Aberdeenshire
C O U N C I L **A** Business Services

REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL – 7 OCTOBER 2020

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1   Reason for Report / Summary

1.1   This report details the Community Impact Assessment process undertaken by the Council and the reasons for the assessment. The findings are in Appendix 1

2   Recommendations

Full Council is recommended to:

2.1   Consider the Community Impact Assessment in Appendix 1;

2.2   Acknowledge that this report captures the position as at August 2020;

2.3   Acknowledge that Covid-19 does not affect all people or communities equally and this is evidenced in the findings of the Community Impact Assessment;

2.4   Endorse further work being undertaken to capture community views at a future stage, and particularly to ensure targeted engagement with vulnerable groups; and

2.5   Note that the findings of the Community Impact Assessment provides evidence to support the development of the Council Plan, Service Plans, Area Plans and Community Plans.

3   Purpose and Decision-Making Route

3.1   The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) process that was commenced in August of this year due to the global Covid -19 pandemic.

3.2   The CIA was specifically created to collect data from the residents and groups of Aberdeenshire in relation to Scotland being in lockdown. The aim of the CIA is to provide Elected Members with an Aberdeenshire focused overview of the result of the CIA process and such information is available to be considered and utilised when making decisions.

4   Discussion

4.1   A CIA is a standard process when a critical incident has been called to better understand how the community, and statutory partners can work towards recovery and next steps. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst an incident under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, is not the same as other incidents we have experienced e.g. flood, potential explosion etc which generally affects specific communities. All residents and communities of

Aberdeenshire have been affected by this incident and therefore this exercise is significantly larger and more complex. A CIA gives the opportunity to assess the impact from both data already collected, and from the views of a broad range of community groups about how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected them, their lives, businesses and communities.

4.2   The primary purpose of the CIA is to identify the issues which may have affected a community's confidence in the ability of Aberdeenshire Council and other key Category 1 partners to respond effectively to their needs following a period of major disruption, in this case Covid-19. The process should also allow community groups to offer first-hand experience of how the pandemic has had an impact socially, economically, environmentally, and on wellbeing. It could assist Aberdeenshire Council in informing short, medium and longer-term recovery plans from Covid-19 and has the potential to influence how community confidence, resilience and ability will be rebuilt (renewed) following the crisis. A CIA also presents the opportunity to identify lessons learned about how the response phase to the incident was handled.

4.3   It is recognised that the views of people in Aberdeenshire will change over time as the impact of the pandemic and restrictions change. It is therefore important that any CIA process takes this into account, and itself is able to be iterative and change. This necessity to be iterative ensures that there is the opportunity to revisit the process and adapt and improve. In particular, consideration is required to be given to engaging, when restrictions allow, with the more vulnerable, hard to reach Aberdeenshire residents.

4.4   It was agreed that the initial CIA would be carried out in three parts and was undertaken between 7th and 31st August 2020 and would report its interim findings early in October.

4.5   The three parts to the CIA are as follows:

Part 1   Online survey of the Aberdeenshire wide community with the themes of impact on People, Community Groups and the Community. Respondents were also specifically asked to assess the Council's response during the early stages of the pandemic.

Part 2   Ward Forums with Elected Members and community groups discussing the themes of People, Place and Economy

Part 3   Data Analysis

4.6   Given the ongoing nature of the impact being felt by all Aberdeenshire residents, there is the opportunity to revisit the community survey and the Ward Forums meetings to further understand as the pandemic progresses. The limitations of this process and resultant CIA report are recognised, given the restrictions in place at the time, however, the impact on particular groups, particularly the vulnerable, will need further action.

4.7   The data collected and the data available for analysis has been presented in Appendix 1 to give an Aberdeenshire overview. Due to the magnitude of the data collected it was not feasible to present it all within this report. Officers are carrying out further data analysis with the view to having available area and ward specific information. At the end of October and early November, there will be a Joint Community Planning Group meeting (community partners, members and area management teams) in each Areas where the area and ward specific data will be provided and discussed. Similarly, the CIA will be discussed in Directorate Management Teams to consider how the information can help shape service delivery.

5   Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1   The report supports the delivery of the three pillars, Our People, Our Environment and Our Economy along with the underpinning principles; right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership, Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

5.2   The report provides supporting information that can be considered when making decisions at Aberdeenshire Council, whether strategic or operational.

5.3   The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		**x**	
Staffing		**x**	
Equalities			x
Fairer Scotland Duty			x
Town Centre First			x
Sustainability			x
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			x

5.4   An equality impact assessment is not required because the reporting of the community impact assessment findings does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

5.5   The continuation of the CIA process will be managed within Service and Area budgets within the current staffing position.

5.6   The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- ACORP005 Working with other organisations
- ACORP006 Reputation management (including social media)
- ACORP007 Social risk
- *Corporate Risk Register.*

    The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- BSSR004 Community Empowerment
- ECSSR004 Support Inclusive, Vibrant & Healthy Communities
- Directorate Risk Registers.

    These risks are mitigated due to the action of reporting to Full Council on the findings of the community impact assessment.

6   Scheme of Governance

6.1   The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

6.2   Full Council is able to consider this item in terms of the General Provisions of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as Full Council can determine any matter with in the Councils remit.

RITCHIE JOHNSON
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES

Report prepared by Elaine Brown, Formartine Area Manager and Ann Overton Acting Garioch Area Manager
29 September 2020

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Executive Summary

A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is a standard process when a critical incident has been called to better understand how the community, and statutory partners can work towards recovery and next steps. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst an Incident under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, is not the same as other incidents we have experienced e.g. flood, potential explosion etc which generally affects specific communities. All residents and communities of Aberdeenshire have been affected by this incident and therefore this exercise is significantly larger and more complex. A CIA will give the opportunity to assess the impact from both data already collected, and from the views of a broad range of community groups about how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected them, their lives, businesses and communities.

The primary purpose of the CIA is to identify the issues which may have affected a community's confidence in the ability of Aberdeenshire Council and other key Category 1 partners to respond effectively to their needs following a period of major disruption, in this case Covid-19.The process should also allow community groups to offer first-hand experience of how the pandemic has had an impact socially, economically, environmentally, and on wellbeing. It could assist Aberdeenshire Council in informing short, medium and longer-term recovery plans from Covid-19 and has the potential to influence how community confidence, resilience and ability will be rebuilt (renewed) following the crisis. A CIA also presents the opportunity to identify lessons learned about how the response phase was handled.

It is recognised that the views of people in Aberdeenshire will change over time as the impact of the pandemic and restrictions change. It is therefore important that any CIA process takes this into account, and itself is able to be iterative and change.

It was agreed that the initial CIA would be carried out in three parts and was undertaken between 7th and 31st August 2020 and would report its interim findings early in October.

The three parts to the CIA are as follows:

Part 1 Online survey of the Aberdeenshire wide community with the themes of impact on People, Community Groups and the Community. Respondents were also specifically asked to assess the Council's response during the early stages of the pandemic.

Part 2 Ward Forums with Elected Members and community groups with the themes of People, Place and Economy

Part 3 Data analysis

These three parts were supplemented by more in-depth discussions by Community Learning and Development with harder to reach groups.

Aberdeenshire Council received 4299 participations as part of the online survey and 138 groups took part in the Ward Forums with Elected Members.

Emerging Trends

- People are concerned about their jobs, education and safety in their community

- Residents are reporting to be drinking more alcohol

- Some people continue to feel anxious, lonely or isolated

- Community groups have responded well, but there is concern about sustainability and future capacity

- People are confident that they can ask their neighbours for help

- Local people have said they will do more to support local business

- People are positive about volunteering in their local area

- People report to be more active (socially and physically) than before

- People are positive about their local area and the community they live in and value open space and paths

- The reduction in grass cutting was welcomed because of the improved biodiversity, but there was also criticism

- Data on vulnerabilities can identify locations where additional support may be necessary

- There has been a positive uptake in the use of technology, but more need to be done for the digitally excluded

- It was welcomed that the Council responded quickly with funding

The information contained in this report will help Aberdeenshire Council better understand the impact Coveid-19 has had in its communities to date, help shape services as they both step back up and adapt to the inevitable change as a result of the pandemic. Given the ongoing nature of the impact being felt by all Aberdeenshire residents, there is the opportunity to revisit the community survey and the Ward Forums meetings to further understand. The limitations of this process and report are recognised, given the restrictions in place at the time, however, the impact on particular groups, particularly the vulnerable, will need further action.

PART 1: Community Impact Assessment – Community Survey

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Survey Analysis

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1.4 Findings

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1.1 Introduction

To understand the impact of the global (COVID-19) pandemic, Aberdeenshire Council surveyed local residents to find out how the health crisis is impacting individuals and local communities. The survey was open from 7th August to 31st August.

The Council communicated and invited responses through a range of channels. The survey was open to any interested party. Though the Council made specific efforts to raise awareness and reach out to individuals and organisations who may be interested in or impacted by the pandemic, those who responded were predominantly self-selecting. As a result, participants should not be considered representative of the population as a whole and open engagement activity should not be judged on its overall representativeness. Instead, engagement activity should be assessed on the extent to which a broad diversity of relevant individuals were able to express themselves in the process. It is important to consider the mechanism for engagement and the respondent group when interpreting the responses received. Even though interested participants were offered other methods to participate, the majority of the engagement exercise took place online, and therefore the response should be interpreted to take this into account.

The overall social media campaign reached an audience on Facebook of 54,682 people. This is the cumulative total of three posts. In comparison to other campaigns this is a high level of engagement. The campaign had 5,359 Facebook engagements (comments, shares, likes etc.).

Subsequently 4299 responses were received to the survey and included responses from one hundred and sixty-two residents who are members of community groups.

From respondents who provided demographic and equality information; 82% of all participants were female, while 18% were male. 6% of participants described themselves as having a long-term illness or disability.

84% of respondents owned their house either outright or with a mortgage, 7% were social housing tenants, and 9% rented from a private landlord.

20% of respondents are responsible for caring for an adult, 13% have pre-school age children, and 47% have school age children.

22% of respondents had a household income over £60,000, 17% had a household income of between £40,000 and £60,000, 21% had a household income of between £20,000 and £40,000 and 15% had a combined household income of under £20,000. 61% of all respondents were currently employed, 10% were self-employed, 3% were unemployed and looking for work, 2% were students, 2% were unable to work, 11% were retired and 6% looked after the home/family.

12% of respondents had been furloughed by their employer during the pandemic (albeit 6% had at the time of the responding returned to work.)

10% of all respondents were over 65, 20% were between 55 and 64, 28% were aged between 45 and 54, 29% were aged 35-44, 11% were aged between 25 and 34 and 2% were under the age of 25.

19% of respondents lived in the Buchan area, 13% in the Banff and Buchan, 16% in Formartine, 20% in Garioch, 18% in Kincardine and Mearns and 13% in Marr.

Less than 1% of all respondents reported that they have tested positive for COVID 19, but 12% think they have had COVID 19 in the last six months but had not been tested and 18% of respondents were shielding during the outbreak.

1.2 Survey Analysis

This report presents frequency results for each survey question. In some cases, the analysis has excluded 'don't know' responses from the percentage base to give a more accurate indication of views amongst residents with experience of specific issues or services. Tabular area results will be provided under separate cover, including base numbers for all figures presented in the main body of the report.

All survey questions have been cross-tabulated to assess the extent of any variation in views across key respondent groups. Any significant variation is highlighted in the report text. In some cases, percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number; for some questions this means that percentages may not sum to 100%.

It should be noted that this report contains the analysis of individuals comments, this analysis of the feedback is intrinsically subjective as it involves the interpretation of people's comments. This analysis should be treated with care, as the question did not specifically ask for people to comment on each of the specific categories, therefore it cannot to be said respondents do not to have views on key themes identified because they have left no comment.

1.3 Summary of Key Findings

Impact on individuals:

- People have enjoyed spending more time with their families
- Residents have been more active during lockdown compared to normal
- A high percentage of people report making positive changes to their lifestyle
- People have found ways to relax and take part in different activities
- A significant amount of people are drinking more units of alcohol
- A high number of people report to be more stressed and anxious than before
- A substantial amount of people are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on other people's mental health and wellbeing
- People are concerned about access to health care services and the impact of the last few months on long term health
- Education appears to be people's biggest priority for the short and long term as well as a concern around the future transmission of the virus and keeping their family/community safe

Impact on community groups:

- Member of community groups feel there has been improved communication (between members and the wider community)
- There is greater awareness amongst individuals around activities and services the community and voluntary sector deliver
- There has been a positive uptake an increase in the use of digital technology to facilitate community groups and deliver services (for example

the use of zoom, teams, etc to hold meetings/deliver counselling sessions for services users)
- The community and voluntary sector reacted and adapted to the situation well (for example change of focus from community café to foodbank)
- There has been an increase in demand in service due to more people needing support and greater awareness of community services
- Many groups feel they have missed standard income generation opportunities

- Groups have had to deal with issues in procuring supplies and essential items
- There is unknown impact because of the closure of facilities (for example village halls)
- There has been an increase in pressure on volunteers
- Groups have faced barriers and bureaucracy dealing with some "statutory services"
- There is general concern about capacity and sustainability on maintaining and delivering services to meet current and future demand

Impact on communities:

- Residents are confident that their neighbours would look out for them and other people living nearby
- Nearly everyone is certain they would help out people living nearby if they were asked to
- More people think there had been improvement in their local area because of lockdown compared to those who disagree
- A significant number of people have volunteered in their local area and nearly all of them will continue to do so
- A third of people agreed that they have felt lonely or isolated in the last three months
- 1 in 3 people feel less safe in their home or local area than before
- A minority of people have kept in touch with friends and family less
- Residents are concerned that there are gaps in the support available for certain groups for example single parents, vulnerable groups and young people

1.4 Findings

1.4.1 Impact on individuals

Positive impacts

When asked about positive changes that have happened respondents noted that they had spent more time with family/children (54%), spent more time outdoors (46%), spent less money (59%), tried different things (19%), exercises more (28%), and worked from home (30%).

Other positive changes that respondents highlighted included: becoming more involved with local support groups, became more involved in children's education (through home schooling), became more self-sufficient(including growing own vegetables), stopped smoking, got a dog, more (virtual) contact with distant family and friends, completed a learning course, made furniture, learnt to relax, reduced carbon footprint and decorated the house.

A number of respondents noted that they had not experienced any positive impacts, with some respondents highlighting that they continued to work during lockdown.

Negative impacts

When asked specifically about the negative impacts; three quarters of all respondents agreed that they missed seeing relatives and friends. Other negatives included; being worried about relatives (46%), more stress (43%), worry about jobs (37%) finances (28%), dealing with home schooling (26%), entertaining children (20%), family arguments (15%) and illness/self-isolation (13%).

Other negative impacts highlighted by respondents included; struggling to separate work and home life, increased stress (due to work and new pressures), missed medical appointments, lost employment, and missed leisure and exercise.

Impact on behaviours

The majority of respondents agreed that they had been more active during lockdown compared to 35% who disagreed. Nearly all of the respondents did enjoy certain activities during the lockdown, the most popular being walking. Other activities that respondents enjoyed included; cooking/baking, gardening, spending time with children, reading, resting and relaxing, exercising, riding a bike, arts and crafts, getting to know neighbours, computer and video games, supporting others in the local community and volunteering.

To further understand what activities individuals had missed. Respondents were asked to list the things they were most looking forward to doing once restrictions allowed. The most popular activities included eating out (54%), Getting hair done/other beauty treatment (50%), gym/swimming/leisure activities (37%). cinema/theatre (32%), shopping for clothes/other high street retail (22%) visiting a play centre/activity with the children (21%), Going to the pub/socialising (15%), Local interest group/community group (14%) and Attending sporting event (11%).

Impact on wellbeing

Nearly one third of respondents noted that the lockdown had negatively affected their mental wellbeing. 18% respondent saying they are much more anxious or stressed, 17% said they were slightly more anxious or stressed. Just under half of respondents

(40%) noted that they have mixed (good and bad days. More positively; 13% had not experienced any impact on their mental wellbeing and around 10% were feeling happier or less anxious and stressed. Respondents with lower household income were much more likely to be "much more anxious or stressed". And respondents who indicated that they had a disability were twice as likely to be much more anxious or stressed.

Just under one third of respondents (30%) believed that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected how safe they feel in their home or local area. The comments listed below illustrate the most commonly mentioned issues.

> *A lack of understanding generally and locally regarding how easily the virus can be transmitted from one person to another. This is displayed locally when visits need to be made to a supermarket where it is likely that individuals will be present who are not following government guidelines on isolating, social distancing, or face coverings...*
>
> *Wary of going to cafes, restaurants, bars, shopping is just run in and get what we need and run out of the shop again as quick as possible*
>
> *Unclear how rife the virus is in our specific area and how transmission is occurring which makes you nervous when you go out especially when others ignore the guidance, and nobody enforces it*
>
> *I didn't enjoy the extra amount of people travelling to my local area. I found people flooding to the area rather than going abroad. Many people did not follow social distancing and crowded around shop entrances. I felt I could not spend time in my local areas due to this.*
>
> *I'm unsure if I will be sending my 3 children (attending 2 different schools) back to school on Wednesday due to the increase in cases. If we are told to remember FACTS then in the next week we are told none of that matters for our children and teachers in the school.*
>
> *Recent spike is a reminder that the local community cannot be complacent. As a teacher, I am anxious about our return to school next week. I am keen for the full return of schools but I feel it would be more sensible to delay the return by one week due to the recent spike in cases*
>
> *I'm not convinced I won't catch Covid, especially as the schools are going back without social distancing as it's not possible if all the pupils are in school.*

In general, more people reported that they have made positive lifestyle changes (41%) compared to those who thought it has had a negative affect (23%). Just over a quarter of respondents (29%) reported no lifestyle changes and around 7% were unsure.

In the period March to August one quarter of all respondents reported to be drinking more units of alcohol than before. Most people responding to the survey (38%)

thought it was about the same as before. Just under 15% thought they were drinking less alcohol. Nearly 1 in 5 noted that the question didn't apply to them as they didn't drink any alcohol.

From the respondents who indicated that they were drinking more alcohol than before; 28% thought it was affecting their sleep, 21% thought it had a negative impact on their energy levels, 15% thought it was affecting their mental health. A similar number thought their alcohol consumption was affecting their physical health in a negative way. 9% thought drinking more was having an impact on their productivity, 18% weren't sure and 1 in 3 of the respondents who reported to be drinking more alcohol hadn't experienced any negative impacts. Respondents in the highest household income band were nearly twice as likely to report an increase in the consumption of alcohol in recent months as those in the lowest income category.

When asked about contact with friends and family during the lockdown; 44% of respondents thought they were in contact more than before, 11% thought they were in contact less and 45% thought they were in contact about the same.

Importantly nearly all (85%) said they had used technology to keep in contact with friends and family compared to 15% who said they hadn't. Females were more likely to have used technology to keep in contact with others compared to males.

Emerging impacts

Over half of respondents (51%) agreed that they were concerned about future employment for themselves or a member of their household, 36% were not concerned, 7% were unsure and 7% did not think the question applied to them.

Less respondents were concerned about how the pandemic will affect their financial situation (39%) than employment opportunities. Just over half of all respondents were not concerned about any finical impacts. A similar number of respondents were concerned about the impact on future training or education (39%).

People who reported to have household income below £30,000 p.a. were much more likely to be concerned about their future financial situation along with younger respondents were more likely to be concerned about future employment and education opportunities.

A total of 1135 comments were given by respondents when asked about general impact on them or their family. The positive comments highlighted the positive benefits of spending more time with immediate family, connecting with the local natural environment and having more free time. However, most of the tone was generally negative in nature, with comments focussing on the financial impact, the impact on mental health, an increase in stress, depression and anxiety, the impact of missing family or social settings, the impact of the uncertainty, and the impact of missed education on children. Specific concern was raised about the impact on existing medical conditions and not being able to access health care, and the impact on the mental health of children.

The comments listed below illustrate the most commonly mentioned issues.

> *It has, made my son and myself extremely anxious about going out to the shops, I start to get anxiety when I think about going back to work...*
>
> *Home education for young children would be challenging in long term. We were lucky as the furlough enabled us to focus on children.*
>
> *We've been able to spend more quality time together....*
>
> *Feel very alone and isolated.*
>
> *Big impact on my husband who has Alzheimer's he has deteriorated quite a lot He has missed his routine of attending activities and not had the same stimulation.*
>
> *The fact we cannot get to see a doctor at local surgeries is worrying when you are being diagnosed over phone and treatment does not work*

1.4.2 Impact on the local communities

Community groups

One hundred and sixty-two respondents (4%) indicated that they were responding to the survey as a member of a community group. 85% of those respondents have supported others in the local community during the pandemic.

Ways in which groups have supported communities included; providing assistance in transporting/delivering goods, helping with allotments, providing a collection and delivery service, giving out food parcels to those facing food poverty, supporting men who are at a greater risk of social isolation, keeping the community informed through local updates, providing online youth activities, supporting parents, befriending individuals , dog walking services, hospital transport, providing a central point for the distribution of essential items, and delivering meals and afternoon teas.

Impact on community group activities that groups reported included:

- Improved communication (between members and the wider community)
- Increased use of digital technology (use of zoom, teams, etc to hold meetings/deliver counselling)
- Reacted to the situation well (for example change of focus from community café to foodbank)
- Increase in demand in services
- Loss of income
- Procurement issues
- Unknown impact of closure of facilities (for example village halls)
- Increased pressure on volunteers
- Failure to connect with certain public services (a number of respondents mentioned care homes and sheltered housing specifically)
- Faced barriers and bureaucracy dealing with some "statutory services"
- Concerns about capacity and sustainability

The comments listed below illustrate the most commonly mentioned aspects that worked well.

>> *Successfully moved to deliver services online and have had over 800 attendees to groups and provided in excess of 200 hours counselling*

We operated a tick and cross system, where residents displayed ticks if all was well, and a cross if someone needed help. Our volunteers checked their designated street daily to see if anyone needed assistance.

Communication between Local Government and the Men's Shed was key, and worked well. Provision of advice, P.P.E, and funding worked well from our various donators, including Local Government Officials.

The Coronavirus Assistance Hub has worked really well with help and advice being direct, speedy and appropriate

Community resilience team and their volunteer helpers worked brilliantly to deliver groceries, prescriptions etc to those in community shielding and isolating. Interaction(s) with other community groups and their ability to change function to accommodate meals delivery as well as community fresh veggie deliveries from commercial distributors provided excellent additional services.

We had a very successful community helpline, which we operated ourselves...

The flow of information and direction from Aberdeenshire Council was excellent however we felt somewhat overwhelmed by the amount...

Local communities have rallied to meet local need. Response has been very quick, especially in the community. New volunteers coming forward which was fantastic. There appeared to be no means of communicating with sheltered housing staff if organisations had concerns for a resident which wasn't good enough...

Community response was amazing. Funding decisions were fast-tracked which helped communities to respond.... ''

Impact on community connections

To understand the strength of social networks within communities, respondents were asked a number of questions to understand the quality of friendships, relationships and contacts, the help that people provide and receive from neighbours and how connected and supported people perceive themselves to be.

63% of respondents agreed (26% strongly agree, 37% agree) that they can rely on neighbours for help if needed compared to 25% who neither agreed nor disagreed and 8% who disagreed and 5% who strongly disagreed.

18% of respondents strongly agreed and 33% agreed that their neighbours would look out for them compared to 35% who neither agreed nor disagreed and 9% who disagreed and 5% who strongly disagreed

17% of respondents strongly agreed and 34% agreed that they could turn to their neighbours for advice compare to 31% who neither agreed nor disagreed and 12% who disagreed and 6% who strongly disagreed

50% of people who took the survey strongly agreed and 44% agreed they would help out neighbours if needed compared to just 4% who neither agreed nor disagreed and less than 1% who disagreed and around 1% who strongly disagreed

12% of respondents strongly agreed that they have felt lonely or isolated and 23% agreed. 22% were not sure and 42% disagreed. Results show that female respondents, people with lower income and respondents who indicated they had a disability tended to report to have been lonelier than others.

When asked about giving up time to help any groups, clubs or organisations in an unpaid capacity 25% of people surveyed noted that they had volunteered, 73% said they hadn't and 2% were unsure. Older respondents were more likely to have volunteered.

From the respondents who had not volunteered the majority of them noted that they had no capacity either due to work or family commitments or were unable too due to medical conditions. A few respondents noted that having more information about volunteering opportunities may encourage them to volunteer in the future.

For the respondents who had volunteered nearly 80% said they would continue to do so. For those who said they would not continue to volunteer the top reasons given included: lack of time and work or family commitments. Results show that males were more likely to say they will continue to volunteer compared to women.

Community activity

Respondents were asked to list community/neighbourhood activity that they had participated in during the last few months. Three quarters of respondents said that they had been buying from local shops/business, 36% said they had been helping out neighbours, 21% noted neighbours had helped them, 16% had used local street or neighbourhood social media to keep in touch with others, 10% had helped out or volunteered in their local area and 6% had taken part in a socially distanced street party.

To understand what (if anything) had made things easier for individuals during the first phase of the COVID 19 pandemic respondents were asked to list areas of support. 40% listed support from family, 37% national information (such as letter from First Minister, daily briefings), 30% local social media, 25% support from friends/neighbours, 25% support from employer, 13% local importation from newspapers/radio, 10% information from the Council website, 5% support from local community group, 4% NHS appointments, 3% Council Service (specific services

noted included: area offices, ranger services, education department, staff bulletins, waste service) and 1.5% support from the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub.

Improvement in local communities

When asked about improvements in their local community; 60% of respondents thought there had been positive changes compared to 30% who disagreed and 10% who were unsure.

1483 respondents provided more details of the improvements that they had experienced. 22% of these comments related to less traffic, 19% comments mentioned an improvement in local wildlife, 7% noted there was less noise and 7% noted less pollution or better air quality. Just under 4% highlighted wildflowers or an improvement in local biodiversity. Other positive changes included people being more friendly, it being easier to cycle, and feeling more connected with their local environment.

Respondents were asked to list any changes they would make in the future. The top changes noted by respondents included: support local business more (63%), spend more time at home (43%), spend more time with children (32%), working from home more (32%), travel less by car (26%), keep in touch with neighbours (24%), go on more holidays (21%),go on less holidays (19%), travel on public transport less (19%), and volunteer in the community more often (10%).

Impact on future behaviour

When asked about visiting public places such as shops or town centres; 13% of respondents said the pandemic will have no impact, 50% said they will go less often, 7% were unsure and 30% said they will try to avoid visiting these places. Respondents who indicated they had a disability were more likely to say they will try to avoid visiting public places in the future.

The main reasons respondents listed for wanting to avoid these places in the future included: places being too crowded, finding it easy to shop online, too much of a risk, the behaviour of other people, having to wear a mask, parking trouble, and increased fear or heightened anxiety.

Respondents were also asked about other concerns that they had around staying safe in the community as restrictions are loosened. 1973 comments were received. Key concerns included: individuals adhering to social distancing, concerns around schools, people not using face masks properly, other people knowing/following restrictions, and concerns around the night-time economy and people who have had too much to drink.

A total of 1454 comments were given by respondents when asked about general impact on their local community. Key themes identified through comments included:

- Concern with others mental health and (or) wellbeing
- Concern with the impact of changes to schooling and education
- Frustration with not being able to see relatives
- Concern about others not adhering to government guidance
- Local community safety concerns
- Increased connections with local natural environment and frustration around local amenity and landscape services being reduced

- Short term impact on individual income and concern with medium/long term effect on local economy

The comments listed below illustrate the most commonly mentioned issues.

"

Less social interaction for older generation has had terrible impact on physical and mental health

Local areas risk not being felt as safe due to large number of youths hanging around especially at nights.

There is a fear of crowds and that will last for a long time

As I live in ..... town centre, the unavailability of parking is a big issue, not just for me, but for the many who are trying to access local shops

Appalled at number of folks ignoring restrictions especially in early days of lock down

It has been sad to see some of the fly tipping and dumping taking place as well as the grass in play parks, school grounds, local walks and cemeteries being felt to get so long that cutting now has become a major challenge.

"

1.4.3 Impact on Council services

The survey asked respondents a number of questions around the Council's response to the COVID 19 pandemic. The extent to which residents feel informed and engaged by the Council, and the trust that they place in it, directly affects their views about the Council and the services they receive.

When asked about how the Council responded to the COVID 19 pandemic and if they thought that the Council is doing a good job overall in its response; 11% strongly agreed, 37% agreed, 37% were unsure, 10% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed. Female and younger respondents were much more positive about the Council compared to older or male respondents.

When asked what worked well and what could be improved nearly 2000 comments were received. The key things people thought worked well included:

- Waste collection
- Education and home schooling (although many respondents highlighted areas for improvement)
- Management of recycling centres (albeit there was a feeling that they could have opened earlier)
- Redeployment of staff
- Updates through social media
- Childcare hubs
- Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub

The key things that could be improved included:

- Grass cutting (highlighted by 11% of respondents)
- Road improvements (while they have been quiet)
- Checking business that were not complying with the rules
- Stopping fly tipping
- The management, communication, and implementation of Spaces for People

The comments listed below illustrate the most commonly mentioned issues regarding Aberdeenshire Council response.

Not enough done to check on premises abiding by the rules that have to be followed during lockdown. Too much is concentrated on the vanity projects and cyclists, there are other people in more need

I saw no need for people who cut grass and do general outside maintenance etc to have been stopped from working.

Town centre social distancing road networks are a shambles, they are a accident waiting to happen now the kids are back, it also puts you off town centre shopping. The parks and streets turned in to a mess, but yet private ground care companies worked all the way through, farmers worked all the way through, mean while you had staff at home, very badly organised.

Refuse collection worked well. Road & greenspace maintenance suffered badly and has been very slow to recover.

Impressed that the bins were still collected on time. Would have like more road repairs undertaken when the roads were quiet.

I think the council had a really difficult job to do, a job that nobody envisaged or even knew how to do. I think you did really well using social media to communicate with the public. I think we should all assume we may need to go into lock down again and we should all have a plan for that.

Good information and accessible leadership. Honest and not trying to bluff anyone. Swift action was taken and steps put in place to assist key workers from the start.

I think this impossible situation we are all learning and adapting. Continuing with bin collections was huge. At times it has been difficult to find out information regarding schooling, what's open etc but I fully understand this is a work in progress

Booking system for tip is great. Free parking has seen a boost in town centre. One way system imposed is a nightmare and an eyesore. Doesn't work at all and needs to be removed.

Respondents were also asked if they thought that the decisions that the Council had taken during the pandemic were in the best interest for the people living in Aberdeenshire: 10% strongly agreed, 35% agreed, 40% neither agreed nor disagreed, 10% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed.

The survey also asked if respondents thought that Aberdeenshire Council have treated people with dignity and respect. 9% strongly agreed, 37% agreed that the Council have treated residents with dignity and respect and 45% neither agreed nor disagreed and only 6% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed.

When asked about how the Council has communicated during the pandemic the majority of respondents were positive. 7% of respondents thought communication was excellent, 27% thought it was good, 45% thought it was ok and just over one fifth (22%) thought it was poor.

In general, younger people were more positive about the Councils response however less positive about how well the Council had communicated. Respondents who had a disability were less positive about how the Council has communicated during the pandemic and more likely to think communication has been "poor".

When asked what worked well and what could be improved over 1200 comments were received. A significant number of respondents noted that they were not aware of any difference/specific communication.

The key things people thought worked well included:

- Local councillors sharing information
- Communication from schools
- The Council website
- Communication from Area Offices

The key things that could be improved included

- Having a central place for all information instead of "lots of individual emails"
- Creating one daily update
- Direct communication from management
- Making communications easier to read

When asked to think about the future and their experience through the pandemic the main things that were highlighted that could be done differently (by the council, its partners, or local communities) included:

- More partnership and communication between the Council and local communities
- Increased focus on active and safe travelling routes
- Support for older and vulnerable residents
- Effort to shop locally to support local business
- More communication (within communities)
- increased enforcement (of any restrictions/guidance)
- Collaborative resilience planning

Overwhelming the things that were the most important for respondents for the Council to focus on for the rest of the year was schools, education and services for children. Other comments highlighted key areas to focus on including

- Protecting the community
- Landscaping/grass cutting
- Leisure facilities

- Care homes
- Local economy
- Support for communities
- Libraries
- Street/road repairs
- Refuge collection

Similarly, respondents noted the most important things and services the Council should focus on over the next few years were: education, schools, community services and support for the most vulnerable. Comments also highlighted the need to learn from recent events and encouraging everyone to contribute.

PART 2:   Community Impact Assessment – Ward Forums

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Aberdeenshire Summary

       2.2.1 People

       2.2.2 Place

       2.2.3 Economy

2.3 Community Identified Opportunities

2.4 Analysis

2.1 Introduction

To understand the impact of the global (COVID-19) pandemic, the Area Managers arranged Ward Forum meetings for local and community groups to find out how the pandemic is impacting local communities. The forum meetings ran in all six administrative areas of the Council in August 2020.

The Council invited all Elected Members and a range of groups and organisations. Representatives from Community Councils, Rural Partnerships, AVA, Parent Councils, Churches, Community Associations, Community Hall Groups, Charities and SCIOs, Resilience Groups, Scouts, Foodbanks and other organisations attended the meetings.

The purpose of the forums at Ward level was for Aberdeenshire Council to hear, at a more local level, the communities' views about the impact of the pandemic. It was also to allow sharing of experiences between groups that were active during the pandemic, and to give Elected Members the opportunity to hear first-hand about their work, the positives and the challenges they faced.

138 groups and organisations attended the Ward Forums.

This report summarises the findings of all Ward Forums from across Aberdeenshire to give a whole picture. More detailed information is available at both Area level and Ward level for more localised discussions with Members and community groups to better understand what happened and how best to support action in the future, should that be necessary.

The forums lasted approximately an hour and a half and referred to three themes. Participants were asked to consider these prior to the meetings:

People   impact on health and well-being and feelings of vulnerability

Place   impact on environment and community spirit

Economy impact on personal finance and reopening of businesses

2.1 Aberdeenshire Summary

This report provides a summary of the common themes across Aberdeenshire identified during the Community Impact Assessment Ward Forums held in August 2020.

2.2.1 <u>People</u>

Positive Impacts

- People valued, and were supported by, the Grampian Covid19 Assistance Hub for a wide range of issues, from child protection, to assisting with food purchases. Groups were impressed with the numbers of volunteers.

- Quick financial help from Aberdeenshire Council through the Resilience Fund was key to the success of Community Groups being able to react rapidly to the needs of the communities and reach more people.

- The existence of strong community groups (both new and established) was of key importance, these groups were very active, responsive and shared information and they worked collectively to build resilience. Established groups provided early local knowledge and experience which was important in delivering help. This meant that connections and processes were already in place, even bank accounts, which allowed them to be ready to respond more quickly. Groups utilised social media very effectively.

- Community spirit increased and was evident in acts of kindness, increase in friendships including intergenerational interactions, donations of food, supply parcels, pictures in windows, stories, painted stones, music, neighbours supporting neighbours and the clap for carers.

- More time was spent with family both at home and outside when waking and exercising.

Negative Impacts

- There was too much reliance on digital communication which could exclude people who either did not have access to the internet, have a poor connection or have other difficulties with using online tools.

- Information was being issued from too many places and a more co-ordinated approach should be explored for the future to ensure that the key points do not get overlooked.

- Loneliness and isolation were big issues particularly for the elderly, who were more likely to live alone or be cut off from social contact, especially if they

could not get out for exercise. Anxiety and lack of confidence about being back in society was evident in the shielded and the elderly, and in the general community.

- Increase in awareness and of mental health concerns and issues during the lockdown. Groups were also looking towards the winter and beyond with an expectation that there could be further deterioration in mental well-being.

- Volunteers are going back to work, reducing availability and capacity for community groups.

Specific Comments

"

- The Grampian Covid19 Assistance Hub worked well, although there was a feeling it wasn't as busy as was expected, but this could be due to the local initiatives being in place very rapidly.

- Disparity was felt between those on furlough and those trying to work full time while home-schooling. Home-schooling had caused major issues for many people. There is also an evident impact on our young people due to not being in school.

- Ongoing support for volunteers and community groups that have been strengthened by the pandemic will be important, especially to ensure a quick response in the event of a second wave of the virus, or other crises.

- The childcare hubs were excellent and very much needed and appreciated.

- Reported an increase of domestic violence its settlement, the community council has signposted contact details of organisations that can help but it is important to emphasise there are support services for mental health early on to help prevent a rise of cases.

"

2.2.2 Place

Positive Impacts

- Footpath and cycle networks created over past years were greatly appreciated.

- Physical activity increased. People realised what is on their doorsteps, they increased use of local walks for exercise both on foot and on bicycles. When out walking there was the opportunity for communities to interact.

- Communities were shopping more locally, local businesses supported the community and the community supported the businesses, which adapted and diversified by delivering/taking phoneline orders and selling different items.

- Reduction in traffic meant better air quality, improved local environment, nature taking over spaces and as there was less speeding, safer use of roads for walkers and cyclists.

- Uncut grassed areas and verges left for wildflowers to grow were appreciated. It was felt that in future, areas could be identified to be left uncut.

Negative Impacts

- Lack of grass cutting, maintenance of communal spaces and town centres and potholes – impacted people's sense of place and created unease.

- Concerns about the confidence of shielded and elderly residents being able to get out and about and use public transport safely

- Investment is required into providing and upgrading safe accessible paths and routes to support increased walking and cycling in communities. It would be good to join some of the routes up, provide better signage and even provide litter bins along the way.

- Increase of littering and dog fouling and there was evidence of other antisocial behaviours increasing such as vandalism.

- Sudden increase in day visitors and overnight campers to coastal and rural areas when restrictions were eased created a feeling of vulnerability and uncertainty. There is a need to be proactive in finding ways of encouraging people to behave differently and managing opening these areas up.

Specific Comments

"

- We need to support communities who have the desire to develop active travel solutions within their communities.

- People are interested in outdoor volunteering.

- To continue to attract people to our villages we need to keep them looking nice and well maintained. During the lockdown volunteers willing were discouraged from doing this. **,,**

2.2.3 <u>Economy</u>

Positive Impacts

- Local business reacted quickly to the pandemic and were able to diversify their offering to meet the needs of their communities. Existing mobile services (fruit and veg deliveries, fish vans, etc) greatly valued. Local shops and services were valued.

- Employers saw that productivity could be maintained with employees working flexibly at home. This benefits parents returning to the workplace after having children, in an area where childcare resources are very limited.

- Business relief fund for village halls...we did receive funding to help run the village hall as fundraising events have been cancelled this year. Other grant money has been available to support a variety of resilience activities.

Negative Impacts

- Concerns over the end of furlough, increase in unemployment, reduction of available jobs, pay cuts, communities that already have high levels of poverty and the readiness of the Universal Credit to cope with the increased applications.

- Limited broadband affects rural business.

- Not all businesses or organisations were eligible for funding support and charitable organisations are reporting a drop in donations. The usual fundraising opportunities are not there and are unlikely to be there for some time. Some funding opportunities were oversubscribed and closed quickly

- Covid-19 is not going away, communities need to be supported to live with Covid-19 and to recover.

- Need to avoid duplication of other work taking place and be careful not to create dependencies for people

Specific Comments

"

- The Council is struggling financially; Scottish government has spent a lot of money mitigating the impact on the economy so far.

- Look at how the town centre becomes more digital - need money to help businesses invest in this way of working.

- Volunteering is a viable worthwhile option for those who may become unemployed. Needs consideration of certification of volunteering opportunities.

- Post Office and Postal services were greatly valued.

- People in economic hardship not coming forward, despite availability of hardship funds. In small communities, anonymity is an issue. Hardship funds need multiple individuals to approach.

- People were saving money in fuel costs.

"

2.3 Community Identified Opportunities...some highlights

"

- We need to explore how to ensure food is available from different delivery models, such as food pantries, food larders, community shops and food banks.
- We need to ensure that local businesses remain supported by encouraging the various Shop Local and Totally Local campaigns.
- A scheme to provide for people who have lost their jobs to allow them to continue and maintain a good quality of life and mental health by access to health and wellbeing activities such as gyms
- Need courses to help groups cope with digital connectivity.
- Tourist industry - some self-catering accommodation have now regained their bookings with people staying locally and enjoying the area. How do we keep that going? Some sort of social media enterprise? We need to find a way to keep this going and pleased to see the Scotland Loves Local initiative - https://lovelocal.scot/scotland-loves-local/
- For many shopping is a social experience, regenerating the High Street could bring a big mental health plus as well as fill a commercial need.
- Focus is required on ways to encourage the older generation to re-engage (in line with the guidance regarding Coronavirus) developing their self-confidence to come out ease their social isolation and loneliness
- Community ownership was empowering and made real practical difference in communities – spaces could continue to be maintained.
- Need to continue partnership working in settlements. Ensure sustainability, and ongoing service when budgets for all will be restricted. Desire for all community groups operating within a community to be known by the wider community.
- Those who have been able to alter their service during lock down have generally continued to operate. Is there a role in gathering this information/how this has been achieved for the benefit of the wider business community in our towns?

"

2.4   Analysis

Contributions from participants were wide ranging in scope, but there was significant common ground. Overall, communities across Aberdeenshire demonstrated a high degree of resilience and response to an unprecedented situation. This Aberdeenshire focused analysis considers the key themes that emerged, and frames them under the following questions: What worked well? What should we keep? and What lessons were learned?

What worked well?

Communities demonstrated a high level of capacity to respond locally, quickly appropriately to a new and developing situation. Financial help from Aberdeenshire Council was key to this success, as was the existence of strong community groups prior to the pandemic. Online communication worked well for internet users, including local regular bulletins from the Aberdeenshire Council / the Rural Partnerships.

The Grampian Covid19 Hub worked well, and prioritising services such as waste collection was important and valued.

What should we keep?

Ongoing support for volunteers and community groups strengthened by the pandemic will be important, especially to ensure a quick response in the event of a second wave of the virus, or other event. Several communities have set up hardship funds, food pantries and further strengthened their resilience groups, and they hope that these initiatives will continue for those in need.

Support for shopping local was seen across Aberdeenshire as something that should be retained and enhanced. Supporting shops and businesses to diversify their model would be helpful

Most households in Aberdeenshire had access to green spaces, footpaths, allotments and quiet roads for cycling and walking, and several comments were made during the meetings as to their value. Promoting active travel and outdoor access was seen as important for the future.

Areas of grass to be left uncut for biodiversity could be identified, along with areas that require cutting for safety and access, and tidiness where appropriate.

What lessons were learned?

The primary lessons that emerged were issues around withdrawal of support for vulnerable people, and the need for communities to be able to quickly step in to help.

Problems arising as lockdown eased including parking, litter, and closed toilets could have been better planned for. There were a mix of comments about Spaces for

People, some groups were pleased to be consulted and see changes made before start and some groups would like to see this extended as it should be safer for people to go shopping. There were other groups who were not as supportive as there seemed to be a lack of communication with the business owners and a suggestion that the Council needs to engage with business owners.

Communication repeatedly arose as an issue during the discussions. Having a single communication channel was identified as a positive, and this could be better developed. It was felt that there wasn't enough recognition of those that don't use the internet, and have sight, hearing and language difficulties. Poor broadband connections proved frustrating for those suddenly having to work from home, and those home-schooling.

Agreed that it would be good to meet again in the community focused forums to see how things have changed as restrictions are still evolving.

PART 3:   Community Impact Assessment – Data Overview

3.1 Contextual Summary

3.1 Aberdeenshire Statistical Summary

3.3 COVID Vulnerability

3.4 Age Vulnerability

3.5 Health Vulnerability

3.6 Economic Vulnerability

3.7 Other Socio-economic Vulnerability

3.8 Overall Vulnerability in Aberdeenshire

3.1   Contextual Summary

Employment Workforce data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) reported that the number of jobs in **Scotland** fell by 14,000 between March and June 2020. Analysis by SPICe at a national level shows that there is an underlying story to the jobs market. There has been an increase in part-time jobs, however.

Figure 1 below shows the change in the number of jobs in Scotland over the relevant period.

Figure 1 – Change in the number of jobs in Scotland between March and June 2020

There was a large decrease in male full time jobs
Change in the number of jobs in Scotland between March and June 2020

Source: ONS
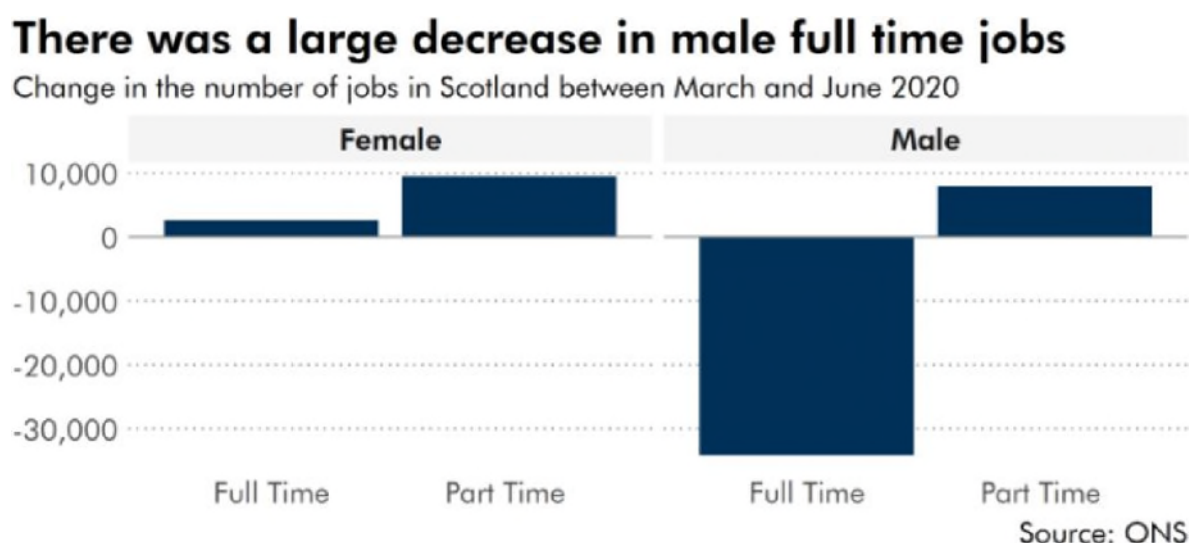
- Where full-time jobs have been added they are in lower paid industries or for the self-employed.
- Males appear from these statistics to have been harder hit than females.
- With the end of the furlough scheme scheduled for the end of October, this fall in jobs may be much higher in the coming months.

It would be entirely plausible that the same findings would be replicated in areas of Aberdeenshire.

Digital Exclusion/Vulnerability During COVID-19 pandemic many organisations and partners found that there was a need for a rapid shift to signposting and online delivery of support. This will have posed challenges for the more deprived and vulnerable groups who are digitally excluded and would not have access to a smart phone or a computer. Digital would not be the first-choice communication method of many vulnerable groups who tend to opt for face to face advice however during the pandemic this was not an option that was available during the pandemic and high-demand periods. Digitally vulnerable areas are likely to contain relatively high rates of child poverty, pensioner poverty, single person households and households without access to a van or a car. They are also likely to contain a relatively high proportion of the population in receipt of Personal Independence Payments suggesting that the recipients may be more at risk from COVID-19 and require additional support or assistance.

Mental Health Back in April 2020 the First Minister said that Scotland will be left with a "mental health legacy" from COVID-19 long after social distancing restrictions are lifted.

A recent study by the Office of National Statistics in relation to Coronavirus and depression in adults (June 2020) looked at the proportion of the population with depressive symptoms in Great Britain between 4 and 14 June 2020, based on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (a nationally representative survey of adults in Great Britain) including how symptoms of depression have changed since before the pandemic (July 2019 to March 2020). Main findings include:

- Almost one in five adults (19.2%) were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in June 2020; (9.7% pre-pandemic)
- One in eight adults (12.9%) developed moderate to severe depressive symptoms during the pandemic, while a further 6.2% of the population continued to experience this level of depressive symptoms; around 1 in 25 adults (3.5%) saw an improvement over this period.
- Adults 16 to 39 years old, female, unable to afford an unexpected expense, or disabled were the most likely to experience some form of depression during the pandemic.
- Feeling stressed or anxious was the most common way adults experiencing some form of depression felt their well-being was being affected, with 84.9% stating this.
- Over two in five (42.2%) adults experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic said their relationships were being affected, compared with one in five (20.7%) adults with no or mild depressive symptoms.

In the Council's recent CIA survey, the residents gave views on both the positive and negative aspects of the coronavirus pandemic including some people being more active; making positive changes to their lifestyle etcetera, however they are concerned that there are gaps in the support available for certain groups e.g. single parents and young people. A substantial number of people are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on other people's mental health and are concerned about access to health care services and the impact of the last few months on long term health. In Aberdeenshire there is also anecdotal information locally about increased concern for young men – 16-24yrs old.

Feeling Safe For the economy to recover, people need to feel safe to resume/reengage in their normal activities. These can be going to work, travelling on public transport, visiting a hairdresser/barber or other business that provides close contact service. In the CIA survey residents report that they are concerned about their jobs, education for others and safety in their community with almost one third of respondents saying that they feel less safe on their local areas, less likely to visit public places.

Impact on Inequalities A key feature of the crisis is how it is impacting differently on different groups. The higher rate of health impact on Black and Minority Ethnic populations have been widely documented[1]; these differences are also stark across different socio-economic groups.

For example, COVID-19 job disruption is likely to have a disproportionate impact on women's employment, as a result of low-paid women being particularly affected by

job disruption; and women are potentially faced with an increase in childcare responsibilities as a result of school and nursery closures in the shorter term.

The Institute for Public Policy Research[2] notes that young people are also likely to be hit hard in Scotland, as they are disproportionately concentrated in the sectors most affected by the economic shutdown, and so face heightened exposure to job loss or furlough.

The IPPR estimates that 41% of young people in work in Scotland were furloughed in April, compared to 22% of all workers in Scotland. This is similar to research from the IFS[3] that has found that workers under the age of 25 are two and half times more likely than those aged 25 and older to work in sectors that have been shut down and is reinforced by work from the Resolution Foundation for the Nuffield Foundation that estimates that youth unemployment could rise by 600,000 across the UK, affecting the least qualified the most.

Impact on Oil & Gas[4] The oil & gas sector has recovered and reinvented itself through innovation. But as the extent of damage wrought by COVID-19 becomes apparent, the situation appears different this time.

What makes this crisis unique is not just the combination of the immediate demand and early supply shocks, resulting in extreme volatility. It is also how the crisis may accelerate underlying trends, such as the growing momentum of environmental, social and governance (ESG) themes, and energy transition.

The spread of COVID-19, resulting in global lockdowns and dramatically reduced economic activity, has led to a tumble in demand for oil. This demand shock, according to analysts, represented a 30% decline in April 2020 alone[1]. Several agencies now anticipate that for the whole of 2020, oil demand will decline by about 7 to 9 million barrels per day. During the global financial crisis, demand decreased by 1.4 million barrels per day.

Many office staff are working from home, while the numbers working on offshore platforms have been cut to allow for social distancing. North Sea staffing levels are down 40% to 7,000 according to trade association Oil & Gas UK, while in the face of reduced demand, refiners are scaling back processing runs or even shutting down refineries altogether.

The energy transition and a move to ESG investing have been underway for some time, but COVID-19 may provide the impetus to accelerate these trends. As mentioned earlier, one of the main themes of the latest Programme for Government centres on tackling climate change and decarbonisation.

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[1] A historic drop occurred on 20 April 2020, when the price of West Texas Intermediate crude dropped by 300%, trading at around **negative** $37 per barrel (futures contract). This was a consequence of the demand shock as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown and the oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted how fragmented the energy market remains, and this is particularly true in oil services. Whether as a result of distress or outright failure, consolidation in the market is a likely outcome.

Global upstream Oil Field Services (OFS) revenue never recovered from the last oil price downturn but invested capital levels have remained elevated, further reinforcing the need for capacity rationalisation.

There will likely be mergers, with Tier 2 and 3 (smaller) companies looking to combine to survive. Tier 1 (larger) players may continue to divest but may also become aggregators, acquiring smaller companies to build specific capabilities.

Job losses tend to follow industry consolidations

Across all these segments OFS companies will likely develop strategies to increase their exposure to low carbon plays, such as offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS).

Alternatively, OFS players may consider strategic investments in selective geographies and product or service lines which will prove resilient through cycles and generate cash flow in the future. They may also streamline their portfolio. Many larger OFS companies have subscale businesses in sub-scale geographies. These tend to destroy the economic value. Therefore, divestitures are in order and may result in the emergence of larger regional OFS companies.

In 2016 the Wall Street Journal estimated that the cost of producing a barrel of oil in the UK equated to $44 – the highest out of the world's top oil-producing nations[5]. At the time of writing, oil prices barely cover the average cost of extraction. Additional expenses, like taxes on profits, mean that the actual breakeven price for many projects is higher, and newer and more complex projects generally fall well above the average cash cost of production. The danger for the North East economy is that oil & gas extraction will no longer be considered a viable cash-generating activity for some businesses.

Brexit The role that Brexit will play in the social and economic future of Aberdeenshire is by no means clear. Myriad rights and laws have been created by EU membership over the 40 years the UK has been a member. Over the longer term (15+ years), many economists have predicted that the decision to leave the EU will damage trade, labour mobility, and investment.

The transition period is scheduled to end on 31 December 2020. New economic modelling by the Scottish Government indicates that ending the transition this year would result in lowered Scottish GDP of between £1.1 billion and £1.8 billion by 2022 (0.7 to 1.1% of GDP), compared with ending transition at the end of 2022. That would be equivalent to a cumulative loss of economic activity of between nearly £2 billion and £3 billion over those two years. A proportionate impact would be likely for the UK economy. This will clearly hamper recovery from the impact of the pandemic[6].

The combined impact of these effects on businesses that are already severely affected by COVID-19 could result in widespread business closures and job losses over and above those resulting from COVID-19 alone.

In early 2020, Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake exploratory research on the impact of Brexit on individuals, businesses and communities

across Scotland. The research consisted of qualitative research amongst EU nationals, UK nationals and Scottish based businesses across three different geographic case study areas: Glasgow, **Aberdeenshire**, and the Highlands. The findings in terms of the impact on the economy are:

- Participants reported that they had experienced an increased cost of living since the EU referendum in 2016. They raised concerns that Brexit may result in further increases in the cost of living, citing the likelihood of prices increasing after the UK has withdrawn from the customs union.
- Businesses reported that they had made operational changes to their business plans as a result of a decrease in job applications from EU nationals and anticipated changes to import and export regulations.
- Participants, particularly in the Highlands and Aberdeenshire, were concerned that Brexit may have a detrimental impact on their local economies and noted that the hospitality and tourist industries were a vital part of these local economies.

European Structural Funds The UK will not receive support from the European Structural Funds, after the current funding period. The purpose of these funds is to "invest in job creation and a sustainable and healthy European economy and environment." In Scotland, they have played a vital role in reducing disparities across different parts of the country for over 40 years.

Under the current 2014-2020 programme Scotland benefits from over £780m of such funding through the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. This provides investment for key policies such as the Modern Apprenticeship schemes and Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme. The loss of this funding will have a significant impact on the ability of local authorities, community groups, funding bodies and enterprise and skills agencies to deliver the kinds of initiatives that will drive inclusive economic growth and promote wellbeing and cohesion in communities across Scotland.

Aberdeenshire Council has previously carried out an evaluation of the delivery of European Structural Funds programmes in parallel with stakeholder consultation on potential national programmes[7].

The report identifies the following priorities as particularly important for replacement domestic programmes:

- **Employability and Skills** - initiatives which support disadvantaged people into sustainable employment and/or ensure that there is a skilled workforce in place to meet the needs of the local economy.
- **Poverty** - initiatives which support people living in or at risk of living in poverty, with a particular focus on rural deprivation and pockets of deprivation in small towns.
- **Connectivity** - initiatives which improve digital and transport infrastructure in rural areas and/or increase accessibility to reliable, regular and sustainable transport.
- **Regeneration, Rural Services and Facilities** - initiatives which regenerate physical infrastructure in villages and towns and/or enhance local services.
- **Business Development and the Social Economy** - initiatives which directly support businesses, including social enterprises, to grow, innovate or export and initiatives which support the development of priority sectors with a particular focus on diversification and strengthening of traditional sectors and the development of emerging sectors and economic opportunities.

Aberdeenshire Council would like to see the above priorities taken into consideration in the development of new domestic programmes. In light of the declared climate emergency in 2019 by the Scottish Government, Aberdeenshire Council additionally would like to see climate action (mitigation and adaption) and biodiversity made a priority also.

These priorities may be interlinked (e.g. tackling in work-poverty through employability interventions) and should not necessarily be limited in scope to the activities supported by current Structural Funds programmes. For example, there is an opportunity to expand eligible activity to include investment in town centre redevelopment and repurposing. There should also be a continuation of horizontal, cross-cutting themes including environmental sustainability and social inclusion integrated into all parts/themes of the programme[8].

Migration: Brexit has placed an increased focus on the nationality of people living and working in the UK. It has the potential to discourage EU migrants from coming to the UK to live and work, either through choice or eligibility. Migration is important to Scotland as without it the population would be declining. In Aberdeen City and Shire, there were 35,000 people who were born in the EU and a further 26,000 from the rest of the world in 2018. The EU born population accounted for 7% of the region's population, and 5% of the region's population were born elsewhere in the world. Compared to Scotland a greater percentage of the region's population were born in the EU or elsewhere in the world.

Changes to migration policy as a result of Brexit will affect all regions in Scotland, but the evidence suggests that Aberdeen City and Shire may be more adversely affected if the changes affect supply. Aberdeenshire could be impacted by a reduction in employees in the care sector – there is already anecdotal evidence that this is happening.

Community Impacts - Other Contextual Evidence

Transport Operators and Social Distancing

Given the limited rail service coverage in Aberdeenshire, local bus services provide crucial lifeline services to communities across Aberdeenshire providing the only or most effective means of access for many to employment, health care, education/training, shopping and other facilities. The Transport Scotland Covid-19 Support Grant to bus operators in order to reinstate local bus networks has been welcomed and permitted around 95% of the pre-COVID-19 Aberdeenshire bus network to be provided. Continuity of such funding in the medium term is crucial to maintenance of the Aberdeenshire local bus network, given that patronage and associated fares revenue remains (and is likely to continue to be) suppressed and social distancing rules continue to reduce the capacity of vehicles and therefore the costs of provision.

In line with Scottish Government and COSLA advice, Aberdeenshire Council maintained payments to transport operators throughout the Lockdown period when many passenger transport services were curtailed or suspended. Despite this, given the significant downturn in other aspects of their business due to Covid19, for example, private hires, many smaller operators will be struggling financially and without on-going support could cease to trade, significantly diminishing the number of potential suppliers of such services, with consequential implications to tender prices for supported local bus, school transport and other passenger transport services.

The proposed Public, School and Community Transport Covid19 Mitigation Fund, although belated, is also welcomed and should to a lesser extent assist some transport operators and transport authorities in addressing specific Covid19 related issues. This fund should be maintained for the duration of the period when social distancing rules apply to transport services.

Agriculture The Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS) conducts a weekly co-op surveillance survey of its members and regularly reports to the Scottish Government on the impact of COVID on the sector and to highlight any issues raised. In general, co-op members are said to have coped remarkably well. The vast majority didn't furlough staff and adjusted their operations and continued to serve their farmer members. Those who had invested in IT equipment / updates and cross-trained staff reportedly reaped the benefit. Most board meetings are now conducted online. The technology has worked well.

The SAOS believe **increased co-operation** is the best way to build resilience and supply chains. The challenges facing farming and wider rural communities are so great (COVID-19 recovery, leaving the EU, the climate emergency, skills gap, etc) the only solution is through people working together – **co-operation and supply chain collaboration**.

Co-operation brings farm businesses together to achieve greater efficiencies in areas such as purchasing, production and marketing. The benefits include greater profitability, and resilience for farmers, the knock-on advantages this gives to the wider farming sector, and the public benefits that follow from communities working together. It also addresses the imbalance in power famers experience when dealing with multiple retailers and
processors. Co-ops provide the thought leadership and have the resources to make change happen. Without a supportive policy to encourage increased co-operation change will be slow and mainstream family farms will suffer.

Recovering from COVID-19 – A Local Authority Perspective[2] With the pandemic having closed much of the economy, more people are experiencing insecurity and hardship. As governments around the world, including the UK, start to ease the lockdown and get their economies moving again, it is becoming clear that life is going to be different, with many implications for local authorities. Local government is at the heart of community wealth building, and there are many examples of the proactive and imaginative approach required in how councils have coordinated local emergency responses to the pandemic. The same level of energy and focus will be needed in the recovery and reform stages to build local economies based on wellbeing, resilience, environmental sustainability and economic justice.

According to the Local Government Information Unit, local authorities can play three roles in the economic response to COVID-19[9]:

[2] This is based on research by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). LGIU was established in 1983 as an independent, not-for-profit local authority membership organisation and think tank. Members include councils and other organisations with an interest in local government from across England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Australia. LGIU Scotland comprises 5,000 individual members, and includes MSPs, MPs, National Conveners, CEOs, NGOs, and local authorities.

(1) Analyser – building and maintaining a detailed and granular knowledge of the state of the local economy and the impact of COVID-19 in the short, medium and long term on sectors and communities.

(2) Anchor – as a large employer, procurer of goods and services, owner of land and assets and investor in the local areas, the council, with other anchor institutions, can lead economic reform.

(3) Agent of change – using all the levers of the local state, councils can set the conditions for inclusive local economies and rewire the local economic architecture; they can also intervene at scale to implement policies such as insourcing and new municipal enterprises.

Local authorities could undertake the following tasks or actions (amongst others):

- Map local needs and flows of goods and services.
- Work practically with local businesses as state support is withdrawn.
- Update local economic and industrial strategies for the new context.
- Ensure local industrial strategy can support potential growth sectors, for example, 'green new deal'.
- Scale-up unemployment support and tailor it to needs of the most vulnerable
- Dispose of under-used assets to 'public-commons partnerships' and socially-minded businesses.
- Help bring redundant private assets back into use for social purposes.
- Where relevant, identify where existing devolution deals may need further work with the government to meet newly arising need.
- Use procurement to raise social, economic and environmental standards and incentivise good pay conditions; explore how other powers such as planning and business rates could further support higher standards.
- Collaborate with other anchor institutions and their supply chains on employment support schemes to create opportunities for the most disadvantaged.
- Encourage new forms of finance and investment with steady returns, for example using municipal pension funds.
- Support the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to develop new socially oriented businesses to meet needs.
- Consider how essential services such as broadband, public transport and housing could be made more universal.
- Lobby vigorously for a fair funding settlement for local government.

3.2   Aberdeenshire Statistical Summary

The main Ward report categorises vulnerability thematically, as per the list below:

- COVID Vulnerability (based on 2 major indices);
- Age Vulnerability (based on 2 indicators);
- Health Vulnerability (based on 28 indicators);
- Economic Vulnerability (based on 15 indicators); and
- Other Socio-Economic Vulnerability (based on 30 indicators).

Summaries of each of the themes listed above will be dealt with individually from an Aberdeenshire perspective.

3.3   COVID Vulnerability

The report utilises two major COVID vulnerability Indices which place Intermediate Zones on a spectrum relative their respective COVID vulnerability rankings. One of these studies was conducted by the Scottish Public Heath Observatory (ScotPHO), the other by the British Red Cross (in association with Oxford University). Both studies incorporate multiple indicators that capture clinical vulnerability (e.g. underlying health conditions), demographic vulnerability (e.g. over-70s), social vulnerability (e.g. barriers to housing and services, poor living environment, living in "left-behind" areas, loneliness, digital exclusion), and health inequalities.

According to the ScotPHO study, Aberdeenshire is among the least vulnerable areas in Scotland on a population weighted basis[3]. Of Aberdeenshire's 59 Intermediate Zones, 8 were in the 20% most vulnerable in Scotland. This equates to 14% of Aberdeenshire's Intermediate Zones - the 4th lowest proportion in Scotland.

Approximately 33,000 people live within these 8 Intermediate Zones, which equates to approximately 13% of Aberdeenshire's total population. Again, this was the 4th lowest proportion in Scotland.

The British Red Cross (BRC) COVID Vulnerability Index takes account of more indicators and is arguably more comprehensive than the ScotPHO study.

According to the BRC study, there are zero Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire within the most vulnerable 20% in Scotland. The most vulnerable Intermediate Zone – Fraserburgh Harbour & Broadsea – falls just outside the most vulnerable 20%.

The overall vulnerability scores within the BRC study are closely correlated to a number of specific indicators. In more vulnerable areas, the items list below are likely to be relatively high.

- **The proportion of people who are out of work and receiving benefits relating to poor health: Incapacity Benefit (IB) / Employment Support Allowance (ESA).** IB and ESA are workless benefits payable to people who are out of work and have been assessed as being incapable of work due to illness or disability and who meet the appropriate contribution conditions. The overall scores are also correlated to the proportion of IB recipients whose claims are due to mental health related conditions.

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[3] https://scotland.shinyapps.io/scotpho-covid-vulnerability/

- **The proportion of people receiving benefits payable to people who are unemployed receiving either Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit for those who are out of work**.
- **The proportion of residents with a limiting long-term illness.** Figures are taken from responses to the 2011 Census, based on a self-assessment whether or not a person has a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they can do, including problems that are due to old age.
- **Pensioners in poverty**. This is defined as pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit. Pension Credit provides financial help for people aged 60 or over whose income is below a certain level set by the law.

Other moderately strong correlative indicators include:

- **The proportion of households who do not have a car or van.** Figures are based on responses to the 2011 Census car ownership question which asks information on the number of cars or vans owned, or available for use, by one or more members of a household. It includes company cars and vans available for private use. The count of cars or vans in an area is based on details for private households only.
- **the proportion of people who are disabled and receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA).** DLA is payable to children and adults who become disabled before the age of 65, who need help with personal care or have walking difficulties because they are physically or mentally disabled. People can receive DLA whether they are in or out of work. It is non-means tested and is unaffected by income or savings of the claimant. DLA provides support for paying with additional care or mobility requirements associated with a disability.
- **The proportion of patients being prescribed anxiolytic, antipsychotic or antidepressant drugs**. This is derived from paid prescriptions data at patient level.
- **The proportion of working age people receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP) whose main disabling condition is a respiratory disease.** Respiratory diseases include asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary fibrosis, pneumoconiosis, heart and lung transplants and various lung diseases and diseases of the upper and lower respiratory tract. PIP helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term disability, ill-health or terminal ill-health.
- **The proportion of people receiving Universal Credit who are not expected to work at present**. Health or caring responsibility prevents claimant from working or preparing for work. Conditionality means work-related things an eligible adult will have to do in order to get full entitlement to Universal Credit. Each eligible adult will fall into one of six conditionality regimes based on their capability and circumstances. Different members of a household can be subject to the same or different requirements. As circumstances change claimants will also transition between different levels of conditionality.

Again, **in more vulnerable areas, the items list above are likely to be relatively high.**

When the rankings of both studies are accounted for (weighted in favour of the BRC study) the top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire are shown in Table 1 below. In keeping with national findings, the most vulnerable areas are also

among the most deprived in the area, either from a geographical access standpoint or from a socio-economic perspective.

Table 1 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire according to the rankings of two major Covid Vulnerability Indices (ScotPHO and British Red Cross). The rankings are weighted in favour of the British Red Cross study due to the comprehensive nature of the index.

S02001343	Fraserburgh Harbour and Broadsea
S02001336	Peterhead Harbour
S02001341	Fraserburgh Lochpots
S02001331	Mintlaw
S02001324	Portsoy, Fordyce and Cornhill
S02001328	Gardenstown and King Edward
S02001325	Aberchirder and Whitehills
S02001285	East Cairngorms
S02001342	Fraserburgh Central-Academy

3.4 Age Vulnerability

The vulnerability of an individual is the risk that, once infected with Covid-19, they will develop serious illness and die. A person's risk of serious Covid-19 is a combination of their vulnerability and the risk that they get infected. The risk of getting infected depends on the prevalence of the virus in the local community (which can vary over time), and personal circumstances and activities that predispose to contact with the virus.

Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. Severe illness means that the person with COVID-19 may require hospitalisation, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or they may even die. People of any age with **certain underlying medical conditions** are at increased risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19. The overall rankings for this theme were based on two indicators:

1. The proportion of the total population aged 65+; and
2. The proportion of the population aged 65+ who have social care needs and are receiving Attendance Allowance (AA). AA is payable to people over the age of 65 who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need a great deal of help with personal care or supervision.

The overall rankings are weighted in favour of item 2 above as it was felt this would have a greater bearing on vulnerability than simply the age profile of an area.

When the weighted rankings are taken into account the top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on specific age and health-related vulnerability factors

Code	Intermediate Zone Name	% of 65+ pop relative to AA Cases with Entitlement	% of 65+ pop relative to Total Population
S02001335	Peterhead Bay	13.5%	24.8%
S02001324	Portsoy, Fordyce and Cornhill	11.5%	26.2%
S02001342	Fraserburgh Central-Academy	13.4%	22.4%
S02001340	Fraserburgh Smiddyhill	11.7%	24.1%
S02001321	Huntly	10.0%	26.8%
S02001326	Banff	10.6%	23.6%
S02001287	Mearns and Laurencekirk	12.0%	19.7%
S02001328	Gardenstown and King Edward	10.0%	24.0%
S02001323	Turriff	9.7%	26.0%
	Aberdeenshire	6.5%	19.6%

Relatively high Attendance Allowance rates may also highlight areas where extra pressures are placed on families, especially if certain family members have caring responsibilities (the adult daughter caring for an older mother, for example). Even if there are no official caring responsibilities, certain elements of the COVID-19 experience (e.g. Lockdowns), could exacerbate the challenges faced by those in receipt of AA as well as their families.There is a moderately strong positive correlation between AA rates and COVID-related death rates in that, where death rates are relatively high, so too is the AA rate.

At 6.5%, Aberdeenshire has the lowest proportion of AA cases relative to the population aged 65+ in Scotland (The Scottish average is 13.0%). The rates range from 6.5% in Aberdeenshire to 18.7% in Glasgow City, as Figure 2 below demonstrates.

Figure 2 – Proportion of Attendance Allowance cases relative to total population aged 65+, Scottish Local Authorities, February 2020

Local Authority	Rate
Glasgow City North	18.7%
Lanarkshire West	18.1%
Dunbartonshire	16.5%
Inverclyde Na h-	15.8%
Eileanan Siar East	15.4%
Renfrewshire East	15.2%
Ayrshire South	14.7%
Lanarkshire	14.5%
Renfrewshire North	14.4%
Ayrshire Dundee City	14.2%
Scotland East	14.0%
Dunbartonshire	13.0%
Dumfries and Galloway	13.0%
South Ayrshire Argyll	12.4%
and Bute West Lothian	12.3%
Falkirk Shetland	11.8%
Islands Midlothian	11.2%
Stirling Orkney Islands	11.1%
East Lothian	11.1%
Clackmannanshire	11.0%
Highland Fife Perth	10.9%
and Kinross Aberdeen	10.4%
City Scottish Borders	10.1%
City of Edinburgh	10.1%
Angus Moray	10.1%
Aberdeenshire	9.8%
	9.4%
	9.3%
	9.1%
	9.1%
	8.9%
	8.3%
	6.5%

Latest data show AA numbers tend to remain relatively steady on a quarterly basis. Although figures beyond February 2020 are not available, it is unlikely that the numbers will have materially changed as a result of COVID-19. However, the next iteration of this report will incorporate future figures.

3.5 Health Vulnerability

Expert doctors in the UK have identified specific medical conditions that, based on what is known about the virus so far, place some people at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Disease severity, medical history or treatment levels will also affect who is in this group.

Clinically extremely vulnerable people may include:

- Solid organ transplant recipients
- People with specific cancers:
- People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
- People with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
- People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- People having other targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- People with rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell)
- People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
- Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease (congenital or acquired).

The overall rankings for this theme were based on twenty-eight indicators including patients hospitalised with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and coronary heart disease, as well as emergency hospital admissions, maternal obesity and early deaths from cancer. These tend to be annual data sets.

Quarterly, monthly or weekly data sets used as part of the health rankings include cumulative deaths attributed to COVID-19, the number of households in receipt of Universal Credit with Limited Work Capability, and the proportion of the population in receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

Although twenty-eight indicators were used in determining the overall rankings, the final results are weighted in favour of COVID-related deaths. As such, the most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire from a health perspective are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones based on 28 health-related indicators (weighted in favour of COVID-related deaths)

Code	Intermediate Zone
S02001336	Peterhead Harbour
S02001342	Fraserburgh Central-Academy
S02001341	Fraserburgh Lochpots
S02001335	Peterhead Bay
S02001303	Inverurie North
S02001338	Longside and Rattray
S02001323	Turriff
S02001298	Banchory West
S02001337	Peterhead Ugieside
S02001308	Westhill North and South

The rate of deaths attributed to COVID per head of population tends not to be strongly correlated with any one indicator. That said, in areas where the COVID death rate is relatively high, bowel screen uptake tends to be relatively low. The same may be said of male and female life expectancy.

Age-related indicators also tend to be associated with higher death rates. For example, in areas where the death rate is relatively high, so too is the proportion of people aged 65+ in receipt of Pension Credits (a proxy for pensioner poverty). The

65+ population receiving Attendance Allowance (AA) benefits. As noted previously, AA is payable to people over the age of 65 who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need a great deal of help with personal care or supervision.
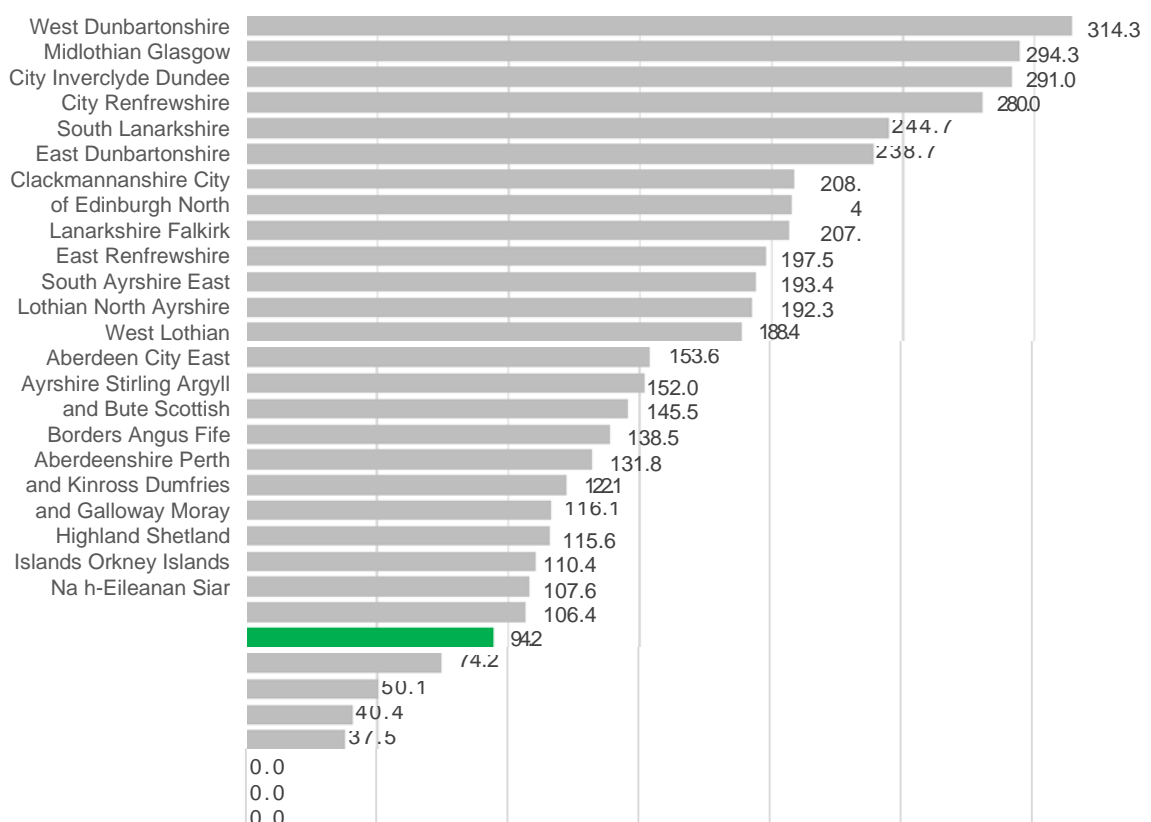
Interestingly, areas with higher COVID death rates also tended to have higher rates of babies exposed to second-hand smoke at 6-8 weeks and poorer child dental health. Dental health is widely used as an 'indicative measure' of children's general health. This is because it reflects a key 'outcome' of good parental care during childhood.

However, in most cases the correlation or relationship between the COVID death rate and the indicators listed above are only moderately strong – but they nonetheless suggest deprivation is a material factor, a finding that is reinforced by national statistics.

COVID-19-Related Deaths

The number of deaths in Scotland are on a downwards weekly trajectory and have remained relatively flat since the end of June 2020.

Between 1st of March and 31st of August 2020, Aberdeenshire recorded 118 COVID-related deaths[4]. COVID was the underlying cause in 112 of the 118 deaths. This equates to a death rate of 94 per 100,000 population, which was the 5th lowest in mainland Scotland at the time of writing. Figure 3 below charts the cumulative COVID-related death rate in each of Scotland's local authority areas as at 31st August 2020.

Area	Rate
West Dunbartonshire	314.3
Midlothian Glasgow	294.3
City Inverclyde Dundee	291.0
City Renfrewshire	280.0
South Lanarkshire	244.7
East Dunbartonshire	238.7
Clackmannanshire City of Edinburgh North	208.4
Lanarkshire Falkirk	207.
East Renfrewshire	197.5
South Ayrshire East	193.4
Lothian North Ayrshire	192.3
West Lothian	188.4
Aberdeen City East	153.6
Ayrshire Stirling Argyll and Bute Scottish	152.0
Borders Angus Fife	145.5
Aberdeenshire Perth	138.5
and Kinross Dumfries	131.8
and Galloway Moray	122.1
Highland Shetland	116.1
Islands Orkney Islands	115.6
Na h-Eileanan Siar	110.4
	107.6
	106.4
	94.2
	74.2
	50.1
	40.4
	37.5
	0.0
	0.0
	0.0

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4 https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/covid19stats

During the same period (1st March to 31st August) Aberdeenshire recorded a total of 1,323 deaths from all causes. Therefore, COVID-related deaths accounted for 8.9% of total deaths in Aberdeenshire since 1st March 2020 (the 8th lowest proportion in Scotland).

The following Intermediate Zones are associated with at least 3 COVID-related deaths. These statistics may be affected by the location of care homes and other institutional settings within the region.

Table 4 – Intermediate Zones that have recorded at least 3 COVID-related deaths between 1st March an 31st August 2020

Code	Intermediate Zone Name	Number of Deaths	Population (2019 based)	Death rate per 100,000 population
S02001336	Peterhead Harbour	22	6,002	366.5
S02001308	Westhill North and South	11	5,138	214.1
S02001338	Longside and Rattray	7	7,626	91.8
S02001342	Fraserburgh Central-Academy	4	2,590	154.4
S02001298	Banchory West	4	2,877	139.0
S02001319	Insch, Oyne and Ythanwells	4	5,059	79.1
S02001303	Inverurie North	4	5,318	75.2
S02001337	Peterhead Ugieside	3	4,173	71.9
S02001323	Turriff	3	4,437	67.6
S02001287	Mearns and Laurencekirk	3	4,457	67.3
S02001330	Deer and Mormond	3	5,068	59.2
S02001316	Ythsie	3	6,093	49.2
S02001313	Ellon East	3	6,106	49.1
S02001339	Rosehearty and Strathbeg	3	6,269	47.9

The following statistics pertain to Scotland as whole:

- 46% of COVID-19 deaths registered to date related to deaths in care homes. 46% of deaths were in hospitals and 7% of deaths were at home or noninstitutional settings.
- After adjusting for age, people in the most deprived areas were 2.1 times more likely to die with COVID than those living in the least deprived areas. In Aberdeenshire, the more vulnerable areas generally tend to be among the most deprived in the region.
- Of those who died with COVID-19 between March and August, 92% had at least one pre-existing condition. The most common main pre-existing condition among those who died with COVID-19 was dementia and Alzheimer's disease (31%), followed by ischaemic heart disease (13%).
- Age-standardised death rates (adjusting for the age-structure of the population) were 43% higher for men than for women (193 vs 136 per 100,000 population for deaths occurring in March - August). Although the respective death rates are lower in Aberdeenshire, the same finding is pertinent, albeit the percentage difference is not as extreme. Indeed, the male COVID death rate is higher than the female rate in all but three local authorities in Scotland.

3.6 Economic Vulnerability

Emerging evidence on the social epidemiology of COVID-19 suggest that infections and deaths from the disease operate along existing axes of social inequalities, and that individuals from ethnic minorities, poorer socio-economic backgrounds and deprived areas are more likely to suffer[5].

[5] R.E. Jordan, P. Adab Who is most likely to be infected with SARS-CoV-2? the Lancet Infectious Diseases (2020), 10.1016/S1473-3099(20)30395-9

However, it is unclear how already existing intersecting inequalities at the household level might influence the short and long term consequences of the pandemic. Disease control measures mean that people spend much more time in their immediate households, due to

lockdowns, the need to self-isolate, and school and workplace closures. There is a good chance such measures will again be required to varying degrees over the coming months. This situation has led to concerns over financial, physical and psychological effects as well as potentially widening societal and health inequalities[6].

Some household characteristics have become elevated in importance for wellbeing, such as access to a garden or safe outdoor space, technology and internet connectivity. Furthermore, global economic slowdown and rising unemployment may interact with these disparities and exacerbate already existing health- and socio-economic inequalities as the pandemic progresses.

The overall rankings for this theme were based on fifteen indicators including household income (especially households earning less than £20,000), income deprivation rates, unemployment rates including the rate of change over the past few months, universal credit claimants, and pensioner and child poverty.

Although fifteen indicators were used in determining the overall rankings, the final results are weighted in favour of lower-income households and an area's respective unemployment rate (including the rate of change). As such, the most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire from an economic perspective are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on fifteen economic indicators (weighted in favour of lower-income households and areas with relatively high unemployment rates, including the rate of change).

Code	Intermediate Zone Name	% of households earning less than £20k (2019)	Unemployment Rate (May '20)	Change in Unemployment Rate (Jan-May '20)
S02001343	Fraserburgh Harbour and Broadsea	50.5%	10.2%	+ 5.6%
S02001336	Peterhead Harbour	47.0%	10.8%	+ 5.1%
S02001341	Fraserburgh Lochpots	41.0%	8.1%	+ 3.7%
S02001342	Fraserburgh Central-Academy	41.6%	6.0%	+ 2.9%
S02001335	Peterhead Bay	42.3%	7.0%	+ 2.6%
S02001326	Banff	38.0%	5.9%	+ 2.6%
S02001321	Huntly	39.7%	5.9%	+ 2.0%
S02001327	Macduff	36.6%	5.5%	+ 2.6%
S02001304	Inverurie South	32.2%	6.2%	+ 2.7%
S02001324	Portsoy, Fordyce and Cornhill	34.3%	5.1%	+ 2.4%
	Aberdeenshire	23.5%	3.8%	+ 2.0%

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[6] Douglas M, Katikireddi SV, Taulbut M, et al. Mitigating the wider health effects of covid-19 pandemic response. The British *Medical Journal 2020;369(m1557) doi: 10.1136/bmj.m1557*

COVID-19 – Economic Implications

The outlook for the UK economy is increasingly pessimistic. The latest UK GDP data for March 2020 was down 5.8% compared to February (and down 2% over the first quarter of 2020). The average of independent forecasts for the UK suggests a fall of 8.6% in GDP in the UK.

The Bank of England scenario analysis (7 May) suggests that UK GDP could fall by 14% in 2020 with a bounce back to growth of 15% in 2021. Unemployment could rise to 8% in 2020 and remain elevated at 7% in 2021.

The Bank of England and the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) have in recent analysis assumed a V-shaped recovery, that is, a short, sharp decline in economic activity followed swiftly by a rebound in growth within 12 months. As more economic data emerge, there is a growing recognition that a quick rebound in economic activity following the phasing out of lockdown may be unlikely.

The Scottish economy will recover from the current impacts of COVID-19, but the shape and speed of adjustment are uncertain. Although physical distancing measures are expected to be temporary in nature, there is potential for even short-term measures to have long lasting impacts and become more structural.

The path of the recovery remains uncertain for several reasons[10]:

- as business and society reopens the output contraction will likely reverse for many parts of the domestic economy. However, not all sectors will come back immediately as external demand, consumer tastes, and business models will have changed significantly. This will present challenges and opportunities for different segments of the business base reflecting their exposure to different economic channels - both external and domestic. The crisis may also accelerate some structural changes that were already happening, such as a switch from high street retail to online. This may negatively impact on Aberdeenshire's town centres over the coming years.
- Loss of productive capacity will likely endure as the restrictions in economic activity continue and this will lengthen the recovery period. This is mirrored in the labour market as unemployment rises significantly and the scarring effects that has on individuals and communities. The number of people on Universal Credit, for example, increased by 88% in May 2020 relative to the month prior to Lockdown (increasing from 6,649 people in February 2020 to 12,496 in May 2020). Aberdeen City recorded a similar percentage increase. In both cases this is higher than the corresponding increase for Scotland as a whole (72%).

  Figure 4 below charts Aberdeenshire's claimant count (unemployment benefit recipients) from 1987 to June 2020 per broad age group and places the COVID pandemic in the context of previous recessions and crises.

Figure 4 – Claimant count per broad age group, Aberdeenshire, Jan 1987 to Jun 2020

The Claimant Count measures the number of people claiming unemployment related benefit in the UK. Aberdeenshire's claimant count has, like the rest of Scotland, increased over the last few months to levels not seen since the 1990/91 UK-wide recession. Approximately 6,135 people claimed unemployment benefits in Aberdeenshire over the course of June 2020, up from 2,975 in February (prior to Lockdown). That equates to 3.8% of the total population aged 16-64, up from 2.3% in February (see Figures 5 and 6, right). Although this is the 3rd lowest rate in Scotland, it is a relative 'shock' in the context of recent local employment data and could potentially push a greater proportion of residents and families closer to the threshold of relative deprivation. The situation may be exacerbated once the existing furlough scheme expires.

The end of furlough may see some people lose their jobs and making an application for Universal Credit. Evidence from Citizens Advice Scotland report proportionally large rise in requests for employment-related advice since the start of the pandemic and for advice on the private rented sector.
For those in receipt of up to £83 per month the additional Universal Credit payments will cease at the end of March 2021, increasing the financial burden on those households.

Figure 5 - Claimants as a proportion of the total population aged 16-64, Aberdeenshire and Scotland, Jan 2001 to Jun 2020
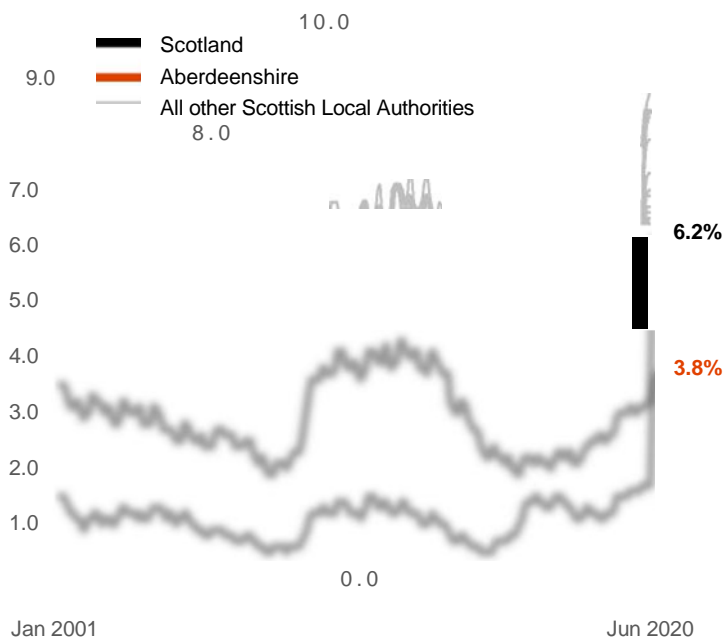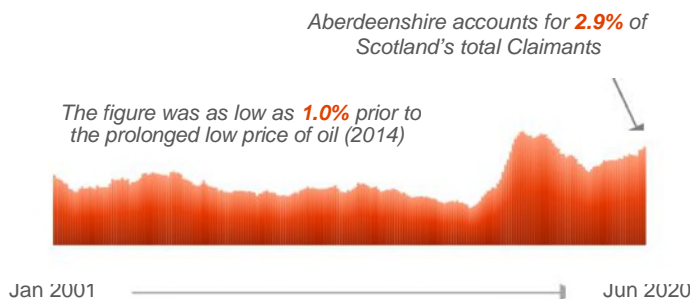

Figure 6 - Aberdeenshire's Claimants as a percentage of Scotland's total, Jan 2001 to Jun 2020

The longer the measures are in place, the harder the impact will be on the public finances and the less scope there will be for a fiscal stimulus in the recovery, with a greater risk of wider economic contagion.

The economy will recover but the path and speed of recovery will mirror success in managing the health crisis and will require careful planning and management of economic activity so that society can operate in a different but productive manner.

3.7   Other Socio-Economic Vulnerability

The overall rankings for this theme were based on thirty indicators including geographic deprivation, superfast broadband availability, digital vulnerability, food vulnerability, loneliness, overcrowded households, addresses with private outdoor space and the average distance to the nearest park, garden or playing field. Data pertaining to at-risk sectors/jobs were also included as part of the overall rankings.

Although thirty indicators were used in determining the overall rankings, the final results are weighted in favour of a suite of vulnerability indices (digital, food, financial, and hardship fund vulnerability). Extra weightings were also placed on overcrowded households, measures of loneliness, and sectors at-risk as a result of COVID-19 (e.g. accommodation and food services, retail, as well as the arts, entertainment, recreation and other services). As such, the most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on a selection of socioeconomic indicators are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on a selection of 30 socio-economic indicators (weighted in favour of digital vulnerability, food vulnerability, financial vulnerability, overcrowded households, loneliness and the proportion of workers employed within at-risk sectors).

Code	Intermediate Zone
S02001339	Rosehearty and Strathbeg
S02001325	Aberchirder and Whitehills
S02001329	New Pitsligo
S02001285	East Cairngorms
S02001338	Longside and Rattray
S02001330	Deer and Mormond
S02001328	Gardenstown and King Edward
S02001300	Cromar and Kildrummy
S02001331	Mintlaw
S02001336	Peterhead Harbour

Digital vulnerability is very strongly correlated to indicators that suggest income deprivation. Digitally vulnerable areas are far more likely to contain a relatively large proportion of households earning less than £20,000. As such, digitally vulnerable areas are likely to contain relatively high rates of child poverty, pensioner poverty, single person households, households without access to a car or van. There is also a health dimension in that digitally vulnerable areas are also likely to contain a relatively high proportion of the population in receipt of Personal Independence Payments. These payments help with some of the extra costs caused by long-term disability, ill-health or terminal ill-health.

Given that digitally vulnerable areas are among the least deprived in terms of geographic access, they are therefore far more likely to be found in urban areas.

Parts of Huntly, Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Mintlaw, Turriff and Macduff are among the most digitally vulnerable in Aberdeenshire.

Food vulnerability is less strongly correlated to certain other indicators – but moderately strong correlations do exist. Food vulnerability is associated with indicators that suggest 'remoteness' and 'accessibility'. More vulnerable areas are therefore more likely to be associated with longer drive times to various local amenities, especially retails centres and secondary schools. They are also likely to be farther away from foodbanks, as well as parks, public gardens or playing fields.

There is also a moderate relationship between food vulnerability and child poverty in that more vulnerable areas are more likely to be associated with higher rates of children in low income families. More vulnerable areas are also more likely to contain a relatively high proportion of people over the age of 65 relative to the total population.

Therefore, food vulnerability appears to be associated with remoter areas that tend to have higher rates of child poverty and older people. Parts of East Cairngorms, New Pitsligo, Portsoy, Fordyce and Cornhill, Rosehearty and Strathbeg are among the most vulnerable in Aberdeenshire in this respect.

The proxy measurement for loneliness – The Loneliness Prescription Index – is based on an approach developed by the Office for National Statistics' Data Science Campus, which uses GP prescription data to find areas with above-average prescriptions for five conditions where loneliness has been shown to be a risk factor: Alzheimer's, depression, high blood pressure, anxiety and insomnia. Areas with a relatively high incidence of such prescriptions tend to be located in and around the 'Buchan Corner' – Mintlaw, Deer and Mormond, New Pitsligo, Auchnagatt, Longside and Rattray. Other areas include Stonehaven (North and South), Macduff, Crathes and Torphins, Ythanside and Balmedie and Potterton.

In terms of jobs in at-risk sectors, the more vulnerable areas are contained in the tables below. Each table relates to one of the three sectors considered 'at-risk' as a result of COVID.

Table 7 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on the proportion of jobs within an 'at-risk' sector. In this case Arts, entertainment, Recreation and Other Services (2018)

Intermediate Zone Name	% of Jobs
Stonehaven North	13.3
East Cairngorms	12.0
Westhill Central	12.0
Banchory West	10.0
Aboyne and South Deeside	10.0
Howe of Alford	8.6
Newtonhill	8.3
Newmachar and Fintray	8.3
Crathes and Torphins	8.0
Barrahill	7.5

Table 8 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on the proportion of jobs within an 'at-risk' sector. In this case Accommodation and Food Services (Hospitality) (2018)

Intermediate Zone Name	% of Jobs
Aberchirder and Whitehills	25.0
Banchory West	24.0
East Cairngorms	18.0
Ythsie	15.0
Dunecht, Durris and Drumoak	14.3
Westhill Central	14.0
Rosehearty and Strathbeg	12.5
Mintlaw	12.5
Newmachar and Fintray	11.1
Ellon West	10.7

Table 9 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on the proportion of jobs within an 'at-risk' sector. In this case Retail (2018)

Intermediate Zone Name	% of Jobs
Newtonhill	33.3
Portlethen	30.0
Inverurie South	25.0
Huntly	20.0
Banchory East	20.0
Westhill Central	18.0
Fraserburgh Central-Academy	18.0
Ellon East	18.0
Fraserburgh Smiddyhill	17.1
East Cairngorms	16.0

3.8   Overall Vulnerability

When all the various indicators within each of the themes are accounted for, the most vulnerable areas overall are shown below.

Figure 7 – Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire ranked according to their respective rankings per the following themes: COVID Vulnerability; Age Vulnerability; Health Vulnerability; Economic Vulnerability; and Other Socio-Economic Vulnerability.

Areas in the north of Aberdeenshire and urban areas tend to be more vulnerable, according to the various indicators and themes contained in this report.

Some of the more rural areas, whilst vulnerable in certain respects due to geographic remoteness and poorer internet connections, tend to be less vulnerable.

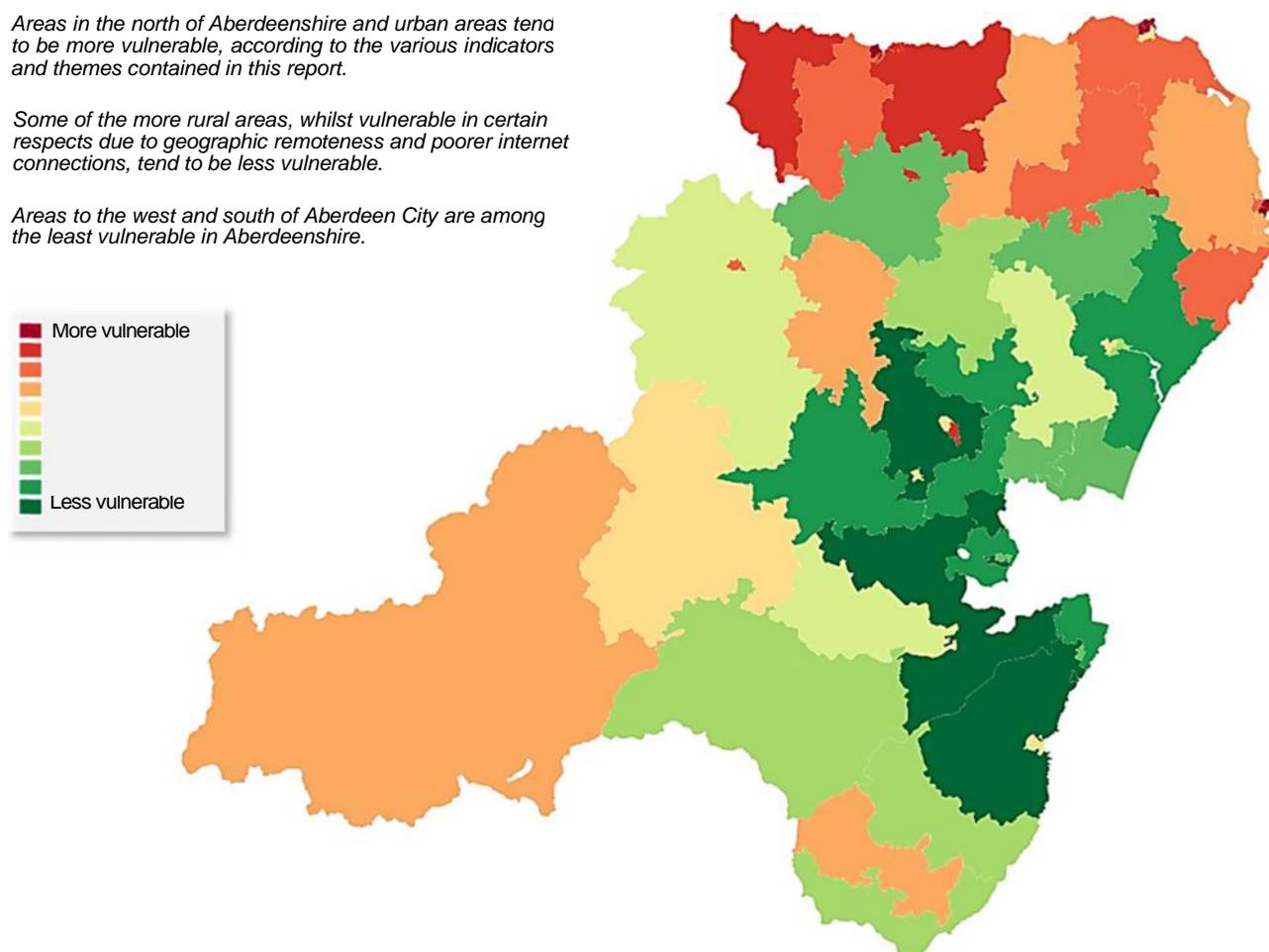*Areas to the west and south of Aberdeen City are among the least vulnerable in Aberdeenshire.*

Table 10 – Top 10 most vulnerable Intermediate Zones in Aberdeenshire based on weighted rankings per vulnerability theme

CODE	INTERMEDIATE ZONE NAME	VULNERABILITY THEME RANKING (1 = Worst Ranking; 59 = Best Ranking)				
		COVID	AGE	HEALTH	ECONOMIC	OTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC
S02001336	Peterhead Harbour	2	12	1	2	10
S02001342	Fraserburgh Central-Academy	9	3	2	4	12
S02001335	Peterhead Bay	13	1	4	5	42
S02001343	Fraserburgh Harbour and Broadsea	1	19	20	1	11
S02001341	Fraserburgh Lochpots	3	26	3	3	25
S02001326	Banff	17	6	11	6	15
S02001324	Portsoy, Fordyce and Cornhill	5	2	30	10	13
S02001323	Turriff	15	9	7	12	19
S02001331	Mintlaw	4	11	28	18	9
S02001327	Macduff	12	16	24	8	14

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[1] https://www.ifs.org.uk/inequality/COVID-19-and-inequalities/

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[3] https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14791

[4] COVID-19: Industry Focus, Where Next for Oil & Gas, PwC, 2020

[5] http://graphics.wsj.com/oil-barrel-breakdown/

[6] Coronavirus (COVID-19): the case for extending the Brexit transition period, Scottish Government, June 2020

[7] https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/22216/2018-03-15-aberdeenshire-council-position-on-post-brexit-funding-final.pdf

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[9] https://lgiu.org/briefing/COVID-19-recovering-from-the-virus-sustainable-local-economic-strategies/

[10] State of the Economy, Office of the Chief Economic Advisor, Scottish Government, April 2020