

City priorities

1

Children and young people get the best possible start in life

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Financial Inclusion Strategy

What is working in Wolverhampton

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Impact of Covid-19

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed just how vulnerable any family is to income shocks and job losses. It is of critical importance that we develop the resources and responses to adequately meet the urgent needs of local residents.

This strategy will play a key role in supporting families who risk slipping into crisis and destitution and will aim to provide support through a graduated response. It will provide accessible hardship support, particularly in relation to the provision of food, fuel and other emergency provision that has increasingly become a critical issue in the deteriorating economic conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Covid Winter/Local Support Grant

The value of grants equals £ 6.1 Million

Paid as 5 different grants for spending between December 2020 and March 2022.

Most recent grant award £2.6m (October 2021-March2022)

Over 65,000 households have been supported since December 2020.(data to June 2021)

Currently there are 17k children who are registered for Free school meals in the city.

Key Outcomes and Successes

- Mobilisation of £3.7m in 10 months with no grant returned to DWP to households that need it most
- Strength of delivery arrangements with Third Sector partners who understand the needs of their communities
- Strengthening of relationships with partners
- One council matrix working approach to grant management and dispersal
- Opportunity to test innovative ideas

Strength in Partnerships

COVID-19 has seen our city refocus, specifically on the unfolding response to economic vulnerability and the need to work collaboratively to understand strengths and difficulties within communities and their experiences and challenges. This has enabled the development of new solutions/approaches and created opportunities to develop existing partnerships and networks. The work has included representatives from over 40 organisations from:

- Voluntary and Community Groups
- Charities
- Housing Providers
- Local Authority services Children and Adults Social Care.

Wolverhampton has embraced the opportunity to listen, understand and respond to requests for support that empower local and trusted partners to deliver high quality services on our behalf. This has laid and firm foundation for future collaboration and co-production.

Our Landscape

A profile of the over-indebted population



- Renting: 25% renters vs 12% home owners (social tenants 29% vs private landlord 21%)
- Larger families: 1 in 4 adults with three or more children
- 28% single parents vs 18% two parents families
- Low incomes: 24% if income less than £10,000
- 25-35 year olds 4x more likely to be in debt than if over 65
- Youth Unemployment, the highest rate in the UK

Developing a Strategy – what we know

Prior to COVID, Wolverhampton already had high proportion of indebtedness with 21.1% of its residents in debt (MAPs: A Picture of Indebtedness), the third highest in the West Midlands and 11th in England. Given the correlations between indebtedness and deprived areas with higher unemployment, you can expect the scale of this challenge locally to increase significantly. Financial stress is estimated to impact on over 150,000 households in Wolverhampton (Experian Mosaic data).

There is learning that can be drawn from the data and review of the work we have undertaken in city the last 12 months to support our financial vulnerable residents. This shows the direct support offered and the developing picture of what households need in order to reduce inequalities as a direct result of Covid.

Aligning the work outlined in the Health Inequalities Strategy , learning from and embedding the use of the HEAT tool.

Aligning the work around Place Based Strategy to consider targeted areas across the city .

Guiding Principles to underpin the Strategy

Provision of a range of support- we will work with people to identify needs **early** , understand where there are **emerging** issues and community needs and respond to with support that is **essential**.

Maximise dignity, autonomy and choice. we will minimise barriers and develop systems that promote ease of access and timely support to provide services people tell us are helpful.

Raising activity through a diverse range of channels to reach the most vulnerable households we will work with the third sector, charities, voluntary organisations and other services in addition to our council led offer.

Developing a clear Strategy document, we will clearly communicate our relevant principles, standards and detailed criteria to provide clarity and transparency.

Prioritising equality and diversity, leaving no one behind we will ensure that the strategy reflects the diversity of our city and is inclusive of all individuals within communities and those that are newly arrived.

Guiding Principles (continued)

Eligibility and assessment should carefully reflect a balanced approach – we will aim to keep things as simple as possible for people to respond to and complete, whilst still ensuring we the capture of the most pertinent information. Eligibility assessments will not become a barrier or cause delay in support.

Robust evidence of what is necessary and effective. we will use a range of data to assist us in understanding our communities to support us in determining local need to ensure that support is sufficient to meet families' needs.

A transparent and straightforward award structure will be developed we will using benchmarking and evidence to determine the level of support an individual or household receives.

Ensuring engagement with wider support services should be a key underlying principle we will work hard to tackle deep-rooted issues and address longer-term needs. We will ensure that every application is an opportunity to identify and offer other appropriate advice and support to, wherever possible, move people away from crisis toward greater financial stability.

The Three E's

EARLY

EMERGING

ESSENTIAL

A graduated response that provides a clear structure to the identification of need at the earliest opportunity, understanding of need and resource allocation in order to address some of the challenges faced by those that experience financial difficulties and hardship.

What are we hoping to achieve?

- A graduated response to meeting individual and local needs.
- Developing resilience to avoid households slipping families who risk slipping into crisis and destitution.
- Strengthen community infrastructure to be able to respond to future need.
- Understanding the diverse needs of our communities and being able to adapt and change to build capacity.
- Build on what we have done to achieve sustainability.
- A platform for innovation – communities are able to respond to meet needs.
- Resilience and sustainability.

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