### **Conclusion**

Whilst it is clear that there has been a Covid Impact on operational activity, partner agencies have adopted a business as usual approach and utilised social media opportunities as much as they can to maintain virtual contact.

Moving forward it is likely that some virtual groupings will choose to remain in place as there is supporting evidence to say that logging into a meeting wherever you are encourages attendance as it reduces the need to take into account travel time.

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<sup>1</sup> All data is sourced from the YouGov tracker using a building sample. The current sample size is around 3000 with slight variance between each question. The link is provided to the [YouGov Panel Methodology](#) applied in this survey.