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**TACKLING POVERTY, EQUALITY & PUBLIC HEALTH STATEMENT**

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**PUBLIC HEALTH & EQUALITY**

**Covid-19**

In the last two and a half years we have lived through significant and distressing events due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, which have disrupted our lives and our ability to connect with those we hold most dear. Whilst this period has been challenging for everybody, we also know that the Covid-19 pandemic has exerted a terrible and unequal toll on our communities; for some, not only were they more at risk from the virus itself, but the effects of lockdowns and restrictions exacerbated poor health status and further reduced access to opportunities that existed before. Our duty to support those in need and experiencing disadvantage has never been clearer or more urgent. As a Council, we are in a unique position to meet this challenge, both through the services we provide to individuals and the role that we have in building, nurturing and sustaining local communities and environments. We can create real and positive change for the people of Cardiff.

Over the last two and a half years, the Council has learned much from its experience of working closely with our local partner organisations to mount a successful pandemic response, and about the strength there is in working together around common aims. We need to continue to build on the strong relationships and integrated approach that has been developed over the last two years, not only to respond to the ongoing risks from Covid-19, but also to address the wider harms caused by the pandemic and the pre-existing issues that impact on the health and wellbeing of our population. I am keen that we take purposeful steps to address the inequalities made more obvious by the pandemic. Working with colleagues from Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB) in particular, I want us to take a data driven, problem solving approach, including engaging with the people who live in our communities as essential partners in co-producing successful solutions.

While Wales has now returned to alert level zero, with all Covid restrictions removed, we need to remember that Covid-19 itself has not gone away. Indeed, we are starting to see the emergence of a new wave of infections in Cardiff fuelled by new sub-variants of the Omicron strain. Due to our high levels of vaccination, we are anticipating that this wave will be much smaller and that a much smaller percentage of people will develop serious illness than earlier in the pandemic, but we must not let our guard down. In our roles as councillors and community leaders, we can help by encouraging everyone to get vaccinated if they have not yet had a full course of the vaccine or if they are called for a booster. If anyone has symptoms of Covid-19, then please encourage them to get tested and isolate themselves.

Taking sensible measures like these will continue to remain important in the months ahead to try to reduce unnecessary spread of the virus. We are likely to continue to see different variants emerging in future, with waves of infection every 3-6 months, and as we go into the winter months there will be close partnership monitoring of the situation, and I will ensure that elected members are kept updated.

### **Covid-19 Immunisation Update**

The Covid-19 vaccination Spring booster programme is currently being rolled out by Cardiff & Vale UHB and should be completed over the next few weeks. The programme continues to ensure “no one is left behind”, so that if someone still requires a first, second or booster dose of Covid-19 vaccine (according to the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) eligibility), then they can walk in to any of the three Mass Vaccination Centres (MVCs) in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. A new Cardiff MVC site is being secured to replace the Splott and Bayside MVC sites. Mobile teams are continuing to visit care homes where there are any vaccinations outstanding and people who are unable to leave their homes to obtain their vaccine.

Data from Public Health Wales shows that there are high levels of Covid-19 vaccine uptake across all age groups within the UHB region and work is ongoing across sectors to address areas of low uptake by making vaccinations more accessible (e.g. by providing pop-up vaccination clinics in religious settings) and to address any concerns. The UHB is working with partners, including council officers, to plan for the Autumn booster programme following the publication of interim guidance by the JCVI. The plan is to bring together the winter flu and Covid-19 vaccine programmes as part of a routine approach to prevent the spread of winter respiratory viruses.

### **Amplifying Prevention in Public Health**

Looking to recovery and renewal, we intend to use the strengthened and trusted partnership arrangements established through the shared experience of the pandemic response to improve population health, tackle inequalities and add value to the delivery of services into the future. The Council and partner organisations have therefore agreed to a whole system approach to ‘amplifying prevention’, as identified in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan’s Annual Report of the Director of Public Health (2020), with specific attention on childhood immunisation, screening and actions linked to the Move More, Eat Well Plan which could be approached on a regional basis. A Delivery Board will be formed to guide the strategic and operational aspects of this approach. The focus will be on practical delivery as a partnership and, learning from the experience of the pandemic response, setting clear, time-bound and specific targets for each topic. I look forward to updating members on this work over the months ahead.

### **Monkeypox**

Monkeypox is a rare disease in the UK, but the current outbreak has seen cases reported across the world. As of 17 June 2022, there were six confirmed cases in Wales. Monkeypox does not spread easily between people, but can do so through contact with clothing or linens (such as bedding or towels) used by an infected person, direct contact with Monkeypox skin lesions or scabs, and via coughs or sneezes of an individual with a Monkeypox rash. The incubation period for Monkeypox is between 5 and 21 days and the disease is usually mild, with most of those infected recovering within a few weeks without treatment. It can, however, be severe for some. Smallpox vaccine can be used to control outbreaks of Monkeypox.

The recent multi-country outbreak of Monkeypox has demonstrated the effective local mechanisms we have in place in Cardiff to respond to any emergent health protection issues. Cardiff & Vale UHB has undertaken thorough preparations to care for any patients if needed. Several planning meetings have been held and a standard pathway of care has been developed for any local people experiencing symptoms. The UHB has provided assurance to the Welsh Government that robust plans are in place to care for any individuals in a sensitive and timely manner. Contact tracing will also be undertaken to limit onward transmission and this is being jointly managed between the UHB and Public Health Wales.

### **Ukraine Refugee Status**

Following the devastating Russian attack on Ukraine, which has caused the displacement of many tens of thousands of Ukrainian people from their homes, the Council has been determined to do whatever it can to help those fleeing the conflict and ensure that appropriate support is in place to those seeking sanctuary in Cardiff. This has predominantly involved ensuring that people from Ukraine who arrive in Cardiff are supported with a full wraparound service that ensures their safety, sanctuary and access to public services.

There are currently two Visa schemes in operation by the UK Government for Ukrainian nationals: Homes for Ukraine and the Family Visa scheme. In addition, in Wales, there is the Welsh Government Super Sponsor scheme. Details of each scheme are provided below:

#### **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme opened on 18 March 2022 for Visa applications. The Scheme allows Ukrainian nationals and their family members to come to the UK if they have a named sponsor who can provide accommodation for a minimum of six months. The Council receives daily information regarding the scheme and is in contact with all local sponsors, with an established process in place to ensure that sponsors meet the requirements for approval, including property checks and DBS applications. The Council receives funding under this route, enabling wraparound support to be provided to individuals upon their arrival. Sponsors are also entitled to a £350 per month 'Thank You' payment once their DBS check has been completed. As of 24 June 2022, 157 sponsors have applied to take part in the scheme in Cardiff, with 418 Visas applied for<sup>1</sup>. Of these applications, 277 Visas have been issued, with 218 confirmed arrivals to date.

#### **Family Visa Scheme**

The Ukraine Family Scheme allows applicants to join family members, or extend their stay, in the UK. As the scheme assumes that the in-country sponsoring family member will provide support to their arriving Ukrainian family members, the Council is not provided with any information regarding arrivals or funding. In addition, family sponsors do not receive payment. However, in order to provide support, the Council has put in place a drop-in 'one-stop-shop' service at Cardiff Central Library for any Ukrainian arrivals – irrespective of visa route. A multi-disciplinary team is based at the

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<sup>1</sup> Of which have withdrawn: 20 (43 visa applications total)) = sponsor attrition rate = 10.85%). 137 sponsors are in progress and 353 Visa applications are in progress.

library to provide a holistic welcome service, alongside existing advice and homelessness services. The Council's hubs and libraries are also working to provide advice and information on key welcome processes, such as benefit claims, school admissions and accessing other local services.

### Welsh Government Super Sponsor Scheme

In addition to the above, the Welsh Government are acting as a 'Super Sponsor' to directly support people from Ukraine coming to Wales, over and above the Homes for Ukraine scheme, committing to provide them with accommodation, support and care in Wales. The Council is working closely with the Welsh Government to support this additional commitment, including establishing and running a Welcome Centre in Cardiff (currently one of five in Wales).

### Food Strategy

I am pleased to say that the Council's Food Strategy is progressing. We have recently recruited a dedicated Food Officer to facilitate and deliver action on food. The Council, in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council, has also bid successfully for £2.6m from the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Challenge Fund to run a challenge on the sustainable production and supply of food. We are also working on a pilot growing spaces project to utilise spare council land for community growing purposes and, following Cardiff's attainment of the Silver Sustainable Food Places award in June 2021, we are supporting the local food partnership, Food Cardiff, in working towards the Gold Sustainable Food Places award.

## **TACKLING POVERTY & SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Cardiff Cost of Living Crisis Project**

In response to the soaring cost of food, fuel and the general cost of living, the Council's Money Advice Team have set up the 'Cardiff Cost of Living Crisis' project to provide local, practical support to residents of Cardiff who are struggling to manage during these difficult times. A wide-reaching publicity campaign will be launched shortly and will include social media and radio adverts, as well as publicity in Hubs and other council buildings, to increase awareness of the support available. Last year alone, the Money Advice Team provided advice to over 10,000 people and identified over £17million in unclaimed benefits.

New Food and Fuel Champions are now providing additional support in Hubs across the city, providing information, guidance and advice on maximising income, benefit and grant checks and tips on how to shop on a budget. Dedicated 'Cost of Living Crisis' information stands are available in each Hub, with a member of staff on hand to help residents. 'Cooking On A Budget' classes will also be provided on a regular basis throughout our Hubs. The Money Advice Team and Food and Fuel Champions can also support residents by providing emergency foodbank vouchers and fuel vouchers. The Money Advice Team and Food and Fuel Champions will identify if a food or fuel voucher is appropriate and ensure that the resident is provided with these swiftly. If any residents are struggling, they can contact the Advice Line on 029 2087 1071 or they can call in to any of our Hubs.

### **Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers**

The Into Work Service's Youth Team and the Advice Training Team are working in partnership with Children's Services in preparation for the launch of the Welsh Government's Basic Income pilot for care leavers on 1 July 2022. From this date, once they become 18 years of age, the pilot will offer those leaving care a monthly payment of £1600. Training support packages are also being put in place for young people who will be eligible for the payment and their Personal Advisors. The training will cover budgeting and how the monthly payments may affect existing benefits claims and their housing situations. This is to ensure that rental payments are paid on time and that the young person is no worse off by receiving this payment. The Money Advice Team will shortly be recruiting Young Person Money Mentors to provide advice and support to all young people on money matters, but in particular to care leavers. Training sessions will also be rolled out to Foster Carers and hostel workers to provide an overview of the Basic Income pilot scheme.

### **Bright Start Placements**

Pre-placement training for Bright Start placements recommenced last month. The training programme has been revamped to include accredited courses with Adult Learning and Leadership Skills Workshops from Cardiff Youth Service, alongside the original placement training offered in previous rounds. The care experienced young people who are currently on work placements within the Council are working for Cardiff International White Water (CIWW), Parks, Whitchurch Library Hub, Youth Service and the Onsite Construction Academy. The service has also re-introduced external placements at the Wales Millennium Centre.

### **Cardiff Youth Service**

An evidence-based review of the Youth Service is currently ongoing, which is being led by an independent lead and conducted over three phases. The first phase, which is close to completion, considers the capacity of the Youth Service to support a sustainable and balanced delivery model across the city in post-pandemic recovery. The next two phases of the review will focus on strengthening the integration of the Youth Service with wider youth support services and partners, whilst aligning service provision to any changes to the national position.

As part of the development of the service, a new Senior Youth Officer has been appointed with responsibility for Welsh Language/Bilingual Cardiff youth work. They will work closely with our Welsh Language partners to promote Welsh Language and culture and will provide young people with the opportunity to engage with young people in their preferred language, extending the reach of the service. I am pleased that the Urdd and Menter Caerdydd are working with the Youth Service as part of the Youth Innovation Grant programme to extend the offer. The Youth Service also supported Menter Caerdydd's Tafwyl event at Cardiff Castle, which took place on 18 & 19 June 2022.

On 18 & 19 June 2022, the Youth Service also supported the Urdd Urban Street Games in Cardiff Bay and provided a range of activities, competitions and workshops, such as graffiti, Radio DJ, skateboarding, BMX, basketball, football etc. Further information on this event can be viewed via the following links: [\(20+\) Watch | Facebook](#) and [Urdd Urban Games](#).

Another key development is the new digital youth club for young people aged 13-17, which started this week, giving young people the ability to engage with youth workers via the Discord platform. The [Cardiff Youth Service Discord](#) server will serve as a free, online community for young people who sign up, offering different activities and resources. Work is ongoing to build an online space for young people across the city.

The Youth Service is also promoting creativity via its website and blog and is currently looking for stories, podcasts, blog posts, articles, poetry, vlogs, posters, graphics, photography, art, music, or films from young people, which can be submitted by email to: [CardiffYouthService@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:CardiffYouthService@cardiff.gov.uk)

**Councillors Julie Sangani & Peter Bradbury**  
**Cabinet Members for Tackling Poverty, Equality & Public Health (Job Share)**  
**23 June 2022**