

Barking & Dagenham

Corporate Plan 2020/2022 Performance and Delivery Update

01 April 2020 to 30 September 2020¹

¹ This report covers financial quarters 1 and 2 of 2020/21 (April to September) but it has been written to give the most contemporary position as at the time of writing; it therefore reflects performance and delivery up to the end of the 2020 calendar year.

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Inclusive Growth

Building new homes

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Just under 1,050 new affordable homes have been completed since May 2018
- Council intervention in the wider housing market has sped up the delivery of homes and improved tenure mix, e.g. Beam Park
- Negotiated an increase in the Affordable Housing Grant to be received, from £25m in 2018 to £110m

Priorities for next six months:

- Over 2,200 new affordable homes expected to be built by May 2022, 2,700 by end of 2023

Key risk in the next six months:

- Construction delays owing to material and labour shortages, or difficulties in procuring from the supply chain

We are on track to exceed the target of 2,000 new affordable homes by 2023. As of November 2020, just under 1,050 new affordable homes had been completed in the borough since May 2018. We expect just over 2,200 new affordable homes to have been built by May 2022 and over 2,700 by the end of 2022.

The majority of new affordable homes in the borough are being built by the council itself, through Be First. In August, 87 new homes at Becontree Heath, all affordable, were handed over by Be First and into Reside management. This included 41 homes for households on the council's housing register.

The council is also actively intervening in the wider housing and land market to speed up the delivery of homes. Most notably, in October Cabinet agreed to buy 938 homes at Beam Park, a 3,000 home regeneration scheme in South Dagenham. Half of the homes acquired by the council will be affordable. This deal brought forward the delivery of these new homes by approximately five years. The council's intervention also significantly improved the tenure mix of the new homes, including doubling the number that will be made available for households on the housing register.

The council has also negotiated an increase in the amount of Affordable Housing Grant it will receive from the GLA to support the new build programme. This has increased from an initial £25m allocation in late 2018 to £110m. The scale of the Be First programme means that we are now the largest council housebuilder in London.

Improving the quality and management of homes

Key performance and delivery messages:

- 91% decent homes completion, which is slightly behind expectation due to Covid-19 related delays to the capital programme

Priorities for next six months:

- Deliver improvements to turn-around times for Voids and Repairs
- Ensure stock investment programme delivery is optimised following the Covid-19 related delays
- Support residents in rent arrears to make payments to help recovery the income position

Key risk in the next six months:

- Further impact on rental income collection due to the impacts of the pandemic, which is already forecast to be £200,000 behind target (as of December 2020)

In terms of My Place services, the focus since March has been on maintaining service delivery throughout Covid-19. Frontline staff continue to provide a full service across the borough. There has been no reduction in service level provision across key front-line services.

The delivery of the stock investment programme has been significantly impacted by Covid-19. All programmes ceased in March, and contractors and supply chains were not fully mobilised again until September. Leaseholder consultation on major works was also suspended during this time (though has now recommenced), which has also had a knock-on effect regarding works to blocks containing leaseholders.

Delivery Agents (Be First, BDMS and My Place) have updated their forecast spend profiles and are projecting an overall spend of £19.8m against a budget of £38.4m. Access arrangements to homes in order to carry out works is improving and takes into account those shielding or self-isolating. Some projects (such as the estate road improvements) have only been partially impacted by the pandemic. The partial lockdown in November 2020 has slowed some programmes further, although progress is being maintained wherever possible and some of the delayed external works (roofs and windows that were scheduled for completion over the Spring and Summer) may still be affected by any inclement winter weather.

This has had a knock-on impact on the level of council homes that meet the Decent Homes standard. This remains at 91%, though this is expected to increase to around 97% once current programmes are completed.

Covid-19 also had a significant impact on rental income collection, particularly in Q1. This affected HRA properties and Reside. The Income Team, which moved from Elevate into Community Solutions in September, has been working to support residents and put in place plans to help them to pay their rent. Despite this challenging context, HRA rental income is forecast to come in broadly to budget. Within Reside, there was a sharp increase in rent arrears in Q1. This increase in arrears slowed significantly after April, with monthly collection rates also improving (from 73% in April to 92% in November). However there remains a risk around income over the next six months and beyond, so supporting residents to meet their rental payments will remain a major priority.

Covid-19 also had an impact on the gas safety checks programme. The council is required to check gas boilers annually, and this type of inspection was particularly impacted by the lockdown restrictions. The closure of the courts also limited the council's ability to seek warrants. Performance returned to 98% in Q2, and plans are in place to gain access to remaining properties. However, this measure needs to return to 100% as soon as possible to reduce the risk to residents and the council.

Responsive repairs and the speed at which void properties re-let remain priority areas for improvement. Elements of the void process were impacted by Covid-19, but performance was already below target and has been for some time. My Place are working with BDMS to put in place a plan to implement the improvements needed for repairs and voids. Further improvements are also needed in estate services including caretaking, cleaning and grounds maintenance. Initiatives to date in this area include a review of the Caretaking Service to ensure consistency of the service offer and make more efficient use of caretaker time (including through the use of smart phones to enable the caretakers to link directly with other parts of the council and improve communication on day to day issues, speeding up responsiveness). More rigour is also being brought to estate inspections by using sector standard guidance. This will improve transparency and allow for better benchmarking.

These services, along with repairs, are the major drivers of tenant satisfaction, so improvements here will ultimately help to increase satisfaction, which remains below target this year.

The independent review into the aftermath of the Samuel Garside House Fire has also continued, with the report expected to be published in early 2021.

Tackling Homelessness

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Lowest number of rough sleepers in London
- Under the ‘everyone in’ policy during the first lockdown, 28 residents were accommodated (19 remain in accommodation)
- Successfully bid for £440,000 from MHCLG to support rough sleeping work for the remainder of 2020/21
- Temporary accommodation numbers are down to 1,505 (from a peak of around 2,000 in 2017/18)

Priorities for next six months:

- Providing accommodation as required under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol
- Preparing for the impacts of the lifting of the suspensions around evictions

Key risk in the next six months:

- An increase in homelessness approaches once evictions recommence

The focus since March 2020 has been on managing the impact of the pandemic and the lockdowns. The council’s successful response in this area has been helped by strong underlying performance particularly in reducing the numbers of households in temporary accommodation and reducing rough sleeping.

On rough sleeping, the borough continues to have the lowest number of rough sleepers in London. This is supported by a preventative approach where support is provided to people known to be at risk of rough sleeping at an earlier stage than many other councils. Under the ‘everyone in’ policy during the first lockdown, 28 residents were accommodated of which 19 remain in accommodation.

In September 2020, the council was successful in a bid for £440,000 of revenue funding for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support our rough sleeping work for the remainder of 2020/21. This included resources to provide additional, targeted support for the 19 former rough sleepers currently in council accommodation.

On temporary accommodation, numbers have continued to decrease. From a peak of just under 2,000 in Q3 of 2017/18, the total number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation has reduced and continues to do so. As of the end of October 2020, there were 1,505 households in temporary accommodation. Barking & Dagenham has had the largest decrease in numbers in temporary accommodation in London since April 2018 (when the Homelessness Reduction Act came into effect).

Homeless approaches reduced significantly at the start of Covid-19 but have now started to increase towards pre-lockdown levels. The number of approaches in October 2020 was significantly higher than previous months. As noted below, homeless approaches are expected to increase in the coming months as Covid-19 economic support measures are unwound.

To the end of October 2020, 232 council homes were let via the allocation policy to households on the housing register. This compares to 355 in the same period last year.

The next six months will be focused on continuing the response to rough sleeping, including providing accommodation as required under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol in the winter months. Since March 2020, the Government has put in place various measures which have meant that evictions have essentially been suspended. This position is expected to be unwound from March 2021, and it is expected that homeless approaches will increase from then. Community Solutions are already taking proactive steps to anticipate this increased demand.

Providing homes for vulnerable residents

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Development of specialist housing for residents with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) on Brocklebank site approved
- Panels set up to consider housing options for specific cases (bringing together relevant professionals from Care and Support, Community Solutions and other partners)

Priorities for next six months:

- Bringing forward proposals for additional specialist housing on council-owned sites

Key risk in the next six months:

- Maintaining the programme for Brocklebank so that planning permission can be secured in mid-2021
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In January 2020, Cabinet approved a set of commitments relating to housing for vulnerable residents. This included commitments around how we work with vulnerable residents when allocating housing – ensuring that this is done in a relational way; understanding their wider circumstances and ensuring that housing can best support their needs and their wellbeing and provide choice and control. It also included commitments to build new specialist housing to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

In November 2020, Cabinet approved the development of specialist housing on the Brocklebank site for residents with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These proposals will help us to keep service users in the community, close to family and friends, with professionals close at hand to ensure that the most vulnerable are safe and cared for. We know that the number of young people with autism, requiring specialist support, is growing nationally; Brocklebank will ensure that we are developing the right offer to meet current and projected need in our borough.

A system of panels has been set up to consider housing options for specific cases. These bring together relevant professionals (including Care and Support, Community Solutions and relevant partners) to ensure that decisions are made taking into account a resident's wider circumstances. As well as improving housing outcomes, the panel system has enabled savings by supporting residents to move on to sustainable, affordable accommodation.

Over the next six months, a priority will be to bring forward proposals for additional specialist housing on council-owned sites.

Improving the quantity and quality of jobs in Barking and Dagenham

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Business Forum created; seven events held and newsletter issued to over 1,500 local businesses
- Jobs, skills and supply chain plan established to maximise local benefits from film studios deal
- New Social Value Policy agreed, being implemented across all commissioning teams

Priorities for next six months:

- Develop our approach to reporting on social value outcomes delivered by council a wholly owned company contracts
- Develop sector strategies for Health and Social Care, Film, and Green Industry sectors

Key risks in the next six months:

- Dramatic reduction in available jobs following end of Furlough scheme in March, especially within Retail
- Risk of increase in closure of businesses within borough, given high proportion of small and medium enterprises

The labour market has seen an unprecedented shock in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, meaning that our strategies to generate new and better jobs in the borough are being delivered in the context of a structural international economic crisis. Given this, our long term and generative approach is more important than ever – proactively growing and developing new sectors (in film, food and green industry) whilst investing and strengthening existing sectors (construction and Health and Social Care) as well as strengthening our ability to offer support to businesses across all sectors in the borough.

Over the past year, we have taken big strides to make the most of the resources and leverage we have as a council. Strengthening our business-facing offer, we have created the Barking & Dagenham Business Forum; holding seven events and issuing between two and four regular monthly newsletters to over 1500 local businesses, supported by a Business Forum Steering Group. We have increased our engagement with local employers through the dispersal of Covid-19 response grants via the business rates team. We have deepened our collaboration with the Barking Enterprise Centre through all this work and are well placed to work with them on the sector specific plans outlined above. Driving forward the growth of new local jobs in existing and emerging sectors, we have developed a jobs, skills and supply chain plan to maximise local benefits from the film studios deal, with a new coordinator post set to be recruited in early 2021.

We established a clear plan to kickstart the food sector in the borough, catalysed by the markets (Billingsgate, New Spitalfields, Smithfield) re-location, with funding to support jobs, training, supply chain opportunities and a new food hub being funded through Section 106 monies. We are working towards a sector strategy for social care, bringing together a number of smaller scale funding sources to drive forward combined approach on business support, employer engagement, London Living Wage, and skills, training and career progression routes. We have put in place stronger social value and Section 106 requirements to improve training, pay, jobs and supply chain opportunities in the local construction sector

and improved the coordination of employer engagement, training provision and employment support via the Construction Advisory Group and local Construction Forum.

In addition, we have agreed a new Social Value Policy, backed up by a full-time Social Value Co-ordinator based in the Commercial Team, which is now being implemented across all our commissioning teams.

Supporting residents to access new opportunities in the borough

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Over 400 people supported into employment since April 2020 despite a decrease in vacancies from the previous year
- Apprenticeship levy transfer policy agreed to enable local business to use unspent LBBB levy funds

Priorities for next six months:

- 'B&D Working Together' campaign launched to promote full range of employment and business support services through website and social media
- Capitalising on the government's Kickstart Scheme to offer opportunities to 150 young residents of the borough
- Expand the volunteer offer to increase the number of volunteers and the variety of experiences on offer
- Standardise the volunteer offer across Community Solutions, support volunteers into work through links with Job Shop and identify volunteer coordinators to support the growing volunteer offer

Key risks in the next six months:

- Loss of EU funding (currently a significant source of funding) for the Employment and Skills Team with limited information about UK Shared Prosperity Fund and indication of time-lag before this is fully available to bid for
- Challenge in meeting our ambitions to support priority groups facing multiple barriers to employment, given current economic situation and anticipated increase overall in unemployment

Our Employment and Skills team, working across Adult Education, Job Brokerage, Employer Engagement, and several sector specific posts within construction, has continued to deliver above targets this year despite the challenging circumstances. Since April 2020, over 400 people have been supported into employment, despite the reduction in vacancies compared to last year. We have also secured a new dedicated post working across Social Services and the Employment Service to support Adults with Learning Disabilities into employment and have been developing the vocational offer in the Adult College.

We have also agreed an apprenticeship levy transfer policy enabling local businesses to use unspent council levy funds to create local apprenticeships. This Autumn, we also launched the 'Working Together' campaign to promote Covid-19 support for local business and those facing unemployment. We have also responded to new funding streams including the Government's Kickstart Scheme, operating as a gateway for employers in the borough to access funding to support paid work placements for 18-24 year olds, with a comprehensive employment and training offer provided directly through our Job Brokerage Service. As part of the Kickstart scheme a tailored training programme will be delivered by the Adult College. To date we have applied for over 100 jobs, of which seven are within the council across Enforcement, Parks and Public Health teams. There is a target for Community Solutions to recruit a further 16 young people with some of those being recruited into frontline and apprenticeship positions.

Safe and liveable neighbourhoods

Key performance and delivery messages:

- During the first six months of 2020/21, given the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus for all frontline teams within My Place and Enforcement has been on service continuity
- All frontline teams continued to provide a near normal service with no significant impact on service delivery
- All residual waste and recycled waste collections were maintained through the period. Domestic, recycling and green waste collection have remained at a high level during Q1 and Q2
- We started a new area-based approach within Street Cleansing, this is yielding significant improvements which are being independently verified by Keep Britain Tidy
- The enforcement team have completed restructuring the service and have rolled out the new model including more capacity to deliver late at night
- The number of enforcement notices, prosecutions and fines has reduced compared to the previous year due to the pandemic demands

Priorities for next six months:

- Service continuity continues to be the number one priority during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic
- Improving performance against our 'Operator Licence' regulatory compliance, after issues were uncovered during the period
- Continue to monitor Street Cleansing standards against national and other London borough standards
- Complete review of anti-social behaviour delivery across the council and extend the delivery of late night enforcement activity

Key risk in the next six months:

- The main risk for front line services within My Place and Enforcement is Covid-19 and the potential effect on service delivery. Robust service continuity plans are in place for all services and as at November 2020, services have not had to deal with any major outbreaks

My Place service areas continue to focus on service continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic. Home working has continued for many office-based staff, providing support to residents remotely. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, frontline staff have continued to provide a full service across the borough. In fact, domestic, recycling and green waste collection have remained at a high level (the figures at the end of Q2 show collection rates of 99.91%, 99.92% and 99.99%, respectively).

Conversely, fly tipping performance has declined over the last quarter. The percentage of fly-tips collected within 48 hours was 62% as at the end of Q2 which is significantly below target (90%). This corresponds with a nationwide increase in fly tipping witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns this year. Improved recording of fly tips by officers have also elevated numbers

identified. Work continues between My Place and Enforcement to address fly-tipping issues at known hotspots, with individual action plans for those areas being developed.

The new area-based approach within Street Cleansing, has led to an improvement in the percentage of the borough covered by litter, detritus and fly-posting (the Keep Britain Tidy measure for calculating the cleanliness of the borough). Only graffiti saw a slight decline in performance (3.9% improvement for litter, 3.6% for detritus, 4.1% for fly-posting, 1.9% decline for graffiti).

There is poor Fleet Operator Licence compliance, and this is an immediate priority currently being worked on. Passenger Transport Service started transporting children to school in September 2020, this is an area of increased risk regarding Covid-19.

The enforcement team have completed restructuring the service and have rolled out the new model. Significant changes include extending the hours of operation for parking and environmental enforcement, and increasing capacity to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB) such as begging and street drinking. The pandemic has meant certain environmental health functions, such as food safety inspections and housing visits were and are still restricted. This has impacted certain indicators such as the number of inspections, Fixed Penalty Notices and enforcement notices issued. There has also been a large increase in ASB reports, which are specifically related to the pandemic. This includes reports of people not socially distancing or wearing masks, which are being recorded as ASB. The courts have largely been closed for enforcement cases so there has been a sharp reduction in the number of prosecutions and thus a reduction in income.

The Parking Service saw a significant loss of income during Q1 and Q2 due the pandemic and much of the activity being suspended during lockdown. This has started to recover since the summer. The CPZ programme was suspended at the start of lockdown but started again in Sept and is on track to rollout new schemes from March 2021.

Investing in physical and social infrastructure

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Five projects initiated to reduce traffic around schools
- Plans progressed for tunnelling the A13 to improve air quality in the borough and create room for 10,000 new homes
- £5m grant secured from ‘Get Britain Building’ fund to upgrade road network and London East site
- Range of projects funded through SCIL funding, including a new jetty for Thames Clipper at Riverside and numerous community and parks projects

Priorities for next six months:

- Early in 2021, work starting outside Barking Station to increase space for pedestrians
- Explore how the Council can work with Homes England and others to move the A13 tunnelling forward

Key risk in the next six months:

- Delays to delivery of projects as a result of further lockdowns or workforce issues caused by Brexit
- A slow down in development leading to reduce SCIL income to fund future infrastructure projects

We have set out an ambitious set of goals for improving the infrastructure in our borough.

Over recent months there has been progress on delivering our transport agenda, despite the challenges of Covid-19 meaning delivery had to be reoriented to introduce measures to support to support social distancing. Five projects have been initiated to reduce traffic around schools. Early in 2021, work will start outside Barking Station to increase space available for pedestrians.

More strategically, we have progressed plans for tunnelling the A13 to improve air quality in the south of the borough and create room for up to 10,000 new homes and there is now a feasible technical solution developed which with future technical design work would mean the tunnel could be delivered if funding is secured. A key focus in coming months is to explore how we can work with Homes England and others to move this project forward.

As part of the delivery Film Studios (see page 15) we have secured a £5m grant from the Government’s ‘Get Britain Building’ fund that will be used to upgrade the road network at the London East site.

The council funded a range of projects through the Strategic Community Infrastructure Fund (SCIL) at the beginning of this financial year. Through this we have funded Thames Clipper to build a new jetty that will allow their services to pick up passengers at Riverside. Funding has also been used to invest in a number of community projects, and in our parks to improve the physical environment. This includes providing funding to support the opening of the East London Woman’s Museum which will come to the borough.

Shaping aspirational places

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Partnership announced with Hackman Capital/MBS group to deliver Dagenham East film studios. This will create up to 1,200 jobs in the borough and create training opportunities
- A strategy and a delivery plan for the future of Barking Town centre have been agreed. Funding has been secured to appoint a Town Centre Manager to make immediate improvements to the experience of residents and visitors
- The masterplan for the Thames Road/River Road area has been published for consultation with residents, business and other stakeholders

Priorities for next six months:

- Finalise Local Plan and associated planning guidance documents to set the framework for growth
- Develop delivery options for the build out of housing and commercial space in Thames Road

Key risk in the next six months:

- Delay in submission of the Local Plan and examination in public process

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A major focus this year in this area is work is to consolidate our thinking and set out plans that provide a clear route map for the delivery of regeneration vision for the six areas which are set out in the Corporate Plan. This work is now progressing at pace and the plans will be set out over the course of 2021.

Alongside this work there have been significant achievements over the past six to 12 months which form key elements in delivering our vision for these areas:

In November we announced a partnership with Hackman Capital/MBS group to deliver London's largest film studio at Dagenham East. The studio will create up to 1,200 jobs in the borough, provide opportunities for training and small and medium enterprises, as well as contributing to changing perceptions of the borough more generally.

Cabinet agreed a strategy (and delivery plan) for the future of Barking Town Centre. The strategy provides a road map for the revitalisation of the Town Centre post-Covid and includes a range of projects from securing improvements to the train station, to the potential delivery of a 'food hub' – linked to the arrival of the City of London Markets in the borough by 2025. We have also secured funding to appoint a Town Centre Manager who will bring leadership and co-ordination across a range of services to make immediate improvements to the experience of residents and visitors. A conservation plan has also been approved to ensure the heritage of the Town Centre is preserved as it develops.

Significant progress has been made on the delivery of our vision for the Thames Road/River Road area on both a strategic and practical level. The Masterplan is published for consultation with residents, businesses and other stakeholders. It is hoped that this will be adopted alongside the new Local Plan in 2021. At the same time the council is continuing to acquire strategically important assets in the area, supported by GLA grant. As a significant land owner in that area the council will have greater influence over the long-term delivery of the Masterplan.

A decarbonised, local energy system

Key performance and delivery messages:

- B&D Energy is providing fairly priced heat and power to 170 homes in Becontree Heath and 400 on the Gascoigne estate. Preparations have begun to deliver new connections across the Barking Town Centre Strategic Heat Network
- Solar Panels have been fitted to over 350 Council-owned buildings

Priorities for next six months:

- Trials of products such as solar/thermal photovoltaic batteries and heat pumps across 250 private and council properties will be supported through £1.6m of Green Homes Grant
- Ground-source heat pump communal arrays to be piloted. Feasibility studies are due to commence in January 2021
- Study currently underway to identify potential new heat sources and demands across the Dagenham Docks and Dagenham East areas. Due to complete in February 2021
- Design and viability work for a private wire network on the Padnall Lake development proceeds and will make provision for future use of battery storage units which can export energy back into the grid

Key risk in the next six months:

- B&D Energy cannot bridge the funding gap for new connections in the Barking Town Centre Strategic Heat Network with grant funding from external sources

The creation of B&D Energy, the council's wholly-owned energy services company, in 2016 allowed for the creation of two decentralised and highly efficient, lower-carbon energy networks which are now providing fairly-priced heat and power across new-build developments and existing leisure centres, including 170 homes in Becontree Heath and 400 homes on the Gascoigne estate. Over the last year preparations have begun to deliver new connections across the Barking Town Centre Strategic Heat Network.

However, the potential for local energy production stretches beyond investment in district heat networks and there is wider scope for the deployment of solar photovoltaic (PV), battery storage, as well as communal and individual ground and air source heat pumps. Solar panels have been fitted to over 350 council-owned buildings and we have commissioned the Building Research Establishment Solar Centre to provide advice on the best business models for investment in renewable technologies.

Despite the progress made towards a decarbonised, local energy system, there remain challenges and areas for improvement. Barking & Dagenham remains in the bottom quartile of renewable energy production in London, but ultimately the more energy generated in the borough, the more resilient it becomes in the face of fluctuating global energy prices and the greater our contribution will be to climate change and meeting carbon neutral targets.

Cost and caution will remain the primary obstacles to greater scale-up of renewable energy installations and this will only change with time as supply chains develop, production costs reduce, government incentives increase and residents feel less hesitant about new technologies heating and powering their homes. Therefore, trialling products like solar/thermal PVs and heat pumps in council properties will

show the borough leading by example and incentivise owner-occupiers to join the transition to renewable energy. This will be supported by the delivery of such measures across 250 private and council properties over the next year, funded through £1.6m of Green Homes Grant.

In terms of B&D Energy, tenders for works to extend the Barking Town Centre strategic heat network came in £3m more than was expected but funding options to bridge that gap are currently being reviewed including public grant. A six-month delay in payments from the Heat Network Investment Programme grant has also caused a lag in connecting Crowne House to the network but contingency plans have been put into place to mitigate against the problems this may cause to the progressing of the development scheme.

The coming six months will see a focus on several priorities. There are tranches of work planned for testing technologies which the council has not traditionally been familiar with as part of the understanding required to get the council to carbon neutral by 2030. The Green Homes Grant (Local Authority Led) Scheme and Cosy Homes programme will be trialling the installation of innovative solid wall insulation products across 150 council homes, including the deployment of solar PVs and air source heat pumps.

The Building Research Establishment are due to report back in January 2021 regarding the viability of commercialisation opportunities, such as using Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with solar PV across our stock. Equally, the council has identified trial sites on existing high-rise estates which would be ideal candidates for piloting ground-source heat pump communal arrays which take the free heat out of the ground and turn it into cheaper energy throughout flatted blocks. Feasibility studies are due to commence in January 2021.

B&D Energy continues to develop new network opportunities with a study currently underway which will identify potential new heat sources and demands across the Dagenham Docks and Dagenham East areas and is due to complete in February 2021. Design and viability work for a private wire network on the Padnall Lake development proceeds and will make provision for future use of battery storage units which can export energy back into the grid.

Energy efficient homes and buildings

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Cosy Homes programme launched in partnership with E.ON and installers. This has delivered free cavity, party wall and loft insulation for more than 300 households, with 160 additionally booked
- This scheme has leveraged in £100,000 of free funding and is projected to save almost 4,000 tonnes of carbon over the next 30 years
- This scheme is also projected to provide more than £1m of energy bills savings over the same period

Priorities for next six months:

- Continuing promotion of take-up of free measures to install green products
- Ensuring that more homes receive energy conservation measures and benefit from warmer properties
- Working through a pan-London procurement to have a deep retrofit provider in place by February 2021 with the first 15 properties receiving works from September onwards
- Leading a national £10m bid for eight local authorities to access Social Housing Decarbonisation Demonstrator Fund monies to increase the number of properties taking part in the retrofit trials
- Selecting a solution provider from the Mayor of London's Retrofit Accelerator framework to assist the delivery of energy and carbon saving installs across 25 of the council's highest consuming public buildings

Key risk in the next six months:

- Public reluctance or hesitance means the take up solar PV and heat pumps funded by Green Homes Grant renders the scheme unsuccessful

This year the council launched its Cosy Homes programme in partnership with E.ON and a framework of installers to deliver free cavity, party wall and loft insulation through a national scheme called ECO3, which obliges large energy suppliers to provide funded energy conservation measures to qualifying households. Since May the scheme has provided free installs for more than 300 council, privately rented and owner-occupied households, with 160 additional properties booked for works. Coupled to this are further measures such as solid wall insulation, renewables, smart air bricks and energy bill-cutting immersion system heat pads being rolled out to council and private homes through the Green Homes Grant.

The scheme has leveraged in £100,000 of free ECO3 funding and based on the current installs is projected to save almost 4,000 tonnes of carbon over the next 30 years and provide more than £1m worth of energy bill savings over the same period.

The challenge for retrofit is ensuring it is scalable and can be financed. To meet council and borough-wide targets to be carbon neutral by 2030 and 2050 requires a huge step change in how we all heat our homes and workplaces and that requires both money and cultural and behavioural change. The testing of installs through ECO3 and Green Homes Grant will provide only limited impact in reaching those targets

and other schemes being trialled, such as the Energiesprong deep retrofit pilot, will offer significant technical solutions but at the moment not at a scalable cost.

The key to improving our position on this is to continue the promotion of free measures so the public becomes less reluctant to install green products. A dedicated suite of videos, media, case studies, infographics and promotional material explaining the benefits of renewables, the savings to be made, impact on health and reduction in carbon emissions is being drawn up to reinforce why and how we can meet those 2030 targets. Internally in the Council there is also a need for greater appreciation of this agenda across teams in Be First and My Place so that the way we approach new-build and improve existing build has sustainability and a clear operational understanding of renewables at the heart of design. The work being developed by Anthesis and the Carbon Trust in creating a Zero Carbon Roadmap, estimating our carbon impact and the actions and interventions that the Council needs to take over the next decade, will underpin these decisions.

One of the priorities for the next six months is ensuring more homes receive energy conservation measures and benefit from warmer properties. Cosy Homes continues to attract monthly public referrals; the Green Homes Grant installs begin in December and the Council is due to make a second bid for £1.7m to deliver additional measures in 150 properties by August 2021.

At the same time we are working with the GLA to road-test deep retrofitting, using the Energiesprong performance specification which seeks to create A-rated energy efficient homes, while cutting fuel bills and providing affordable warmth and comfort through the use of air-tight insulation facades, solar arrays, heat pumps and battery storage as a whole-house package. Working through a pan-London procurement, we should have a provider in place by February 2021 with the first 15 properties receiving works from September onwards. Barking & Dagenham is also leading a national £10m bid for eight local authorities to access Social Housing Decarbonisation Demonstrator Fund monies to increase the number of properties taking part in the trials.

It is incumbent upon the Council to lead by example, which is why by February 2021 we will have selected a solution provider from the Mayor of London's Retrofit Accelerator framework to assist us in delivering energy saving and carbon saving installs across 25 of the Council's highest consuming public buildings. Works are expected to begin in the summer.

Discussions with organisations like Abundance Investments and the Green Finance Initiative will allow us to assess the most viable way in which to fund and scale-up our retrofit programmes. Providing the intellectual framework for these retrofitting investment decisions is the Zero Carbon Roadmap which will be completed in March 2021.

A green local environment

Key performance and delivery messages:

- More than 30,000 new trees have been planted in the Forest of Thanks in Parsloes Park. A further 250 trees have been planted in smaller schemes across the Borough
- A new Low Emissions Vehicle Working Group has been established to plan the roll-out of electric-charging infrastructure
- A new Cycling and Walking steering group is examining how to promote greener travel, upgrade existing cycle routes and provide for new ones

Priorities for next six months:

- Acceleration of tree-planting. 5,000 young plantlings are being donated by the charity Trees for Cities and there are a further 2,000 plantings due across St Chads and Old Dagenham Parks
- Ensuring that Borough's 28 Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are provided with adequate investment and protection
- The Low Emission Vehicles Working Group, working in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust, will provide a suitable route to market and procurement strategy to tackle the lack of publicly accessible charge-points in the borough
- An Electric Vehicle survey with the wider public will go live in December as part of an incentivisation and promotion of EV campaign and moves to phase-in electric vehicles across the My Place fleet will begin

Key risk in the next six months:

- Delays in agreeing the right specification and procurement route to select a charge point operator frustrates progress to gradual roll-out of new charge points into 2022

The Council recognises that the environment has a major impact on the quality of the lives of Barking & Dagenham residents and by ensuring that we have the cleanest public realm, parks and waterways, increased tree canopy, and access to the most sustainable methods of transport and vastly improved air quality it will provide greater health and wellbeing.

Upgrading and refreshing the borough's green and blue infrastructure so that fauna and flora thrive, pollutants are removed from the atmosphere and residents enjoy the benefits of bio-diversity has led to the planting of more than 30,000 new trees in the Forest of Thanks in Parsloes Park, which now forms the largest Miyawaki-style² forest in Europe. In addition, 250 trees have been planted in smaller schemes across public spaces, Mayesbrook Park and a new community orchard in Eastbrookend Country Park, confirming the designation of Barking & Dagenham as a 'Tree City of the World'. Improvements to public amenities and green space is due to commence as part of the £7m Parsloes Parklife project, a major commitment to the upgrades of the borough's ten major parks.

² A method of urban forestry which accelerates bio-diversity and vegetation growth through dense planting

Significantly, the borough's new Local Plan makes a commitment to a 10% increase in biodiversity through habitat enhancement, new roosting and nesting sites for wildlife together with street trees, green walls and green rooves.

The Draft Air Quality Action Plan, the consultation to which closed on 30 November 2020, commits the borough to significant interventions to drive down high levels of nitrogen oxides and particulates in the local atmosphere. Preparing the borough for the shift to electric vehicles is central to this and a new Low Emissions Vehicle Working Group has been established to plan the roll-out of electric-charging infrastructure. A new Cycling and Walking Steering Group is also examining how to promote active, greener travel, upgrading existing cycle routes and provide for new ones.

Resourcing and funding improvements to green infrastructure and rewilding has been a longstanding problem in Barking & Dagenham and requires a new strategic approach to maximising uptake of external monies and elevating the importance and value of this area of work across the system, especially in meeting 2030 and 2050 zero carbon targets. A greater role for Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding in supporting and promoting environmental projects needs to be addressed as part of the review of planning obligation policies.

The Council is behind the curve in terms of low emission vehicles. Barking & Dagenham sits in the lowest quartile in London for electric vehicle (EV) car ownership and in the number of publicly accessible charge points. The lack of strategic direction has meant that no internal funding has been set aside to capitalise on match-funded grant opportunities offered through the Go-Ultra Low Scheme (which has since closed) and On-Street Residential Charge point Scheme, which provides a 75% contribution. Equally, the lack of an agreed approach to EV infrastructure on new-build and within the corporate estate has led to inconsistencies in what has been provided and the management of equipment. All these matters are to be addressed by the Low Emission Vehicle Working Group.

Priorities for the next six months include the acceleration of tree-planting, which will continue over the course of the next year. Five thousand young plantlings are being donated by the charity Trees for Cities and there are a further 2,000 plantings due across St Chads and Old Dagenham Parks. The Council is also seeking a strategic partnership to further increase tree-planting, hedgerow restoration and mini-woodlands over the next five years. Ensuring the 28 local Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are provided with adequate protection is also a priority. Some of these sites are deteriorating and the partnership will work up a programme to enhance the ecological value of these assets.

There is also some urgency in agreeing the mechanisms to support funding for green infrastructure over the coming six months and Be First and Inclusive Growth are developing policies which can capture developer contributions towards carbon offsetting projects, air quality focus areas and the improvement of the SINCs.

The Low Emission Vehicles Working Group, working in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust, will over this period provide a suitable route to market and procurement strategy to tackle the lack of publicly accessible charge points in the borough so that by the end of 2022 there is reasonable coverage of new points across all of Barking & Dagenham. In parallel to this piece of work, an EV survey with the wider public goes live in December as part of an incentivisation and promotion of EV campaign and moves to phase-in electric vehicles across the My Place fleet will begin.

Money and Debt

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Begun establishment of an ethical and whole system approach to the collection, management and prevention of debt
- Launched the Financial Hardship Scheme, providing individual assistance payments for residents needing support with emergency living expenses. This has supported over 400 residents with £241k in financial support
- The Homes and Money hub supported over 1750 residents, facilitating income maximisation of £430k. Since April, 4,955 calls or visits have been resolved at the point of contact
- 900 residents have been supported with discretionary housing payments, providing £1m towards rental arrears
- Facilitated an increase in awards including Free School Meals, which increased by 2,000 to 11,205
- Four community food clubs have remained open during Covid-19, enabling residents to access affordable, healthy food alongside wrap-around access to support around debt, money advice and welfare

Priorities for next six months:

- Continue to ensure residents facing financial hardship are able to access a range of support and interventions that address immediate risks, build financial resilience and ongoing independence
- Continue to develop and lay the foundation for the Community Banking service, with a view to launching in mid-Summer 2021
- Launch and develop ethical enforcement service
- Delivery of the next phase of the Single View of Debt project, enabling us to better understand debt, facilitate targeted debt recovery and inform service delivery
- Review ways of tackling digital exclusion – including by implementing recommendations from the Citizens Online digital inclusion project

Key risk in the next six months:

- Increased demand as a consequence of Covid-19 and balance of debt prevention with increasing debt collection

Against the challenging backdrop of Covid-19 we have taken significant steps to establishing an ethical and whole system approach to the collection, management and prevention of debt and continued to build on and strengthen our approach to working with residents and households early, to build financial resilience.

In April, we launched our local Financial Hardship Scheme, which provides individual assistance payments for residents needing support with emergency living expenses including food, fuel, travel expenses, household appliances and or clothing. To date, the scheme has supported over 400 residents with £241,000 in financial support.

In September we successfully implemented our local scheme and process for the Test and Trace Self-Isolation Payment. This supports residents at risk of income loss caused by isolation because of Covid-19.

The Homes and Money Hub remained open throughout Covid-19 and has supported over 1,750 residents, facilitating income maximisation of £430,000. The service has continued to evolve building on our pandemic response, with the introduction of an additional focus on proactive contact to households at risk with an offer of help and to triage calls and visits to the service. Since April, 4,955 calls or visits have been resolved at the point of contact.

Nine hundred residents have been supported with discretionary housing payments, providing £1m towards rental arrears and securing tenancies to support people to remain in their homes. Free School Meals uptake was increased by 2,000, up to 11,500, and Council Tax support awards increased to 16,436. During this time of financial hardship this help to ensure residents receive their welfare entitlements is critical.

Food clubs and food banks are vital for giving residents access affordable, healthy food alongside 'wrap-around access' to support around debt, money advice and welfare. Four community food clubs operating from Childrens Centres and Community Centres remained open during Covid-19, and a new food club opened at Barking Learning Centre (BLC) which was delivered by The Source building on the successful partnership response in setting up a day shelter at BLC. Since April there have been 3,335 visits to community food clubs providing savings, to residents of £55,028. Food bank membership charges were waived too, increasing access. In the next six months a priority is to link with the BD_Collective and food network to broaden access to a range of information and resources linked to debt and money management, including partnering on training and through this we seek to grow sector capacity, through ongoing collaboration to support more residents early and to ensure those that require some extra support can access it easily and quickly. Increased roles for debt champions and volunteers in the food network is an area of development.

£20,000 of funding was secured to work with the Financial Inclusion Centre to undertake an options appraisal on how the borough could act to increase access to more affordable credit and fairer financial services. The appraisal, completed in August, included an analysis of local need and identified a preferred option of developing a local community banking offer. This is to directly address low average credit scores, significant use of high-interest loans and low financial resilience and savings in Barking & Dagenham. A key priority for the next six months is to continue to develop and lay the foundation for the Community Banking service, with a view to launching in the borough in mid-Summer 2021. This will enable us to take further significant steps in supporting residents to access more affordable and sustainable credit, responsible financial services and everyday banking. In doing this, we are committed to working alongside local social sector organisations to co-develop and build on existing engagement. Key objectives will include:

- Successfully partnering with a like-minded Credit Union to underpin the offer, as the result of a proactive and interactive procurement exercise
- Engaging with staff, residents and the community to seek views on what a Community Banking offer should entail and how it can be linked into existing services, to ensure the offer is tailored to the borough
- Developing a comprehensive communications and marketing plan alongside the credit union and partners to build reach and meet the target of 4,500 new members within three years

Good progress has been made in establishing our in-house ethical enforcement service, with a service launch of April 2021. Recruitment to the service is on track, with Head of Service in place and current focus is on service set up – establishing policy framework, training and development and embedding the service within the wider welfare and support offer in Community Solutions.

The first phase of the single view of debt project (SVOD) has been completed. Data and insight is key to the development of our ambition for a more ethical and preventative approach to collection, management and prevention of debt. The SVOD brings together data through the One View platform, alongside identifying wider household vulnerabilities to support targeted work to increase collection, prevent escalation of debt, and achieve more effective and efficient use of resources by prioritising cases where there is most chance of a positive outcome.

The key output from this phase is a debt insight report which aims to help us better understand debt owed to the Council, in terms of: total debt owed; who is in debt; types of debt; and effectiveness of interventions. In the next six months this report will inform targeted debt recovery action and avoid costly recovery interventions. The report will also inform service delivery by enabling teams to prioritise the cases and optimise activity.

In parallel to the SVOD project, we continue to work closely with the Insight Hub and use behavioural science to explore opportunities to tailor approaches to resident engagement and support; for example, letters, online information and advice which considers a person's overall situation and propensity to pay. Progressing several pilots will be a priority for the next six months.

The ethical enforcement service will be launched and developed, testing and embedding a more ethical and fairer approach to collection and welfare support. As with the SVOD work, this service will take a holistic and humane approach to debt management.

Further work is planned to review ways of tackling digital exclusion; including by implementing recommendations from the Citizens Online digital inclusion project, and facilitating better ways for residents to self-serve and access appropriate advice and support around money and debt, reducing physical demands on services.

The key challenge in this area is meeting the demand of the service in terms of Benefit Applications and Changes, hardship, Discretionary Housing Payments and Self Isolation Payments whilst proactively identifying vulnerable residents needing additional support. How we use the Homes and Money Hub and the early preventative offer is vital to managing demand and resources for maximum impact.

Participation and Engagement

Building capacity in the social sector

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Distributed £250,000 of NCIL funding to community groups, and a further £9k through the local lottery
- Created a central endowment for the Borough that is hosted by BD Giving
- Established Better Impact, a single shared platform for all volunteering in the borough
- Established BD CAN in partnership with the Social Sector, a community led response to Covid-19 that has provided support to over 2,000 residents

Priorities for next six months:

- Continuing to support our vulnerable residents in the face of Covid-19
- Engaging the sector and the community on the priorities for the forthcoming Community Assets Policy
- Working closely with the BD_Collective and BD Giving as they grow their networks in the Borough, including the development of Community Hubs and social isolation programmes

Key risk in the next six months:

- Pressure on the capacity of the voluntary and community sector caused by the pandemic compromises the ability to take forward joint work

Much of the social sector's time over the past nine months has been taken up leading the community response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in the form of BD_CAN as well as different organisations' responses to the crisis such as the diversion of services online. The strong relationship between the social sector and the Council is evidenced by the speed and effectiveness with which BD_CAN was able to be established. This has happened partly due to the work of the BD Collective who were commissioned in 2019 to deliver the social infrastructure contract. Furthermore, the leading role that social sector organisations have taken in delivering BD_CAN and supporting residents highlights how the social sector's capacity has been built up.

The BD Collective has gained traction as they have worked over the past year to grow their network so they can support the social sector in the borough. While much of their time in the last nine months has been spent leading and coordinating BD_CAN, progress has been made on the social infrastructure contract, particularly with regards to volunteering and the use of a single shared platform for all volunteering in the borough. This platform has now been established in the form of Better Impact and social sector organisations have begun advertising opportunities directly on the platform where they are quickly taken up by the pool of resident volunteers. It should also be noted that volunteering in the borough has in some cases been negatively impacted by Covid-19; for example, volunteering at heritage sites has stopped due to heritage sites being forced to close due to the pandemic. However, despite the challenges thrown up by Covid, progress has been made with volunteering as highlighted above, with

3063 hours of volunteering registered on the Better Impact platform during this period and volunteers from different community groups having played an important role in responding to the pandemic. The BD_Collective have also successfully launched three new networks working with partners in the sector and within the Council such as Community Solutions, looking at the areas of food, adult social care and support for families. Through these and future networks they aim to grow the sector, facilitating partnership and collaboration.

Barking & Dagenham Giving has made significant progress in the past season. In April, a project collecting stories of volunteers and organisations adapting to the situation was successfully launched and has been ongoing. A new website for BD Giving was launched ahead of Barking & Dagenham Giving Week. BD Giving week saw over £9,000 from the Barking & Dagenham lottery handed over to local causes, there is a continued focus for the next six months to continue to grow ticket sales for the lottery scheme for distribution of funds to local groups. In addition, during this week applications opened for a Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund of £100,000 funded by Lankelly Chase. A participatory design process was facilitated and funding grants were successfully distributed to community groups. In recent months there has been significant progress made with the proposed creation of a central endowment for the borough with a paper having been taken to Cabinet in December where it was agreed to create a central endowment which would be hosted by Barking & Dagenham Giving. The Council's NCIL fund has seen rounds three and four successfully run in the last nine months. The whole process has been taken successfully online during this period with over £250,000 distributed to community groups during these rounds.

Faith groups made up a significant part of the BD_CAN response and the Faith Policy Action Plan has continued to be monitored and delivered through a joint work programme with the Faith Forum, with Interfaith Week having been successfully delivered in November. The Council worked closely and effectively with Faith partners during the pandemic to ensure they safely opened, operated and addressed challenging issues related to lockdown compliance and safety.

Work on a community assets review, an accompanying community engagement programme and a new community assets policy was delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 on the resourcing of Strategy and Participation, My Place and Community Solutions. Work continued with regards to community hall leases. Work has resumed on planning a community engagement programme on community assets and the creation of a policy which will draw upon the results of this community engagement, with more progress to be made in the coming months.

Over the next 6 months a key priority will be continuing to work closely with our partners in the Social Sector such as the BD_Collective and BD_Giving to support our vulnerable residents in the face of Covid-19, while also planning for the future by building the capacity of our social sector and facilitating partnership and collaboration between different partners across the borough.

Developing opportunities to meaningfully participate

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Every One Every Day have worked to move their platform online, launching the Tomorrow Today Streets initiative and the Mighty Networks online platform
- Commissioned the development of the conservation management and strategic plans for both Eastbury Manor and Valence House, mapping out the future for both sites
- The One Borough One Love Online Festival was held in September reaching a wide ranging audience from the Borough and beyond with over 27,000 unique online visitors to the event

Priorities for next six months:

- Developing Every One Every Day's collaborative business programme, with plans to utilise the Kickstarter programme to hire up to 30 local young people as apprentices
- Planning for the launch of Becontree Forever, a comprehensive programme of cultural activity that will run throughout the Centenary year of the Becontree Estate
- Securing the future of participation in the Borough, through sustainability discussions with Participatory City and through maintaining participation opportunities for residents through our Culture, Leisure and Heritage offers

Key risk in the next six months:

- Getting traction on Every One Every Day, heritage and cultural planning is more difficult and harder to sustain if meaningful in person participation cannot happen

Over the past nine months, work has been done to move participation platforms online wherever possible, giving residents the opportunity participate virtually. This has been necessary due to the impact of Covid-19, with heritage sites around the borough closing their physical locations and the Summer of Festivals cancelled, while Every One Every Day (EOED) closed their physical shops for part of this time.

In the past six months, a new metric for assessing the impact of participation upon residents has been devised, with six 'Impact of Participation' questions being asked to residents who have taken part in different activities such as the Neighbourhood Fund process, volunteering or the Citizens Alliance Network. This metric and its results will be reported on a bi-annual basis. The first set of results were extremely encouraging, with most residents who responded reporting the positive impacts participating in different activities had upon them, including:

- an increased desire and confidence to be involved in local decision-making or local community work
- feeling confident they have a good understanding of the borough
- wanting to make a change in their community or their own lives and feeling confident they can do so.

As mentioned above, EOED had to close all of their physical shops due to Covid-19. However, operations online to their 'Mighty Networks' platform and they have launched a new initiative called

'Tomorrow Today Streets' which has given residents the opportunity to participate from their own homes with the aim of creating smaller eco-systems of participation across the borough. Despite these efforts to move their participation eco-systems online, the impact of Covid-19 could still affect their outputs at the end of the initial five year project period in terms of numbers of people participating, number of hours of participation recorded and number of projects initiated. EOED have made efforts to re-open their in-person participation facilities to residents in a controlled manner but have been repeatedly hindered in doing so by guidelines and restrictions on in-person participation being implemented by central government. They have used their Thames warehouse whenever possible and it was a key part of the BD_CAN response, acting as a satellite food hub where food parcels for vulnerable residents were prepared and distributed from. Progress has been made with regards to EOED's collaborative business programme, with plans to utilise the Kickstarter programme, in partnership with the Council, to hire up to 30 local young people as apprentices to work in their fast developing Waxworks programme. They continue to host regular online events involving partners from both the social sector and the Council. The governance arrangements regarding EOED have not been affected by lockdown. Meetings between LBBD and Participatory City continued to be held online including funders board, project board and regular working group meetings. Future sustainability planning discussions have begun with Participatory City and are progressing well with teams from the Council and PC working together closely.

Similarly to EOED, Heritage Services have been heavily disrupted due to Covid-19 and the sites have remained closed since March. Valence House Museum opened for a short period but had to close due to the second lockdown. A review of opening times for heritage sites will be undertaken. Despite significant difficulties presented by the pandemic, progress has been made in the development of the conservation management. Strategic plans for both Eastbury Manor and Valence House have been commissioned which will map out the future for the sites, including identifying opportunities to develop the site and programme to ensure the visitor experience and ultimately increase footfall and income generation.

While the Summer of Festivals was cancelled for Summer 2020 due to Covid-19, the One Borough One Love Online Festival was held in September reaching a wide ranging audience from the borough and beyond with over 27,000 unique online visitors to the event. Throughout the month of December the Community Events Team oversaw a Christmas-themed programme of activity which included online programming as well as the distribution of thousands of holiday-themed kits to homes across the borough. Cultural Commissioning is continuing to support arts and community-based organisations in the borough through key commissioning initiatives. This includes a rich Black History Month programme that ran throughout October which saw the launch of the Barking and Dagenham Good Food Collective and Studio 3 Arts' 3-Style Fridays dance battle live streamed from Valence Library, among many other workshops and events. This autumn also saw the launch of New Town Culture's online workshops with young people from our Foster and Youth Offending Services, with artists Joe Namy and Antonio Roberts leading the sessions that were commissioned through our local partners The White House and Company Drinks. Planning is also currently underway for the launch of Becontree Forever, a comprehensive programme of cultural activity that will run throughout the Centenary year of the Becontree Estate, involving hundreds of artists and partners and significant cultural/public realm commissions.

Over the next six months, a key priority will be securing the future of participation in the borough, partly through sustainability discussions with Participatory City over the future of an in-person participation platform embedded throughout the borough and also through maintaining participation opportunities for residents through our Culture, Leisure and Heritage offers, while navigating the complications and barriers to participation that Covid-19 presents.

Pen to Print is a project and vision where everybody should have a chance to tell their story and by giving residents access to a network of expertise and support for aspiring writers in Barking & Dagenham and sharing this with a wider national and international community. During the pandemic delivery has moved

online offering digital content to read, watch and enjoy and a variety of competitions and quizzes; such activity saw website traffic double from 31,856 to 69,177 visits.

Facilitating democratic participation

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Launched the Citizens Alliance Network (CAN) online
- Over 2,000 people have visited the CAN website with hundreds of residents engaging with projects. Projects have been launched by council officers, Members, social sector partners and by a resident participant
- A series of online ‘Community Conversations’ have taken place, bringing residents together with officers and Members, with CAN also featuring at high profile events such as the State of the Borough conference and the One Borough One Love online festival

Priorities for next six months:

- Accelerating the development of the network and the number of people who are using CAN through comms activities with Members, social sector and residents
- Continue to add projects, looking for opportunities to support residents who want to take action on issues that matter to them and social sector groups also
- Establish a series of ‘Community Conversations’, involving council officers, Members, social sector partners and our residents

Key risk in the next six months:

- People continue to struggle to commit time to things over and above the pandemic, and only engage in a light-touch way and do not go forward to formally sign-up to the platform. The situation is made more difficult by being unable to meet in person and develop a deeper conversation

Central to this priority is the progression of the Citizens Alliance Network (CAN), a platform for which community mobilising and democratic participation will be able to be conducted from throughout the borough. Earlier in 2020 CAN was debuted in a different form to what it was originally intended to be, in the form of BD CAN, a core pillar of the council and the wider social sector’s emergency response to the pandemic of Covid-19. Further details about BD CAN are included (see page 26), however the platform was quickly developed to meet community need in collaboration with civil society and is a testament to how far the borough has come in the way we work with civil society and the community. Out of BD CAN has developed BD CAN Connect which is the coming together of over a dozen voluntary and community sector organisations and council departments supporting those residents who received support from BD CAN with emotional, social and community mental health support. This is a great example of the new relational council in action, moving away from ‘commissioned services’ and towards the providing mutual aid and the sharing of resources and data, as well as understanding of the system and how it works.

Over the past six months, efforts have shifted towards developing CAN into becoming the platform for community engagement and democratic participation it was intended to be. The CAN Project Manager, in post since March 2020, has led on a development process to build CAN into a broad and active platform for democratic participation.

Already over 2,000 people have visited the CAN website, while projects so far have engaged hundreds of residents with over 450 contributions³. More than 12 projects have been commenced using CAN's online platform. While many of these have been council-initiated to begin with, we have also facilitated three civil society-initiated projects and a project commenced by a resident participant. A series of online 'Community Conversations' have taken place, bringing residents together with officers and Members to explore the projects and themes in more detail.

A number of high-profile engagement activities have taken place to promote CAN and to encourage development opportunities. These have included the State of the Borough conference and the One Borough One Love Festival.

Over the next six months, there are several priorities for CAN. Marketing and communications activities to help grow the network of participants involved in CAN. Establishing a working group with residents and civil society partners to steer CAN's development. Establishing a regular programme of 'Community Conversations' on a wider range of topics. Developing the 'action' part of the network- looking for opportunities to support residents who want to take action in their communities. Such action is most likely to be in the parks, cleaning and greening space, building on the interest a number of small groups have already shown. More broadly, we will be taking an experimental and iterative approach and seeking opportunities with the VCS and residents to maximise CAN as a participation platform.

³ Active responses or contributions which could include: dropping pins on maps, answering survey questions, sharing a story, or sharing an idea.

Designing relational practices into the council's activity

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Have seen an increase in the number of services using the council's One Borough Voice engagement platform to engage with the community, alongside an increase in internal staff engagement

Priorities for next six months:

- Colleagues from different areas of the council meeting to identify opportunities for effective joint working across the council which can add value to ongoing projects and ensure they are as participatory as possible
- Continue to raise awareness of One Borough Voice and ensure consultations are meaningful and of a high standard

Key risk in the next six months:

- There is an inherent limit on how relational you can be using online communication and at some point a lack of in person contact becomes fundamentally compromising of our ability to take this agenda forward, particularly given increasing levels of mental health concern in the community

Relational working is a key aspect of the participation and engagement priority. This priority is interdependent between the key strategic priorities (Inclusive Growth; Prevention, Independence and Resilience; Well Run Organisation; and Participation and Engagement) and it requires extensive joint working across the council and embracing co-production and co-design practices.

Towards the end of 2020 and into the beginning of 2021, colleagues from Strategy and Participation have been meeting and are meeting colleagues from Inclusive Growth, My Place, Community Solutions and Care and Support to scope out and identify ways in which joint working across the council can add value to critical ongoing projects and, specifically, ensure they are as participatory as possible. For example, related to Inclusive Growth these include engagement undertaken through Reside, Be First and relating to the Becontree centenary celebrations. And related to Prevention, Independence and Resilience, this includes the implementation of the new Target Operating Models, the development of community hubs and the progression of the social prescribing model.

There are three key aspects to relational working:

- communications and campaigns
- customer contact; and
- internal engagement of the workforce

Achievements, improvement areas and risks for those areas are highlighted in the Well Run Organisation themes (pages 61-66).

An important development over the past nine months has been the increasing usage and participation through One Borough Voice. This new digital platform is being used to host meaningful engagements with the community as well as being a tool for internal staff engagement. From April to September 2020 there were 12,849 visitors to the platform putting us on course to exceed the 2020/21 target of 20,000 visitors. Data shows us that residents are not just visiting the platform but also participating with 3,609

engagements⁴ captured. One Borough Voice was used to host the Activities Hub, created to inform residents of online services and activities available to residents during the lockdown, and Citizens Alliance Network which saw over 1,000 visits. It was also used to identify the economic impact on local businesses and to process applications for business grants. These examples show the versatility of the platform and opportunities to engage residents in new ways on a variety of topics.

How we use One Borough Voice creatively to hold dialogue and canvass residents on important community issues is integral to our relational approach. In the next six months we will work to create more engagement opportunities and raise the profile of the platform locally.

⁴ Active responses or contributions which could include: dropping pins on maps, answering survey questions, sharing a story, or sharing an idea.

Prevention, Independence and Resilience

Every child gets the best start in life and all children can attend and achieve in inclusive, good quality early years settings and local schools

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Community Solutions continued to provide support to the most vulnerable families including supporting food and welfare requests
- Early Help services continues its improvement journey in line with the Ofsted action plan and strengthened multi-agency working arrangements
- Take up of the two-year-old early education offer continues to be very strong with Barking & Dagenham (84%) outperforming England (69%) and London (59%) and currently the joint best performing London local authority
- Take up of the three and four-year-old early education offer in the borough (87%) has exceeded London (84%) by 3%
- At the end of August 2020, the percentage of the borough's schools rated 'Good' or better by Ofsted was 91.5%
- New schools are being constructed including phase one of Greatfields school, expansions of Robert Clack onto Lymington Fields, and Barking Abbey across both sites

Priorities for next six months:

- A review commissioned between Corporate Assurance and Children's Improvement Boards will seek to test the impact of progress in line with the action plan, including improvements in safety, effectiveness, and recommendations to support future direction of travel
- Redesign the Health Visiting offer with NELFT
- Fixed term Speech and Language Team
- Re-building the take up of early education and childcare across all ages from a very low point in the first lockdown
- Supporting schools, including through BDSIP, with the development of a blended curriculum, and with SEND curriculum recovery and catch up support for pupils with SEND
- Primary Mental Health Team will be deployed to support children and young people with trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Mayesbrook Park School remains a priority in terms of improving its existing facilities and expanding the number of places
- The scalability of the pilot Team Around the School model will form part of an options appraisal in January 2021

Key risk in the next six months:

- The inability to marshal a coherent partnership response from agencies still consumed with responding to a pandemic

Over the period of Covid-19 Community Solutions has continued to provide support to our most vulnerable families including supporting food and welfare requests. This has been positively received and continues to support improved working relationships across schools, voluntary sector and BD CAN. Against this backdrop the local authority Early Help Services continues its improvement journey in line with the Ofsted action plan.

Early Help improvements across the wider partnership continue as part of a wider piece to strengthen multi-agency working arrangements across health visiting, portage, support in schools, MASH, and in relation to the Ofsted recommended improvement area of childhood neglect and learning from case reviews. As part of our future delivery model for Early Help, we continue to develop multi-agency Team around the Schools arrangements, where partners come together to support children to stay in their schools, remove barriers to learning and improve outcomes.

As part of the corporate risk assurance of local arrangements, an assurance exercise has been jointly commissioned between Corporate Assurance and Children's Improvement Boards, as part of local quality assurance arrangements, and as part of the continuous improvement programme for Children's Services. The review will seek to test the impact of progress in line with the action plan, including improvements in safety, effectiveness and recommendations to support future direction of travel. The review is due to conclude in the new year.

We are currently working with the North East London Foundation Trust to redesign the Health Visiting offer, and this will dovetail with the Early Help offer as set out above. The redesign will strengthen the services ability to safeguard vulnerable families, integrating allied professionals; for example, speech and language therapy into the core team to improve access to support. The new model will draw on the learning from Covid-19 and will blend an online and face-to-face offer for families. An initial outline is due to be presented in January 2021.

Given that many very young children will have missed out on toddler groups, play opportunities and family events due to the pandemic, we are investing in a fixed term Speech and Language Team (SLT), which will provide training to statutory services, Community Solutions, health and voluntary sector organisations, including faith-based organisations. They will support and extend the curriculum in relation to SLT in early years settings, including the early identification of speech and language difficulties.

The team will work alongside Early Years practitioners to deliver speech and language intervention; in doing this they will be modelling and upskilling new ways of working within the sector. This will improve long term language outcomes for the child and improve practitioner understanding which will impact on the wider class.

For children with more complex difficulties, the speech and language therapist will run groups and support parents to improve outcomes for children. For children with more complex speech and language need there is an enhanced referral pathway into mainstream speech and language services.

The play and communication service in Community Solutions moved to online delivery with Babbling Babes, Little Rhyme Makers and Play with a Story with attendance of 1,387 continuing to identify early speech and language needs in children under five. Parents of children that are identified using a speech and language profile are then given strategies to support speech and language development and offered appointments at play and language advice sessions and workshops.

There have been numerous achievements and successes in the past six months. Take up of the two-year-old early education offer continues to be very strong with Barking & Dagenham (84%) out performing England (69%) and London (59%) and currently the joint best performing London local authority. For the first time in several years, take up of the three and four-year-old early education offer in the borough (87%) has exceeded London (84%) by 3%.

As reported in the Annual Education Performance Review 2019/20, at the end of August 2020, the proportion of the borough's schools rated 'Good' or better by Ofsted was 91.5%, the same as end August 2019. This is well above published national benchmarks (86% in March 2020) and just under the London benchmark (93% in March 2020).

In an exceptional year, where there was no national performance data, a key outcome for the borough's young people was strong destinations, including a rise in numbers progressing to higher education.⁵

During Covid-19, strong partnership work has been demonstrated between schools, Barking & Dagenham School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP), the council and partners. The borough's tracking and brokering of support for vulnerable pupils and their families was identified as a key strength. This has been incorporated into legacy arrangements for tracking and supporting vulnerable pupils with all schools and in a pilot of the 'Team Around the School (TAS)' approach. The TAS pilot is delivered in partnership with Community Solutions and three primary schools.

New schools are being constructed including phase one of Greatfields school and expansions of Robert Clack onto Lymington Fields and Barking Abbey across both sites. The planning of new primary and special school places is underway. This includes Ford View primary school, Beam Park school, Greatfields primary school, Pathways special school and Beam Bridge special school. A new primary phase building for Robert Clark school has already been constructed as part of the secondary expansion; it will open in September 2021.

Several areas for improvement have been identified to ensure every child gets the best start in life. There is a focus on re-building the take up of early education and childcare across all ages from a very low point in the first lockdown. Many disadvantaged children have missed a significant proportion of their early years offer. For example, fewer than 10% of eligible two-year olds attended a setting from March to August 2020. This will have an impact on their progress and development, especially in language and communication.

National research has shown that there is likely to be an impact on children and young people's attainment and education outcomes due to missed school time, compounded by unequal access to appropriate IT for remote learning, and given the disruption and difficulties faced as a result of Covid-19. Areas of disadvantage are likely to be particularly affected.

While the TAS pilot has continued, some aspects of work were affected or paused due to Covid-19 and the closure of schools to most pupils. Working with partners and families through a mix of online and face-to-face meetings has enabled the pilot to adapt in many areas. The scalability and associated costs of the TAS model remains a challenge.

In line with the national picture, during Covid-19, there has been a considerable rise in the number of families withdrawing their children to be electively home educated (EHE), with a number of cases connected to reasons relating to Covid-19. This is being monitored and the Council has proactively communicated with parents in respect of their child's school place where EHE may be temporary.

Following the impact of the delayed start to Greatfields's secondary school - phase 2b, combined with operational matters related to Covid-19, it was agreed that two year groups from the school would be temporarily based at the former City Farm School site to relieve pressure from the main school site until 'phase 2b' is completed. This arrangement commenced in Autumn term 2020.

⁵ See theme 'More young people are supported to achieve success in adulthood' for information about this.

Supporting schools and settings to remain open and provide a quality education for pupils on site as far as possible will remain a priority and a challenge throughout the Spring term, with some easing expected after Easter.

Early years settings will be supported to identify gaps in children's language development and provide appropriate support and interventions.

The demand and take up of early education and childcare will be analysed thoroughly to understand the impact of Covid-19 on sustainability, sufficiency and school readiness. In addition, the impact of reduced early education take-up on the overall sustainability of the childcare market once the Government's short term financial support ceases in December 2020 will be monitored closely.

Supporting schools, including through BDSIP, with the development of a blended curriculum, and with SEND curriculum recovery and catch up support for pupils with SEND is a further priority. This will be key in, as much as possible, seeking to mitigate adverse impacts on attainment and education outcomes due to Covid-19, including for the most disadvantaged.

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils will remain a priority. The legacy system for tracking and supporting vulnerable pupils involves Education Inclusion Partners (EIPs). EIPs each work with around 20 schools on a geographical area basis and partners to mitigate challenges faced by pupils and their families. This enables the best use of modest resources in the tracking of this vulnerable group, supported by regular conversations to broker support, based on the best intelligence. This work is further supported by 'Hot Clinics' involving Education, Social Care, schools, the Youth Offending Service, Youth at Risk Matrix Workers, and NELFT at which individual cases of concern are discussed.

The latest internal (provisional) data indicates that exclusions are lower now than at this point last year. It will be important to keep school exclusion levels as low as possible - and ensure that, as far as possible, pupils receive the support they need, particularly given the disruption faced by pupils in school and at home in light of Covid-19. In addition to the support for vulnerable pupils highlighted above, a Primary Mental Health Team will be deployed to support children and young people with trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences. There will be regular training for school staff to help them further develop their understanding around the mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable pupils.

Continued close partnership on TAS with schools and Education will be vital so that support for children and families includes the right offer and so that families tell their story once. Health have joined the TAS pilot and their input and alignment with Early Help and Education will be key. Testing the TAS model will be important to ensure the approach joins all the support together in the most effective way to achieve the best outcomes for children and families. The scalability of the pilot TAS model will form part of an options appraisal in January 2021.

Schools will be supported as they prepare for visits from Ofsted: these visits are looking at how schools work with pupils after their extended stay at home. A return to Ofsted's standard graded inspection cycle is not envisaged while the pandemic is causing such disruption daily to schools.

Further primary provision in Barking Town Centre is a priority for future school places and capital investment. Two 3 Form Entry primary schools are required to meet the demand arising from housing developments under construction or with planning permission. A further primary school will be required on Barking Riverside by 2023 to meet the demand from this new community. Beam Bridge special school is planned to be open by 2023 on the former Pondfield depot site.

Mayesbrook Park school remains a priority in terms of improving their existing facilities and expanding the number of places available for young people.

More young people are supported to achieve success in adulthood through higher, further education and access to employment

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Progression of young people to Higher Education in Barking & Dagenham continues to improve significantly year on year rising by 12%
- BDSIP have adapted the Higher Education 'AimHigher' programme which is being delivered online with partners in this sector
- Colin Pond Scholarship of £500 per pupil for the borough's top achieving GCSE students who have chosen to stay in the borough to study at A-level
- Number of the borough's young people moving into apprenticeships has continued to decline, in line with the London picture

Priorities for next six months:

- Identifying all NEET young people, engaging with them and ensuring that they are supported quickly into appropriate Education, Employment and Training (EET) destinations

Key risk in the next six months:

- The post-pandemic and post-Brexit impact on the local labour market, disrupting pathways into employment and/or further education

Progression of young people to Higher Education in Barking & Dagenham continues to significantly improve year on year rising by 12% in 2020 compared to 2019, with 20% more young people progressing to the most competitive universities. By resident cohort, the borough shows the largest increase in higher education progression of any London borough over the past ten years and the proportion of residents obtaining first class or upper second-class degrees has also continued to rise.

Barking & Dagenham School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP) has worked hard to adapt its careers and work-related learning offers for schools choosing to buy into these services in response to the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Their higher education 'AimHigher' programme is being delivered online with partners in this sector. In light of so many young people missing out on work experience during Covid-19, work-related learning is planned to be delivered via an 'Insight to Management' programme, with a range of employers. Careers interviews are being delivered to around 50 young people a week.

The successes of 47 of the borough's top achieving GCSE students who have chosen to stay in the borough to study at A-level have been recognised and rewarded through a Colin Pond Scholarship of £500 per pupil. Each scholar acts as a role model in their school, encouraging top talent to continue to study in Barking & Dagenham.

In line with the regional and national picture, numbers of young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or whose post-16 destinations are unknown for Year 12s and 13s have risen due to the impact of Covid-19. Early indications are that Barking & Dagenham's NEET figures have risen far below the level of other East London boroughs, which is encouraging. However, in light of the impact of the pandemic, significant challenges remain in identifying NEET young people, engaging with them and ensuring that they are supported quickly into appropriate Education, Employment and Training (EET) destinations. In 2019/20, Barking & Dagenham had 3.5% of young people NEET or with

unknown destinations (a key national measure for the proportion of NEETs and 'Unknowns', based on the December 2019 to February 2020 average), better than London and national averages.

The Department for Education's Key Stage 4 post-16 destination measures indicate the number of the borough's young people moving into apprenticeships has continued to decline, despite the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017. This trend is reflected regionally, with London being far behind national levels of apprenticeship participation. The borough's performance is in line with the London benchmark.

More children and young people in care find permanent, safe and stable homes

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Strengthened management oversight across the child's journey to ensure there are no delays in children achieving their permanence outcome

Priorities for next six months:

- Produce improved Child in Need plans that are SMART and focussed on the child's lived experience and intended outcomes
- Refresh the Looked After Children and Care (LAC) Leaver Sufficiency Statement and action plan

Key risk in the next six months:

- Services are impacted by increased demand and hidden harm because of Covid-19 and a provider market that is under increasing financial pressure

There has been a relentless focus upon enabling early permanency for children and young people since the Ofsted inspection, and considerable progress has been made. A Permanence Taskforce chaired by Operation Director keeps single oversight of all permanence activity from children in need plans through to those being adopted. Monthly tracking is showing more timely outcomes.

Most children are placed within family settings and placement stability is good and an improving picture. Short term placement stability is 9% and long-term placement stability has improved to 70% at end of September, above all comparators. Initiatives such as the Mockingbird and our Specialist Intervention service which includes family support workers, therapists, restorative workers, and a Lasting links, are all impacting on placement stability.

Ongoing work is to be taken forward over the next six months to address the number of children placed long distances away from home. This will be delivered through the LAC and Care Leaver Sufficiency strategy which is currently being refreshed.

Currently 92% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation. Scrutiny on unregulated placements and a robust quality assurance function by commissioning colleagues is underway and due to be reported at Corporate Parenting Board.

Improved planning for children placed with parents and single oversight ensuring children do not drift home in their later adolescence without careful planning and support was highlighted by Ofsted as an area needing improvement. A recent audit evidenced improvements have been made and the focussed work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting's Head of Service was impactful.

The Annual Corporate Parenting Report and Annual Adoption Reports, presented to Cabinet in December 2020, set out our progress in considerable detail, as well as our plans for the next year. This will also be a key feature of our Annual Self Evaluation of Children's Social Care Services, due for publication in Q4 of 2020/21.

All care leavers can access a good, enhanced local offer that meets their health, education, housing and employment needs

Key performance and delivery messages:

- The strong leadership, management and hard work was recognised by the National Advisor for Leaving Care across Corporate Parenting
- At end of October 2020, 92% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation and 66% were in education, employment and training
- 90% of Care Leavers (18+) have an up-to-date pathway plan
- CAMHS Hot Clinic has supported an improved mental health offer
- CAMHS Transitions Group has been set up to look at pathways for young people transitioning from children to adults' mental health services, if they meet secondary care thresholds
- **Priorities for next six months:**
 - Embarking on signing up to the Care Leavers Covenant
 - Improving our health offer to care leavers; as well as with Probation, to offer care leavers entering and leaving custody with better support
 - Care leavers mental health is a priority particularly during Covid-19 where isolation is increased
 - Strengthening Skittlz (Children in Care Council) membership and introducing creative means to communicate

Key risk in the next six months:

- Services are impacted by increased demand and hidden harm because of Covid-19

Significant improvement has been made across Corporate Parenting, the Enhanced Local Offer to Care Leavers and meeting our extended duties which apply to care leavers up to 25 years of age. The strong leadership, management and hard work was recognised by the National Advisor for Leaving Care, following a two day visit on the 11/12 November 2020.

The advisor expressed Barking & Dagenham's Corporate Parenting Approach is beginning to see the benefits of having Elected Members and senior officers asking the pertinent question 'is this good enough for my child?', that each member is a 'Care Leaver Champion', and that pledges are made leading to tangible changes.

It was too acknowledged the Enhanced Local Offer for Care Leavers, launched in 2019, included a free annual leisure pass for Care Leavers and a friend. The visitors were impressed by the council waiving the need for Care Leavers to pay council tax in April 2020. It was also noted the work that has been done to increase the housing offer for Care Leavers, including not making them unintentionally homeless.

The council has demonstrated commitment and ambition by significantly investing in the Children's Improvement Programme which included establishing a new operating structure within Children's Care and Support and a new model of care that has enabled greater flexibility to transfer young people to a Leaving Care Advisor when the time is right for that young person, rather than being dictated by their age. This allows for a more seamless and improved service to be provided to Care Leavers.

As at the end of October, 92% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation and 66% were in education, employment and training; this performance is up by 4% from last year and LBBB is above national, London and statistical neighbours' figures. Improvement in the quality of pathway plans, and evidence of care leaver's contribution and voice are stronger in Pathway Planning. 90% of Care Leavers (18+) have an up-to-date pathway plan.

A multi-agency Looked After Children Health sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Group, chaired by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), is tasked to improve health arrangements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The mental health of Care Leavers is a priority particularly during Covid-19 where isolation is increased. A CAMHS Hot Clinic has supported an improved mental health offer and a CAMHS Transitions Group has been set up to look at pathways for young people transitioning from children to adults' mental health provisions.

In the coming year we will be working hard to take forward the recommendations made by the Department for Education National Advisor, following his visit in November 2020. To be truly effective the role of a corporate parent should extend across the whole council, towns and cities, and include partners across the private, public, and voluntary sectors. In Barking & Dagenham, we are embarking on signing up to the Care Leavers Covenant. We believe that with our council's ethos of 'no one left behind', our strong partnerships and inclusive growth ambitions, means we are well placed to become a truly 'universal family' to our care leavers.

We also know that we have work to do with CCG colleagues to improve the health offer to care leavers; as well as with Probation, to offer care leavers entering and leaving custody with better support. We will undertake greater scrutiny of unregulated placements and implement a robust quality assurance framework for our commissioned providers as well as strengthening Skittlz (Children in Care Council) membership and introducing creative means to communicate; for example, through a Care Leavers newsletter.

The Annual Corporate Parenting Report and Annual Adoption Reports, presented to Cabinet in December 2020, set out progress in detail, as well as plans for next year. This will also be a key feature of our Annual Self Evaluation of Children's Social Care Services, due for publication in Q4 of 2020/21.

Young people and adults at risk are safeguarded in the context of their families, peers, schools and communities and safeguarded from exploitation

Key performance and delivery messages:

- The new Children's Safeguarding Partnerships now established in line with our published plans
- Launch of the Neglect Assurance Programme
- The Adults Safeguarding Board, over 2019/20, strengthened two of its committee boards (Safeguarding Adults Reviews and Performance and Assurance)
- The first phase of Step Up, Stay Safe's 'Lost Hours' campaign has been widely received as a success
- The Greater London Authority (GLA)'s Young Londoner's Funded 'Roads to Community' project is completing its first year of delivery and is on target and has been praised by the GLA
- The borough's Youth At Risk Matrix Workers have now all been recruited and are working in primary and secondary schools
- Virtual delivery methods have been built into commissioning and bid writing
- The percentage of children subject to a repeat referral has continued to reduce remains at 14%, which is below target (15%)
- The number and rate of First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system were reducing, however, most recent data has yet to published
- The second phase of the Contextual Safeguarding (CS) pilot, working with the University of Bedfordshire has commenced. Five CS Champions have been identified across the multi-agency partnership and they have commenced to in-depth training

Priorities for next six months:

- Recruitment process for an Independent Scrutineer to be commenced in January 2021
- Development of the multi-agency Safeguarding Training programme for next year
- LBBD Safeguarding Peer Review to be rescheduled
- The Adults Safeguarding Board needs to be alert to specific safeguarding service needs and to probing them further in 2020/21
- Continue to drive the design and implementation of the Contextual Safeguarding model
- Continue to implement the Youth at Risk Matrix working and predictive tool for crime and exploitation
- Continue to take forward the serious violence and knife crime action plan
- Ensure greater alignment of activity and priorities across Children's Safeguarding Partnership, the Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Adults Board

Key risk in the next six months:

- Services are impacted by increased demand and hidden harm because of Covid-19

Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation

The Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation sub-group has worked hard this year to ensure there is a coordinated multi-agency response to children and young people experiencing criminal & sexual exploitation and serious youth violence that tends to happen in contexts outside the family home i.e. within peer groups, schools settings and neighbourhoods.

This group oversees the Contextual Safeguarding Group responsible for the implementation of a contextual safeguarding approach across the partnership, working with the University of Bedfordshire to do so. The group have commenced the second pilot of work involving the identification of five Contextual Safeguarding Champions, across the multi-agency partnership, each of whom has commenced their training. Further training is being designed with focus on online harm; an issue which is becoming a key feature for children at risk of sexual exploitation, especially those in the younger cohort.

The Contextual Safeguarding Group is also supporting the referral pathways for contextual concerns with specific focus on the design of the multi-agency referral form and Merlin's to support these types of referrals. The testing of the Peer Assessment toolkit continues to embed a culture where child practitioners are speaking to young people about their contexts outside of the family home e.g. friendship groups, schools, places they spend time to ensure more holistic safeguarding.

The Community Safety Partnership has also tested the use of the business survey with businesses around Barking station and are looking to set up a Business Watch meeting which social care exploitation leads will join to support the roll out of the Contextual Safeguarding approach.

Criminal exploitation in the form of 'County Lines' continues to be prevalent. A close working relationship with Rescue & Response has seen an improved single oversight and understanding of the profile of our cohort of young people at risk in Barking & Dagenham. Police initiatives in the community over the Summer were well received and 'County Lines' training is underway.

There is robust oversight of work being undertaken in response to children and young people going missing. Whilst numbers decreased significantly over lockdown, they have not risen to former levels.

The 'Step Up, Stay Safe' programme which focusses on working with schools to reduce incidents of serious youth violence, knife carrying, and exclusions launched the first phase of the 'Lost Hours' campaign which has been well received; the campaign's video has had close to 35,000 views. A short documentary-film, as part of the campaign, has been well received outside of borough too with recognition from youth workers in Tower Hamlets.

The Greater London Authority (GLA)'s Young Londoner's Funded 'Roads to Community' project is completing its first year of delivery and has been praised by the GLA. There are another two years of delivery on the programme in which the partners (Studio 3 arts, Box Up Crime and Spark2Life) will be further supported to succeed.

The borough's Youth at Risk Matrix Workers have all been recruited and are working in primary and secondary schools, with an offer to train teachers and school staff on 'Gangs and Exploitation'.

With the closure of schools to most pupils from the end of March 2020, there have been challenges for partners in the council and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations in operating 'business as usual'. There has been disruption to referral pathways, including the ability to work from schools, and to use some premises. Partners across 'Step Up, Stay Safe' have mitigated these risks by working with young people online and face-to-face, where required. Some organisations have used innovative ways to recruit and engage young people, such as through detached youthwork sessions; informal sports events; and improving the online accessibility of their organisation through web launches and YouTube content. Going forward, virtual delivery methods are built into commissioning and bid writing.

Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has developed a local Serious Violence Action Plan which is submitted to the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) setting out a partnership response to address serious violence. This is monitored through the CSP board and annual reviews submitted to the VRU. One priority within the plan is to better align the partnership boards to work together on shared priorities.

The CSP commissioned 'County Lines' screenings and workshops delivered by Henry Blake for professionals working with children and young people across the East Basic Command Unit (BCU). The sessions were to provide better understanding and guidance to frontline staff on identifying and addressing exploitation and 'County Lines' and how to support those involved either who are identified or disclose.

The CSP through the VRU fund have commissioned the Ben Kinsella Trust to implement an anti-knife crime exhibition in the borough. The exhibition will provide an educational tour for primary and secondary schools based around preventative work to teach young people about the impacts and consequences of carrying a knife. The exhibition uses interactive rooms including a cinema room, choices and consequences room, prison cell and medical theatre room to not only educate young people but challenge their mindsets to help steer them away from gang and serious violence involvement and to stay safe. The exhibition will offer a localised perspective working with families who have lost loved ones to knife crime. Additionally, this will link in the Lost Hours campaign working to reduce exclusions and youth violence.

Through grant funding the CSP have commissioned a range of community and voluntary sector organisations to deliver positive interventions to children, young people, and young adults. The aim is to provide interventions ranging from universal to intensive to support young people and help reduce involvement in youth violence. This is connected with the council's Step Up Stay Safe programme.

Children's Safeguarding Partnership arrangements

The Children's Safeguarding Partners have taken a collective response to children and young people experiencing neglect, resulting in the launch of the Neglect Assurance Programme. This programme was triggered because of a significant neglect case. Case audits, learning workshops and increased supervision/management oversight is being put in place across all partner agencies, as is the roll out of the Neglect Graded 2 Care Profile training. This work is feeding to the refresh of the Neglect Strategy and action plan and discrete performance framework. The new multi-agency threshold document is also out for consultation; it will be launched in April 2021.

The recruitment process for an Independent Scrutineer is being progressed. The vision is for the Independent Scrutineer to be a Safeguarding Champion, who will provide challenge to safeguarding partners and ensure the voices of children, families and staff are at the heart of all we do, as well as engaging providers, commissioners and the community, voluntary and faith sectors. The aim is to commence recruitment in January 2021.

The multi-agency Safeguarding Training programme for next year is being developed, identifying the training priorities and needs across the partnership and approaches for coordination and delivery of training, linking into the wider Barking, Havering and Redbridge Safeguarding Partnership.

As part of producing the Children's Annual Safeguarding Report, next year's safeguarding priorities are being defined, working with partner agencies do so and ensuring alignment with the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safeguarding Partnership. The first Annual Report will be published in Q4 of 2020/21. A key priority to be taken forward over the next six months is to facilitate greater alignment of activity and coordination across the various levels of each organisation working across the partnership.

This will require greater alignment of the programmes of work across the Children's Safeguarding Partnership, the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

The Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), over 2019/20, strengthened two of its committee boards, which are the Safeguarding Adults Reviews and Performance and Assurance. The former has developed a robust and focussed approach to individual cases and increased focus on the learning being applied. Widened learning beyond the Board through a successful joint learning event about outcomes from London-wide and local Safeguarding Adult Reviews with Havering and Redbridge SABs and staff from all partners was taken forward over 2019/20.

Adult Safeguarding Partners have undertaken individual organisation self-assessments and a safeguarding assurance exercise with Havering SAB up to the stage at which this and the planned LBBB Safeguarding Peer Review were disrupted by Covid-19 in March 2020, however, this is rescheduled for later this year.

The Board sought to improve timely information sharing about individual concerns between professional and partner organisations through an agreed documented protocol and escalation of notice to more senior colleagues and the Board's Independent Chair.

The Annual Report of the Safeguarding Adults Board was presented to Assembly in November 2020.

Zero tolerance to domestic abuse drives local action that tackles underlying causes, challenges perpetrators and empowers survivors

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Refuge implemented the new Domestic and Sexual Violence Service in October 2019, and in its first full year of delivery received 1190 referrals for adult survivors needing support
- 17.8% of referrals in July-Sept 2020 were self-referrals
- Implemented DV FLAG East in May 2019 which has since been shortlisted for several awards this year
- Won Everyone's Business Award recognising our work to address domestic abuse in the workplace
- Childrens Care and Support adopted the 'The Safe & Together'TM Model

Priorities for next six months:

- Explore expanding the DV FLAG East project to across the tri-borough safeguarding partners
- The final report from the LBBDD Domestic Abuse Commission to be published in early 2021
- Community Solutions are preparing for Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation
- IRIS is a specialist domestic abuse training, support and referral programme for General Practices

Key risk in the next six months:

- Services are impacted by increased demand and hidden harm because of Covid-19

We have progressed quickly in developing a whole systems approach to domestic abuse.

In October 2019 Refuge implemented the new Domestic and Sexual Violence Service. In its first full year of delivery the service received 1,190 referrals for adult survivors needing support. Particularly good news is a high level of self-referrals: 17.8% of referrals were self-referrals between July-Sept 2020. The two children and young person's posts supported 103 referrals between them, and the perpetrator case manager has worked with 29 perpetrators.

In May 2019, the council implemented DV FLAG East: A collaborative effort between the LBBDD Legal Team and Barking & Dagenham Citizen's Advice Bureau to improve access to quality legal advice for families experiencing domestic abuse. The project has been shortlisted for several awards at the Family Law Awards and LawWorks Pro Bono Awards 2020. There is a plan to take the work to the BHR Safeguarding partners to explore expanding the work across the tri-borough area.

In January 2020, the council was one of the first five organisations in the country to be awarded an Everyone's Business Award, recognising our work to address domestic abuse in the workplace. In September 2020, the council went on to win the Best Organisational Development Initiative Award at the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards 2020, and this contributed to an overall Silver Award.

In September 2020, Childrens Care and Support adopted the ‘The Safe & Together’™ Model: an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help child welfare professionals become domestic violence informed. Delivering training to 80 social workers virtually has been challenging when demand on the service has been high.

In September 2019 we had no perpetrator-focused work at all in the borough. By January 2021 we will have three different offers being delivered by Refuge and Cranstoun⁶. This could be listed as success, but in truth it creates a challenge to ensure pathways are streamlined and services are not confused by the different offers.

In February 2020, the LBBD Domestic Abuse Commission launched, bringing ten national experts around a table to explore the normalisation of domestic abuse in the borough, with a clear focus to examine and respond to the attitudes and behaviours in the borough that allow domestic abuse to exist. The final report is due to be published in early 2021. The report will set the direction and underpin the next phase of work.

Alongside this, Community Solutions are preparing for Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation in February 2021. DAHA Accreditation is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK. Preparation work has been challenging, but we are in a good place and hopeful of success. IRIS is a specialist domestic abuse training, support and referral programme for General Practices. Funded by the Violence Reduction Unit, it will be implemented in Spring 2021 in the borough. We will need to ensure the work complements the Social Prescribing Offer and has a sustainability plan for when funding ends.

⁶ Providers of local domestic abuse services

All residents with a disability can access from birth, transition to, and in adulthood that is seamless, personalised and enables them to thrive and contribute to their communities⁷

Key performance and delivery messages:

- The Heathway Resource Centre has moved into Becontree Children's Centre. This brings specialist services closer to families, reducing need for travel and ultimately allow young people to remain at Trinity until they are 21
- The Disability Improvement Programme has been launched, key in delivering this theme

Priorities for next six months:

- Development of specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) supported living at the Brocklebank site
- ASD Behavioural Team and diagnostic framework will be developed with parents, clinicians, CCG and commissioners to support
- Redevelopment of all supported living block contract for people with a learning disability which will include bespoke offer for people under 30
- Development of day service provision with secured funding and launched pilot with AutoMe (NHS Digital Innovation Accelerator) to develop and implement a virtual support provider to help those with learning disabilities live independently
- The Learning Disability Employment Manager will be supporting service users into voluntary and paid employment opportunities while supporting those in employment to maintain their jobs during and post Covid-19
- Recruitment for additional social workers and enablers will start in January 2021

Key risk in the next six months:

- Significant cost-avoidance is invested in the successful redevelopment of the Brocklebank site – this is complex with many moving parts

The development of the Disability Improvement Programme is the key next step in delivering this theme. The Improvement Plan takes a whole-system view, incorporates all our work in this area under a single plan with the following key objectives developed in collaboration with staff and service users:

- Support service users to develop resilience and live independently as they are able
- Give service users a voice to change and shape services so that they meet their needs
- Develop services that can flex to meet individual assessed needs, including stronger pathways for service users that present with LD and mental health needs

⁷ This is intrinsically linked to the "Every child gets the best start in life and all children can attend and achieve in inclusive, good quality early years settings and local schools" theme, and the developments in Early Help (as summarised above).

- Improve the accessibility of services
- Improvement to supported living and develops new accommodation that meet long term needs

The Improvement Plan strengthens our statutory response to Education, Health and Care Plans, with increases in coordinators and Educational Psychology, with a view of reducing long term support needs. For those requiring adult social care, a new transitions pathway will ensure there is a 'destination' for all young people once they turn 18.

The Heathway Resource Centre has moved into Becontree Children's Centre and this has a twofold benefit: it brings specialist services closer to our families reducing the need to travel; and it allows young people to remain at Trinity until they are 21. Services are planning to open with a new and extended programme of activity that will better meet the needs of families and carers.

There will be a specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder supported living developed on the Brocklebank site, with a view of reducing reliance on out-of-borough placements, keeping service users close to family and friends.

Commissioners secured funding and launched a pilot with AutonoMe (NHS Digital Innovation Accelerator) to develop and implement a virtual support provider to help those with learning disabilities live independently, focusing on support to secure employment and manage mental health and wellbeing.

At the end of August, the Children with Disability team held a caseload of 184 children. While the service was expecting (and had planned) for an increase in referrals once schools went back in September, we had not anticipated the volume or complexity of referrals. The service now has an open caseload of 218 children, a real term increase of 19%. The additional 34 are children, previously unknown to statutory social care, all of whom require assessment. Average caseloads, therefore, increased to 24, compared to 14 at the end of July; 18 at the end of August against a team target of 17. Nine out of ten case holding social workers in this team had caseloads above 20 and four social workers had more than 25 children. Analysis of cases has shown that this increase in demand is Covid-19 related, with significant breakdown in families because of suspension of service delivery, respite, and increased risk factors such as domestic abuse. We have prioritised the recruitment of additional social workers for this reason.

Children, young people and adults can better access social, emotional and mental wellbeing support - including loneliness reduction - in their communities

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Mental Health Improvement Programme was approved. This will address fragmented care pathways to enable service users to access good quality, outcome focused care
- In December 2019, LBBD embarked on delivering a social prescribing model after a successful pilot with three GP surgeries

Priorities for next six months:

- Developing a team of Primary Mental Health Workers (PMHW) with NELFT and the CCG, who will work in schools and with GPs to promote good emotional health, prevent mental health issues and identifying mental health problems early
- All six Primary Care Networks (PCN) signed up to the model leading to the recruitment of six link-workers one for each PCN
- 1,466 referrals have been received with 2,455 needs identified. Initially, as the pandemic hit, referrals started to decrease but are now increasing

Key risk in the next six months:

- The post-pandemic 'surge' in demand is already placing strain on Mental Health services – the risk is those services become overwhelmed

The Mental Health Improvement Programme was approved in August 2020. The programme emphasises the importance of early intervention with clear step-up and step-down processes to ensure acute and emerging mental health needs are met in a timely and thoughtful way. The programme addresses fragmented care pathways, ensuring service users with multiple vulnerabilities can access good quality, outcome-focused care, preventing escalation to specialist services.

For residents with mental health the improvement plan will develop the bereavement and community support offer, including crisis cafes and parenting support. These activities will be delivered in consultation with the CCG and the voluntary sector.

Currently there is a significant deficit in the commissioned offer for young people transitioning to both the Learning Disability and Mental Health teams which the improvement plan is addressing. NHS England's Long Term Plan for Mental Health is prioritising care for 18–25 year olds, which we are developing in conjunction with services users, GPs and the CCG.

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties that manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or distressing behaviour. Withdrawal and disengagement do not appear to provide teachers with immediate challenges that affect the progress of lessons. Nevertheless, disengagement can be just as damaging to a young person's life chances as other behaviours. Different approaches are required from those used to manage the behaviour of the majority of pupils through whole school behaviour systems, when managing challenging behaviour by individuals with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) issues.

These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder. SEMH difficulties can manifest themselves through both passive and active behaviours.

We are developing a team of Primary Mental Health Workers (PMHW) with NELFT and the CCG, who will work in schools and with GPs to promote good emotional health, prevent mental health issues and identifying mental health problems early.

PMHWs can reach a large number of children with low-level mental health problems who might not otherwise receive the services they need. PMHWs ensure children receive help in school-based, non-stigmatising and familiar environments. They can act as an effective screening process for CAMHS, leading to a reduction in referrals. They provide a crucial role in directing children and young people to the most appropriate services, preventing delays and avoiding inappropriate alternatives.

In December 2019, LBBD embarked on delivering a social prescribing model after a successful pilot with three GP surgeries. All six Primary Care Networks (PCN) signed up to the model leading to the recruitment of six link-workers, one for each PCN. The role of the link-worker is to act as a co-ordinator for referrals received from the GP for money and debt, social isolation and loneliness, adult employment and education, mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse, family support and for those patients that would benefit from a healthy lifestyles referral due to being a smoker, having a long-term health condition or being obese. They then link them with relevant services both within Community Solutions as well as voluntary and community sector and commissioned services. So far 1,466 referrals have been received with 2,455 needs identified. Initially, as the pandemic hit, referrals started to decrease but are now increasing. Two of the Primary Care Networks have now approached Barking & Dagenham to recruit an additional link worker and a health and well-being coach to be part of their multi-disciplinary team which demonstrates faith in the success of the programme.

All vulnerable adults and older people are supported to access safe, timely, good quality, sustainable care that enables independence, choice and control integrated and accessed in their communities, and keeps them in their own homes or close to home for longer

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Care and Support services have been reliable and resilient during the pandemic. The key business processes of assessments, referrals, and safeguarding investigations carried on despite the disruption and restrictions
- We have worked jointly with our health partners, BHR colleagues and our care providers to ensure the health and social care system responded effectively to the challenges of the pandemic, particularly around hospital discharge, PPE, infection control and market resilience

Priorities for next six months:

- Support the most vulnerable residents to recover from the effects of the pandemic
- Remodel hospital discharge and support to residents at home
- Develop dementia services including the respite offer for carers, use of day services and increasing provision of Dementia Advisors
- Tender for an ambitious care technology service
- Roll out the Adults Care and Support practice model working with the Social Care Institute for Excellence

Key risk in the next six months:

- A 'spike' in hospital discharge activity (which is expected) is married with legacy-costs of responding to the pandemic, overwhelming the capacity in the system

The pandemic has been a very challenging time for vulnerable residents and their families, and for the staff and providers that care for them. Our communities, and the most vulnerable residents within those communities, will need considerable, and in some cases, long-term support to recover from the effects of the pandemic. The pandemic has seen the local authority and partners across health, social care and the voluntary sector effectively work together to provide services, create new and improved processes and pathways and work with providers to protect vulnerable residents and minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

Our social work teams have worked well during the pandemic with most social workers working from home and talking to residents and families virtually. A rota of staff has been in place in a Covid-19 secure office to deal with urgent situations and visits in the community. Services continued to take referrals, undertake assessments, investigate safeguarding concerns and review the needs of residents. Residents were linked to support services and the work of BD CAN where needs were identified. We have therefore had no need to use the Care Act easements. However, we are seeing pressures within social care as we see the impact of Covid-19 unfold, with more nursing care placements than residential care, more intensive homecare packages put in place (for example double-handed care rather than single-handed) and more residents experiencing mental ill health. Hospital admissions relating to ill mental health are up by one third. Additionally, we know that there may be unsighted risk in our provider

settings and community due to reduced visibility. We will continue to work through these issues and the longer-term implications they have on services over the coming months.

In-house and external providers provided an excellent level of care to residents, whether in an individual's own home or in a care home, despite facing significant challenges around infection control, staffing and morale as a result of Covid-19. A recent Healthwatch report into the work of care homes during the first wave stated that families and residents felt that borough care homes had 'provided excellent care for both the health and wellbeing of residents'. The local authority has provided support to providers throughout the crisis, including:

- seven day a week support and advice from the Provider Quality and Improvement and Public Health teams
- emergency Personal Protective Equipment
- a 10% uplift in rates to older people providers to help mitigate provider failure
- over £2 million of Infection Control Grant distributed.

Alongside this we have worked closely with the hospital, NELFT, the CCG, and neighbouring boroughs to put in place initiatives to support and improve hospital discharge and protect against transmission of Covid-19. This has included the implementation of a new 'discharge to assess' model; a multi-disciplinary team to undertake Continuing Healthcare assessments, and separate provisions for Covid-19 positive residents to reduce infection rates. Flows of communication have been critical to getting solutions in place and we are still working through some issues as a health and social care system, particularly staffing the Infection Control team led by NELFT (of which the local authority provided significant investment) and ensuring the hospital are communicating test outcomes before discharging patients: this issue was surfaced in the Healthwatch report mentioned above.

Against this backdrop, we have developed our Improvement Programme for Adults' Care and Support and Mental Health for the next two years. This includes a number of workstreams, taking learning from the last six months and building on a new strengths and asset-based approach to social work which we have formalised through a new delivery model, quality assurance framework and practice standards.

One of our key priorities for the next period will be our 'From Hospital to Community' workstream which will see us remodel hospital discharge and support to residents at home. Additionally, we will be tendering for a new, ambitious Care Technology service to support the objective of being a national leader in this area and placing technology at the heart of our care and support offer. Through the Mental Health Improvement Programme, the dementia workstream will focus on building the respite offer, improve the use of day services and increasing the use of Dementia Advisors. Finally, we will be rolling out a 'Practice with Impact' project, in collaboration with the Social Care Institute for Excellence. This will help to identify practical and actionable steps to make rapid progress in implementing the new delivery model.

Tackling inequality in all aspects of our service delivery and within our communities jointly with partners and Public Health

Key performance and delivery messages:

- The close partnership working across the system and progress towards an Integrated Care System and collaboration with the NHS providers has accelerated
- The enhancement of the social, emotional, and mental health support for schools and switching to online delivery to continue provision of our Healthy Lifestyles Programmes and social prescribing offer
- Delivering the NHS Test and Trace programme at scale
- Embedding the Healthy New Towns principles in the borough
- The Barking Riverside new model of care has been agreed

Priorities for next six months:

- Prepare to support the national vaccine programme working with health partners
- Encouraging the public to seek advice for any health concerns and working with health and care providers to deliver and adapt services that are safe and easily accessible to the public
- In-depth review of health inequalities and the impact of Covid-19 in the borough, as part of our Annual Public Health Report so that we can meet the needs of our communities and future-proof services

Key risk in the next six months:

- After the emergency response to the pandemic, a slow or uneven re-start of public health and screening programmes, including NHS Health Checks, cancer screening and routine immunisation, poses a risk in terms of widening existing health inequalities. Time lost to spot the early signs of disease can mean reduced opportunities for residents to seek timely medical treatment and to make healthy choices which could potentially have an adverse impact on the borough's healthy life expectancy in the long term

This year, Covid-19 has pushed inequalities to the fore. The Public Health England report on *Disparities in the risk and outcomes of Covid-19* highlighted the risk of dying of Covid-19 was greater for those people from Black and Asian ethnic groups. The experiences of lockdown starkly showed the differences in our living conditions and how they can affect health and wellbeing; and the ongoing social and economic consequences are likely to have greatest adverse impact in deprived areas. We are taking this seriously in Barking & Dagenham as inequalities are becoming an even greater focus.

Achievements and successes over the first two quarters of this year include the close partnership working across the system and progress towards an Integrated Care System. Covid-19 has accelerated our collaboration with the NHS providers. For example, we worked together on the modelling of Covid-19 at North East London level to assess the impact on demand. We were able to make swift adaptations to service delivery by working in partnership; for example, enhancing the social, emotional, and mental health support for schools and switching to online delivery to continue provision of our Healthy Lifestyles Programmes and social prescribing offer. We continue to work positively with colleagues in primary care, BHRUT, NELFT, the CCG and voluntary sector, at the Health and Wellbeing Board, and

have seen the growing maturity of our borough partnership to take forward community-based and integrated care through the Barking & Dagenham Delivery Group.

Public Health has been on the forefront of the Covid-19 pandemic; leading the way, providing advice and support, delivering the NHS Test and Trace programme at scale, providing system leadership, hosting webinars for schools and staff, developing standard operating procedures and protocols, carrying out risk assessments, managing outbreaks, linking with Public Health England and providing robust and timely evidence-based advice and support to the leadership, staff and members of the public.

We have also made progress in work with partners to embed 'Healthy New Town' principles in the borough. The work is moving at pace with the community wellbeing hub plans and financing progressing to initial design stage. The Barking Riverside new model of care has been agreed. The Thames View Activation Group was formed to test this approach and activate existing assets. Learning from this work will be used to embed the 'Healthy New Town' principles.

Covid-19 has undoubtedly posed many challenges over the last six months and will have a legacy on health outcomes far longer than the pandemic itself. Throughout much of this time many routine services were paused or changed their method of delivery. Legacy challenges will have been created by the shutdown of some health services, changes in health seeking behaviour and the social and economic fallout of lockdown. For example, due to a national suspension of public health screening and prevention programmes for several months, some people may not get the early diagnosis and intervention they otherwise would have done. To mitigate this, we are encouraging the public to seek advice for any health concerns and working with health and care providers to deliver and adapt services that are safe and easily accessible to public.

We are well aware that the social and economic consequences of the pandemic and lockdown will likely have a profound effect on health and are taking an in-depth review of health inequalities and the impact of Covid-19 in the borough, as well as at a sub-regional level. Over the next six months this will include a review of our services and any equalities challenges as part of our Annual Public Health Report so that we can meet the needs of our communities and future-proof services. The next six months will also, of course, be dominated by the arrival of the Covid-19 vaccine and working with our health partners to ensure we do all we can to defeat the virus.

Well Run Organisation

Delivers value for money for the taxpayer

Key performance and delivery messages:

- There are challenges in delivering this year's financial savings. £6.8 million is currently undelivered and will need to be absorbed in addition to the £12.7 million of savings required in 2021/22
- There is a forecast shortfall in financial returns from LBBD owned companies due to impact of Covid-19 on their business plans
- The 2019-20 Audit Plan was delivered in full
- Counter fraud activity has led to 178 frauds detected with a total value of £1.4 million

Priorities for next six months:

- Agreeing the next Medium Term Financial Strategy in light of the recent Government Spending Review and impact of the pandemic on council finances
- Embedding the Social Value Policy ensuring large procurements deliver social value outcomes

Key risk in the next six months:

- This is a year of high financial risk for the council as the Covid-19 outbreak and the lockdown has resulted in increased costs of providing services and reduced income from fees and charges. It has also further compounded already existing risks in areas with existing demographic and needs led pressures such as care and support. Financial forecasting is difficult as patterns of demand are unusual and will remain so for several more months at least, and we know there is growth and suppressed demand in the system to come through. The latest forecast is £8 million overspent across the council but this position could worsen due to various factors beyond our control. A realistic worst case scenario is an overspend of £13m

Over the past half decade the council was required to make £48.8m of financial savings to live within its means and be financially secure for the future. At the end of the last financial year £6.8m of that total was undelivered with a further £12.7m to deliver in 2020/21. At present that position is unchanged as savings programmes have been disrupted or delayed due to Covid-19. The risk to achieving the full £48.8m required to balance the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has therefore grown. The next MTFS is in development culminating into reports to Cabinet and Assembly in February 2021. The detailed funding announcement from MHCLG is expected before Christmas which will allow the production of the final, detailed budget for 2021/22.

Another financial risk is a forecast shortfall in the financial returns from LBBD owned companies. At the end of Q2 this shortfall was c.£1.5m across the commercial portfolio where Business Plans of the trading companies are negatively impacted by Covid-19 and that loss of income cannot be recovered in this financial year. However, this forecast is highly dependent on achieving significant milestones in several Be First development schemes by March 2021.

There are also considerable funding challenges, again compounded by Covid-19. As at the end of October 2020 the expected impact of Covid-19 in financial terms is expected to be £46.6m which comes from increased costs, lost income and the savings mentioned above that are being postponed. Grants from Government and the NHS totalling £34.6m are expected to be received, leaving a shortfall of £12m. Within this shortfall are business rates and council tax losses which may be recovered in future years. This leaves a residual funding gap of £3.4m. In a worst-case scenario this could feasibly increase by £10m by year end. In summary the council's financial position is stressed further by unforeseen events making balancing the budget in future years more difficult than would otherwise have been the case.

The council's financial management is good and financial controls are robust and strengthened by the insourcing of Procurement and Accounts Payable. There has been successful work to detect fraud. During 2019/20, 178 frauds were detected with a total value of £1.4m. Nine council properties which were fraudulently occupied have been recovered, this is despite Covid-19 restrictions which impeded housing investigations. In addition, although there is a long lead in time to secure outcomes from procurement processes, our new Social Value Policy, is being implemented and we are embedding social value mechanisms into larger contracts as well as developing the infrastructure to connect commissioners to social infrastructure organisations within the borough.

The 2019/20 Audit Plan has been delivered in full. At the end of Q2, 22% of the original 2020/21 plan of risk and compliance audits were at least at draft report stage. This falls just short of the target for the end of Q2 which is for 25% of audits to be at draft stage, although there has been a significant amount of additional work undertaken around the risks faced by Council surrounding the pandemic. An exercise has been completed to risk assess the schools in the Borough to inform a risk-based schools' audit plan and work is now underway to deliver this plan. This Internal Audit activity is vital to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of policies and procedures and helps to drive the continuous improvement of services and support functions.

Employs capable and values-driven staff, demonstrating excellent people management

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Employee Engagement Index score has increased to 86% - up 10% on last year
- Average sickness absence is 6.1 days per employee (6.43 days including Covid-19 related absences)
- Successfully re-accredited for the Safe and Effective Standards in Occupational Health Standards
- Won the Public Sector People Managers Award for Organisational Development for our work to support employees experiencing domestic abuse
- Won the Best Frontline Recruitment Campaign
- Implemented a new e-learning system

Priorities for next six months:

- Achieve Investors in People Gold
- Attain the Good Work Standard
- Implement a dispersed working model enabling staff to work remotely or at different LBBDD sites

Key risk in the next six months:

- Despite meeting HR and organisational development criteria to achieve the Good Work Standard, at present we have no mechanism for confirming if contractors in our supply chain pay the London Living Wage. This is a significant barrier to accreditation

During the Covid-19 pandemic the council has focussed on keeping the workforce and its services safe. The development of a new approach to risk assessments led to 72 risk assessments approved so far following an engagement and consultation process with Trade Unions and individual staff groups. This has helped the council to deliver services to residents during this time and reduced the level of workplace transmission.

The Occupational Health Service was reaccredited with Safe and Effective Standards in Occupational Health Standards (SEQOHS) and has delivered a wide range of adapted services focussing on Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and vulnerable staff. The Occupational Health Service has overseen the individual health risk assessments for all front-line staff, and delivered an extensive flu vaccination programme to keep key workers safe.

The council has implemented a new approach to recruitment and selection to improve candidate experience. The new system is easier for applicants to navigate and to apply for jobs. It will also enable us to put in improvements to monitoring and time to hire. Ensuring that we engage new staff as quickly as possible. Values-based recruitment has been implemented which puts our DRIVE values at the heart of the process with less of a focus on skills and experience. Included in our new approach are diverse recruitment panels and anonymised recruitment. Most recruitment and selection is taking place online, with good arrangements for induction and training new staff.

In addition to winning the Public Sector People Managers Award for Organisational Development for the work that we have been doing on a whole systems approach to supporting Domestic Abuse in the Workplace, the council won the Best Frontline Recruitment Campaign. This inhouse-run campaign used the council's Cleaner Barking & Dagenham brand to attract residents to apply for jobs in Public Realm.

The apprenticeship target for this year has been met with a combination of new apprenticeship starters, career progression routes and using the levy to upskill current staff. New programmes include bespoke Leadership and Management Programmes (Level 3 and Level 4) delivered in the borough by the Adult College and Coventry University London respectively.

The council is close to its sickness absence target; performance is currently at 6.1 days average, excluding Covid-19 absence, and 6.43 including Covid-19. Wellbeing support has been provided, including signposting to Mental Health First Aiders, and Mental Health Training for managers.

Engagement surveys have been run during the pandemic taking a participative approach to defining our new way of working. A wellbeing, homeworking and frontline survey was run in May 2020, and a Temperature Check in October 2020. The Temperature Check has seen an increase in the Council's Employee Engagement Index score from 76% to 86%. A segmentation survey was run in September 2020 to capture the views of staff in support of rolling out a vision for dispersed working from 2021.

A new approach to learning and development delivered through our e-learning platform has enhanced the learning experience for employees and enabled robust record-keeping. A new inhouse mentoring scheme has been implemented.

The council's Gender Pay Gap has narrowed and is close to 0% (publication 2020). Work continues to gather evidence for our application for the Mayor of London's Good Work Standard.

Good progress is being made on the council's Investor in People's Assessment, with a survey out in December and the onsite review taking place in January 2021.

Enables democratic participation, works relationally and is transparent

Key performance and delivery messages:

- 91.6% of households gave a positive response to the Annual Canvass
- Retained the Member Developer Charter Plus accreditation
- Multiple communications campaigns have been successfully run, including the Lost Hours campaign, Cleaner Barking and Dagenham and the Christmas Cheer campaign. In addition to this, continuous Covid-19 messaging and communications have been maintained throughout the pandemic

Priorities for next six months:

- Develop a Transparency Plan
- Improve compliance with completing Equalities Impact Assessments
- Improve response times to Freedom of Information requests
- Build the profile and usage of One Borough Voice locally

Key risk in the next six months:

- Covid-19 restrictions could impact on voter turnout at the GLA election, notwithstanding the added complexity of additional arrangements to ensure safety for staff and voters on polling day

The bedrock of participation is enabling residents to exercise their right to hold elected officials to account, either through the ballot box or through involvement in local decision-making. Electoral Services has an excellent record of delivering open and fair elections and ensuring compliance with directions from the Electoral Commission. LBBDD has a high proportion of registered voters, in 2020, 91.6% of household properties gave a positive response to the annual canvass, up from 89.7% in 2019 and achieved with Covid-19 restrictions in place. The GLA Mayoral election was due to take place in May 2020 but was postponed until May 2021 because of the pandemic. Even then, there may still be restrictions in place which impact arrangements for the poll.

The Law and Governance Service has an excellent record of compliance with Access to Information law, bringing openness and transparency to decision-making. The Statutory Forward Plan for executive decisions is routinely published with 100% compliance with the law, and 97% of committee agendas were published five clear working days in advance of the meeting. Residents can therefore be confident democratic processes are delivered to the highest standards.

In September 2020, the council retained the Member Development Charter Plus accreditation following an assessment by inspectors. The Charter demonstrates Councillors have the support and training to effectively carry out their roles as elected officials. The assessors noted the strong political and managerial leadership to councillor development and the sustainability of our approach into the future. One area to develop is the involvement of partners in the next Member Induction Programme.

Whilst we are absolutely committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, and have achieved a lot in this area in recent years, there are ways we can strengthen our approach and embed equalities in policy and decision-making. Currently too few Cabinet reports have had Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) completed to inform decision-making and ensure full consideration is given to addressing inequalities for residents with protected characteristics. Improving compliance and strengthening the governance and

processes behind EIAs is a priority to meet corporate expectations and ensure best practice. A new dedicated and specialist resource arriving in Strategy and Participation in 2021 will be responsible for driving this agenda corporately.

Transparency is key to facilitating participation and it is an area where we need to improve. Performance in responding to Freedom of Information requests has been consistently below the 95% target for a long time. An Internal Audit review identified recommendations to improve compliance with process and procedure. Freedom of Information Champions have been established across the organisation to oversee quality and compliance, with stronger oversight from the Information Governance Group. A data ethics sub-group has also been set up to allow for internal debate and scrutiny should there be future uses of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. In the next financial year, we aim to develop a new Transparency Plan to ensure we are exceeding the minimum requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

Communication with residents is at the forefront of our approach to participation. Over the past six months, our communication and campaigns have adapted rapidly and effectively to deliver key messages to the community about Covid-19 and local support initiatives. Rising to that challenge we were able to harness social media to reach c.31,500 followers, up from c.27,000 since the start of 2020/21.

Though the usual campaign activity was disrupted we were able to launch new campaigns. Phase two of the Cleaner Barking & Dagenham campaign was launched, with a particular emphasis on how our frontline workers are continuing to deliver services during the pandemic under extremely challenging circumstances. This campaign has already achieved a reach of over 1,800,000 people. The Lost Hours campaign was launched in direct response to data and concerns from residents regarding the levels of crime in the borough. This has already seen 35,000 film views, nearly 600 shares on social media, a reach of 375,600 people, and more than 1,200 website visitors. Finally, the Christmas Cheer campaign was recently launched to harness seasonal good will and to encourage the community to share festivities.

Puts the customer at the heart of what it does

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Swiftly implemented new cloud technology to enable the Contact Centre to work remotely. Maintained productivity and service performance standards while adapting to new technology and responding to Covid-19 related contacts
- Developed a case management tool for the Citizen's Alliance Network to deliver essential items to vulnerable residents during lockdown
- Complaints response times are behind target, especially those relating to enforcement and housing repairs services

Priorities for next six months:

- Find efficiencies and financial savings through the re-structure of the Contact Centre and Customer Experience Digital Team
- Improve the customer experience for tenants contacting us regarding housing repairs, where currently customer satisfaction and experience is an issue
- Implement a new booking system to support pest control, bulky waste, and the registrar services

Key risk in the next six months:

- Ensuring that we balance our resources with our aspirations and use technology to its maximum advantage

The Contact Centre (Elevate) returned to the council in February 2020 and eight weeks later we deployed new technology to allow this team to work from home as Covid-19 hit. Continued progress has been made in maximising the new cloud telephony system, reporting is slicker, and, in the moment, customers are notified of their position in the queue, and we are trialling call backs. The percentage of calls answered remained above target and there was an increase in productivity particularly in the General Contact Centre Team (which handles, waste, parking etc.) from 10 calls handled per Customer Service Officer to 18 calls handled per hour. Concerted efforts are made to encourage channel shift and a great example can be seen in Revenues and Benefits where we have seen web traffic increase by 185% on the Council Tax pages since April 2020.

The Customer Experience Digital Team and Contact Centre also supported the BD CAN initiative by setting up a dedicated option on the telephony system, and we continue to support the most vulnerable residents with day-to-day tasks. The Customer Experience Digital Team built a case management system for CAN partners as the pandemic started so they could track and deliver essentials to the most vulnerable. This case system is still being used today and the opportunity to re-purpose across other services and/or Councils presents an opportunity.

Upheld complaints remain below 45% meaning that we are getting our responses right first time and have resolved our resident's issues well. However, our most challenging area continues to be complaints and enquiries where our response within the ten working day target. The demand is mainly focused on Enforcement and housing repairs who are seeing the number of cases submitted increase. The Customer Feedback Team continue to engage with these services, working with them on a one-to-one basis.

The Booking System project has also proved challenging this year and has been delayed due to several factors; Implementation complexities relating to certain business requirements and project resource has

not had the necessary focus. Following a detailed review with IT and Customer Contact a way forward has been agreed which addresses resourcing and the delivery of three key areas: registrars, pest control and bulky waste.

Priorities for the next six months are to look at resources in the Contact Centre and the Customer Experience Digital Team with a view to improving efficiencies and value for money; the next step will be to re-engineer systems and processes to improve productivity and customer experience. Lastly, focus will also be on improving customer journeys and satisfaction for housing repairs contacts and queries, working closely with We Fix to support their improvement plan.

Equipped with the tools, information and capability to deliver its vision

Key performance and delivery messages:

- Updated key data insight and intelligence resources and strategic products (Social Progress Index, Borough Data Explorer, Resident Matrix)
- Adapted the One View tool for frontline workers to support case management during the pandemic
- Introduced a text messaging platform to communicate with residents at different moments across their customer journey
- Rolled-out Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop service for c.1,000 users
- Improved cyber resilience and reduced costs by migrating server and storage infrastructure to Microsoft Cloud
- Implemented a new landlord management system

Priorities for next six months:

- Re-design the Council's website to improve navigation, content, and accessibility
- Introduce a webchat feature to the Council's website giving residents another digital option for self-service
- Replace My Account, the client relationship management system
- Continue preparations to replace the current Finance, HR and Payroll system at the end of 2021

Key risks in the next six months:

- The general increase in cyber security threat level across the UK public sector and in particular, the threat from Ransomware which has seriously impacted two UK Councils in 2020 poses a significant risk to the Council's operations across all service areas
- The replacement of our current Enterprise and Resource Planning system with a go-live date of 1st November 2021 is challenging and delays would impact many of the services within the Core of the council
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A key aspect of the Council's transformation since 2015 has been to become a data-led organisation which harnesses the depth and richness of data sets we hold (and exists elsewhere) to drive policy and operational decision-making. The council's internationally recognised Insight Hub has been at the centre of this shift, pioneering new tools and data science techniques.

- The Social Progress Index (SPI), the first of its kind in the world, has been refreshed with up-to-date data, for the third year. The SPI is key to understanding and comparing inequalities and social challenges and helps us, and partners, to target efforts at a neighbourhood-level. The SPI since 2016 has shown steady improvement across all wards across 50 key indicators to April 2020. Next year's Index will detail the true impact of Covid-19. It is currently being used to decide resource allocation for Community Hubs.
- The Resident Matrix has been updated to 2019 and is being used for infrastructure and regeneration planning at Barking Riverside, as well as to provide key insights and demographic

profile information to inform our response to Covid-19 and provide in-depth analysis of inequalities ahead of the refresh of the Equality and Diversity Strategy in 2021.

- One View, a triage tool and case management system which is integrated with key data sets, has successfully been adapted to give frontline workers a Covid-19 case management system.
- The Borough Data Explorer has been updated. There are over 110 indicators to track progress against the Borough Manifesto.

In March 2021, the next Census will take place. In preparation for this, necessary data sharing agreements have been put in place and a community engagement process is being rolled out. The Census is important as it is often used to make funding decisions.

Another key aspect of the transformation has been to improve the experience of residents as consumers of council services, especially when interacting through digital channels. Since April 2020 there have been several big developments which modernise our digital customer experience offer. For example, we recently rolled out a text messaging platform across several services to provide information and updates at milestones in their customer journeys. More importantly, we were able to use digital channels and solutions to adapt to the challenges of Covid-19 lockdown and the disruption this brought to services.

In the next six months there are some exciting digital developments in the pipeline. We aim to introduce an artificial intelligence chatbot giving an alternative to telephone communication and the ability to respond to residents 24/7. A pilot is planned with our Waste Services before deploying across more business areas.

We will also be re-designing the council's website to enhance the content, navigation, and features. The re-design will include better customer feedback options, and better analytics will drive further user-led improvements to the website.

The council continues to develop its IT service and increasingly technology is cloud-based. Since April 2020 we have implemented a new Landlord Management System which improves how we manage our portfolio of social housing. A new cloud-based telephony system has meant our contact centre and other key telephony dependent services can work remotely, this has been vital during the pandemic. We are rolling out a new mobile phone contract which provides more cost-effective service and refreshes many of our older mobile devices. We have migrated all our server and storage infrastructure from Agilisys to Microsoft Cloud reducing operating costs for those capabilities and improving cyber resilience. We have replaced the Council's legacy Citrix infrastructure, key to a wide range of services, with a new Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop service for up to 1,000 users. We are now working across the council to implement the new IT service model and are working with services to develop long-term technology roadmaps to support their business needs and aspirations.

In the next six months we will replace My Account, and towards the end of 2021 the Enterprise and Resource Planning system; this new system will fundamentally improve HR, Finance and Procurement which support the effective operations of all frontline services. Following the successful insourcing of the IT service from Elevate we have greater control of the IT architecture and infrastructure of the council which means we can drive technological improvements and ensure IT is reliable and resilient.