

# **West Lothian Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plan Annual Report 2020/21**



## Introduction

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and our communities. Partners and communities have shown great resilience and worked together to ensure key services continued to be delivered whilst dealing with the huge challenges of the pandemic. The focus of the CPP may have shifted over the last year but the well-established partnership arrangements meant that the CPP was able to respond to these immediate new priorities. It is important to acknowledge the positive examples of partnership working and community involvement that have been achieved throughout 2020/21.

This annual report uses key performance data and case studies to highlight this progress across the four themes of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) and the local (regeneration) plans. The report also highlights the ways in which the CPP has involved communities in service design and delivery.

**Note on Performance Data:** A suite of performance indicators (PIs) have been identified to allow the CPP to measure progress in achieving our eight LOIP outcomes. This annual report includes a snapshot of these PIs to illustrate how we are doing. 2020/21 data has been included where this is available; however sometimes there is a delay in data availability. Where 2020/21 data hasn't yet been published, the latest available data is provided. Targets have been identified for each PI to give a clear sense of what we are aiming for and to allow us to assess whether we are making as much progress as we should be. The targets are set to be achievable and realistic.

Many of the LOIP indicators have been affected by the pandemic. Some of the indicators from the CPP COVID-19 dataset have also been included in this annual report to illustrate the direct impact COVID-19 has had on communities.




Although a draft new LOIP was discussed by the CPP Board in March 2020, this work has been put on hold while the CPP looks to fully understand the impact the pandemic will have on our priorities going forward.

**This annual report therefore refers to the key themes and outcomes of the existing LOIP (2013-2023) – set out below**

THEME	OUTCOMES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed</li><li>• Older people are able to live independently in the community with an improved quality of life</li><li>• We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities</li><li>• Our economy is diverse and dynamic and West Lothian is an attractive place for doing business</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities</li><li>• People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment</li></ul>

## 1. LOIP – How are we doing?

### Health & Wellbeing

PI	Data	Target	Trend	
% of children in poverty	24.6% (2019/20)	20%	This is an increase on the previous year (22%) but this trend is broadly in line with Scotland as a whole	
Premature mortality rate (European age standardised rate per 100,000 population >75)	438 (2020)	411	Similar to Scottish rate (457) but an increase from 2019 (390)	
Proportion of last 6 months of life spent at home/ community setting	91% (2020)	89%	Slight increase on 89% in 2019/20, reflects Scottish trend	
<i>Food parcels delivered by the West Lothian Food Network</i>	124,148 (May-Dec 2020)	n/a		

### Case Studies

#### West Lothian Food Network

The West Lothian Food Network (WLFN) was formed in May 2020 to support households experiencing food insecurity. Funding was secured from West Lothian Council to support the development of WLFN through the provision of a co-ordinator and to develop an annual food action plan. West Lothian Food Bank was appointed as the co-ordinator of the Network with the aim of reducing the number of households experiencing food insecurity and reducing the amount of food waste going to landfill.

Over the past year, WLFN has grown from 26 to 38 community food providers covering all nine wards; including development of seven new community food pantries and one new community fridge.

WLFN has created a centralised food hub where food from Fareshare, local community food growers and over 30 local businesses has been donated. The food is a mixture of ambient, fresh and frozen and includes dairy, baked goods, meat, fish, vegetables and fruit. The warehouse space has been tripled to support this development and there are four vans delivering food to community food providers and to service users throughout the week. 127T of surplus food has been diverted from going to landfill. The network purchases food from local businesses which has, in turn, supported them to be able to bring back staff from furlough.

WLFN has secured funding which supports around 4,000 people each week to access food through parcels, cooked meals, community pantries and community fridges. Of those experiencing food insecurity: 77% was due to financial issues, 11% due to being vulnerable through ill health/shielding, 11% through being marginalised through domestic violence/mental

health/homelessness/addiction and 1% who had COVID symptoms. Those accessing the network have their dietary and cultural needs catered for and also have access to baby goods, toiletries, cleaning and sanitary products.

A core element of delivery is to embed the Food with Dignity principles seeking the views of those who access the services to help shape delivery. All of the organisations which are part of the network refer customers to welfare advice and are part of the On-line Tracking and Referral system to ensure that referrals are made quickly, securely and effectively to a range of local support and help.

WLFN was a finalist in the Third Sector Partnership Category of the 2020 Public Service Awards.

### **Health and Wellbeing/Anti-Poverty Working Group**

A Health and Wellbeing/Anti-Poverty Working Group, involving members from the Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Anti-Poverty Taskforce, began to meet in May 2020 in response to the pandemic. The group carried out a piece of work to gather evidence of activity in response to social needs related to COVID-19, to understand the COVID-19 policy landscape and the potential policy and financial barriers and challenges. A consultation exercise was undertaken to gather feedback from community organisations on the initial priorities identified and additional issues that should be considered. A great response was received and the following themes were agreed:

- income and employment;
- economy and business;
- physical and mental health and wellbeing;

- housing and homelessness issues;
- develop/strengthen partnership working between public, third sector and business

A mapping exercise was carried out to ensure that relevant activity around these themes was being picked up across service responses and recovery plans, e.g. the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, Anti-Poverty Action Plan. A gap was noted in terms of physical and mental health and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership agreed to consider this, to ensure a more holistic approach is taken to physical and mental wellbeing.

The working group also developed a CPP COVID-19 dataset to track impacts of COVID-19 over time. The dataset includes a handful of key indicators and is updated monthly to provide an early indication of changes to West Lothian society. The dataset is regularly reported to the Community Planning Steering Group and CPP Board.

### **Health and Wellbeing Partnership Review**

As we move into the Covid-19 recovery phase, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership will undertake a review of existing and emerging health issues in West Lothian and consider the impact of Covid-19 on health, wellbeing and inequalities across population groups. The review will be undertaken in the context of national public health priorities, prevention and tackling the wider determinants that influence health and life chances.




### Type 2 Diabetes Whole System Approach

In December 2019, the CPP agreed to take forward a local pilot project to test a whole systems approach around Prevention and Remission of Type 2 Diabetes. The project is part of the East of Scotland (East Region) Prevention and Remission of Type 2 Diabetes Programme in partnership with the Scottish Government. The overall objective is to identify actions and interventions across the 'whole system' that support people living in the community to maintain a healthy diet and weight, therefore reducing the occurrence of Type 2 Diabetes in the pilot area over the longer-term. £60,000 of funding was available for this project.

A working group was set up to take forward the project and it was agreed that the pilot would focus on Whitburn. Work was delayed due to the pandemic; however, the working group began to meet again in October 2020 to progress the pilot. A virtual workshop was held to bring together a wide range of stakeholders from across the public, voluntary and community sectors, to map the 'whole system' in the context of what contributes to creating and maintaining a healthy weight and diet of people in Whitburn. A second workshop is to be held to collectively identify and agree actions or interventions which will look to contribute towards a reduction in Type 2 Diabetes in the longer-term within the town. The outcome of the workshops will inform the application for funding to put the agreed actions into practice in the second phase of the project.

The experience of the Whitburn pilot itself will also be used to inform the whole systems approach to dealing with public health issues which may also be used more generally within West Lothian in future.

### Economic

PI	Data	Target	Trend	
% working age adults in work	74.6% (2020)	75%	Decrease from 2019 but still above Scottish level. Negative impact of COVID pandemic on employment figures over last year	
% school leavers entering positive destination	92.9% (2019/20)	94%	There was a reduction in the number of young people entering a positive destination. This was undoubtedly due to the restrictions imposed both locally and nationally at key points in the year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic	
% 18-24 yrs claiming JSA/UC	8.4% (Q2 2021)	5%	Historically, West Lothian has had high levels of youth unemployment; The COVID pandemic, has affected youth employment the most with effects seen since	

			the start of lockdown in March 2020.  Young people have seen large-scale job losses in sectors such as hospitality and retail. Young people are also more reliant on temporary and seasonal employment	
Total number of jobs	78,000 (2019/20)	75,000	No change from 2018/19 – however, we are more likely to see the impact of the Covid pandemic in future year's figures	✓
% employees earning less than the Living Wage	13.5% (2020)	17%	Positive - slight decrease from 2019, and lower than Scottish average	✓



### Case Studies

### Economic Recovery

An economic recovery group has met throughout the pandemic, involving all key economic partners including West Lothian Council, West Lothian College, Skills Development Scotland, DWP, Developing Young Workforce, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian and Heriot Watt University. This has rationalised a number of different groups that had been meeting into one group, reducing duplication and maximising resources to support businesses and local people seeking employment or training opportunities. The group meet weekly to share data, map activity, respond to government policies and initiatives and to discuss and respond to emerging issues, ensuring joined up approaches. Data is regularly monitored to ensure an

up-to-date understanding of economic conditions in order to provide proactive support to local people and businesses and to anticipate and prepare response to possible job losses. The excellent partnership arrangements in place mean that partners are well-placed to support local people and businesses in this most difficult time. The group has been involved in discussions around Kick Start, Young Persons Guarantee, PACE, discretionary funding, business grants, Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund applications.

The Economic Partnership Forum and Jobs Task Force (JTF) have also met throughout 2020/21. The JTF is a partnership comprising the Scottish Government, UK Government, Scottish Enterprise, West Lothian College and West Lothian Council. Prior to COVID-19, it had a target to create 450 high-value jobs by 2021 through job grant support. Support is targeted at high value jobs within the engineering, life sciences, technology, engineering and manufacturing sectors. Posts supported must pay at least £25,000 per annum and lead to formal qualification and/or career advancement. We supported 111 jobs as part of the JTF in 2019/20. Since June 2018, the JTF has helped local firms create over 600 new higher value jobs.

The work of the JTF is now more important than ever, due to the immediate and long-term economic impact of COVID-19. The financial and non-financial resources of the JTF have been used to try to mitigate some of the major economic challenges we will face. An Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2020-2023) has been developed and the key priorities will be safeguarding at least 1,750 local jobs and creating a further 500 higher value jobs. Local people will be supported to find new employment or training opportunities. A further £1m has been agreed for the JTF to help create an extra 300 jobs.

### **Access2employment**

The Access2employment team, which sits within the wider Economic Development and Regeneration Service, supports individual's employability needs via 1 to 1's with individual clients and through the delivery of a range of courses including one day specific courses to 6-week personal development and employability courses. Advisers will work with clients until they have met their individual goals to secure sustainable employment including better paid employment and education opportunities.

The client group supported are those that present with a wide range of preventative barriers including mental health, substance misuse, low skills, health conditions and long-term unemployment. Support is also provided to those who have been made placed on furlough or made redundant through PACE.

Although the service has traditionally delivered in a range of community locations based on the levels of unemployment and needs within the area. COVID restrictions in 2020 resulted in the service moving to remote delivery via telephone, email and video conferencing.

The move to remote delivery has been praised by customers who have found the service easier to access due to the convenience of not having to leave their home. This has been particularly welcomed by parents wishing to engage with the service whilst meeting childcare commitments and those clients in work who are either struggling to earn enough or wish to look at more hours/ more sustainable employment.

The service now prepares and distributes a vacancy bulletin that contain information on the latest local vacancies for West Lothian Job seekers. This

is distributed weekly and reaches 850 clients directly and 155 individuals within community groups, council services and schools each week.

In 20/21 an additional service offer was introduced to support eligible parents who are currently unemployed or in work but in insecure employment or financially struggling. The support provides parents with intensive 1 to 1 support to overcome issues preventing them from securing fair and sustainable employment such as childcare barriers, need for training or qualifications, lack of work experience and mental health issues.

In 2020/21 the service supported 814 new clients and 1645 existing clients with 264 progressing into a positive destination.




The service continues to supports clients with personal development through barrier removal to ensure they are ready to set goals to move into employment or education. Well-being workshops were introduced in 2020. The Workshops focus on mental wellness and provide clients with easy strategies to support positive wellbeing. 7 workshops were delivered with 45 participants attending.

Personal development is delivered intensively 1:1 to clients and also alongside employability in the delivery of short-term courses Women N2 Work and Men N2 Work. In 20/21 the service delivered 5 Women n2 work six-week courses and Men n2 Work delivered 1 six-week course, in total 31 clients attended.

41 short employment skills workshops were also delivered remotely to clients. The workshops allow clients to gain more information on topic specific areas such as CV building, job searching via linkedin, online

interview skills and applying for vacancies, were delivered with 161 participants attending.

## Safer Communities

PI	Data	Target	Trend	
Antisocial behaviour incidents	14,116 (2020/21)	Continuous improvement	45.8% increase - the pandemic created a new band of ASB complaint, including Breaches of the Peace, which engulfs and masks otherwise ongoing 5yr decrease in all other ASB	
Deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population	30.8 (2020/21)	Continuous improvement	Almost 14% decrease compared to 2019/20	
% Early and Effective Intervention cases 8-17 years who do not become	2020/21 Q1 100% Q2 94% Q3 95% Q4 96%	95%	Exceeding target	



known to the Youth Justice Team within 12 months				
--	--	--	--	--

## Case Studies

### **Community Safety Partnership**

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has been resilient in the face of extreme challenges in response to the public health crisis of the pandemic.

- CSP shifted to virtual meetings locally and nationally and saw greater attendance at national forum such as Safer Communities Network, increasing knowledge of what others were doing in light of the pandemic.
- The weekly tasking/monthly tasking meetings were re-focused around September 2020 and used the virtual platform to share information and task out work following the first wave of lockdown. Scrutiny reporting to PDSP/Community Safety Board was also picked back up.
- The Safer Neighbourhoods Team are working hybrid with home/office/community work. Significant work was around providing advice/assistance during the peak lockdown period as staff were unable to undertake normal duties.
- During COVID, Police Scotland officers spent even more time on patrol, within communities in order to raise the awareness of their 4 E approach: Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce.
- Environmental Visual Audits involving community and range of partners have been re-introduced. This is the model used when a high

volume of complaints have been received from the community in particular to young people gathering in public parks. Visits are made to the area of concern, an action plan is written up and various partners are tasked with work that they consider will make a difference. Engagement work was also completed with young people using the particular park (Howden Park), with the West Lothian Youth Action undertaking the engagement work.

- Continued with the Blackburn Bonfire Night Action Group (BBNAG) – partners undertake preventative work around Bonfire Night in Blackburn through the Blackburn Bonfire Night Action Group (BBNAG). Involving communities so that they have a voice, can take part in decision making and be involved in planning events that affect them and their neighbours is important to encourage participation and help communities to develop ownership and joint responsibility of their neighbourhood. This joint work minimises operational demand on all partner agencies and reduces deliberate fire setting and fire-related antisocial behaviour.

### **Women’s Safety**

**Physical Crime Prevention:** Environmental Visual Audits also consider things such as good lighting, safe unrestricted pathways, no overhanging trees/shrubbery and good sight lines for when walking, whether in built up areas or in open spaces, to help keep people safe.

**Planning a Safe Community:** The CPP carries out Quality of Life Surveys every few years in order to obtain the communities feedback on issues of ‘feeling safe’. When compared to statistics, understanding how people in communities feel, assists with community planning.

**Violent Sexual Assault:** The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) works with Community Safety Partners to assist with the prevention of sexual assaults. SNT and Police attend calls of antisocial behaviour to ensure safety of residents. Police are aware that women often feel vulnerable, especially in non-populated areas. As a result, they do patrol these areas and spend time on foot and cycle paths to provide that reassurance to the public. Overall, sexual crime statistics showed that the number of crimes reported to Police Scotland reduced this year compared to last year and prevention and intervention activities where necessary to maintain the safety of women across West Lothian.

**Domestic Abuse:** The Domestic and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT) link closely with Housing and provide a specialised service to women and children in West Lothian who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. DASAT takes part in the 16 Days campaign every year in West Lothian and along with Police, raise awareness of Stalking. DASAT provided support to colleagues at West Lothian College, raising awareness and creating better links for survivors and supports the new national campaign Ask for Ani at the local chemist.

DASAT is also involved in developing an eLearning module for all council staff on Domestic Abuse/Gender Based Violence, for summer 2021, along with other training.

**Positive Relationships:** DASAT works with Education staff to provide the necessary information to children and young people to ensure that they are educated about the positive aspects of relationships. Prevention work for all children and young people in West Lothian and an increased awareness and understanding of gender-based violence is imperative if we are to reduce the number of families affected by domestic abuse. DASAT

has close links with education and there is now a domestic abuse champion identified in every Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Specialist education setting in West Lothian. Teachers are involved in a Mentor Violence Prevention within secondary schools and all education staff receive training on the issue of gender-based violence.

**Positive Outlets for Young People outwith the school setting:** During COVID restrictions, access to buildings and contact with young people was limited for Community Education Workers. Due to a recent lowering of restrictions, staff were able to restart detached youth work engagement activity. Community Education Staff deliver issue-based work with mixed groups of young people on a range of themes including personal safety, online safety, relationships, healthy respect and consent. These sessions are delivered through community-based youth provision, youthwork in schools programmes and post school employability programmes. Work with groups of boys and young men is facilitated as and when required on a referral basis. There are also several girls and young women only groups run by or supported by the service.

Police Scotland and partners all work together to reduce incidents of Hate Crimes and Violence Against Women and provide prevention and intervention to assist women, as well as taking forward necessary enforcement action where necessary to ensure women are protected.

Regarding young women's safety in general, Community Education Staff deliver issue-based group work with young women on a range of themes including personal safety, online safety, relationships, healthy respect and consent. There are several girls only groups run by or supported by the service.

**Post Covid and Young People:** Community based Youth Services staff offered a lunch time drop in service once per week to secondary schools as an opportunity for any young person experiencing anxiety around being back in school, whether relating to COVID-19, friendships, personal safety.

**2021/22:** A consultation is to be carried out with local women to capture general concerns about safety in public places and spaces, concerns about particular areas and information on how fears may manifest in changes to their own behaviour. The theme of the August 2021 CPP Board meeting is to be Women’s Safety, to discuss the issue in more depth.

## Environment

PI	Data	Target	Trend	
CO2 emissions (tonnes per capita)	5.8 (2019)*	5.7	Exceeding target, just behind the Scotland emissions figure of 5.7 tonnes per capita	✓
Household waste recycled	58.2% (2019)**	57.5%	Decrease on previous year – ranked 4 <sup>th</sup> in Scotland	✓
% WLC housing stock compliant with Energy Efficiency	91.4% (2020/21)	100%	WLC ranked 9 out of 26 Scottish authorities – average performance is 87.75%	✓

Standard for Social Housing				
% reduction in emissions from council services and activities	13.7% (2019/20)	2.9%	Significant increase from 7% in 2016/17	✓

\*2020 data likely to be published June 2022

\*\*2020 validated data to be published by SEPA in September 2021

## Case Studies

### Partnership Activity to Tackle the Climate Emergency

It is recognised that a partnership effort is required to achieve our net zero carbon target, involving all public agencies, businesses and communities. It is important that the response to the Climate Emergency is community-led. A great deal of work has been carried out to date to engage local partners and communities, all of which has fed into the development of the new West Lothian Climate Change Strategy.

- The CPP Board themed a meeting around the Climate Emergency in September 2019. A CPP Climate Change Seminar was held shortly after this to further discuss the common challenges, opportunities and potential for collaboration and partnership working. The session was facilitated by the Sustainable Scotland Network and was well attended by partners, council services, community councils and local young

people. Emerging themes from the discussion included Legislation, Policy and Finance; Partnership and Leadership; and Engagement, Awareness-Raising and Communication. An action plan was developed, setting out how partners will work together to tackle the Climate Emergency.

- These discussions also fed into development of the CPP's new LOIP in 2019. Taking a partnership approach to achieving net zero carbon was identified as a key priority by partners and communities through the engagement process and is likely to be a key focus in the new LOIP.
- Youth engagement and involvement is key to the West Lothian approach to the Climate Emergency. Council officers attended the West Lothian College Sustainability Summit in March 2019 to provide an overview of activities that the council and CPP are undertaking to tackle the Climate Emergency and also to carry out some engagement. The Mentimeter tool was used to gather information on where climate change ranks in young people's priorities, what are the best ways to raise awareness with young people, what the young people would like to see happening locally to support climate action and how communities could be supported to do more. The information gathered provided valuable insight and will be used to shape the new LOIP and CPP Climate Change Strategy.

### **Young Persons Climate Change Survey**

A climate change survey was carried out with young people in early 2021 to hear the views and ideas of local young people to shape the Climate Change Strategy. The survey had a great response, with 1184 respondents, and gathered important information around what climate change means to young people, their understanding of climate change and local activities, what changes are required around skills and knowledge, lifestyle, diet, land

use and travel, and ideas for how the council can support young people and wider communities around climate action.

The responses highlighted that there is a good understanding on the impacts of climate change and it seems to be very important to young people. Most young people appear to have a good understanding of how they can help tackle climate change. However, more education is required (in schools and across the community) around local activities already underway to tackle climate change and how young people and wider communities can make a difference. The survey also provided an opportunity for young people to provide suggestions around how the council can support young people and wider communities to do more to tackle climate change.

## **2. Locality Plans – How are we doing?**

It is a requirement of CPPs to prepare and publish locality plans for the areas experiencing poorer outcomes, setting out a plan for how outcomes will be improved within that area. In West Lothian, local plans have been developed to focus on communities where a significant proportion of that community lives within datazones in the bottom 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), last updated in 2019. 13 individual plans have been developed in the following areas: Addiewell, Armadale, Bathgate, Blackburn, Bridgend, Craigshill, Dedridge, Fauldhouse, Knightsridge, Ladywell, Polbeth, Stoneyburn and Whitburn.

Steering Groups are in place in all of these areas, allowing representatives of community groups, residents, local public services and voluntary sector to work in partnership. Ward members for each area are also invited to meetings. The plans were initially shaped through engagement with the

communities with additional input from partners working in the areas. It is hoped that, where appropriate, partners will reshape their services to meet the needs of the community based on the local information and structures that differ from community to community. Plans are updated as part of a continuous process reflecting changing community and partners priorities and regular updates reported to West Lothian Council's Local Area Committees. The existing plans are bottom-up and in many cases community-led with a central role for key community organisations, which can enable community responses to community needs.

### **Review of plans**

Work needs to be done to review the structure of the plans to more fully integrate these with the LOIP and other strategic plans, such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy, Economic Recovery Plan etc, to better align these with the work of the CPP and improve the connection to the delivery of overall services to the communities the plans cover. The effects of Covid-19 has meant that a number of key strategic plans are being updated to reflect the changing circumstances and this provides the opportunity to look again at how these interact and this is ongoing.

The updating of these will enable short and medium term responses to the pandemic being identified and integrated with the plans to reflect how the communities in our poorest areas are supported. Given the original starting point for the CPP and the community planning requirements for the plans this work will help develop a more holistic planning approach to reduce the cross over within areas for partners, take into account the very different nature of the 13 areas currently covered and how we work better in partnership.

### **COVID-19**

The effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic shaped support across all our communities including those areas covered by the local plans. The Community Planning and Regeneration Team, along with community organisations were required to quickly respond to directly support communities and individuals during the lockdown, in particular those vulnerable members who were required to shield. New community groups have been established, along with more partnership working and groups providing new services by adapting to suit the changing needs of their communities. Support with food, shopping and prescription pickups have been required and a newsletter was developed to provide support, information and to signpost people to services that were collated into a local database of service provision. We have seen local volunteering grow to support this work with more local people offering their help.

Through engagement with partners working in our communities a number of areas were highlighted around employment, health and wellbeing and homelessness, and later the increasing use of digital platforms and what this meant for communities going forward. The impact and learning from this will help update and develop future planning in the short and medium term. It also helped to shape key Council funding programmes, in particular for funding in 2021/22 and 22/23.

**COVID-19 Community surveys** were undertaken to update the Craigshill, Ladywell and Dedridge local plans in light of the COVID-19 change in landscape . Three findings reports were published with 515 local residents taking part.

## Work in the local planning areas

Across the plans the Community Planning and Regeneration Team worked with communities and organisations on a range of projects, for example:

- **Community Choices Pilot in Blackburn** – a £25,000 community choices saw the community take part in selecting 9 projects to support. 224 local residents took part in the process (a second pilot in Craigshill is being developed for the new year);
- **Blackburn Drug and Alcohol Action Group** - Taking learning from the Blackburn Bonfire Night Action Group (BBNAG) a new multidisciplinary approach is being developed in Blackburn to address specific issues arising from concerns from the public and specialist services around concerns over visible substance use in public. The Blackburn Drug and Alcohol Action Group (BDAAG) will build on this learning to look at early intervention and to develop an innovative research project as a pilot for the area. A similar approach to address an anti-social behaviour issue including fly-tipping and fire starting on derelict land in Armadale is in the early stages of development. This model aims to help reduce and raise awareness in the community involving all agencies including private land owners.
- **Bathgate Community Development Trust** – a new Community Development Trust has now been established in Bathgate. They are at an early stage but add to the increasing number of active CDTs' in West Lothian.
- **Almond Housing and Regeneration** have supported the local community in Craigshill to be able to access affordable reliable internet and suitable devices to enable them to participate in: learning, socialise, shop, find information, support and play through a variety of

approaches: repurposed laptops, new devices and 24 months MIFI. This approach has also enabled the organisations to deliver new devices and MIFIs to families and older people/disabled people that might not otherwise afford it in Ladywell, Dedridge and Knightsridge. Much of this is fund through Connecting Scotland.

- **Asset Transfer** - Polbeth Community HUB, a Scottish Charity, has completed its Asset Transfer of a Council owned Community Centre following four years of development as an organisation, creating jobs and new projects and working with partners, agencies and West Lothian Council departments to bring this to fruition. With the asset transfer completed they are looking to develop the building further and increase and the services to the local community.

## Funding

- Through the **Voluntary Organisations funding 2020/2021** funding of £944k was awarded to support community organisations, most either based in or operating directly in the communities covered by the local plans to directly deliver activities identified through the planning process working closely with the Community Planning and Regeneration Team to support the plans.
- £173,590 was also allocated from the **Modernisation and Improvement Fund** to support community organisations looking to modernise or provide additional support due to Covid-19. In addition, Hardship monies of just under £100 went to 25 local organisations to support the Covid-19 response. This was part of a bigger fund that supported the Food Network response.

- £29k was also used to provide our 49 **pensioner groups** with a meal or hamper at Christmas.
- With the effects of Covid-19 ongoing at the end of the financial year over £1.4M was allocated to support projects and services in 2021/22.
- In 2020/21 there was a continuing focus on the Scottish Government's Town Centre Capital Fund with West Lothian allocating £2.5M to our towns. Over the two years of funding just over £1.5M was committed to projects in the areas covered by the local plans to support capital improvements identified by local community organisations. Projects are being delivered in partnership between community organisations and council services to deliver over 75 separate projects. Projects include improving local greenspaces and parks, local community facilities, growing initiatives, signage and street furniture.

### **3. Community Involvement**

Although there have been some challenges with engaging communities during the pandemic, the CPP has carried out a number of important engagement activities, including the Health & Wellbeing/Anti-Poverty Survey and the Young Persons Climate Change Survey mentioned earlier in this report. Further examples are provided below.

#### **Community Listening Events**

Community Planning and Regeneration officers facilitated two community listening events on behalf of the Scottish Government's Social Renewal Advisory Board (SRAB). The events were held to gather information on people's lived experience of the pandemic and their priorities for the

future. The events were attended by representatives from various groups across West Lothian, including local young people, members of the Race Forum, Faith Group, Carers of West Lothian and local community organisations. The information gathered was fed back to the SRAB and also used to inform local activity.

#### **Community Choices**

Community Choices is a process that enables local communities to decide how public funding is spent. Blackburn Community Choices was originally launched in February 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19. It was re-launched in March 2021.

In Blackburn, this focused on improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and families in Blackburn. This was a pilot project as part of the wider development of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in West Lothian. £25,000 was allocated to address issues around health and wellbeing; mental health and wellbeing; children living in poverty; and healthy life choices. Originally, voting was going to be through a public event, however a digital approach was taken forward due to restrictions in place relating to COVID-19. Eleven applications were received and nine of the projects received funding. Anyone who lived in Blackburn, aged 8 and over could vote.

Two more pilots are being planned; another focusing on a geographical area in West Lothian which will be carried out in Craigshill, and a thematic pilot focusing on equalities.

### **Role of the Third Sector During the Pandemic**

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) is West Lothian's Third Sector Interface. VSGWL led the Third Sector response to the pandemic, working closely with Third Sector colleagues locally, the wider TSI Network as well as West Lothian Council, the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and other Community Planning Partners to support individuals and communities during the Coronavirus crisis.

**Coordination of volunteering opportunities:** There has been an incredible community response to the pandemic, supported through formal and informal groups and organisations. The sector responded at speed, particularly during the early weeks of the pandemic with many moving quickly to provide necessary help and support services online to those in need.

Over 1200 people from across West Lothian have signed up to volunteers during the crisis. VSGWL created a volunteering database that allows them to manage and respond to requests from partners for volunteers. Individuals have secured opportunities with a range of third sector partners to help with food parcel deliveries to those in need, support PPE supplies to carers, arrange medicine pick-ups and as be ward helpers in St John's.

**Support to the vaccination rollout programme:** VSGWL is coordinating volunteer support to the mass vaccination site at the Pyramids, Bathgate. The site is operating 7 days per week from February through to August 2021. There was an astonishing response from individuals offering to help undertake 'meet and greet' roles. Within hours of creating a sign-up rota database, all 3 shifts per day, 7 days a week through to the end of June

were allocated. VSGWL are working closely with NHS Lothian to support volunteers at the site.

### **Third Sector Summit**

The Third Sector 'Covid-19 Recovery summit – 'Creating a new West Lothian' was held in September 2020. There were 96 attendees from across the third sector in West Lothian as well as elected members from Scottish, UK and local Government. The purpose of the summit was to recognise the importance of the sector in the economic and social recovery and the partnership approach required to create a new West Lothian. Participants highlighted the importance of outcome focused locality partnerships as well as the flexible and timeous response that third sector agencies could provide. But there was concern that an ability to aid recovery might be constrained by inadequate strategic partnership arrangements and a lack of resources.

### **Equalities**

The CPP continues to support community equality forums in order to gain an understanding of the diverse experiences of our communities. The equality forums also organise various activities to promote diversity in our communities. To mark Black History Month in 2020, the West Lothian Community Race Forum held a virtual community event to celebrate local cultural diversity, hearing from speakers including Professor Sir Geoff Palmer (the first black Scottish professor and a major figure in Scottish education and anti-racism campaigning), Wezi Mhura (the driving force behind the Black Lives Matter Mural Trail in Scotland) and Etienne Kubwabo (the comic book artist who created the first black Scottish



superhero comic character). The event was well attended and received positive feedback.

The West Lothian Faith Group continued to meet regularly throughout 2020/21 and organised an interfaith event in November 2020 to mark Scottish Interfaith Week. The aim to the event was to explore what each faith says about 'connecting', what 'connecting' means to members and how people have found ways to connect during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members representing the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian faiths provided an input on this theme. The event highlighted the strength of faith groups in reaching out to communities and providing support. COVID has offered a common goal and different groups have worked together during the crisis, with new connections being made. The group felt we must now keep up this momentum, stay connected and continue to work together and find new opportunities for partnership working. Further interfaith events being planned by the group include a virtual 'Peace Walk' and they are exploring the possibility of an interfaith garden.

### **Experts by Experience**

As a key part of the CPP's Anti-Poverty Strategy, an 'Experts by Experience' group has been set up to gather the views of those who have experience, or know of someone, who has experienced poverty at some point in their lives. The success of the panel will create a better picture of poverty in West Lothian and inform our planning to tackle the major issues surrounding poverty. The group currently has ten members who provide regular input in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the members, e.g. by telephone, e-mail and face-to face meetings (prior to the Covid-19 crisis). During lockdown, contact has been maintained with the group with Zoom meetings and continued completion of surveys has been encouraged.

The Experts are encouraged to take part in research for the Advice Shop, (e.g. testing and providing feedback on a new online benefits calculator and budgeting calculator and an interactive map providing information and guidance to those experiencing food insecurity), have been provided the opportunity to attend events and assist with raising awareness of poverty, and have taken part in consultations (e.g. West Lothian Council's Food Growing Strategy, the Respectful Funeral initiative, implementation of the Period Poverty initiative). The consultation sessions allowed the participants to provide their views on the various projects and how plans would impact those in poverty, both negatively and positively. The Experts have also contributed to responses to government consultations, such as the Scottish Social Security consultation about devolved Disability Assistance benefits.

It is also important that the voices of young people are heard and that they are able to, not only influence actions to reduce the cost of the school day, but are also able to talk about the impact of poverty in other areas of their lives. The Anti-Poverty service in collaboration with the council's CLD Youth team worked with a group of 8 teenagers from the Armadale Youth Forum to find out more about young people's lived experience of poverty. This initial group took part in poverty awareness training and one youth ambassador took on a role in co-delivering training in youth clubs across West Lothian. This consultation project ran from October 2019 to January 2020 engaging with a total of 164 young people to hear their views and gather information to inform the ongoing direction of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. The consultation focused on young people's experiences of poverty and deprivation outside of school and 91% said that a lack of money made it difficult for them to take part in activities which led to feelings of isolation and exclusion amongst peers. Socialisation was

identified as the main part of life affected by poverty for young people in West Lothian. Following the consultation period, a short video was filmed with 3 young people from the Armadale Youth Forum to present the findings and reflect on the approach to the consultation. The young people involved have identified 3 keywords to use going forward when engaging with young people about social issues; Learn, Think, Speak. The next stage was to involve young people in becoming peer advisors to help and support young people to have someone to talk to about issues relating to low income which were affecting them and their families and to help them access help and support. This project has been put on hold due to COVID-19. Discussions are underway on how this aspect will be moved forward

#### **4. Moving Forward**

This report sets out the progress made by the CPP throughout 2020/21 in relation to the LOIP and locality plans. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the CPP and our communities and we have had to quickly adapt our priorities and ways of working. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements over the last year.

Collaborative working has never been more important. We have already adapted our services in response to the pandemic and we now need to consider how we can work in new and different ways to tackle the challenges that lie ahead, building on West Lothian's solid foundation of working in partnership. The CPP's role in response to the crisis will be key to successful recovery and long-term resilience. This has been an opportune time to reflect on how the partnership works and how we can strengthen it going forward, particularly in relation to how we work with communities.

Although a draft new LOIP was ready to be consulted on in early March 2020, this has been put on hold while the CPP considers what the key challenges for the CPP are likely to be going forward. The new LOIP will be refocused to reflect the impact of COVID-19 and how the partnership will work together to meet these challenges, in order to continue to improve outcomes and tackle inequalities in our communities. Work is also ongoing to review the local plans and to ensure that they are more fully integrated to the LOIP and other strategic plans, such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy.