

Oldham Council Covid Recovery Strategy

June 2021





Foreword

Councillor Arooj Shah,
Leader, Oldham Council

This last year has been a tough one for our borough and its people. COVID-19 has hit Oldham hard. Many of us have lost loved ones, and seen others seriously ill or with long-term complications from Coronavirus. We also know that it has hit some of our areas and some of our communities much harder than others due to the existing inequalities in health, in income and in opportunities.

Oldham was the first Council in the country to appoint a Cabinet Member for Covid Recovery back in May 2020. At the time of accepting the role I had no idea that a full year later we would still be in the midst of the pandemic, but also facing the need to deal with the very real long-term impacts that COVID-19 has had on local people's physical and mental health, their finances, local jobs and businesses and the education of our children.

This strategy is about acting quickly to do exactly that. While we are still responding to the very real challenges of managing a pandemic we have also established and will deliver against the key things needed to give Oldham the best change to recover as quickly as possible. And we'll do this while always acknowledging that the situation isn't the same for everyone. Some will need more help than others.

It would be easy to reflect simply on the challenges but we have so much to be hopeful about and thankful for. Not least the amazing response of our communities over the last year. As a borough we have pulled together – helping our friends, family and neighbours, building stronger relationships in our communities and creating a legacy of care and understanding that will last way beyond this pandemic.

Oldham has come together – local people, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and public services to support and care for each other like never before.

Thank you so much for playing your part.





Foreword

Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE

Chief Executive Oldham Council and
Accountable Officer Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group

I'm delighted to be sharing our Covid Recovery Strategy – our clear plan for delivery over the next period.

While the last year has been incredibly challenging it has shown what the public sector, working closely with its communities, can achieve. Together Oldham has shown the strength of its commitment, its resolve and its undeniable sense of teamwork.

Team Oldham has been at the heart of our response – delivering care and support to those who need it, as well as delivering local testing, tracing and, most recently, the roll out of the Coronavirus vaccination programme. We have built new teams and services and reshaped others. Our helpline and door-to-door engagement teams have offered a lifeline to many thousands of residents and we have administered financial grants and advice to thousands of local businesses.

Alongside this we've continued to deliver other vital services – from health visiting to social care and from youth services to bin collections, our teams have continued to do what needed to be done. Throughout the last year we have been all too aware of the impact the pandemic was having on local people's health, their jobs, education, and finances. Alongside our response we have been planning for recovery; thinking about what more we can do to make things better for local people and businesses.

This plan allows us to look beyond the current pandemic, to restate our ambition, establish our priorities and drive forward with a relentless focus on delivery for Oldham and its people.



What you told us

To help us build this plan we asked Oldham residents to tell us their experiences of the pandemic, their thoughts, fears and hopes for the future and to help us set priorities for Team Oldham for the next 12-18 months.

In February 2021 we carried out an online survey of more than 600 Oldham residents and throughout March held focus groups with parents of school aged children, black and minority ethnic residents (who were underrepresented in the survey), and business owners.

We asked residents to talk to us about the ways that COVID-19 had impacted their lives and the level of concern they continued to have about the pandemic.

The real-life impacts were stark.

83% of residents told us they continued to be worried about COVID-19.

84% had been affected by social isolation and 77% felt their mental health had been affected. This rose to 81% among informal carers and 89% among parents of school-aged children. 88% of parents we spoke to were concerned about the impact the pandemic was having on children's mental health.

95% of parents were worried about the impact COVID-19 had on their children's education.

56% felt their ability to meet their caring responsibilities had been affected. This rose to 95% of informal carers.

65% felt their physical health had been affected, 66% had medical appointments cancelled or rescheduled and 50% say they had ignored other health concerns because of COVID-19.

54% told us their work or employment situation had been directly affected, rising to 90% among business owners.

44% said their overall finances were affected. In 30% of families we spoke to someone had lost their job, 56% said they or someone in their family had been furloughed.

32% said they needed financial support throughout the pandemic and 30% needed to borrow money at some point. 45% of residents we spoke to didn't feel or were uncertain they would financially recover from the pandemic.

63% of people had been forced to isolate, rising to 77% among parents of school-aged children.

We asked local people what we should focus on to make sure we boosted the recovery of the borough. We offered them a list of suggestions to prioritise and also offered the opportunity to identify any additional priorities they felt we had missed.

Overwhelmingly they told us that the number one priority should be to prioritise those most in need. They felt creating safe and decent homes and providing easy access to parks and green spaces were also important.

In addition, 24% felt we should support communities and/or tackle deprivation, 30% wanted us to prioritise them being able to safely spend time with family and friends or to access leisure and travel and 19% felt we should support local businesses.



The Impact of COVID-19 in Oldham

At the time of writing, the COVID-19 crisis is still ongoing.

Many of Team Oldham's services have been affected due to Government restrictions, increases in service demand, or staff being redeployed to help combat the impact of the pandemic. However, one is clear from the emergency response work - many of the challenges we have responded to during the pandemic existed before COVID-19, though in many cases these challenges have been exacerbated by the virus.

Oldham is home to a diverse range of people. This diversity is a strength, to be valued and promoted. However, as the pandemic has progressed, research has shown that some people across our communities are more at risk should they come into contact with the virus. Specifically those residents who are over the age of 70 years, clinically vulnerable due to a pre-existing medical condition, are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background, living in a care home or working in a job where they have greater contact with members of the public such as a nurse, taxi driver or security guard. In Oldham 17,589 residents were identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable and advised to shield. We continue to work across Team Oldham to mitigate and reduce the inequalities that exist in all areas including: health and wellbeing, economic prosperity, education, and service access and delivery.

According to our COVID-19 Resident Survey, the pandemic has also had a major impact on social and community life. The virus has brought loneliness, anxiety, financial insecurity, isolation and exclusion. Some residents will, for the first time, need to navigate the benefits system. Families have been bereaved and some individuals are dealing with the long-term medical implications of having had the virus. Many have lost their jobs or face future financial hardship, while key sectors of our economy have been severely impacted.

Going into the pandemic, one in three households had at least one major housing problem relating to overcrowding, affordability or poor-quality housing. The pandemic has highlighted the health implications of housing. Poor housing conditions such as overcrowding and high density are associated with greater spread of the virus, and people have had to spend more time in homes that are overcrowded, damp or unsafe. The economic fallout from the pandemic is likely to lead to an increase in evictions across the private rented sector, further exacerbating the challenges already faced across Oldham.

As Team Oldham continues to help and support our communities and businesses, Oldham Council is also working towards a cleaner and greener borough. One thing Coronavirus has shown us is there are solutions to the climate change emergency. Carbon emissions fell dramatically in spring 2020 as people moved to working from home, with a huge improvement in air quality. Lockdowns and social distancing restrictions have also meant more residents have explored our green spaces as they've had to stay local to get fresh air and exercise. Cleaner air quality, healthier water, effective waste management, and enhanced biodiversity protection not only reduce the vulnerability of communities to pandemics and improve resilience, but have the potential to boost economic activity, generate income, create jobs and reduce inequalities.

Businesses have reported significant stress as a result of the pandemic and contain measures, including decreased sales, cashflow issues and less than six months sustainability. Many are increasingly reliant on Government support. Even before additional COVID-19 restrictions were in place, in Oldham we saw unemployment claimants almost double from 6,545 in March 2020 to a total of 14,015 at peak in September 2021. The end of Government support schemes including furlough in September 2021 and the start of interest payments on business loans is likely to cause further economic challenges across Oldham.



For young people, the COVID-19 crisis has caused considerable disruption to education and employment, impacted upon mental health and reduced disposable income. But the main challenges for children's services are yet to come. As children return to school, and as the full, long-term impact of the pandemic becomes apparent, we anticipate a sharp increase in demand for everything from universal support services through to urgent child protection responses. We will also be working closely with schools to support children as they return, putting children's needs at the heart of our recovery.

Over the next six months COVID-19 continues to pose a very serious threat, compounded by the additional challenges faced as restrictions start to be relaxed. We need to learn from the lessons of this last year in how to safely reopen our society and economy and continue to suppress the virus. The contain measures we put in place will be crucial to doing this.

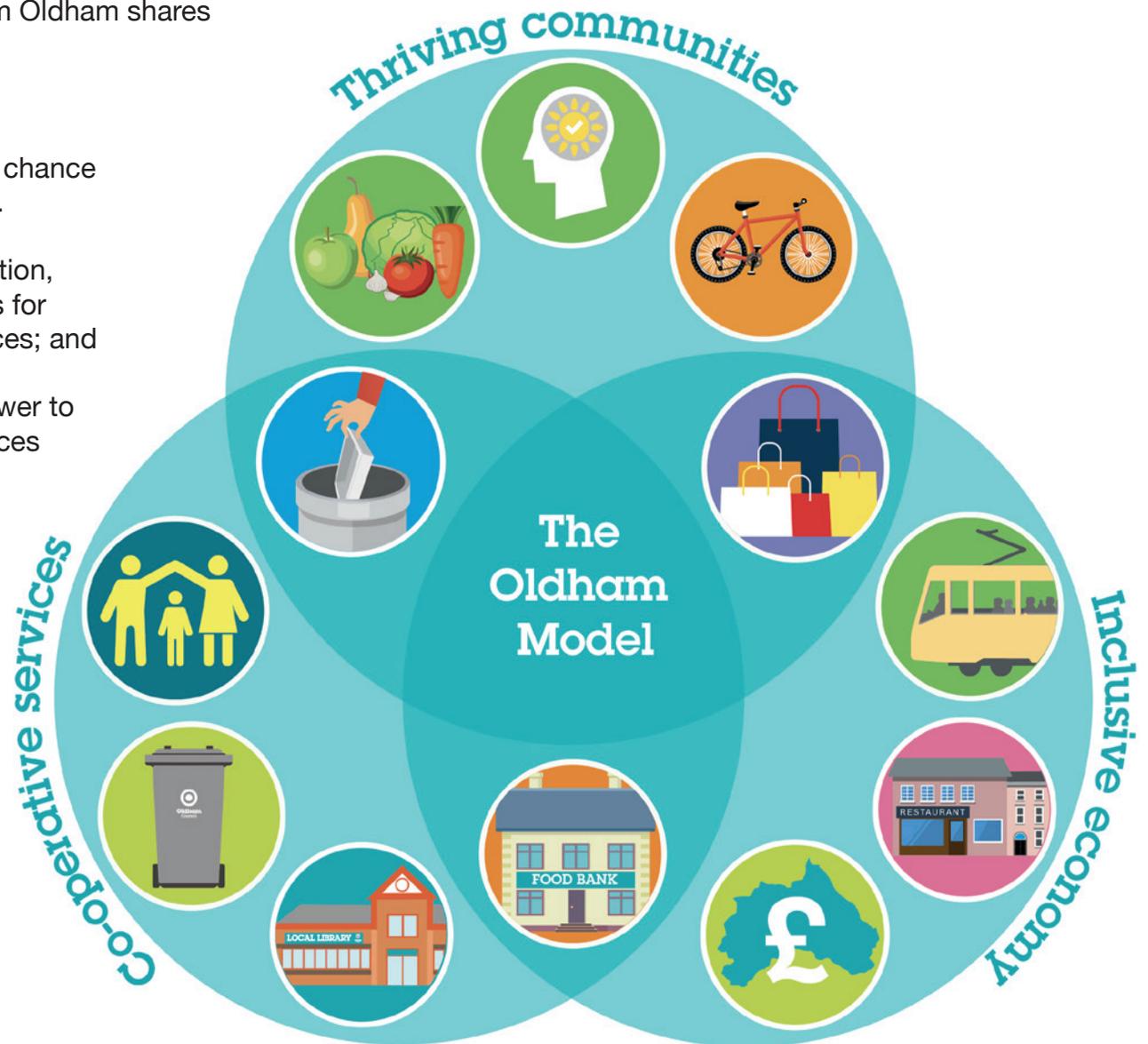


The Oldham Model – our vision for the borough

As we recover from the pandemic, the Oldham Model continues to provide our vision for the borough – a vision that Team Oldham shares with our wider partners across the borough.

It outlines the shared goals of:

- **an inclusive economy**, where everyone has a fair chance to improve their living standards, wages and skills.
- **co-operative services**, underpinned by collaboration, integration and innovation, that improve outcomes for residents and create effective and seamless services; and
- **thriving communities**, where people have the power to be healthy and happy and can make positive choices about their lives.



Our Priority Areas

This strategy builds on the work already happening across Team Oldham to recover from the impact of the pandemic and will form the basis of our work as we start to transition from crisis support to recovery.

Our Recovery Strategy shows how Team Oldham will prioritise services and initiatives to build a stronger borough, helping our communities and economy recover.

The strategy therefore sets out how we will help residents and businesses to get through these tough times, either directly, or by signposting to where support is available across Team Oldham.

It covers the next 12 months to 18 months and, based on feedback from our residents and supported by data and evidence, includes six key themes:

- Driving Equality
- Investing in Quality Housing
- Championing a Green Recovery
- Creating and protecting jobs and supporting businesses
- Prioritising education, skills and early years
- Promoting health and wellbeing and protecting the most vulnerable



Covid recovery plan

2021–2022

We will continue to promote and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, contain the spread of COVID-19 locally and target action to protect our most vulnerable residents and communities

We will work with schools and colleges to support children and young people to catch up and succeed in learning. We will also prioritise training for adults who have been made redundant, helping them retrain and secure employment.

We will continue to create good jobs for our residents, while supporting local businesses to restart and recover from the effects of the pandemic.



We will continue to identify and mitigate the equality impacts caused by the pandemic, informing our recovery planning through lived experience.

We will improve housing quality both inside and outside of the home, while bringing forward significant investment in new and affordable homes.

We want to use this as an opportunity to stimulate a green recovery that accelerates our ambitions around reducing the borough's carbon footprint and protecting our greenspace for residents to enjoy.



Driving Equality – The Context

- As we recover from the impact of COVID-19 it is critical that we tackle inequality and discrimination head on. The pandemic has exacerbated many pre-existing inequalities, including health and financial inequalities..
- The Marmot review 'Fair Society, Healthy lives' demonstrated how health inequalities are affected by a wide range of social and economic factors including where we live, our housing, our income, the environment, our relationship with the local community and the lifestyle choices we make.
- People living in deprived areas and in the lowest income group are much more likely to have a reduced life expectancy and a poorer health outcome than more affluent people.
- Public Health England (PHE) have found older people, males, those living in deprived areas, and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities (BAME) are at increased risk of poor outcomes.
- Oldham has a significant proportion of wards within the most deprived 10% or 20% in England on almost all of the measures within IMD.
- The Northern Health Science Alliance has found that 12.4 more people per 100,000 population have died with COVID-19 in the North from March to July than elsewhere in the country, with 57.7 more people per 100,000 dying of all causes.
- COVID-19 has also resulted in a further deepening and widening of poverty in the borough. Unemployment rates have doubled since March and rates are highest in our most disadvantaged communities. We are especially concerned about the rise in youth unemployment; now approaching 16% borough wide in some hotspots, within our poorer wards, as high as 37%.
- Child poverty has increased over the past five years with 38% of children in Oldham live in poverty, the worst in Great Britain (18.4% average).
- Inequalities are also experienced in how people are treated – in the assumptions that are made; the language that is used; the way we communicate; and how services are designed and accessed.

Driving Equality – over the next twelve months we will:

1. Enable those adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access the help they need

- Continue to identify, monitor and co-develop solutions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our communities through the work of the Equality Advisory Group and our partners.
- Increase the number and quality of the services available online, making them easy to access for everyone.
- Target support to our most vulnerable residents, supporting residents based on need through our place-based approach.
- Support sustainability across the VCSFE sector, working as a system to explore how we do this.
- Target prevention, earlier intervention and support services to those most at risk of homelessness, working towards ending rough sleeping in Oldham.
- Provide additional support to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds catch-up on their education and development.

2. Reduce inequality and build resilience across Oldham's communities

- Deliver our Equality Strategy, working with partners and communities to make Oldham a fairer place for everyone.
- Increase the uptake of, and reduce inequalities in access to vaccination and screening programmes, including the Oldham Health Check and Covid vaccination programme.
- Improve mental health and wellbeing services, strengthening support for people at risk of emotional or mental health issues, including embedding mental health support for children and young people across children's services and educational settings.

3. Reduce poverty and help people get back on their feet –

- Continue to tackle the symptoms and causes of poverty across the borough, including funding a Poverty Truth Commission, to develop new ways to help people who are struggling.
- Refresh and update the Business Growth & Investment and Work & Skills strategies to provide an economic recovery roadmap that aligns with COVID-19 Recovery Plan and Poverty Strategy.
- Bring together financial support and debt advice services to make it easier for people to access the support they need.
- Improve people's access to good quality, affordable food by improving provision across the borough.
- Fund Citizens Advice, to help people access the support they're entitled to, and campaign to protect the £20 per week rise in Universal Credit.

Invest in Quality Housing – The Context

- Around one million owner-occupied homes in the North now fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard, in addition to 354,000 private rented homes.
- There is a positive correlation between rates of Covid infection and both overcrowding and population density.
- Public Health England (2020) found that issues of overcrowding and poor housing conditions contributed to an increase in cases amongst members of BAME communities.
- The National Housing Federation (2020) indicated in June that 31% of adults in the UK had experienced mental or physical health problems during lockdown linked to limited housing space.
- 230,000 private renters – who were not in arrears prior to the pandemic – having fallen behind on rent (Shelter, 2020). As of May 2020, 39% of private renters now claim housing benefits (ibid.), with new research revealing that Universal Credit claimants are now more likely to be owner-occupiers and from the PRS than from social housing (Edmiston et al., 2020).
- There is an increase in energy use, due to more people spending more time at home. These costs are causing increased anxiety to a wider range of households.
- Households feel financially insecure and renters feel insecure in their tenancies.

Invest in Quality Housing – over the next twelve months we will:

1. Build more affordable homes

- Speed up Council homebuilding, starting to deliver new homes in the town centre.
- Work with Registered Providers (RPs) across the borough to help deliver a minimum of 25% affordable homes.
- Work with RPs to accelerate and encourage Pathways to Ownership and Affordable Rent homes.
- Work with Children's Social Care to improve housing/semi-independent living provision for young people aged 16+ and care leavers.
- Make available a range of supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities, reflecting different levels of need.

2. Improve the quality and condition of existing homes

- Use the learning from our recent 'Empty Homes pilot' to put in place an improved scheme to tackle empty homes.
- Commission a private sector stock condition survey for Oldham which will highlight areas for improvement.
- Expand the award-winning Warm Homes Oldham service to keep people warm, safe and independent in their own homes and reduce demand for health and social care services.
- Review and agree selective licensing area scope following consultation.
- Focus on improving private sector housing/empty properties and enforce to habitable standards.
- Implement a new 'Private Tenants Charter', outlining what tenants can expect from us as their landlord and what we expect from our tenants.

3. Support rough sleepers into permanent accommodation

- Ensure the increasing numbers of people needing help because of actual or threatened homelessness receive a good standard of service and help into a long term home.
- Publish a Temporary Accommodation (TA) Strategy for Oldham – this includes bringing online the Council's own TA provision as well as leased accommodation (moving away from hotels, B&Bs and other nightly paid provision).
- Under our Corporate Parenting obligations deliver on our commitment to ensure Children Looked After 16+ and Care Leavers under the age of 25 remain in 'Priority Need', never letting them become 'Intentionally Homeless'.
- Deliver A Bed for Every Night to reduce Rough Sleeping and provide the support people need to move into secure homes.

Championing a Green Recovery – The Context

- Championing a green recovery is not only to ensure that we meet our climate change commitments, but also to ensure we realise the opportunity to make Oldham a green, healthy, fair, inclusive and socially just borough where everybody can thrive.
- Communities have suffered during this period of economic hibernation caused by local and national lockdowns and we need to ensure that we secure a recovery that delivers sustainable growth for all our residents.
- The only way to deliver sustainable long-term growth is to ensure that that growth is part of a transition to a decarbonised economy. Only growth that sustains industries that have a future will deliver the long-term jobs and investment that our communities need.
- Nearly 700,000 direct jobs could be created in England's low-carbon and renewable energy economy by 2030, rising to more than 1.18 million by 2050. We need to think about how we support Oldham residents into those jobs and secure investment in the critical infrastructure to make the transition.
- Across Greater Manchester, empowering and resourcing communities to tackle issues such as poor air quality and congestion is also vital to achieving our climate goals.
- Net zero represents a once-in-a generation opportunity to upgrade England's poorly performing housing stock. Net zero's potential to improve the lives of people will only be maximised if policy makers view the programme as a wider opportunity to undertake holistic improvements to our housing stock.

Championing a Green Recovery – over the next twelve months we will:

1. Providing well maintained, accessible outdoor space for people to enjoy

- Progress our Local Plan to identify, protect and enhance the borough's green spaces, especially Sites of Biological Importance.
- Implement a Clean Air Zone as part of the GM Clean Air Plan, tackling air pollution across the borough.
- Support the development of Active Environments, reducing inactivity and increasing engagement in physical activity and sport.
- Identify land where remembrance and reflection trees could be planted to commemorate the people who have died during the pandemic. These will be established in six parks, with one in each district.
- Create cleaner environments for people to enjoy, reducing fly-tipping and improving rates of recycling.

2. Build a greener economy that reduces Oldham's carbon footprint

- Champion the Northern Roots project, helping local communities get involved in the green economy through growing and enterprise.
- Develop plans for a new District Heat Network which will use renewable heat from disused mines underneath the town centre.
- Start to deliver the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme in private sector and social housing to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and create new green jobs.
- Develop sustainable / green energy plans for corporate assets, and encourage growth in Oldham's low-carbon and environmental goods and services sector, encouraging local investment in infrastructure that supports the green economy.
- Reduce emissions by improving our ICT technology, supporting the ability to work from different places.
- Engage young people with planning for the borough's carbon neutral future, in line with the UN Conference on Climate Change.

3. Reduce carbon emissions from transport and increase cycling, walking and public transport use

- Improve walking and cycling routes in Oldham and continue to deliver the Bee Network.
- Implement a campaign to promote active travel including to schools, residents and workplaces.
- Work with partners to improve the public transport offer in Oldham.
- Facilitate and accelerate the shift to electric vehicles by expanding the public Electric Vehicle charging network.

Creating and Protecting Jobs and Supporting Businesses – The Context

- Unemployment in Oldham has doubled (+98%) over the last 12 months, to a current total of 13,655 claimants, to levels significantly above those seen at the peak of the last recession in 2009. This is broadly in line with GM (+105%), but lower than England rate (125%).
- Over the same period Oldham's monthly youth Claimant Count has increased by 117%, similar to GM (113%) but lower than England (133%).
- Increases to unemployment have hit more traditional deprived areas to a greater extent, rather than being spread proportionally across the borough. Social housing estates seem to have impacted the most, especially the isolated social housing estates such as Holts and Sholver.
- The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) are projecting that unemployment will continue to rise nationally until June 2021, and won't start to show a decrease until around September 2021. As Oldham's economy is less resilient (as shown during the previous recession) the recovery is likely to start and finish later.
- Since March 2020, Oldham has provided more than £52M in grants to local businesses.
- Data from the GMCA suggests footfall in town centres across GM has decreased by between 45-71% compared to last year. The consequences of hotel, pub and restaurant closures have been widespread and severe. The breadth of impact on the industry has made initial attempts to quantify the economic impact on the sector infeasible.

Creating and Protecting Jobs and Supporting Businesses – over the next twelve months we will:

1. Support businesses to get back on their feet

- Support the safe reopening of local businesses, building consumer confidence and encouraging residents back to the high street.
- Continue to promote Oldham as a place to live, to do business and to visit through our Creating a Better Place strategic framework, Town Centre Vision and Town Deal Investment Plan.
- Work with local businesses to capitalise on opportunities to sell more goods and services locally, and encourage commitment from the public and private sector to procure more locally and to support local innovation.
- Support businesses to survive and thrive through refocused business events and training in digital skills.
- Provide free business start-up support to kick-start new businesses in to life at pace.
- Provide targeted support to markets and market traders, helping them to access new markets.

2. Help people back into work or retrain for new careers

- Ensure responsive employment support for newly-unemployed, under-employed and those facing redundancy including disadvantaged groups and communities, especially young people have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic economically.
- Target provision at identified groups disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 e.g. young people, BAME, and those already disadvantaged in the Labour Market, in particular residents with disabilities.
- Ensure everyone has access to opportunities to upskill and reskill, adapting the skills provision so that it meets the changing needs of businesses and the aspirations of individuals, reflecting our Education and Skills offer.
- Prioritise entry level jobs across Team Oldham as a step to enable young people enter public service.
- Provide access to the Oldham Pledge to all Oldham's children and young people, helping them develop skills so they are life ready, school ready and work ready.

3. Creating the conditions for inclusive growth and a thriving town centre

- Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes and actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough.
- Create the conditions that will deliver a more inclusive, zero-carbon economy by investing in transport infrastructure, digital infrastructure and the environment.
- Develop and begin to implement the new Cultural Strategy and develop plans for a new performance space for the borough.
- Increase council spending with local businesses, and those who create local jobs.

Prioritising Education and Skills – The Context

- Compared to the UK as a whole, the North East and the North West of England both have a higher proportion of employment in ‘shutdown sectors’, such as retail and manufacturing.
- Research by the Institute for Student Employers (ISE) suggested that all types of entry-level roles have been reduced by 23% in 2020.
- Employers are also seeking 32% fewer entrants on apprentice or school leaver programmes than originally planned for this year (2021).
- Youth Unemployment in Oldham stands at 14.4% This is the highest rate across Greater Manchester and higher than the national rate of 9.0%.
- The effects of school closures and the lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly detrimental for the most disadvantaged groups in society, including vulnerable children and young people.
- To end of term December 2020, around 33,200 pupils have been affected by bubble closures. Over 855 bubbles have closed in total. Only 3 schools have not had a bubble closure.
- Recent figures from an online survey of 4,000 parents in England by the Institute of Fiscal Studies carried out between April and May shows that children from better-off households are spending 30% more time each day on educational activities than are children from the poorest fifth of households.
- Without the right support the economic and educational inequality for young people will be wider than ever. Many will struggle to find work, those in work will struggle to climb the income ladder and it will be even more difficult for young people to fulfil their aspirations regardless of their background.
- The First 1001 Days is the time between conception and age two. It is the period when brain development is at its peak growth period. It is a crucial period for young children’s learning, especially making relationships and language learning.

Prioritising Education and Skills – over the next twelve months we will:

1. Ensure school and college leavers move on to education, employment and training

- Work across Team Oldham to promote opportunities and careers to all young people leaving full-time education, ensuring every young person in Oldham will have the support they need to get into high quality education, employment, training, or an apprenticeship.
- Increase SEND transport provision and other work to support the most vulnerable children to attend school.
- Work with partners, children, young people and their families to identify the extent of hidden harm, for example, mental health impacts that will have been experienced by some of our most vulnerable children and young people during the pandemic.
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2. Work with local schools, colleges and early years settings to ensure children and young people achieve their full potential

- Ensure all children and young people in Oldham have an equal opportunity to thrive within their families and communities; and those at risk of marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement are protected and supported.
- Support schools to develop their digital and remote learning strategies so that high quality provision is available everywhere.
- Support schools to maintain resilience and capacity to meet the changing demands through the waves of the pandemic and lockdowns, including forward planning on talent management and progression management.
- Support all children and young people and their parents to successfully return to education following the Covid pandemic, and feel confident and secure in doing so.
- Develop the early support and provision across Oldham schools to promote inclusion and meet SEND need in mainstream provision.
- Revise the placement sufficiency strategy in Oldham to reduce the number of children educated out of borough.
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3. Enable the best start in life for our youngest children who have missed out as a result of COVID-19

- Increase take up of the 2 year old early education offer with a specific focus on targeted communities.
- Increase support to parents and families to help parents provide positive home learning experiences.
- Accelerate progress in achieving Good Level of Development (GLD) of pre-school children, reducing the gap between children in disadvantaged families and others and between boys and girls - gaps exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19.
- Launch our early years strategy to enable every child in Oldham to have the best possible start in life.

Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Supporting the Most Vulnerable – The Context

- Oldham residents overall experience poorer health than other parts of the country. Life expectancy is lower than the national average, and the proportion of the population who experience long term conditions such as high blood pressure and lung disease is significantly higher than the national average. This poorer underlying health has made Oldham particularly vulnerable to high rates of serious illness and deaths from COVID.
- The impact on the mental health on our residents is significant - with consequences of lockdown such as food insecurity, income loss, isolation and anxiety all worsening mental health outcomes.
- We have seen increases in mental health referrals from A&E and the community, and increases in mental health admissions for 34 hours and 3-5 days which are indicators of crisis.
- The physical health of our residents has also been impacted both by high COVID-19 mortality and morbidity and by the disruption to the wider health and social care system caused by the pandemic. The NHS has worked at times to capacity to manage increasing COVID-19 hospital and ICU admissions. This has had knock on impacts on the health and social care system including the disruption to non-Covid acute care across Oldham and a backlog of care across acute and primary care.
- Significant drops in A&E use, admissions for urgent conditions, and attendance rates for primary care also indicate that many residents have not been seeking the help they need. This is particularly the case for our most vulnerable residents and risks increasing the health inequalities that already exist within Oldham and causing more non-Covid deaths.
- Additionally there are also longer-term impacts on NHS and social care capacity and resilience, including the impact on a workforce that has tirelessly worked through many months of a pandemic.
- In November 2020 there was a 92% increase in IDVA referrals for high risk domestic violence. The average increase since March is 35%.
- Increase in injuries to under 2's - majority of cases were accidental injuries where wider impact of COVID-19 was a potential contributing factor, primarily linked to increased family pressure due to lockdown which lead to reduced supervision.

Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Supporting the Most Vulnerable – over the next twelve months we will:

1. Continue to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Oldham –

- Scale up testing in Oldham using new and existing technologies and increasing capacity.
- Deliver the vaccination program across Oldham, in line with JCVI Priorities, starting with the most vulnerable segments of our population.
- Proactively manage clusters of cases and outbreaks to prevent onwards transmission.

2. Work with residents and communities to improve health and wellbeing, preventing illness and premature death –

- Implement the GM Living Well at Home Strategy, supporting people to live at home as independently as possible.
- Provide mental health support that targets the whole population (including children and young people), populations at higher risk and people who need additional support, including Oldham's 23,000 unpaid carers.
- Work across the Oldham Cares system to agree a co-operative approach and response to the NHS People Plan, ensuring we have the staff and skills to support our services.
- Support recovery of leisure facilities, helping ensure residents are physically active and are able to make positive life choices.
- Increase capacity in substance misuse treatment , helping vulnerable people improve their health, rebuild relationships, find work and drive down crime and violence.
- Increase healthier behaviours, including healthy eating and physical activity, helping residents improve the quality of their lives.

3. Safeguard and supporting our most vulnerable residents –

- Continue identifying children at risk of harm and working to protect them through high quality assessment, planning and interventions.
- Ensure all young people know where and how to find support now and that there are smooth pathways between services.
- Develop the complex safeguarding offer across services to address need earlier.
- Ensure we have the right capacity and effective partnership working to improve the effectiveness of the response to domestic abuse, including through the provision of safe accommodation.
- Launch a new residential provision offer to reduce out of borough placements.
- Enabling our most vulnerable residents to be supported to retain their independence as close to home as possible by managing risk, and working with stakeholders to ensure a strength based approach where people have choice and control.
- Develop our whole system response to early intervention and prevention , which will include the role of communities and the VCSFE in promoting well-being.

