

# CSAG Briefing Paper



## Initial principles to reduce the impact of lockdown exit on vulnerable groups

Date: 23.04.20  
Prepared by the Vulnerable Groups workstream

### A) Purpose

This briefing note provides an overview of initial ideas and principles to minimise the impact of lockdown exit on vulnerable groups and wider inequalities. At this point, it is difficult to develop specific scenarios due to the wide range of different variations of exit and considered, and high level of uncertainty. However, there are principles that can inform recovery planning, based on public health values and evidence. The note summarises initial discussions by members of the C-SAG vulnerable groups workstream and is an early draft of thinking on this topic.

### B) Principles

We have identified 5 initial principles to minimise the impact on vulnerable groups and inequality:

#### 1. Mitigate the impact on inequalities

COVID-19 and the response has a) highlighted and amplified inequalities that already existed (e.g. the impact of housing conditions on health and wellbeing is higher during lockdown), and b) led to new risks and inequalities impacts for vulnerable groups. People in precarious employment have been more likely to suffer significant financial losses, including people on temporary or 'zero hours' contracts, in minimum wage jobs or working in the informal economy. School closures have had the greatest impact on children with special educational needs and from low income backgrounds. Older people who already had low levels of social contact are facing the highest social isolation.

Lockdown exit discussions necessarily include consideration of public health needs and economic implications. Where possible, the most vulnerable groups could be prioritised when sectors and services reopen, to reduce the widening inequality gap. Examples include ensuring children with additional needs can re-start school first, prioritising sectors with high numbers of 'minimum wage' workers. Where this is not possible, additional support will be required so that people can remain safe and financially secure. Vulnerable groups will need additional and ongoing support during extended lockdown periods and recovery, including financial, social contact and health support.

#### 2. Ensure lockdown exit and recovery are inclusive

Decision making processes and strategies for exit and recovery need to be inclusive, and involve the voices of people in the most vulnerable groups and communities. There are many different approaches to public participation in decision making and 'democratisation' of the recovery process. Prioritising these will ensure that the focus is 'recovery with', not 'recovery to' communities.

In Bradford, the Local Authority, NHS and VCS have rapidly worked together to meet the needs of vulnerable groups. During recovery, it will be important to ensure that this work continues and there is a focus on levelling up of material resources and opportunities to reduce inequalities.

#### 3. Support children and young people in lockdown exit and recovery

Although children are less clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, they are highly vulnerable to the wider changes in society during and after the response. The impacts on children not only affect their health and wellbeing now, but are likely to have long lasting, profound effects throughout their lifecourse. All children are affected, but some groups are particularly vulnerable, e.g. children with special

educational needs or socio-emotional and behavioural difficulties, in households that are struggling financially or with parents/grandparents/carers with ongoing physical or mental health conditions.

We propose additional support for children and young people in the lockdown exit and recovery planning. This includes assessing the impact on children for decisions, prioritising children's needs such as play and learning, providing extra support for vulnerable children, and monitoring impacts on children's lives and wellbeing.

#### 4. Build on positive aspects of lockdown

There have been some aspects of lockdown that are likely to have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing. This includes improvements in air quality, encouragement for physical activity, and engagement with digital technology among older people. As we transition to recovery, it will be important to capture these benefits, ensure they are sustainable and that they reach people who need them the most.

#### 5. Ensure exit and recovery are evidence-informed and evidence-generating

There has been rapid and unique collaboration for evidence-informed decision making during COVID-19. This includes district-wide intelligence generation on vulnerable groups, research studies providing more in-depth understanding, and thorough interpretation and application of evidence.

This provides a foundation for ongoing monitoring and evaluation during lockdown exit, the recovery and beyond. Prioritising timely monitoring (including disaggregation of data) can recognise and integrate changes in inequalities and early signs of success and concerns. Sharing of evidence generated in Bradford also has the potential to inform decision making nationally.

### C) Vulnerable groups

An initial list of groups of people who may be particularly vulnerable to the wider health, social and economic impacts is provided below. Vulnerability is dynamic, and the groups are likely to change over time due to rapid health, social and economic changes. It is also important to recognise that groups overlap, and people with multiple vulnerabilities are likely to be most at risk.

#### POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

- Households in the most deprived areas
- Children living in poverty
- Households with food insecurity

#### EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- People who have lost their job or who have reduced income and their households, including:
  - Self-employed people
  - People with flexible/ temporary contracts
  - Informal economy workers

#### HEALTH AND DISABILITY

- People with long term physical health conditions or mental ill health
- People with physical disabilities, autism and learning disabilities
- People with alcohol or drug needs
- Unpaid carers

#### d) HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLD

- Single person households (especially single over 70)
- Homeless people (including 'hidden' homeless)

#### e) MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY

- Recent migrants, asylum seekers and refugees
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds, including South Asian and Central and Eastern European backgrounds
- Roma and traveller households

#### f) OTHER

- People who are digitally excluded people
- People at risk of domestic violence and children at risk of safeguarding concerns
- Older people who are shielding
- Other groups identified through research, service and community insights

### D) Next steps

This paper presents ideas from initial discussions, and the C-SAG vulnerable groups workstream will further consider ways to reduce impacts on vulnerable groups over the medium and long-term.