



# **Kent Resilience Forum (KRF)**

## **COVID-19 Recovery Overarching Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway**

July 2020, v2.0

### **Version Control**

Version	Date	Changes
0.1	22/06/20	Initial draft incorporating all recovery cell impact assessments
0.2	23/06/20	Revisions to first draft
0.3	24/06/20	Revisions for Chair of KRF Recovery Coordinating Group
1.0	24/06/20	First draft for circulation to partners for feedback
2.0	10/07/20	Changes made following partner feedback and addition of equality cumulative impacts

# 1. Contents

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You Said We Did

## **2. Purpose of the Overarching Impact Assessment**

The aim of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) COVID-19 recovery is to restore, rebuild and recover public services and community support across Kent and Medway following the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. The recovery process involves creating core products to support recovery planning and delivery, including impact assessments and a recovery strategy with supporting action plans.

The overarching impact assessment provides a strategic overview of cumulative impacts (including equality impacts), strengths and opportunities linked to COVID-19, to inform the prioritisation of essential actions which need to be delivered across Kent and Medway to support a successful recovery over the short, medium and long term.

It also captures a reflection of potential risks, weaknesses, gaps and what activity may be stopped, to inform mitigating actions and to help prioritise limited resources effectively. It also identifies strengths and opportunities to build on.

The overarching impact assessment provides an executive summary of 7 individual recovery impact assessments, which act as a detailed evidence base to understand thematic impacts and equality considerations. The overarching impact assessment captures the highest priority impacts identified in the individual impact assessments, creating a high-level summary for partners.

These detailed impact assessments reflect the judgement of the recovery cells and their wider reference groups, which could inform future service redesign, strategy and action planning in Kent and Medway organisations. The impacts will continue to evolve as Covid-19 events unfold, so partners will be able to update the impact assessments over time as needed, providing a live evidence base.

### 3. Development of the Recovery Impact Assessments

The Impact Assessments have been developed by the KRF Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG), chaired by Kent County Council, which reports into the KRF's Strategic Co-ordinating Group (Gold) and engages with other Regional and National Recovery Co-ordinating arrangements and key stakeholders, including Kent Joint Chiefs and Kent Leaders.

The RCG is supported by 7 multi-agency recovery 'cells' which reflect the wide-ranging demands of the recovery work. The recovery cells have led the development of individual impact assessments (Appendix A). The recovery cells are: Economy (ECO); Infrastructure (INF); Children and Young People (CYP); Health and Social Care (HSC); Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS); District and Community (D&C); and Finance (FIN).

Each cell produced their impact assessment collaboratively with contributions from partners across the public, private, voluntary and community sector. Views were also engaged from a wider reference group including representatives of service providers, parish and town councils and community groups.

Each cell identified the main impacts for their areas, based on their level of severity (low, medium or high) and proximity when the impact may be felt across Kent and Medway (less than 6 months, 6 to 12 months or more than 12 months).











The cells then identified strengths, weakness, opportunities and risks. It was important to capture the positive aspects of recovery, as well as highlighting the challenges we need to urgently address to recover and restore vital services.

The cells prioritised the most important system-wide impacts and assessed significant gaps in information or knowledge needed to plan for recovery, quick wins and anything that should be stopped or not restarted in order to focus on the most significant priorities.

Cells also identified key equality considerations and impacts. This is important to fulfil our statutory responsibilities in the Public Sector Equality Duty and helps us to better understand priority areas for action and where there are cumulative impacts on protected characteristics or groups, including *Age, Disability, Sex, Gender reassignment, Race, Religion/belief or none, Sexual orientation, Pregnancy and maternity, Marriage and civil partnership*.

The seven impact assessments stand alone as a detailed evidence base of specific impacts, captured in Appendix A. This overarching impact assessment summarises the key findings and draws together cumulative impacts from all the individual impact assessments. This frames key elements which cells will consider in action plan development and will inform the Kent and Medway COVID-19 Recovery Strategy.

## 4. Recovery Impact Assessments – At A Glance

<b>Kent and Medway Recovery Impact Assessments</b> <b>7 impact assessments, identifying 77 impacts</b>	
<b>Cumulative Impacts - Positives</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong partnership working</li> <li>• Flexibility and adaptation</li> <li>• Collaborative commissioning</li> <li>• Strong and committed workforce</li> <li>• Tackling pre-existing challenges</li> <li>• Opportunities for transformation</li> </ul>	<b>Cumulative Impacts - Challenges</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant and prolonged economic impacts</li> <li>• Financial sustainability and resilience</li> <li>• Changes in demand</li> <li>• Increased and new vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Widening of inequalities</li> <li>• Data and insight</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Impacts for Action</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 77 impacts, 42 high severity, 48 short term</li> <li>• Permanent loss of businesses</li> <li>• Loss of employment</li> <li>• Increased levels of vulnerability</li> <li>• Loss of learning</li> <li>• Changes in health and social care activity</li> <li>• Cumulative financial impact on VCSE</li> <li>• Social distancing guidelines</li> <li>• Supporting adaptation &amp; behavioural change</li> <li>• Multiple financial challenges for councils</li> </ul>	<b>Risks</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84 risks</li> <li>• Twin pressures of rising demand &amp; costs</li> <li>• Wind down of Government support schemes</li> <li>• Winter planning in health and social care</li> <li>• Impact of potential further COVID-19 waves</li> <li>• Unsustainable financial risk in VCSE sector</li> <li>• Financial challenges for local authorities</li> <li>• Government faces competing demands</li> <li>• Low market confident impacts on investment</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 47 strengths</li> <li>• Government's economic support package</li> <li>• Continuity of vital infrastructure</li> <li>• Partnership working in children's services</li> <li>• Resilient health and social care workforce</li> <li>• Responsive and flexible VCSE workforce</li> <li>• Communities supporting each other</li> <li>• Improved working at a local level</li> <li>• Collective work on funding and lobbying</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44 weaknesses</li> <li>• Withdrawal of temporary economic support</li> <li>• Broadband access and digital poverty</li> <li>• Understanding travel infrastructure impacts</li> <li>• Children and youth health inequalities</li> <li>• Employer consideration of risk to BAME staff</li> <li>• National health and care communications</li> <li>• Limited local data and insight available</li> <li>• Data on vulnerable and shielded people</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67 opportunities, incl. innovation, investment, transformation, partnership and peer support</li> </ul>	<b>Gaps</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34 gaps, incl. data and insight and uncertainty on future funding arrangements</li> </ul>
<b>Quick Wins</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37 quick wins for positive action</li> </ul>	<b>Stops</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 things we could stop or reprioritise</li> </ul>

## 5. Cumulative Recovery Impacts

The 7 individual impact assessments in Appendix A identified a huge variety of significant and detailed impacts, which reflects the unique breadth and depth of the COVID-19 recovery.

However, similar types of impacts continually emerged in the individual impact assessments, highlighting the cross-cutting nature of recovery.

These give a sense of the potential cumulative impact of recovery, both positive aspects of recovery which we want to celebrate and build upon, and more challenging aspects of recovery which will be critical to address in the Recovery Strategy action plans, if we are to deliver a successful recovery.

Positive cumulative impacts that partners need to recognise and take forward include:



**Strong partnership working** – partners from all sectors are working together to tackle challenges and take action, cutting through barriers and organisational boundaries to support each other in recovery.



**Flexibility and adaptation** – organisations and services have quickly adapted and shown great flexibility in the way they work. There are opportunities to embed this as an ongoing strength.



**Collaborative commissioning** – partners are working collectively to commission the services and support that people need, building greater trust, supporting providers and encouraging sector collaboration.



**Strong and committed workforce** – the workforce across Kent and Medway has demonstrated extraordinary commitment and resilience and will continue to be valued and supported.



**Tackling pre-existing challenges** – there are opportunities to tackle endemic challenges like climate change and social isolation by maximising positive behaviour and culture change and the strength in our communities.



**Opportunities for transformation** – we can build on what has worked during the crisis, going further and faster to transform how we work and how services meet people's needs, achieving a multi-benefit recovery by building back better.

Challenging cumulative impacts that partners will need to mitigate and act upon include:



**Significant and prolonged economic impacts** – including significant unemployment and immediate loss of output in sectors directly impacted by lockdown, which is likely to extend for a prolonged period.



**Financial sustainability and resilience** – public services and providers face enormous financial demands while income and funding are decreasing or insufficient, threatening the sustainability and resilience of vital services.

**Changes in demand** – as we move into recovery there will be short-term surges in latent demand for many types of services as well as longer-term shifts caused by behaviour change that are difficult to predict. Hidden harm experienced by people will need to be identified and support provided.



**Increased and new vulnerabilities** – there will be new and greater vulnerabilities in our communities including families in financial hardship and people who are socially isolated. People may need most help as emergency support is withdrawn.



**Widening of inequalities** – the unequal impact of the crisis on different people may widen gaps in attainment, opportunity and health and wellbeing. Gaps could be exacerbated by a growing digital divide and digital poverty.

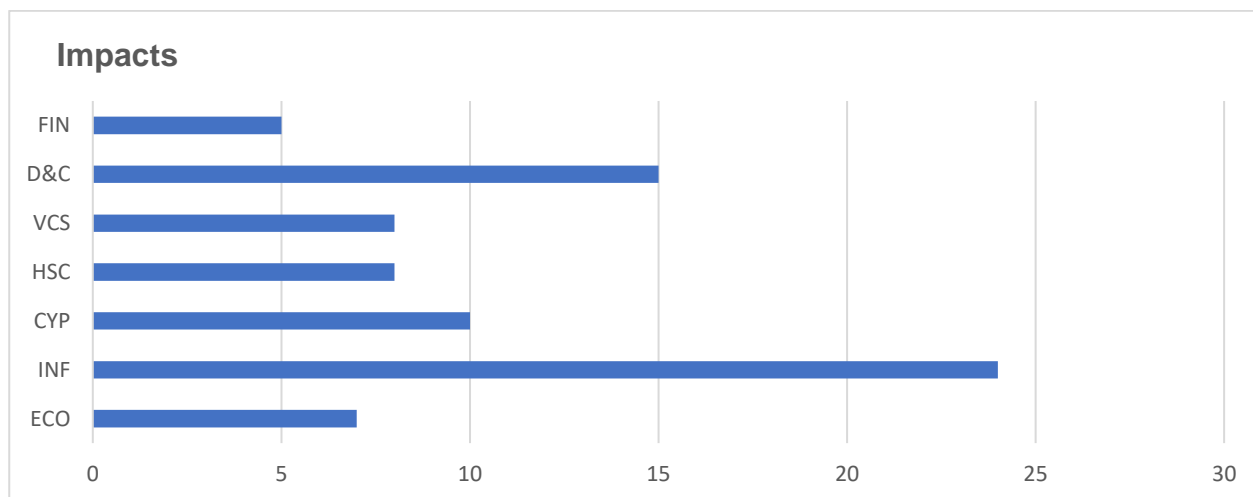


**Data and insight** – successful recovery is reliant on robust intelligence on the needs and situations of individuals, communities and providers. Partners face challenges in quickly gathering, understanding and sharing data and working successfully with Government.

## 6. Priority Impacts for Action

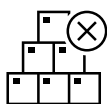
Each recovery cell prioritised the most significant impacts by severity (high, medium, low) and proximity (short, medium, long). Overall, 77 impacts were identified across the cells.

Of these, 42 were rated as high severity impacts. 48 were identified as short-term impacts, which are having an immediate impact, or will do within the next 6 months. A robust understanding of the key impacts is critical to informing effective action planning.

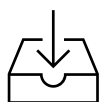


Given the breadth of impacts identified, this overarching impact assessment summarises only the highest priority impacts, which could have a significant and severe impact in Kent and Medway. The full range of recovery impacts is captured in Appendix A.

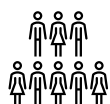
The highest priority, significant system-wide impacts identified by recovery cells included:



**Permanent loss of businesses** - Sectors such as hospitality and the creative industries will be particularly affected due to continued shutdown and distancing measures. This will have knock-on effects for other areas of the economy. It will be important for partners to influence and supplement the national response.



**Loss of employment** – This is highly likely in the short term and the extent of unemployment may become more apparent as the furlough scheme winds down. It is likely that those with the weakest position in the labour market will be the most impacted. For new entrants to the market, the effects of unemployment on long-term wages and career opportunities are lasting. The longer-term socio-economic impacts of unemployment are considerable and link to increased vulnerability and financial hardship.

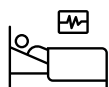


**Increased levels of vulnerability** - Individuals and families will need support from public services and the voluntary sector because of financial hardship or problems associated with or exacerbated by lockdown (including mental health problems, alcohol or substance misuse and domestic abuse). Vulnerabilities could be at their highest when emergency support ends, at the same time as services are at their most stretched.





**Loss of Learning** – Following closures, there is a need for swift return of early years and childcare providers and schools to redress likely growing attainment gaps, particularly in the disadvantaged groups and the public examination cohorts.



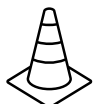
**Change in health and social care activity patterns** – Changes need to be understood and dynamically monitored. Demand has shifted and a reduction in early intervention could lead to later and more intensive need. Acute and community support will need to be aligned with the greatest need.



**Cumulative financial impact on the VCSE sector** – Cumulative impacts include the need for greater core funding, reduction in voluntary income, reduced access to funding and economic impact on funders and donors, who often rely on investments.



**Social distancing guidelines** – Restrictions will continue to impact on the capacity of essential public services and infrastructure in Kent and Medway, including public transport and community services.



**Supporting adaptation and behaviour change** – Partners will need to work together to support adaptations and behaviour change for safe social distancing, particularly to support the re-opening of public places, including town centres, high streets, civic and leisure spaces, and to support increased digital access to services and remote working and learning.



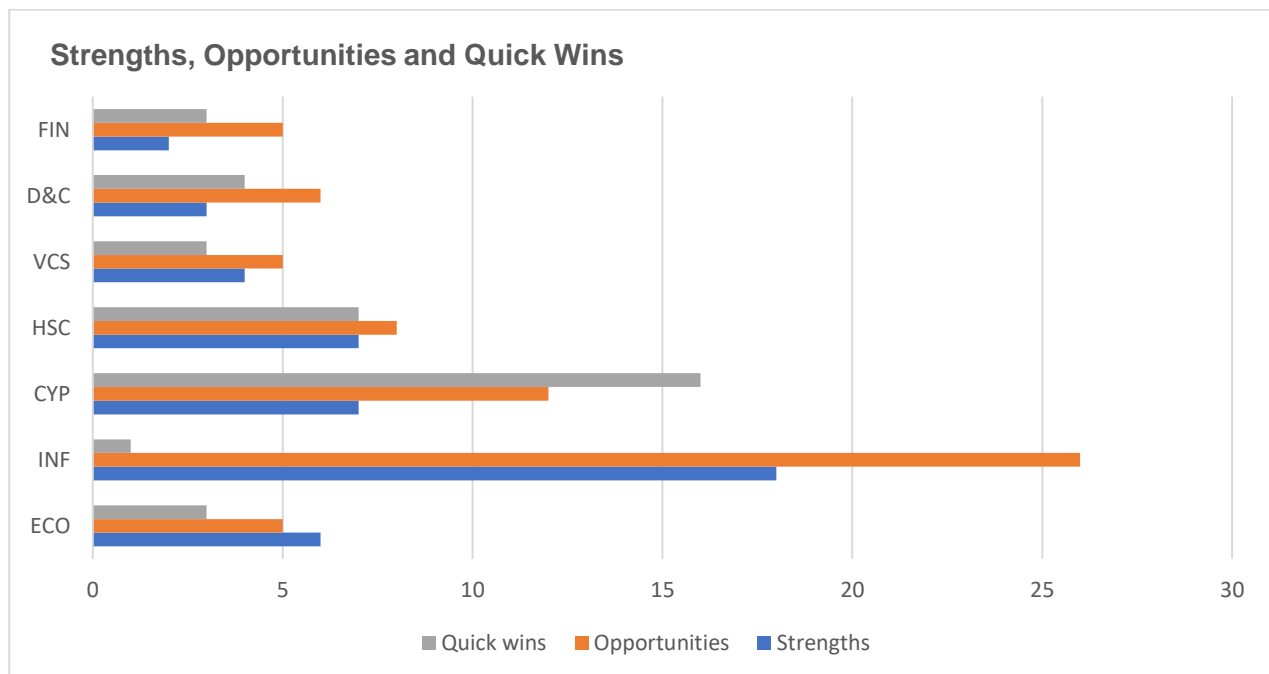
**Multiple financial challenges for councils** – There is a projected shortfall of funding in relation to spending and demand pressures and projected reduction in income, which has only partially been mitigated by un-ringfenced grant. Funding shortfalls may need to be covered by reserves, which will need to be replenished in preparation of a second pandemic, the longer-term effects of a recession and EU transition.

## 7. Strengths, Opportunities and Quick Wins

It is important that we recognise the immensely positive work that has been demonstrated by partners across Kent and Medway during the COVID-19 response and initial recovery. The workforce has risen to the challenge with dedication, commitment and resilience.

Whilst the immediate emergency response to the pandemic has been incredibly challenging, many positive changes have emerged that present ongoing opportunities to transform services and support recovery planning. It is important that we capture and build on this successful legacy of strong partnership working.

The recovery cell impact assessments focused on capturing strengths and opportunities, including identifying quick wins for positive action. In total, 47 strengths, 67 opportunities and 37 quick wins were identified, which should provide a strong start to a successful long-term recovery.



The top strengths demonstrated in response and recovery include:



**National Government response to immediate economic challenge** – An extensive package of measures has been provided during lockdown to mitigate business and employment impacts in the short-term. This has been regarded overall as an effective package and feedback from businesses has generally been positive. Local partners have worked effectively together to ensure funding has reached people who need it as soon as possible.



**Continuity of vital infrastructure** – Partners have worked tirelessly to maintain essential services, including planning decisions, maintaining good performance of digital infrastructure, progressing a full programme of highways asset maintenance, green infrastructure availability and waste service delivery.



**Partnership working in children's services** - A culture of collective responsibility and accountability has emerged that is welcomed by all partners. Enhanced multi-agency engagement and more focused and evidenced

discussions have improved strategic planning and co-ordination. Families and carers have responded positively and engaged with altered service provision favourably.



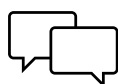
**Resilient and innovative health and social care workforce** - The workforce has risen to the pandemic in unprecedented ways. There is significant positive learning for improved multi- disciplinary team approaches, understanding what supported the incredible resilience of staff and the pace at which it changed to respond. There are many good partnership examples, including collaboration in care homes, maternity and health visiting, which must now be embedded.



**Responsive and flexible VCSE workforce** – The sector has been able to rely on the goodwill of staff and volunteers to go above and beyond. The workforce has adapted quickly and beneficiaries and volunteers have been more sympathetic to the current situation and therefore more accepting of the reduction of services and levels of support.



**Communities and neighbourhoods supporting each other** – People have shown kindness and dedication in supporting their loved ones, neighbours and vulnerable people in their communities. Help has been organised quickly and with energy and purpose. This has increased the strength and resilience of individuals and communities.



**Improved working at a local level** – There has been improved networking and relationships between organisations at a local level including through Kent Together, the district community hubs which have supported vulnerable people and active collaboration with parish and town councils and the VCSE sector. Referrals and support have been arranged effectively for people with complex needs, whilst recognising the importance of not creating dependency.



**Closer collective working between partners on funding and lobbying** - Finance officers have worked well together across Kent during the pandemic, particularly in co-ordinating responses to MHCLG surveys and in lobbying Government for funding, but also in highlighting Government inaccuracies, particularly regarding misinformation relating to pace and what funds local Government has spent/allocated.

Partners identified potential opportunities to build on the strengths and take positive actions to improve recovery. This included opportunities to adapt and transform services including the use of technology, investment and to enhance partnership working.

The top opportunities include:



**Adaptability and agility of Kent and Medway businesses** – There are opportunities for growth in businesses that are able to respond to changed demands and that have the capacity for innovation and growth.



**Continued investment and access to infrastructure funding** – Subject to Government funding, schemes and projects could be taken forward quickly, including Active Travel, environmental projects and digital infrastructure (mobile and fixed broadband networks).



**Innovation in service provision** - Rethinking how public services can be delivered has resulted in the development of new digital ways to access support, learning opportunities and services. This has included online learning provided by schools and a digital youth service offer.



**Investment into early intervention, preventative and community services** – There are opportunities to rebalance services towards prevention and develop a new offer for community support to prevent specialist and high need services, including clinical NHS services, from becoming overwhelmed from COVID-19 and winter pressures.



**Partnership and peer to peer support** - Charities and community organisations of different sizes can work together and support each other to find sustainable, sector led solutions, harnessing the positive collaboration and support networks that have developed during response and recovery.



**Improved partnership working** – There are opportunities to build on the partnership working and goodwill between tiers of Local Government and between sectors to seek new whole-systems solutions that might not have previously been possible.



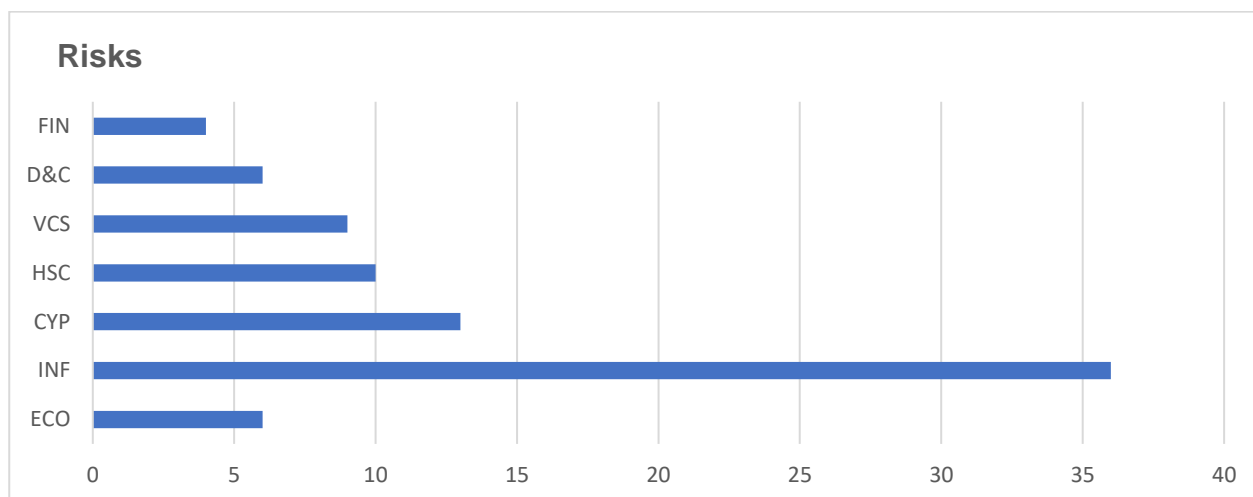
**Council transformation** – Councils can use the opportunities of enforced changes to ways of working to move forward with transformation and improve efficiency, looking at rationalising or sharing their property estate to support this.

Partners identified 37 quick wins, spanning a multitude of specific issues. These will be shared with the Recovery Co-ordinating Group and considered by the Recovery Cells, to determine what actions can quickly be taken forward to make a successful contribution to recovery. This will be prioritised and captured within the detailed action plans which will support the Recovery Strategy.

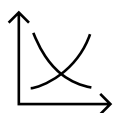
## 8. Risks for Recovery

An impact may be on the community or individuals but may also cause risks and consequences that organisations or partnerships need to manage. Cells used their impact assessment to identify major risks for recovery. Cells have also been capturing risks and issues throughout the recovery process through weekly status reports.

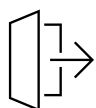
Overall, the recovery cells identified 84 risks and potential consequences in their impact assessments, covering a wide array of risk factors, which reflects the breadth and depth of the recovery work. These are set out in detail in Appendix A. Partners were asked to prioritise their top risks for recovery.



The major risks identified include:



**Twin pressures of rising demand and financial constraints** - Demands on organisations will increase as people require more support, precisely as their own resources and capacity will be constrained. This could lead to services being overwhelmed and needs not being met.



**Wind down of Government economic support schemes** - As the Government's support offer including the Coronavirus Job Protection Scheme ends, but social distancing and wider disruption effects continue, unemployment is likely to rise, leading to greater need for local economic development support. The removal of other temporary protections including from eviction and debt recovery may also push individuals and households into greater vulnerability and need.



**Winter flu and next wave COVID-19 preparation in health and social care** - The winter will be challenging for many social care clients and staff in all front-line settings. The system needs to urgently plan for this in the lull between waves.



**Impact of second wave on public services** – Services need sufficient capacity and flexibility to adapt to a potential second peak of Covid-19, which could force local lockdowns, exacerbating risks and issues and disrupting recovery. This is a particular risk for schools and for support provided at District and community level.



**Unsustainable financial risk within the VCSE sector** – This could lead to closures of charities that provide vital support to communities, particularly small organisations that are intrinsic to supply chains supporting communities and public service delivery leading to unmet need.



**Financial challenges for local authorities** – Councils may not have the resources to support recovery. There is expected to be increased demand for statutory services and significant impact on core council services, including Adult Social Care and Children’s Services.



**Government priorities impacted by competing demands** – The Government is balancing many significant demands which will potentially impact on legislation, regulation and government capacity, including COVID-19 response, recovery, and the end of the EU exit transition period.



**Access to Finance** – access to finance is a concern for small businesses and voluntary organisations. There may be limited access to finance housing developers and house buyers.



**Low market confidence impacts on investment in the county** – In a struggling economy, market confidence may impact on investment in infrastructure and housing growth. There needs to be support for the continued viability of developments.

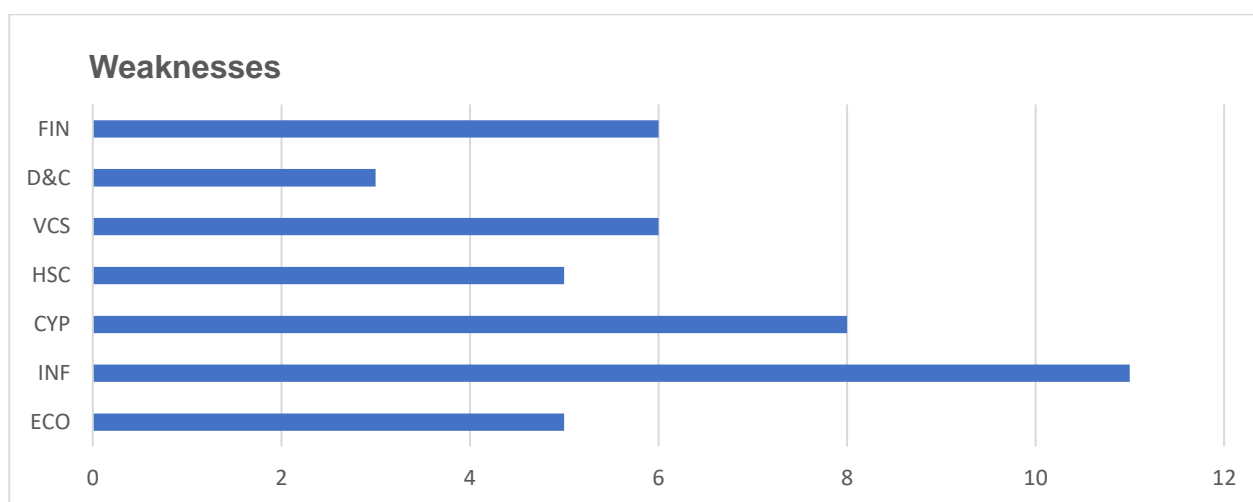
Risks have been appropriately escalated to the KRF’s Strategic Co-ordinating Group. The identification of risks has helped to inform appropriate mitigating recovery actions in the Kent and Medway Recovery Strategy and to inform future risk management, including appropriate risk appetite and controls.

Partners will also be reflecting these risks within their own organisational risk and governance processes.

## 9. Weaknesses, Gaps and Things to Stop

During such an unprecedented and fast-moving national emergency, there will inevitably be some weaknesses in recovery including system vulnerabilities, resource gaps or single points of failure.

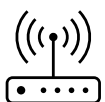
It has been important that partners can provide honest reflection about weaknesses, in order to anticipate potential issues and identify mitigating actions in recovery planning. Overall, the recovery cells identified 44 weaknesses.



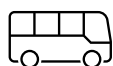
The most significant weaknesses included:



**Difficulties in adapting withdrawal of temporary mitigation measures to sector / business circumstances** - Gradual withdrawal of Government economic support will create major challenges for firms in sectors that remain compromised by social distancing measures. It is unclear at present how national Government will respond to this.



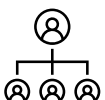
**Broadband access and digital poverty** – Whilst overall broadband capacity and performance has been positive, connectivity remains an issue for the 2% of homes and businesses who cannot get a fixed line broadband service of 10mbps. In addition, some individuals and households are unable to afford the means to digital access. This has presented challenges for people working and learning from home and accessing digital services and for the effectiveness of business operations.



**Understanding travel infrastructure impacts** - Public transport and travel infrastructure must be prioritised or considered more carefully in recovery plans to prevent significant negative impacts on the economy, education, town centres and wider community issues and services.



**Health inequalities for children and young people** - Children and young people are also experiencing limited access to dental care, missed immunisations and reduced access to mental health support. Increased obesity and diabetes due to reduced physical activity may be occurring.



**Employer consideration of disproportionate risk to BAME staff** - A recent national Public Health England report confirmed that BAME staff in

the health sector are disproportionately at risk of contracting Covid-19, which is also likely to be the case for other frontline and key workers. Employers will need to be more mindful of the ethnicity of staff and manage the impact as far as they able.



**National health and social care communications** - National, communications were not initially aligned with regional and local messages leading to confusion. There was a lack of one central place to address strategic issues within the health and social care landscape. This was addressed and the multiagency approach should be sustained.

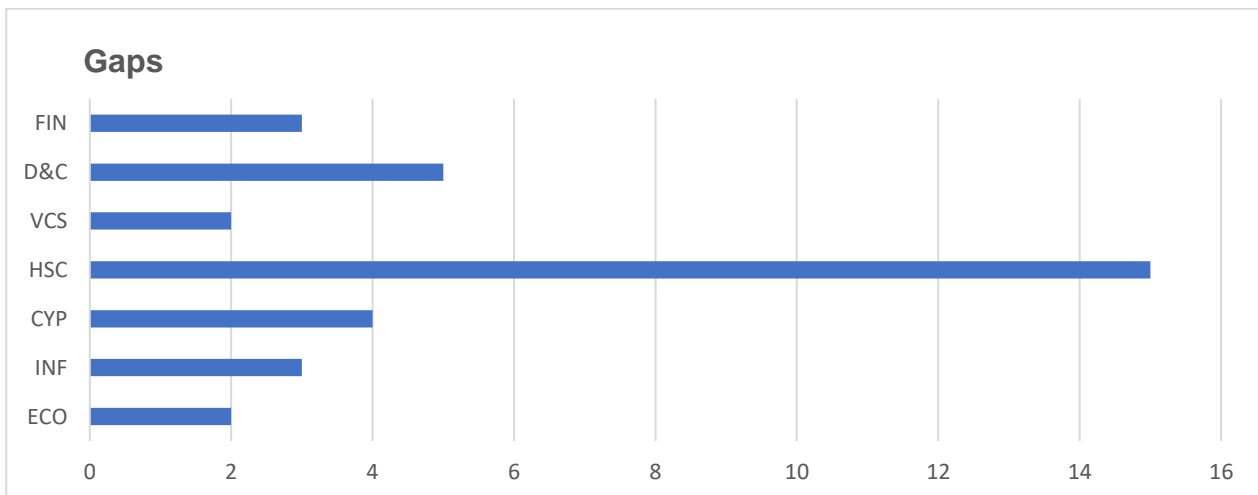


**Data and insight currently limited at a local level** – There is a need to create more robust local intelligence on the VCSE sector, particularly social enterprises and those that are not registered charities. Better intelligence on beneficiaries would enable better prediction of demand. There are often many data sources, but data is not shared, held in one place or well used, which is a national issue.

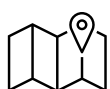


**Data and information sharing on shielded and vulnerable people** - This has been a huge challenge in relation to the shielded population and vulnerable people receiving support. It could continue to be a challenge as we try to build on the strengths of partnership working on Kent Together.

The partners identified where there may be some gaps in information or knowledge that we need to fill in order to plan for recovery. Some of these gaps are national issues, as well as a local issue for Kent and Medway partners. Overall, 34 gaps were identified by the recovery cells.



The detailed impact assessments identified specific gaps. However, similar themes began to emerge. Key gaps included:



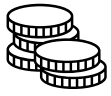
**Gaps in localised knowledge and intelligence** – this was identified as a particular gap for local business data, although this is improving and there are opportunities to gather and analyse intelligence more systematically.



**Gaps in data** – there is a need to better understand the impact on vulnerable people and where there may be opportunities to inform future service provision or target interventions. This included the Voice of the Child in early years and childcare, identifying vulnerable people who may



benefit from early intervention or prevention services and those facing financial hardship. There were also gaps in data around beneficiaries and impact of the VCSE sector, which would need to be brought together.



**Uncertainty on future funding arrangements** – the funding position for local authorities is very unclear, including availability of more ring-fenced grant, future Council Tax arrangements and detail of the ‘Fair Funding review’.



**Gaps in Government travel guidance** – there are current gaps in Government guidance on international travel arrangements and infrastructure which may impact on Kent and Medway as gateway authorities. Partners are engaging with Border Force, Eurotunnel and Port of Dover.

The pandemic has made us all to reflect on what is important. Partners reflected on anything that is currently stopped that could possibly not be recovered or re-started, in order to help prioritise limited resources and capacity on essential activity.

Overall, 9 potential ‘stop’ activities were identified in the impact assessments, which will be referred to the KRF Recovery Co-ordinating Group for consideration. Common themes which emerged included:



**Review** - identifying where ‘business as usual’ activities are already supporting recovery or could be reoriented to do so. Where appropriate, services that are now being carried out digitally and/or remotely could continue being delivered this way. There are opportunities to streamline processes and enable service decisions to be made closer to the frontline.



**Targeting** - reviewing support could help identify where capacity is best targeted in the future, recognising positive collaborations developed during lockdown. Support for resilience and universal services, rather than specialist services, may help reduce latent demand.



**Commissioning** - reviewing commissioning practice to reflect the financial situation, be more flexible, support stability and provider viability and reduce competition requirements for the VCSE sector in the short term.



**Funding immediate needs** - any public funded support to the VCSE sector should be used to reflect the immediate needs in recovery including peer to peer support networks and core funding, but also consider longer term need to build sustainability and resilience in the sector.

## 10. Equality Impacts

### Equality issues

Recovery cells identified emerging **equality issues** in their impact assessments. Based on the equality issues identified in the Recovery Impact Assessments, all protected groups may be impacted by COVID-19, but there will need to be further exploration, discussion and analysis to support this. It is possible that new inequalities could emerge as a result of COVID-19, as well as the deepening of pre-existing inequalities.

Actively considering equality impacts is important to fulfil our statutory responsibilities in the Public Sector Equality Duty and helps us to better understand priority areas for action and where there are cumulative impacts on protected characteristics or groups, including Age, Disability, Sex, Gender and gender reassignment, Race, Religion/belief or none, Sexual orientation, Pregnancy and maternity, Marriage and civil partnership.

Examples of equality issues identified in multiple impact assessments include:


- Older and disabled people are more likely to have been shielding and to need to continue to maintain social distancing. This puts them at greater risk of becoming isolated, lonely and experiencing mental health problems.
- Consider the national research about the vulnerability to COVID-19 of BAME young people and staff and what can be done to mitigate the impact, including increased incidences of prejudiced behaviour towards both BAME staff and children & young people, for example the need to be aware of the unconscious bias when schools are allocating public examination results.
- Sectors that have been hit hardest by the crisis employ high levels of young people, meaning that there are less entry level positions available.
- Women are more likely to work in sectors that have been most affected by the crisis, leading to a greater chance of unemployment, being furloughed or loss in income. Women have taken on greater caring responsibilities for children and elderly and vulnerable people who are shielding.


### Cumulative issues


COVID-19 recovery is unique because it impacts almost every aspect of people's lives, in communities in every part of Kent and Medway. In addition to individual equality issues for the protected groups, it is important we seek to understand the potential cumulative equality issues, where the same group could be affected by multiple factors of recovery.


When considering the cumulative impact of the issues identified at this early stage of recovery planning, it appears that the protected groups most impacted are **Age, Disability, Race and Sex**.


Examples of the individual impacts identified for these groups are set out below.

<b>Young people</b> 	
Young people coming towards the end of their formal education have experienced varying provision of education and support during lockdown and will have missed out on learning.	Young people entering the job market could experience significant and long-lasting disadvantage in finding employment. However, government action including the Kickstart scheme for 16-24 year olds could help mitigate this.
Young people have been awarded examination grades based partly on the judgement of teachers which may be unconsciously biased to the advantage or disadvantage of young people with other protected characteristics.	Sectors that have been hit hardest by the crisis employ high levels of young people, meaning that there are less entry level positions available but also that young people already in employment may be more likely to lose their jobs.
Provision of learning at schools, colleges and universities is being adapted, which may contribute to young people missing out on education, development and social opportunities.	Young people are also more likely to work in zero hours contracts and subsequently lose income due to reduced demand.
However, some young people report preferring digital learning and support, and for some it has increased engagement.	Young people may be less likely to have suitable environments for working from home and are more reliant on public transport which is currently less available.
There has been significant disruption to the provision of apprenticeships which could continue as businesses struggle.	Young people are reporting negative impacts on their mental health and may be at more risk of suicide, particularly young men.


<b>Children</b> 	
Children have experienced varying levels of education and support provision during lockdown and have missed out on learning and development opportunities.	Children may have experienced 'hidden harm' during lockdown and will now need to be identified and supported.
The physical and mental health of children is reported to have suffered and could widen health inequalities.	Children have missed out on development checks and support to transition between stages of education.
Covid-19 has had a greater impact in deprived areas where there are more children in need and looked after children.	There have been delays in processing Education, Health and Care Plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and these children may have missed out on specialist support that they need.
Demand for children's social care and support for families is expected to increase as a result of the crisis, which may impact on the availability and waiting time for support for children and families in need of these services.	Some children with special educational needs and disabilities have not been able to return to school for an extended period if it was not judged to be safe.

<b>Older people</b> 	
Older people are more likely to become seriously ill or die from COVID-19.	Older people are more likely to use public transport which is now less available.
Older people are more likely to have been shielding and to need to continue to maintain social distancing. This puts them at greater risk of becoming isolated, lonely and experiencing mental health problems.	Older people may have less access to digital technology and may lack digital skills and confidence, meaning they could miss out on services and opportunities as some provision shifts to digital.
They are likely to be more reliant on help from Community Hubs, befriending services and other temporary provision which will be wound down.	Older people are more likely to rely on public sector support, which may be at risk as budgets need to be reprioritised. There is expected to be a surge in demand for social care which may impact on the availability and waiting time for support for older people in need of these services.
Older people may find it more difficult to get another job if they are made redundant.	Care homes have been particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of Covid-19, putting older people in care homes at greater risk.

<b>BAME people</b> 	
Evidence suggests that there is higher incidence of COVID-19 in BAME people and they are more likely to die as a result of COVID-19 than people from other racial groups.	BAME people may need to take greater care to social distance to mitigate the risks, and this could lead to them missing out on employment, education and social opportunities as well as increasing isolation, loneliness and mental health problems.
Some frontline professions employ more BAME people which may increase their exposure to COVID-19.	There could be increased incidences of prejudiced behaviour towards BAME people due to beliefs about COVID-19 and race.

<b>Disabled people</b> 	
People with some disabilities and health conditions are more likely to become seriously ill or die from COVID-19. There may be long-lasting health impacts for people who have recovered from COVID-19 that may lead to them becoming disabled.	Disabled people are more likely to live in care homes which have been particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of COVID-19.
Disabled people are more likely to have been shielding and to need to continue to	Disabled people are more likely to rely on public sector support, which may be at

maintain social distancing. This puts them at greater risk of becoming isolated, lonely and experiencing mental health problems.	risk as budgets need to be reprioritised. There is expected to be a surge in demand for social care which may impact on the availability and waiting time for support for disabled people in need of these services.
They are likely to be more reliant on help from Community Hubs, befriending services and other temporary provision which will be wound down.	Existing mental health problems may have worsened during the crisis and more people are expected to need support for mental health problems.
There have been problems in accessing testing for COVID-19 for people with some conditions including dementia.	There has been an increase in the number of young males committing suicide, some of whom have Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

<b>Women</b> 	
Women are more likely to work in sectors that have been most affected by the crisis, leading to greater chance of unemployment or loss in income and women are more likely to be furloughed.	As businesses struggle to recover, they may be less able to accommodate flexible working arrangements which women are more likely to need.
Evidence suggests that women have taken on greater caring responsibilities while schools and childcare settings are closed and while elderly and vulnerable people are shielding.	Women are more likely to use public transport which is now less available.
Women are more likely to have been carers already and may have lost out on support and respite.	There have been interruptions in support for maternity and Health Visitor services which could impact women more.

### **Equality analysis**

Although generic impacts have been identified against each characteristic, there will be a need for further **equality analysis** of the responses to recovery that will need to consider the intersectional relationships that exist between the protected characteristic groups.

There are other characteristics that we do not know enough about at this stage but will need to be brought into focus for further equality analysis across all the recovery work. For example, although there was no identification of any issues for Sexual Orientation and Gender-Reassignment at this stage, there may be emerging inequalities for the two groups.

Analysis will now need to be taken to mitigate specific impacts that exist across the recovery work, not only to mitigate the adverse impact experienced by individuals but also to support the financial recovery and the organisations that provide services for those who learn live and work in Kent and Medway.

There may also be opportunities for positive impacts across all aspects of the recovery. New ways of working in response to COVID-19 may form a basis for innovation and efficiency across sectors to provide far more responsive services for protected groups in

Kent and Medway. For example, the use of technology means that there is greater accessibility for the groups who can use such technologies to access employment, training, deliver and receive services.

The equality issues, opportunities and cumulative impacts will now be considered carefully within recovery action plan development, so we identify the right actions to make a positive contribution and to tackle inequalities. The issues identified here can also be used to inform future service redesign for Kent and Medway residents.

An equality analysis of the Kent and Medway Recovery Strategy will also be undertaken.

## **11. Background document: KRF COVID-19 Recovery Impact Assessment Evidence Base**

The 7 detailed impact assessments which have informed this overarching impact assessment are available, to provide a much deeper insight into the impacts, risks and opportunities for different aspects of recovery.

These are available as background documents.

## You Said, We Did

The following changes have been made as a result of feedback from partners.

Comment	Response
‘Opportunities for transformation’ – recovery cells have discussed ideas on “building back better” and of achieving a “multi-benefit recovery”, essentially maximising opportunities.	The phrases “building back better” and “multi-benefit recovery” have been added to this point.
‘Latent demand’ – this is across many services, not just ‘support’. There is an emphasis on addressing the immediate recovery but there also needs to be an awareness of longer term implications.	“Support” has been changed to “services” to address the first point. This issue has been rewritten to also acknowledge the longer-term demand changes.
‘Loss of employment’ – you may want to reference potential for the furlough scheme to have hidden full extent of impacts on unemployment.	The furlough scheme has now been mentioned in this point.
‘Supporting adaptation and behaviour change’ – Supporting continued investment in digital infrastructure, new digital ways of working and promotion of digital skills are key elements of this.	This point has been expanded to also reference supporting digital access and working.
‘Risks to Recovery’ – A significant one for housing which is worth including is ‘access to finance’, both developers and public, and supporting the continued viability of developments.	An Access to Finance risk has been added and the wording clarified on market confidence and housing risks.
The ‘At a glance’ page references health and social care communication as a weakness and it is not clarified until later in the document that this is national communication rather than local.	The point in ‘At a glance’ has been changed to explain it is a national issue and the description of the issue in the weaknesses section has also been changed to more clearly explain this.
The impact assessment does not pick up on the impacts of the removal of temporary protections from evictions and debt recovery.	This point has been added to the Risks around the removal of government support.
The impact assessment needs to include the impacts of the barriers that some people face in accessing digital services and opportunities, both due to infrastructure and affordability for individuals and families (digital poverty).	The growing digital divide is mentioned in one of the cumulative challenges at the start of the Impact Assessment. We have extended the point in the Weaknesses section about broadband to cover digital poverty as well as infrastructure performance.
There are a variety of ways that cumulative issues will affect people from protected groups.	Further detail has been added to the section on cumulative equality issues.