

Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting Date: July 9 2020

Item Title: Mental Health – An update on the prevention and resilience work which has been taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic

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1. Summary

It was recognised that in addition to the existing mental ill health conditions within our communities, the pressures and uncertainties associated with COVID19 would have a direct or indirect impact on the emotional wellbeing of Shropshire residents.

A weekly Mental Health Resilience and Prevention group was set up early in the pandemic period as a subgroup to the Community Reassurance programme. The purpose of this group has been to bring partners from across different directorates within the Council, the voluntary sector as well as other key partners to identify and respond to the mental health and emotional wellbeing impact of COVID19 for Shropshire residents and those working within Shropshire.

We recognised the focus would be on prevention of avoidable mental ill health, promotion of coping mechanisms and opportunities to manage emotional wellbeing for our communities. This group has been instrumental in providing insight into immediate local mental health needs and we would like to highlight the fantastic work from members of this group (as well as those linked to it) for their motivation, willingness and desire to create a social movement in leading, designing and implementing such a range of response with short turnaround.

Key activities that have already been implemented include;

- i Bereavement: Practical support booklets for services and individuals to provide guidance on what to do following a death during COVID19 and signposting information to further local and national support. Printed copies distributed to services most likely to work with bereaved people. Funding for a bereavement support and counselling pathway for Shropshire residents
- ii. Promotion of opportunities to manage mental health during COVID19: A suite of resources is available on the public facing Shropshire Council webpage for [managing mental wellbeing during COVID19](#), which provides helpful links to

agencies that can provide support (including concerns associated with money worries, how to self-isolate, supporting children and young people and support for people experiencing a mental health crisis). A weekly video conference workshop has been designed and delivered by Shropshire MIND which focuses on how to identify and manage stress, anxiety as well as promote wellbeing. These have proved to be popular and very well received, having been delivered to services and the public.

iii. Support for Staff: A range of offers have been able to be provided in response to identification of the increasing reported levels of distress being reported in VCS organisations, Care Homes and other frontline workers.

There are a number of additional actions which continue to be developed and are outlined in more detail later in this report. This includes more targeted projects focusing on children and young people's mental health, investment in the digital mental health platform "Big White Wall" and continued priorities with suicide prevention. We also continue to support partners with system wide responses such as supporting the design of a trauma informed model for staff following exposure to a distressing situation and connecting with the 24/7 Mental Health Helpline.

The MH Resilience and Prevention Group is now considering the future priorities post pandemic and are in the process of agreeing specific projects we would like to progress. Themes include: money worries, unemployment and mental health, strengthening work with the voluntary sector for funding support and reassurance for CYP, schools and teachers.

2. Recommendations

- To be aware and recognise the range of activities that have been able to be progressed in a short period time
- To consider whether there are any other opportunities that could be explored supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our residents

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

4. Financial Implications

We recognise the financial investment into providing a mental health response made by Shropshire Council. We shall endeavour to feedback on the impact of this investment, particular with regards to bereavement and Big White Wall offers.

5. Background

National messages and local observational feedback identified that since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been challenges not only in how services needed to be reorganised to provide continuity of care for those already receiving support, but of

increases in people seeking mental health support who have had no previous contact with services. There was therefore a need for the system to work together in order to agree how we respond to immediate and emerging mental health challenges, what can we do that is proactive to reduce negative emotional wellbeing impact and to consider longer term impact post pandemic.

A weekly Mental Health Resilience and Prevention group was set up early in the pandemic period as a subgroup to the Community Reassurance programme, involving a range of members from across different teams within the Local Authority, VCS colleagues, the CCG mental health commissioner as well as other key partners. The meetings provide opportunity to share learning and intelligence from insight connecting with clients, services and communities as to what were the immediate and emerging mental health concerns resulting from COVID19. It also provided opportunity to ensure connectivity and co-ordination to strengthen agreed response actions. Appendix 1 contains the group Action Plan.

Data from service managers, and local surveys such as the Healthwatch Report as well as national documents have been used to inform all of the projects so that needs are appropriately responded to.

A summary of the progressed mental health actions and activities co-ordinated by Shropshire Council is outlined below;

- i. **Bereavement Support:** We recognised that due to the increase in unexpected deaths from COVID19 and disruption to usual bereavement processes (including restrictions around attending funerals), as well as the pandemic acting as a catalyst for some in triggering negative feelings associated with previous loss that there was a need to provide a bereavement support offer. This has resulted in 2 main activities;
 - **Death and bereavement during COVID19 booklets:** feedback from Registrars and Funeral Directors identified a significant cohort that were requesting practical support following a death during lockdown (such as how to organise the funeral, financial support due to the loss or being in a shielded group). In response, two booklets have been produced utilising national guidance and providing a sympathetic and supportive overview of what bereavement means, a step by step process of what needs to happen next and who needs to be contacted (including changes made due to COVID19) as well as links to helpful resources for additional support. Printed copies of these booklets have been shared with key agencies throughout Shropshire (including Funeral Directors, SaTH End of Life Care teams). An electronic version of this resource is available from the Shropshire Council webpage (At <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/bereavement-services/>)
 - **Bereavement Listening Ear and Counselling Pathway:** Shropshire Council has allocated funding to provide a temporary pathway offer of bereavement support for any resident struggling with bereavement and grief. This does not to be a COVID19 related death and could relate to previous loss. Four local community and voluntary agencies have been identified to provide this offer (Samaritans, Cruse, Severn Hospice and Crane Quality Counselling). Access to this pathway is made through phoning the COVID19 helpline and requesting bereavement support, where following a short discussion to

consider other social care needs where appropriate, the client is connected to the agency most appropriate to their circumstance and at no cost to the client.

- ii. **Children and Young People (CYP) Mental Health:** A task and finish group has been formed as a sub group of the MH Resilience and Prevention group in order to consider opportunities to further develop opportunities for how the Council can lead in terms of building and promoting emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people. Five action projects have been proposed which include;
- **Staff Training:** developing confidence, skills and knowledge for those working in different parts of the system (including schools) and who work with CYP
 - **Embedding mental health into restorative practice in Shropshire schools:** consideration of a pilot programme linking exclusion officers, SEND and the Safeguarding Partnership
 - **Leeds University Research:** supporting the proposed bid by Leeds Uni. researching links between lockdown during COVID19, young people's mental health and nutrition
 - **CYP Social Prescribing:** Shropshire Council has committed to progressing the development of a Social Prescribing model for CYP and are currently researching good practice examples and are working with Healthwatch to help guide
 - **Coproductioin of CYP services:** with parents, carers and families
 - **Development of a system wide approach to personalisation to support SEND children**
- iii. **Online mental health resources and guidance:** The Shropshire Council webpage has a suite of managing mental health and wellbeing information including a bespoke locally created document "Looking after your mental health during COVID19". This resource provides a combination of local signposting to helpful support, guidance and tips for self-isolation, resources for parents and carers who work with young people, resources aimed at children and young people to keep mentally well, guidance on managing physical health and links to information addressing wider concerns such as money worries. The resource has been recognised as an example of good practice by the Local Government Association and has been adopted as part of their recommended digital resources. The online resource can be found on the Council webpage at: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/information-for-the-public/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>. A thousand printed copies of this resource (along with other helpful printed literature around scams and helpful information) was distributed by Shropshire MIND to a residents throughout the county who were identified as vulnerable and had no or poor internet connectivity. These resources were also distributed to the Prince Rupert Hotel and the B&Bs supporting with providing temporary housing accommodation.
- iv. **Communications:** The communications team have provided regular press releases linked to a number of the project areas and during Mental Health Awareness Week, activities took place involving staff groups and residents with the Simple Act of Kindness used as the strapline. There were many examples of these taking place in the community and from staff.
- v. **Shropshire MIND Anxiety Workshops:** Shropshire MIND have been running weekly (standalone) Anxiety, Stress and Wellbeing sessions via video conference

which are free to attend by anyone (including health and social care professionals, voluntary sector colleagues and members of the public). The sessions provide a focus on how we manage stress, understand how stress manifests and key signs for us as unique individuals. The sessions also look at wellbeing, identifying methods to allay anxiety and stress. It is delivered in a light non pressured way, allowing as much or as little participation as people would like. Bespoke sessions have also been run for SaTH, the Care sector and Shropshire Council in addition to “open” invitation sessions with over 500 participants to date.

- vi. **Frontline staff wellbeing:** Feedback from the group identified that there were concerns within the care and voluntary sector of staff managing situations over and above what they would usually see which would cause distress, trauma or have a significant negative impact on wellbeing. Through identification of different skills sets and redeployment opportunities, a number of responses were provided;
- **Shropshire Council Staff Wellbeing:** Shropshire HR have been significant contributors in supporting Mental Health Awareness week in May and for promoting wellbeing opportunities via the staff portal.
 - **Educational Psychologist support for VCS colleagues:** providing managers and staff within voluntary sector organisations who were concerned about increasing stress levels and exposure to distressing situations an opportunity to have regular video conferencing support, to talk through concerns and consider different approaches to manage anxieties.
 - **Clinical Psychologist support for Care Homes:** although already occurring, our group connected with the Mental Health Trust to help ensure co-ordination for offers of support to Care Homes was available.
 - **Peer support advice from Shrewsbury Samaritans:** Our local Samaritans branch have extended an offer to other VCS organisations and teams who could benefit from introducing or developing a debrief/peer support system for their teams following a distressing or potentially trauma inducing incident.
 - **Supporting the system wide trauma resilience management model for staff:** A STP wide group including psychological trauma specialists, coordinators of the psychological response to trauma and wellbeing leads at NHS Trusts, STP, SPiC, Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, Primary Care and Public Health, are currently working together to create a system Trauma Resilience Management (TRIM) Network of trained practitioners. The Network will support individuals dealing with the cumulative impact of trauma as a result of COVID19.
- vii. **Suicide Prevention:** Although this a continuing work programme, we are aware from national messages that suicide risk may increase as a direct result of COVID19 (due to increase in isolation/loss of continuity in support, bereavement of a COVID19 death) or indirect impact (such as financial worries through loss of employment, relationship breakdown or domestic abuse). Through continued monitoring of our local data, we can confirm that observationally there has been no change to the rate of suicide deaths in Shropshire during the period January to end of April 2020 compared to the same period in previous years. The Suicide Prevention Action group are continuing discussions as to how to ensure we can continue to promote our work with all partners and the wider community. This includes the continued promotion of existing resources such as the Pick Up The

Phone You Are Not Alone resource, the free online Zero Suicide Alliance training as well as other helpful resources such as the Shout! text line and Samaritans.

- viii. **Big White Wall:** Shropshire Council has agreed to invest in a 12 month license for all Shropshire residents (that live within a Shropshire Council managed postcode) to be able to access the online digital mental health website – Big White Wall. Details for commissioning are currently being explored. Big White Wall is an online community for people who are stressed, anxious or feeling low. The service has an active forum with round-the-clock support from trained professionals. You can talk anonymously to other members
- Big White Wall is for anyone aged 16 or over who wants to improve their mental health.
 - The Big White Wall community is completely anonymous so you can express yourself freely and openly.
 - Express your feelings by creating a Brick using words, pictures and images and add it to the community Wall.
 - Take online tests to measure your anxiety or depression levels to set goals and track your progress.
 - Register for online courses with health professionals covering things like sleep problems, stopping smoking and anger management.

6. Additional Information

None

7. Conclusions

There has been much positive learning and connectivity between different teams and services coming together to progress a resilience and prevention response for mental health during COVID19. We hope to continue to build and strengthen these relationships as well as the enthusiasm for identifying and strengthening shared ambitions.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
Local Member
Appendices Appendix 1 – Mental Health Resilience and Prevention Draft Action Plan.

Mental Health Resilience and Prevention Draft Action Plan

v1.9

Updated 23 June 2020

1. Identification of immediate (and post-pandemic) mental health needs of local residents

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
Identify current offer and gaps in service provision at local level	CCG questionnaire sent to VCS/3rd sector to identify current offer	Consolidation of a range of local offers collated via the MH Resilience and Prevention Group and shared via public facing Council website and partners. Includes Looking After Your MH during COVID19 resource and links to further information and support on the Council COVID19 webpages		Completed
		Healthwatch questionnaire developed including questions around mental health, resilience and loneliness as a result of COVID19. Regular messagers and themes of resident concerns have been shared with the MH Resilience and Prevention Group.	A final report will be produced and shared with the MH Resilience and Prevention Group	In progress
	Discussions with VCS sector, service leads and Commissioners	Response programmes established (including the Shropshire MIND Anxiety workshops delivered via Zoom, stress anxiety and wellbeing), these are offered on a weekly basis x 3 days, and are open to a range of staff, in the NHS, local authority, and the public.ongoing discussions to address emerging themes managed and co-ordinated initially via the MH Resilience and Prevention group and related subgroups. Links with the LHRP weekly meetings and MH Partnership Board.	Continue conversation of emerging mental health needs of residents and follow up with CCG commissioners. Ongoing	Completed
Utilise data and intelligence from partners/VCS/Commissioners to address residents mental health needs, in addition use data from national surveys to inform next phase of mental health	Use feedback from VCS, Social Prescribing data, FPOC, the Mental Health 24/7 helpline and from services to inform proposed responses	To inform on gaps and opportunities to co-ordinate low level mental health support; - providing a universal offer - targeting high risk/vulnerable groups - children & young people - adults	Continuous process to determine changing themes of needs	In progress

Children & Young People's Mental Health

2. Develop a mental health offer for shielded & vulnerable groups (including a wider universal offer for those impacted by COVID-19)

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
Social prescribing support for those in Shielded groups	Capacity of current SP Team	Deploy/train staff from other areas to support people with MH issues (including those who are isolated and lonely) Call back mechanism for SP with referrals coming from Social Care Customer Services, FPOC, Welfare teams & Community Reassurance Team	Referrals for a call back from a SP Advisor can now be made via the COVID19 helpline Service to cover the county and launch 7th April	Completed
Develop solutions to deliver low level mental health support and resilience	Creative and/or new solutions being developed using different ways of working/access to support. Needed due to reduced capacity to formal services such as IAPT	Access to telephone or video conference talking therapies/other innovative ways to connect key workers to people requiring support - being delivered by Shropshire MIND In process of purchasing a 12 month license for the online digital health service Big White Wall which provides 24/7 access to online anonymous and confidential support, listening ear to share concerns, connect with others, access a wide suite of self help resources and courses	Big White Wall to be implemented - currently completing the contract process and will follow by a short implementation phase. The offer is available for all residents of Shropshire and those who work for Shropshire Council but may live elsewhere	In progress

Joint approach to Mental Health 24/7 Helpline and COVID19/FPOC hotline	MH 24/7 helpline set up by Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust to signpost to appropriate support and Local Authority teams as required COVID19 Hotline run by Shropshire LA	Details of the service have been widely shared	There is still further work to promote the 24/7 mental health helpline particularly within primary care and other services where there may be some uncertainty as to its purpose	In progress
Updated guidance and information	Special educational needs and disabilities guidance	All information directs to local support and advice rather than national documentation		Completed

3. Develop a suite of resources and information promoting self-care of mental health issues

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
Resource pack to contain a range of information for different target audiences including tips and practical interventions	A dedicated resource summary for looking after your mental health during COVID19 with signposting to local services, guidance and information to help manage emotional wellbeing during the pandemic. No centralised resource previously in place	Dedicated MH page on COVID19 pages of the Shropshire Council webpage which has been widely shared with partners and the community. Resource accessed at: https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/information-for-the-public/mental-health-and-wellbeing/ Recognised as good practice by the Local Government Association and has been adopted on their website. Website links regularly monitored and updated.	Continue to monitor and review if any changes/amendments/additions	Completed
	Information for those with no internet access	1000 printed copies of the above resource have been made available with key advice and information and no weblinks. Distributed by Shropshire MIND to known offline vulnerable residents and those in B&Bs/hotels and other temporary accommodation along with details/leaflet information about scams and helpful contacts		Completed
	Information for the general public	Regular media coverage in Shropshire Star p		

4. Bereavement Support

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
Potential increase in demand for support with number of COVID19 related deaths. Impact of people unable to visit cemeteries as part of non COVID19 grieving process		A grief and bereavement during COVID19 booklet has been produced along with a checklist with practical guidance on what to do following a death during the pandemic. Includes signposting to local and national support	Electronic versions of these booklets are available on the Bereavement page of the Shropshire Council webpage via the COVID19 Information for Public Link. Final version of the checklist to be uploaded.	In progress
		Printed copies of these booklets have been shared with key partners including funeral directors, registrars, hospitals and other services most likely to work with bereaved people. Note: this was advised to be a public displayed document but to aid services in supporting bereaved people.	Recognition that this should be easier to find from the front page	
		Potential to link offer with Community Reassurance Teams and have bereavement lead CRT within each locality with knowledge of local support/trained in bereavement support. Working	To develop conversations and explore possibilities	In progress
		Longer term training need to address ongoing needs for bereavement support within communities/organisations	Being explored through adaption of the Seasons for Growth model used for young people Launching w/c 22nd June	In progress

Develop a co-ordinated package of bereavement support for those impacted by a COVID19 death		Shropshire Samaritans can provide guidance and support around bereavement in group settings (e.g. workplaces/schools)	Promoted to VCS colleagues	Completed
		New short term referral pathway has been developed with 4 local organisations (Samaritans, Cruse, Severn Hospice and Crane Counselling identified through our local service mapping) to help connect those that could benefit from bereavement support to the agencies that could best support them. Referrals will be received via request through the COVID19 helpline and will be at no cost to the individual. A maximum of 6 funded appointments per client will be available through this route during the pandemic.	Launching 23rd June Finalisation of grant applications	In progress
	Workforce needs	Linked to support outlined in Action 4 below		In progress

5. Peer and mental health support offer for staff (NHS, Council, VCS and volunteers)

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
Range of activity based on different need				
Level 1 - emotional wellbeing and managing low mood, lower level/moderate stress	Currently no formal support to support staff mental health impact from COVID19	Shropshire Council HR have developed a staff wellbeing portal providing a range of supportive information, guidance and podcasts to help manage emotional wellbeing		Completed
		Shropshire Council employees can access individual counselling (group sessions are available if required) through the Council's providers NOSS (Network of Staff Supporters) by contacting 01978 780479.		Completed
		Video conferencing workshops on normalising anxiety delivered by Shropshire MIND In place and being rolled out to other organisations/teams		Completed
Level 2 - exposure to trauma or highly stressful situations		A STP system wide model of trauma informed care approach is being developed across Shropshire and T&W, to support staff based on the fire service model is being developed. This includes a coaching programme using existing coaches and recruitment of trauma informed care practitioners that can provide support to any staff from the LA, NHS or voluntary sector who has been exposed to distress that has had a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing	Full STP system approach to the TRIM model - lead Victoria Rankin (People lead for STP). Group meeting weekly to progress.	In progress

		Local Authority Educational Psychologists are providing - weekly group supervision for VCS managers/lead by EP trained in bereavement and critical incident support (Poppy Chandler/Sheri Wright) - Manager support to discuss immediate concerns including a death - Support following a complex death where level of trauma (e.g. found dead at home/suicide) -Material for children and families where there is a death but cannot attend funeral	Offer sent to key contact agencies who have already expressed (including CAB, Age UK, Mayfair Centre, Shropshire Rural Communities Charity, Healthwatch and Qube)	Completed
		Psychologist support from MPFT are already linked with a number of Care Homes and providing a similar model of support as above where requested		Completed

6. Children & Young People's Mental Health

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
CYP Task & Finish Group	To co-ordinate the range of activities from different teams supporting the MH of CYP within the Council and agree common priorities	A weekly task and finish group has been meeting to discuss priorities and identify gaps and opportunities	To agree future purpose, opportunities to address challenges and ensure all CYP have equal opportunity to pursue and manage good emotional wellbeing. To develop some practical solutions/initiatives that span service areas - educ, CYP social care, public health, early help	In progress
		Test out a model of social prescribing that supports CYP in two localities	Conversations with 2 PCN areas and internal conversations with T&F group about which locality/which target group to work with. Explore national good practice and work delivered by the SIG CYP. Work up proposal for discussion. Use workshop information and input from key stakeholders previously	In progress
		Understand levels of anxiety and access to food issues to enable a plan to develop	Explore opportunities with Leeds University to test out a survey in schools to assess parents, teachers, C&YP levels of anxiety and understand access to food issues	In progress
		Develop a training package to enhance skills and confidence of workforce around level 2/3 support for school staff, EH staff and other groups	Work with the EH Team to understand training needs of the EH workforce and schools	In progress
		Develop a Peer Support Programme/Preparation for Return to School following COVID19 – schools and colleges – preparing schools, parents and young people	Work with education colleagues to support return of 6th form students and reduce anxiety	In progress
		Actively engage C&YP of various ages and from a range of groups to better understand their needs	Explore opportunities with local college and media students to develop the thinking further	In progress
		Identify gaps around data collection, JSNA of C&Y and work with LA colleagues to influence CYP's commissioning	Discuss with DPH, Joint Commissioning Group and directors to identify a solution	In progress
		Develop the DREAM to embed restorative practice in all aspects of work with C&YP - in education settings and based on the culture already existing	Scope up ideas from the education team, identify good practice elsewhere, review bhvr management change policies, develop a Pilot – identify schools, initiate	In progress

7. Development of mental health support for people in supported housing

Action	Local Activity, Gaps & Need	Proposed Solution	Next Steps	Complete
		Housing Providers developing support		
Identify staff support and support for residents		Connexus - Customer services telephone for anyone with housing issues (not just tenants)	Option line to be launched	
		NOSS is operating a telephone counselling service currently due to Covid-19 and social distancing. They have counsellors in many locations and can accommodate Shropshire Council employees when face to face counselling is required and constraints do not apply.		
People in Bed and Breakfasts		A list of B&Bs that are providing accommodation for people in SHropshire has been identified and shared with Shropshire MIND	Shropshire MIND to make contact with the B&Bs are provide literature/information as appropriate to support the mental health needs of guests and the proprietors	Completed