

East Suffolk Community Partnership Board
Covid Impacts Task and Finish Group Report
December 7, 2020

Introduction and Background

1. At its meeting on 7th September 2020, the Community Partnership Board received a report from the Covid impacts Task and Finish Group, based on discussions at the first Task and Finish group meeting on 4th August 2020. The Board agreed the recommendations of the Group and approved £181,000 of funding from its 2020/21 budget against four projects:

Hidden Needs Grants Programme	£50,000
Purchase of additional Grandpads	£25,000
East Suffolk VCSE 'Bounce Back' Fund	£100,000
East Suffolk Volunteering Campaign	£5,853
TOTAL	£180,853

2. These four projects deliver against two of the three priority themes agreed by the Community Partnership Board at its meeting in June which focussed on the impacts of Covid-19 in East Suffolk, namely Theme 1: Social Isolation and Loneliness (which is also one of the two overall Community Partnership priorities) and Theme 2: Sustaining Community Hubs and Community Resilience (which is directly related to both the Covid response and recovery).
3. The Board agreed that the Task and Finish Group should meet again, prior to the next Board meeting, to focus specifically on Theme 3: 'Vulnerable People and Places' and develop outcome proposals for consideration at that next meeting. The second meeting of the Task and Finish Group took place on 13th October 2020.
4. In addition to the £181,000 allocated through this Task and Finish Group, the Transport Task and Finish Group will require a proportion of the £194,147 still available in 2020/21.

Priority 3: Supporting the most vulnerable people and communities

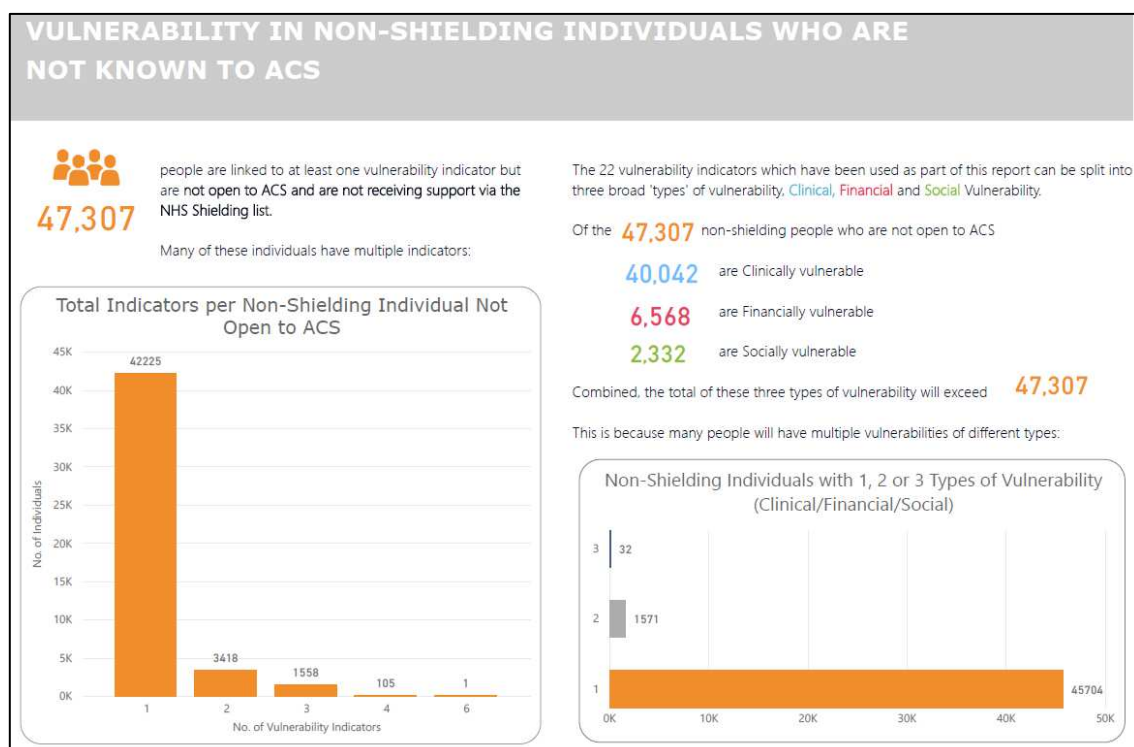
5. At its first meeting, the Task and Finish Group considered a report on all three priority themes. At its second meeting, the Task and Finish Group focused specifically on the 'Supporting the most vulnerable people and communities' theme and considered and supplemented the information set out below.

Suffolk Vulnerability Mapping

6. Mapping has been undertaken by the Suffolk Office of Data Analytics (SODA) to identify people with multiple vulnerabilities in three categories (clinical, social, and financial). As the slide below shows, 66,556 people (47,560 households) were identified in East Suffolk as having one or more vulnerability indicator and 58,817 were clinically vulnerable (including the 14,126 on the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable – CEV - list), 6,722 were financially vulnerable and 8,703 were socially vulnerable.



7. 47,307 of these 66,556 individuals, as shown on the slide below, were not being supported by Adult Care Services (ACS) or on the NHS shielding list – 32 had indicators across all three categories (clinical, social, and financial) – and are therefore a priority cohort for future support:

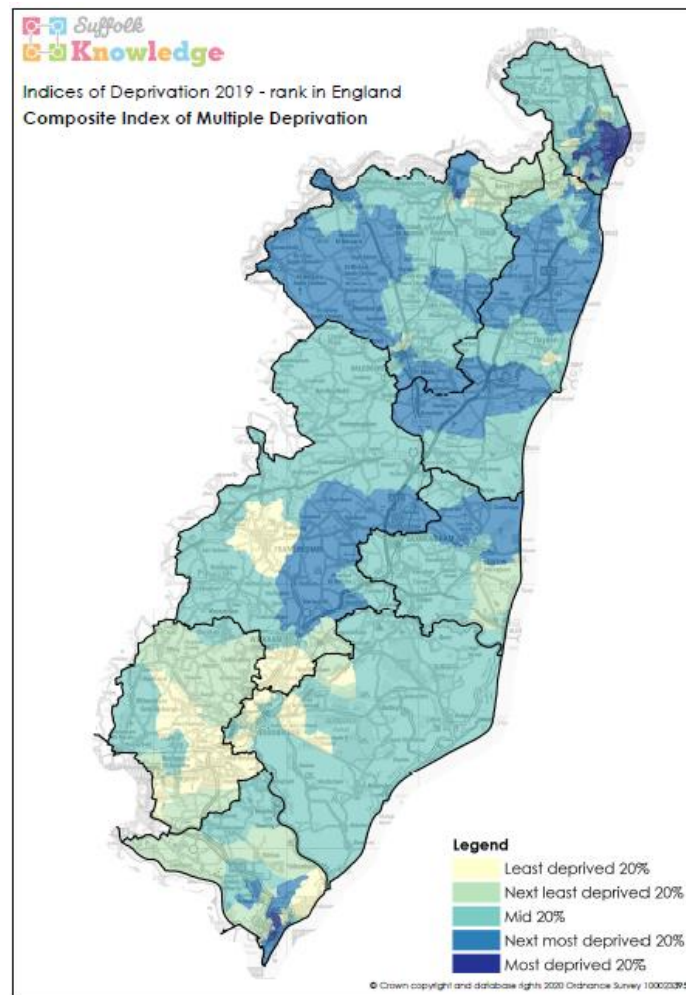


8. 2,026 people in East Suffolk have four or more vulnerability indicators, of these 1047 were Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and 979 were not.
9. We know that people in East Suffolk who were financially, clinically and/or or socially vulnerable prior to Covid-19 are likely to become more so. The Collaborative Communities Board, at the end of shielding on the 31st July, identified three key types of vulnerability:
 - a. Shielded/clinically extremely vulnerable people (14,126 in East Suffolk) who may struggle to adapt to going out in the community again
 - b. Those who are newly financially vulnerable (see below)
 - c. Those who were vulnerable before Covid-19, often sitting just below service thresholds and bouncing between services
10. Those who are newly vulnerable include the following groups in particular:
 - on zero hours contracts (immediate loss of income)
 - self-employed (many not eligible for Government help, likely to have committed outgoings higher than Universal Credit payment)
 - impacted by furloughing (including those eventually made redundant)
 - made redundant (particularly those made redundant in March/April who are likely to have exhausted any savings)
 - newly unemployed, exhausted savings and unable to reduce outgoings
 - claiming Universal Credit for the first time (may be delays in payments)
 - those at risk of eviction
 - those who were shielding to end of July but may have been unable to return to their role.

Financial/Economic Vulnerability

11. Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) work in East Suffolk at the peak of Covid-19 identified cohorts of individuals and families who are more likely to slip into crisis during the pandemic (numbers in brackets indicate the number of families in East Suffolk within each category):
 - a. Couples with school age children eligible for free school meals with Council Tax arrears (40)
 - b. Couples with children under 5 with Council Tax arrears (26)
 - c. Lone parents with school age children eligible for free school meals with Council Tax arrears (13)
 - d. Lone parents with children under 5 with Council Tax arrears (46)
 - e. Self-employed households with children (22)
 - f. Households with low earnings - monthly gross earnings less than £512 (9)
12. We know that some communities – including those that are already deprived - are more likely to be impacted by Covid-19 e.g. in terms of social mobility, educational attainment, and economic resilience.

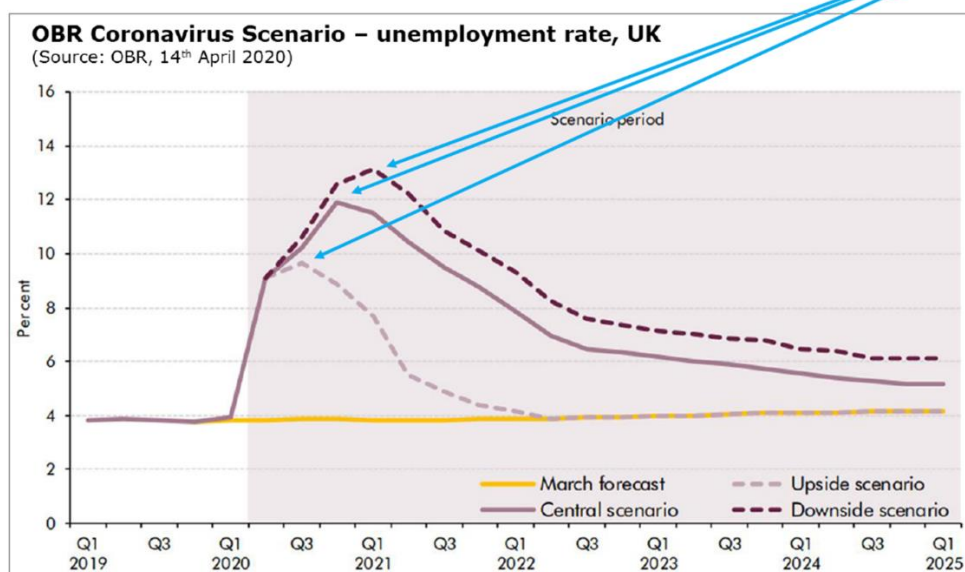
13. We are likely to see an increase in deprivation levels – some deprived communities could become even more deprived and the gap between deprived and affluent communities may grow – the map below shows multiple deprivation hot spots in East Suffolk in 2019:



14. It is estimated that there is a total of 9,998 low income families in East Suffolk and 6,797 children eligible for free school meals.
15. Ongoing increases in unemployment are expected over the coming months despite the furlough scheme being extended to March 2021, and these challenges are expected to last well into next year. The worst-case scenario is unemployment of over 13%. Nationally 1 in 3 firms have indicated that they are likely to decrease their workforce in the next three months.
16. These higher rates of unemployment could become embedded – employment deprivation was already higher in East Suffolk than the Suffolk average pre-Covid. Young people and those who are 50+ are disproportionately affected by unemployment.
17. East Suffolk has a high proportion of SME's, who are more vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19 – sectors like hospitality have been hit particularly hard and high numbers of people in low skill, low wage jobs who could be forced out of these jobs as businesses close and others move down into this tier of the job market.

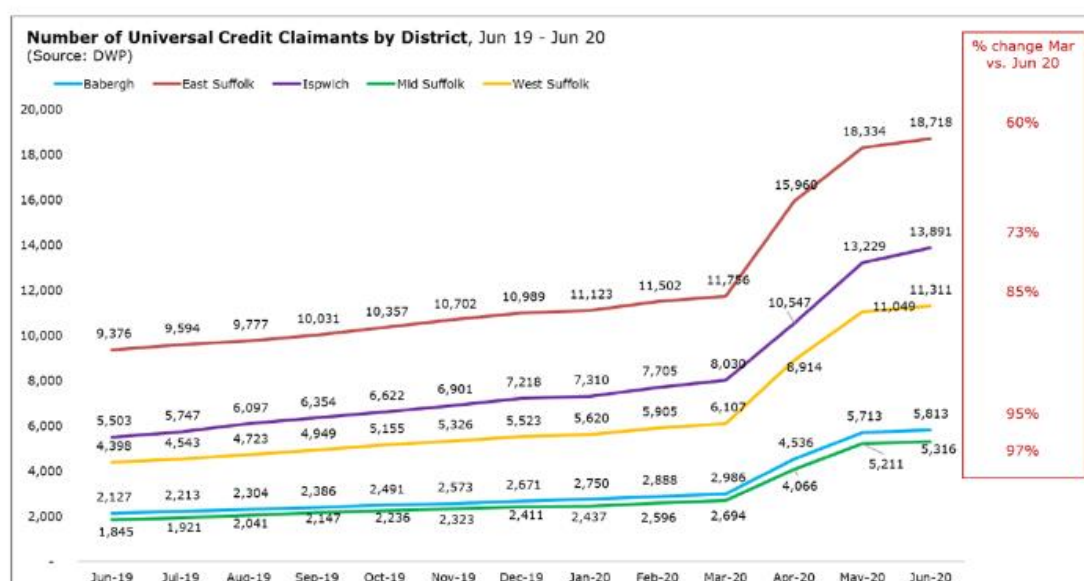
18. The average salary in England is £580 per week but the average East Suffolk salary is £151 less than this.
19. People may be forced to leave East Suffolk to find work – particularly young people and families. This would increase the proportion of dependents (young and retired people) compared to the working population – which is already at 1:1 in the District.

The Office of Budget Responsibility updated its Coronavirus Scenario (initial release March 2020), which models the impact of COVID-19 on the UK economy, on the 14th July. Based on their 3 scenarios **peak unemployment** rates across the UK will range between 9.7% (upside scenario) and 13.2% (downside scenario).



20. Unemployment and financial insecurity will, in turn, impact on housing security, leading to a change in the volume and type of demand for housing e.g. more people seeking rented accommodation.
21. Tenancy protection has now ended there is therefore likely to be an increase in the number of evictions and therefore people in urgent need of housing support.
22. We are already seeing impacts on mental health due to isolation/loneliness, financial hardship, and loss of employment – this will increase further (an 8.1% decline in Mental Health is predicted, particularly in young adults, women, and those with existing poor mental health).
23. A third of young people said that their mental health was worse following lockdown – that they had noticed a change in mood, thoughts, and feelings (Healthwatch survey)
24. There has been a huge increase in welfare support claims – Universal Credit claims increased by 69.4% between March and April 2020 (and 90% since April 2019), and lots of people are claiming benefits for the first time

Within Suffolk, the highest increases of UC claimants were in Mid Suffolk (97%) and Babergh (95%). While in absolute terms, East Suffolk and Ipswich continue to have the largest numbers of UC claimants.

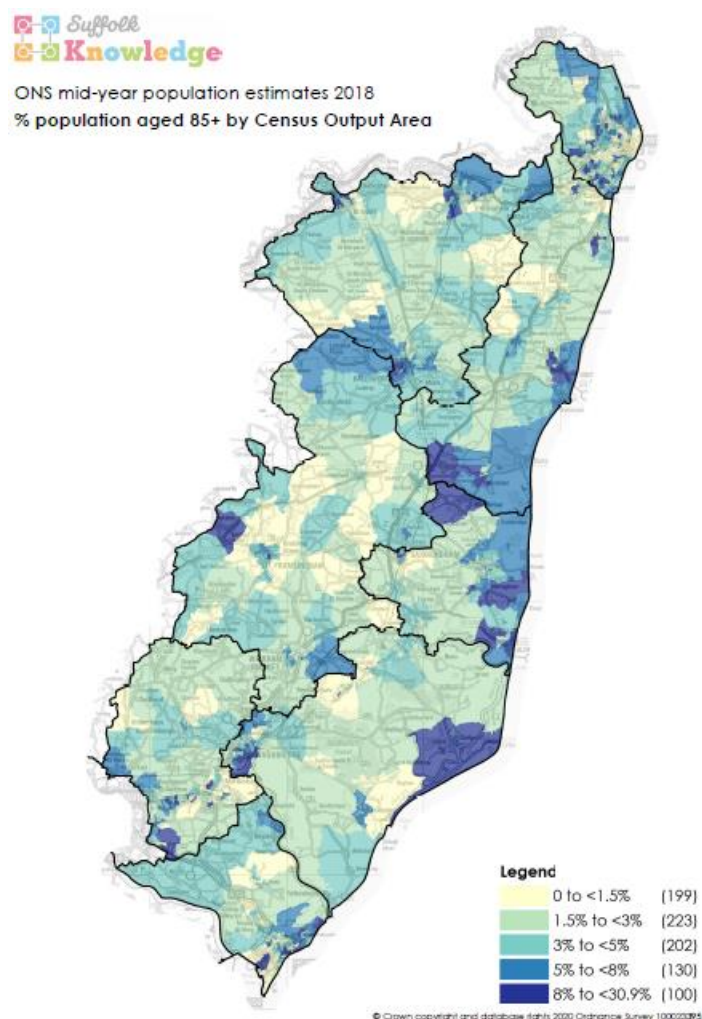


25. There is likely to be more demand for support to meet basic life needs – shelter, food and fuel, which will lead to associated pressure on housing services, food banks, Citizens Advice etc – for example Lowestoft Food Bank had its busiest ever week in the first week in September.
26. Future lockdowns (national or local) would put additional pressure on community response services some of which started to struggle in July as volunteers returned to work

Clinical Vulnerability

27. 14,126 people were on the shielding list in East Suffolk when it paused on 31st July and just over 1,000 of these were in receipt of Government food parcels when shielding ceased at the end of June (from over 1,500 at peak).
28. Support for those who are shielding ended on 31st July (food and prescriptions) although priority online supermarket shopping and NHS responders were still available. Although full shielding has not been introduced under the second local lockdown, the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) are advised to only leave the house to exercise and to attend medical appointments, not to access food or prescriptions.
29. Access to food is a local authority responsibility as the government is not providing free weekly food parcels. The Home But Not Alone line has now been stood back up and East Suffolk Council staff have already called those CEVs likely to most need support (just under 1,500 people from the overall list of over 14,000). This includes those who were receiving food parcels in July and those who have been added to the CEV list since then.

30. Through the Norfolk and Waveney CCG Eclipse Covid Protect scheme, ESC provided non-medical support for 100+ additional vulnerable people and this scheme is being reintroduced and will provide support for those Waveney digitally excluded and vulnerable CEV residents not already contacted by the Council.
31. Overall population health may deteriorate if fewer people continue to seek help with long term conditions – the older East Suffolk population is likely to be impacted more as they have more co-morbidities. For example, deconditioning and frailty are likely to increase due to lack of activity during ‘lockdown’– Felixstowe is already a frailty ‘hot spot’.
32. Life expectancy gaps may increase further between different parts of East Suffolk - the gap is already 10.9 years for males between Deben Ward and Kirkley Ward and 14.8 years for females between Kirton Ward and Kirkley Ward.
33. People may have sought escape from the restrictions through alcohol, cigarettes and possibly drugs and these habits could continue and become ingrained behaviours.
34. Almost 44,000 people in East Suffolk are aged 70 and over and almost 10,000 of these are over 85 and therefore likely to be more vulnerable both to Covid and to the changes in society and communities following Covid-19. The map below shows where there are concentrations of 85+ year olds in East Suffolk:



What is Already Happening in East Suffolk

- **Debt and Money Management** - a 'Money Matters' campaign, led by the ESC Communications Team in conjunction with the three Citizens Advice in East Suffolk, to encourage people to seek financial help as early as possible if they are worried about meeting their outgoings or emerging debt.

Money Matters | Managing Debt Together



- **Food Banks** - County Council funding (up to £250,000) was made available at the start of lockdown to support Food Banks in accessing food stocks and other resources. Community Action Suffolk recently completed a 6-week piece of work on behalf of the Collaborative Communities Board to map food banks and understand:
 - if existing food banks can meet current demand in their geographical area
 - if each food bank has a robust supply of food, to include ambient, chilled, and frozen
 - their ability to provide food parcels should Suffolk go into lockdown
 - to understand the number of times people have received support
 - clients supported by 'crisis type'
 - if they apply eligibility criteria in order for people to access the food bank,

The aim is also to develop a close working relationship with FareShare to understand ongoing costs, to enable existing food banks to continue operating during the Covid-19 crisis and resultant recession and to understand what, if any, support they need.

- A new single point of access, the **Suffolk Advice and Support Service (SASS)**, has been set up for those who are facing hardship because of Covid-19. Many people have been furloughed in Suffolk, some have already lost their jobs and it is extremely likely that many thousands more will do so into 2021, compounded by the potential for further lockdowns. There is an increasing need to take a holistic approach to each person's situation and identify a whole range of issues and solutions that are often inter-dependant. Much of it is centred around debt advice which requires specialist skills and knowledge to triage, assess and advise. The Collaborative Communities Board (CCB) has worked with the Citizen Advice Suffolk to establish a Helpline: 0800 068 3131, which operates Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. People can leave a name and number outside of these hours and will receive a call back within 1 working day. The Suffolk Advice and Support Service – see

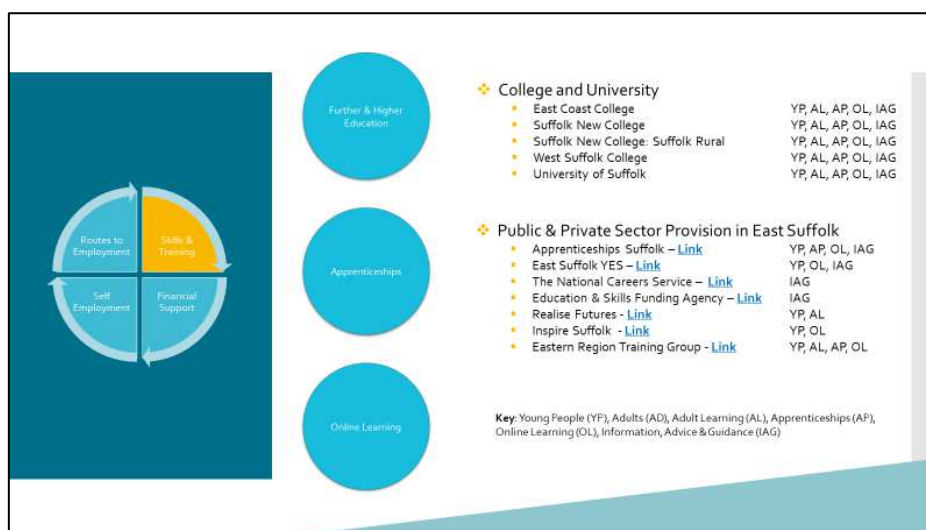
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/suffolk-advice-and-support-service/> - brings together five essential areas of work:

- Single Point of Access
 - Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (see below)
 - Food banks
 - Suffolk InfoLink
 - The Warm Handover
- **Local Welfare Assistance Scheme** – LWAS aims to ensure that vulnerable people in Suffolk, who have no other way of meeting essential basic needs, can have those needs met. Assistance from the LWAS is on a cashless basis in the form of referrals for household items (furniture and white goods), fuel vouchers to enable gas and electricity card/key top-ups, and supermarket vouchers. To be considered for LWAS in Suffolk, someone must be:
 - Aged 16 or over and
 - A permanent resident in Suffolk (or in exceptional cases can establish that they will be resident in Suffolk within 28 days, such as people leaving a hostel or prison that is outside of the county) and
 - In need of immediate urgent support and/or
 - In need of essential basic household items such as furniture, white goods, or fuel top-ups to enable them to set up or maintain their home and
 - Have no other means of meeting the need(s) presented

There are a range of gateway organisations who can refer people into the LWAS scheme.

- **Employment Support** - the ESC Economic Development Team is leading a piece of work to bring together information about employment, training, and apprentices into one simple and easy to access on-line portal to make it easier for people to find the information that they need





- The **Kickstart Scheme** provides funding to create new job placements for 16-24-year olds on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or National Living Wage depending on age) for 6 months plus NI contributions. An application should be for a minimum of 30 placements which can be spread in terms of start dates up to December 2021. If an employer cannot provide this many placements, they can work through a Kickstart Gateway organisation. Funding is also available for training and skills development.
- Youth Voice – Appendix A to the report summarises the results of a survey undertaken by ESC to assess the impact of Covid-19 on young people. This highlights that those who responded wanted:
 - more reassurance and updates on what is going on in the community and how things are going to change
 - more counsellors in school and on the internet to provide mental health support
 - future employment/unemployment support and advice.
 - 15% felt they don't require any future support.
- **Youth Employment Support** – with the imminent rise in youth unemployment and the damaging effects that Covid-19 has had on their future employment opportunities and confidence, Inspire Suffolk has launched their Youth Employment Service Website www.yessuffolk.co.uk. The website is packed full of supportive workshops, live job vacancies, 1-2-1 coaching, careers advice sessions and personalised training opportunities to help young people aged 16-24 move forward in work and life.

YES.

**YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT
SERVICE**

- The East Suffolk Youth Employment Service provides employment, education and training advice to young people aged 16-24 in East Suffolk.
- Current COVID-19 restrictions mean that anyone can register and meet virtually with an experienced Work Coach to discuss their career needs and aspirations. Local hubs are due to re-open from October.
- Following an initial assessment, an assigned Work Coach will develop a bespoke package of support that will help individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses, identify opportunities for progression, and navigate appropriate pathways into employment, education, and/or training.
- Contact ES YES:
 - Web: www.yessuffolk.co.uk
 - Telephone: 07590 983294
 - Email: info@yessuffolk.co.uk

ESYES is funded jointly by all Local Authorities across Suffolk

- The proposed next cohorts of **Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)** work includes:
 - Single Pensioners living alone who are classified as 'In Crisis' (27)
 - Single pensioners living alone / 'At Risk' / aged 85+ (155)
 - Single Pensioners living alone who are disabled and classified as 'At Risk' (127)
- BT and other larger companies are sharing their Apprenticeship Levy's with other smaller companies and have a Work Ready Programme that could be replicated. There is potential to unlock volunteer capacity from places like Adastral Park, for example with food delivery and tech support and possible support with storage of food in currently unused buildings.

What else could the Community Partnership Board do?

The Task and Finish Group has developed a number of ideas for consideration by the Board. Because of the pressures on the 2020/21 budget, these have been split between short (before March 2021) and longer-term projects and it has also been indicated which age group within our community would benefit from each project:

Project	Short Term	Longer Term	Young People	Work Age	Older People
Skills development a) A package of projects to support the upskilling and reskilling of specific groups of people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-25-year olds (through the YES – see below) • Care Leavers • Older young people (late twenties) • Seasonal workers • Those whose furlough period is ending • Over 55's (link to the East Suffolk volunteering campaign and role of volunteering as a pathway back into work)		*	*	*	*
b) Develop a Kick-Start readiness programme for those young people who aren't quite ready for a 6-month work placement		*	*		

Reducing Frailty c) Explore how to specifically support over 70's to remain active thus reducing deconditioning and frailty – links to the EAST Box project below. This would also help with the management of long-term conditions. d) Build on the BT tech trial for older/vulnerable people to explore how we can support people to be safe at home e.g. checking that they are moving, drinking, accessing the fridge etc.		*			*
Food Poverty e) Use the results of the CAS survey of food banks to understand gaps in East Suffolk and consider additional funding or other support to sustain food banks and food projects e.g. community fridges/pantries/food schemes f) Ensure that those who are newly vulnerable and in need of food bank support have access to Christmas food and treats	*			*	*
EAST (Everyone Active, Supported, Together) Box g) Develop winter activity packs for older people – similar to the Summer in a Box packs for vulnerable young people - to be distributed in January 2021 to 2,000 older, lonely residents (see Outcome Proposal). h) Introduce a 'Buddy Up' system so that each box recipient has a 'buddy' to help and encourage them to use the contents of the box.	*				*
Vulnerability Gaps i) Consider data from the Suffolk Advice Support Service and the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme for East Suffolk to understand what needs are not being met e.g. heating oil and identify who is in most extreme need and what additional support they might need.		*		*	*

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- consider and endorse the package of projects identified by the Covid Impacts Task and Finish Group to respond to the Vulnerable People and Places priority identified by the Board at its June meeting
- mandate the Task and Finish Group and partner organisations to develop these projects and report back to the March Board meeting
- allocate up to £20,000 towards the EAST Box project (any unspent funding would be returned to the budget) as per the outcome proposal attached to this report as Appendix 2

Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities, East Suffolk Council, on behalf of the Task and Finish Group