

# Covid-19 response: strategic framework

Reading Borough Council, 23 March 2020

The challenge of tackling the spread and impact of the Covid-19 virus is greater than anything we have seen in a generation. The situation has developed at phenomenal speed and we can be in no doubt that life will be very different over the coming months. Families, communities and businesses are trying to come to terms with the implications of social distancing, high levels of sickness, absence, and self-isolation. The impact is felt in many ways, such as less social contact, loneliness, reduced economic activity, concern for job security, and fear for loved ones. We know that people will become ill, some of them seriously, and that we should expect many more deaths before the pandemic is under control. And we anticipate an increase in safeguarding and vulnerability issues that will impact on the health and wellbeing of at-risk groups including elderly people, those who are homeless, those who use food banks, asylum seekers, those at risk of domestic abuse and those with existing multiple and complex needs.

At the Council we are clear what we need to do to play our part in leading the response in Reading, and we have the staff, the skills, the infrastructure, the partners and most importantly the will to do it.

Our response is underpinned by key principles that guide how we work:

- We will work with others, collaborating with partners across the voluntary, business and public sectors to deliver a coordinated response.
- We will prioritise the most critical services and redeploy people and resources from other areas as necessary.
- We will safeguard the resilience and wellbeing of our staff. We will be adaptable in how we work, enabling home working and flexible hours wherever possible, and ensure people do not lose out if needing to self-isolate or care for dependents.
- We will communicate regularly through a variety of channels to ensure that residents, communities, voluntary groups, businesses and partners feel informed and engaged.



## **We have a three-point strategic framework:**

### **1. Support and protect vulnerable children and adults by ensuring the social care system continues to function effectively.**

We will maintain effective social care services for adults and children by:

- Ensuring key services are fully operational including the Adult Social Care ‘front door’ service for people in need, and the Children’s Multi-disciplinary Referral access point.
- Ensuring social workers are available to undertake assessments and can access resources to keep people safe.

We will support others to deliver their services by:

- Providing equipment, advice and support to carers, residential and nursing homes and home care services where possible within our resources.
- Ensuring schools can provide support for the children of key workers, and for vulnerable groups.

### **2. Support the people who are most vulnerable and isolated in our communities.**

We will deliver our statutory public health responsibilities by doing all we can within our resources and our ability, and that of our partners in the voluntary sector and the NHS, to protect the health and wellbeing of residents and communities in Reading.

We will focus our efforts on key vulnerable groups including elderly people, those who are homeless, those who use food banks, asylum seekers, those at risk of domestic abuse and those with existing multiple and complex needs by:

- Working closely with providers and voluntary organisations to deliver services, target vulnerable groups and maintain robust safeguarding.
- Amending our service delivery to promote social distancing, for example delivering services online, in smaller groups or using appropriate protective clothing.
- Supporting people in financial hardship with advice and funds where we can.

We will play a lead role in coordinating the voluntary and community sector response by:

- Establishing a One Reading Community Hub to coordinate and support the recruitment and registration of volunteers, connecting what people need with the help available.
- Ensuring that community and voluntary support efforts have robust governance and safeguarding mechanisms in place.

### **3. Support businesses and the local economy, and secure Reading’s economic recovery**

We will support our local businesses and the local economy by:

- Establishing a One Reading Forum for anchor institutions to ensure employers get the support they need.
- Ensuring Business Rates and grants to businesses are distributed quickly and efficiently.
- Lobbying the Government for rapid implementation of Covid-19 budget decisions that support businesses, workers and the economy.

We will respond to the situation now, and plan for the future, working with partners to mitigate the effects of the crisis and plan for the long-term recovery of the town, its residents, communities, businesses and economy.