

**To: The Emergencies Board**

**On: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

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**Report by: Victoria Hollows, Chief Executive Renfrewshire Leisure**

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**Heading: COVID-19 Pandemic - Renfrewshire Leisure Community Focused Response**

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## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Renfrewshire Leisure's community focused support in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
  - 1.2 In the course of its usual business, Renfrewshire Leisure provides numerous services that, by their nature, support the health and wellbeing of local people across our communities. During the current pandemic, with our operational buildings closed to the public, Renfrewshire Leisure teams have moved swiftly to maintain core health services; expand services that engage with community groups; and provide alternative platforms to access cultural, sport and leisure opportunities.
  - 1.3 Renfrewshire Leisure provides complementary activities and services (physical, cognitive and emotional) in addition to the mainstay of social, housing and food services provided by Council colleagues. Renfrewshire Leisure's services can support wellbeing by maintaining an ongoing sense of belonging and connection between people and their locale, a vital touchpoint for everyone in this time of social distancing and isolation.
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## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Emergencies Board:

- (a) Note the work being delivered by Renfrewshire Leisure to support the health and wellbeing of local people, both in terms of the immediate restrictions faced by communities and through the anticipated, longer-term recovery period.
- (b) Note its plans to expand this work in collaboration with the volunteer response hubs being established by the Council and partners.

### **3. RENFREWSHIRE LEISURE COMMUNITY FOCUSED RESPONSE**

- 3.1 In general, Renfrewshire Leisure's work for our community focused Covid-19 response can be summarised under three key headings: Locality; Catharsis and Support. It is a natural extension of the services we typically provide for the community, adapted to the current environment and context of Covid-19. We are also ready to collaborate with the Council's launch of community volunteer hubs, to maximise our reach into, and support for, local communities.
- 3.2 One of the first activities within Renfrewshire Leisure's contingency planning prior to lockdown was to prepare for transferring a number of key activity classes online – particularly those that support people with long term health conditions – to minimise service disruption. This work, alongside many other services transferring to online platforms, required a significant response from RL's marketing and comms team. It is particularly important during this time of separation, to enable people to access online activities led by familiar coaches and staff members from our venues. Uptake from the public has increased online traffic by over a third and significantly broadened public understanding of the range of services Renfrewshire Leisure offers.
- 3.3. In response to growing concerns about how the third sector might be faring with the additional pressure of Covid-19, and what recent research has identified as 'newly vulnerable communities', the Museum Project has adapted its existing co-production methodology as a means to channel support to community partners and their users.
- 3.4 Cultural services are also adapting many of their services to be delivered online, or through alternative analogue means, and creatively redeveloping content to reach existing and new service users. These platforms will also provide an essential outlet for the work of artists, makers and creative organisations during the pandemic, whilst also ensuring that local people are provided with quality content that can provide a useful uplift in difficult times, a distraction from a painful situation, help reinforce a sense of belonging.

### **4. SERVICE RESPONSES**

- 4.1 This section highlights examples of our community focused support from key service areas. The examples cover: continuity of provision for sport and health services; the Museum Project's role in supporting recovery; and the work of cultural services. They are followed by an outline of the work our marketing and

communications team have put in place to support services moving online and the public to access them.

## **4.2 Continuity of provision for sport and health services:**

### **4.2.1 Health & Wellbeing Classes**

The Macmillan, Live Active and Vitality programmes have been merged together to enable the widest reach possible, ensuring the same provision is there for all existing users. Every client working with these services prior to Covid-19 is still working with us. New GP and other referrals into our services are also being received and included.

We are delivering online classes specifically designed for people living with medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, MS, stroke, cardiac conditions, cancer, bone/joint/muscular conditions, cognitive impairments and COPD. Approximately 12 classes per week are being offered to all current clients and there is an opportunity for new clients to join in. The classes are also ideal for those who have a fear of falling, or who find their strength and balance is starting to impact on their daily lives. So far, we have had over 600 attendances since lockdown began. Classes are suitable for all abilities, offering both standing and seated options.

We also provide home-based exercise packs for those who cannot access our online class programme or who simply prefer not to. These packs include suitable links to online content and resources, a pedometer, an activity tracker, leaflets and booklets on safe exercise. To date, 58 packs have been posted out to users in the community. We can also post any Macmillan booklet required to an individual within 3-5 working days. Booklets include treatment information on matters such as dealing with a diagnosis, how to tell children etc.

We continue to offer and maintain support, advice and information around physical activity and nutrition for all those with long term conditions and have hosted 225 phone-based consultations to date. We have maintained weekly contact with all users in our groups to ensure that nobody is left behind due to social isolation. Instead, we provide them with essential regularity of contact and health benefits through the reassurance of familiar staff/coach/volunteers supporting each class, followed by the usual cup of tea and chat at the end of the class, which is equally vital to general wellbeing.

Prior to Covid-19 we were working with Invest Renfrewshire to establish a volunteering coaching programme to support people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Whilst this has been disrupted in its planned form, we are in conversation with HSCP colleagues about adapting our health and wellbeing classes to provide support for people in recovery in an alternative format.

#### 4.2.2 Sport services for children and young people

Active Schools provides a wide variety of sporting opportunities for all pupils across Renfrewshire. To mitigate current lockdown restrictions, our Renfrewshire Active Schools team have created digital sports sessions and were the fastest in Scotland to do so. These sessions cover several sports such as dance, football, basketball and athletics. The sessions have all been locally created, filmed, edited, promoted and monitored by the Active Schools team, and as much content as possible is put out on a daily basis.

To date, there have been a total of 2,963 sign ups via the Class4kids online booking system, which allows us to continue to track participation. This is something that has been paused in other authorities. The sign ups have shown that the content has been widely received across Renfrewshire and has also seen several participants from other local authorities take part. Renfrewshire Active Schools have also shared this content nationally so that it is also available to families beyond the Class4kids sign up. Shetland Active Schools have also been using our digital content to help support delivery within their school hubs, without which they would have no content to support their young people. We are moving now to link with national governing sports bodies and local community sport clubs to enhance the amount and range of content available.

Trying to alleviate the stress and anxiety that young people feel, the Renfrewshire Active Schools team created the trend for several online challenges via social media intended to lift the spirits by adding another element of fun. These challenges are interactive and require very little resource to take part. The trend for growing these types of challenges initiated from responses Renfrewshire Active Schools received from other local authority Active Schools teams, the Scottish Commonwealth basketball team and several local schools as well as many individuals and families from across Renfrewshire.

In planning ahead to when restrictions ease, Renfrewshire Active Schools team are in talks with Education Services about what would need to be put in place for Active Schools working in-person with children again, adapting sports to support social distancing. The transition to an online platform has opened up the options to provide Active Schools classes at home for children who are unable to stay on at school beyond 3pm. Therefore, what we are learning through this time is that the way these services are offered and accessed in the future is not an either / or digital or in-person but both. This also applies to our health and wellbeing classes, particularly as many clients will need to remain shielded.

#### 4.2.3 Sporting Memories Dementia group

This group normally meets every Thursday at KGV pavilion. It is currently being maintained through direct weekly contact with each client, which has been hugely welcomed due to their social isolation. Quizzes are also sent to keep their minds active and relieve boredom.

Our online Sporting Memories posts are a result of this contact. The social media campaign highlights each member and their favourite sporting memory. We are also actively maintaining contact with the Sporting Memory Foundation to keep this partnership alive.

### **4.3 The role of the Museum Project in recovery**

- 4.3.1 As we are working directly with communities to develop the new Paisley Museum, we need to acknowledge the potentially changing priorities of our audiences as result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our activity plan for the museum (this is a NLHF requirement, which sets out how we will engage with audiences and the types of activities we'll undertake) will have an increased focus on health & wellbeing, inclusion, co-production and learning. This approach is based on collaboration, kindness and responsiveness.

We have identified two key strands of project work emerging from this adapted approach: Listening (building community, connections, relationships) and Creating (promoting sense of worth, identity, empowerment).

#### **4.3.2 Listening (building community, connections, relationships)**

Our first step has been to maintain our engagement with existing partner organisations about how we can continue to engage with them during the current restrictions and really to ask "How are you? Where are you at the moment? What can we do to support you?" At this point in time our aim for the project has simply been to be 'a friend'.

Co-production partners:

- Kairos Women's Space have moved to online engagement and we are now delivering weekly sessions with them as well as looking to host some of their own events.
- In trialling this approach with Kairos, we are now working to see if we can roll that out to other existing partners including YMCA, Who Cares? Scotland, STAR project, Talking Heads and others during the immediate lockdown period and beyond.

Schools:

- We instigated a revised dialogue with schools at the end of March through 19 Head teachers and Primary teachers. We initially discussed the general position of schools, opportunities for us to support home learning and general health and wellbeing.

These are the partners we've been working to co-produce content with over last two years and it is important that we don't lose connections with them and don't let people feel forgotten about or that our work together is on pause. We recognise the importance of maintaining momentum even if the nature of the engagement is changed.

We are also acutely aware that there are groups and organisations who find themselves newly vulnerable, or at risk, that we can engage with and provide

support to. We don't want to pre-empt what that support would be or what activities would look like, so the first step to initiate dialogue and to listen to them, is really the most important.

Connecting with newly vulnerable communities and third sector organisations:

The team leading the Activity Plan are mapping who those new communities of interest are; what are their priorities? who are the key contacts? so we can make connections and begin conversations. Led by the Museum Project's Co-Production Officer, Audience Research Officer and Learning & Access Co-ordinator, our approach centred on kindness and empathy will be focused around answering the most basic of questions "How can we help? / How can we be your Buddy?" (to take a local reference, for example).

'Thinking Space' discussion events:

Following these initial activities, we will set up online and in person discussion forums / online assemblies. These are likely to explore specific topics that relate to Covid-19 and focus on people's changing priorities, for example their sense of community, the importance of locale, the role of family and friends, the importance of health as well as their experiences of living through a pandemic. However, discussions might also be unrelated to Covid-19 providing some respite to the experience and a chance to look forward, for example considering the role of the Museum's garden and the importance of outdoor spaces in people's general health and wellbeing. These events may be an end in themselves or may feed directly into museum programming but what is important is taking the time to build the relationships and allow people to be heard and that we have the time to respond to them and consider what are now their priorities.

#### 4.3.3 Creating (promoting sense of worth, identity, empowerment)

In the longer term, but starting work this year, we will be reviewing the Museum's Introductory Gallery content in light of people's experience and changing priorities. The intention is to commission a writer to co-produce the narrative for the Introductory Gallery and to work with local organisations and individuals to develop it. As a co-produced piece of work, it will include multiple viewpoints & voices, have humour, pride, as well as be a means to challenge perceptions. We can include Covid-19 in the discourse about the town if people would like to do so, and it may help people process what has happened. It is also another opportunity to provide creative opportunities through this process that might offer some respite from Covid-19 with outcomes around how we create and feel a sense of identity, a sense of place and self-worth in contributing to the cultural life of the town.

Museum practice also offers the opportunity to develop a Covid-19 archive (which may be linked to the Introductory Gallery but also presents an opportunity to collect digital and physical objects for display) and which would evolve from some of the earlier 'listening' discussions enabling us to

collect a Paisley / Renfrewshire specific response to the pandemic experience.

A strategic aim of the Museum Project has always been to create a community resource at heart of Paisley, where co-production is at the heart of our work, involving people to create a useful museum. All the engagement with new and existing communities will support the development of a non-binary building, what services we offer in the building, and how spaces are likely to be used etc. In summary, it is about maintaining the relationships we've already brokered but trying to connect with new communities and newly vulnerable communities to begin a process of dialogue and discussion which ensures that people are involved in the delivery of the Museum and that the Museum becomes part of that recovery process.

#### **4.4 Cultural Services**

##### **4.1 Examples of what is currently online:**

- Library bookbug you tube – session from 24 March has had 7k views and from 31 March has had 4k views. Library staff preparing for daily sessions.
- Libraries ebook and magazine loans – 72% increase in users.
- Livestreaming of the moon, 2 April had 267 comments with further events planned, including a weekly 'Ask the Astronomer' hour.
- Archive film used to make a short film about Renfrew Junior in cup final in 60s, 1100 views in a week.
- Continuity of community engagement work, for example Art Boss programme for care experienced young people has moved to an online/digital programme working in partnership with Youth Services and Who Cares Scotland. This programme has been maintained through a Facebook group for 3-4 weeks, supported by artists delivering online workshops.

##### **4.2 Upcoming provision:**

- Stories in Scots for children.
- Virtual tea dance – moving Johnstone Town Hall tea dances online.
- At home music sessions "Stuck in the house with you" a weekly livestreamed session from a different artist, always on the same day and time so it becomes a regular event.
- E-sports delivered through Libraries to provide online fitness and gaming sessions.
- Online bookclubs by school librarians in Linwood High, Renfrew High, Paisley Grammar.
- Artists, crafters and makers online commissions.

##### **4.3 In further developments we are taking cognisance of the three key strands of locality, catharsis and support:**

###### **4.3.1 Locality:**

We recognise the importance of content having a local focus to ensure people can continue to feel connected to their place, their culture and to one another.

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April, we will be launching Ren TV, a new digital platform that brings all our content together, providing one single place to go to for local content across all cultural services. We intend to use this new platform to create a buzz for the area and will also be able to signpost or host the content of other local organisations to support as wide a cultural network as we can.

#### 4.3.2 Catharsis:

Digital storytelling: We recognise there is the opportunity to support processing the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic through shared storytelling. We will work with Council, HSCP and partner colleagues to understand where the need might be for people to share their stories, or to tell stories that are not otherwise being heard. There are many techniques available to enable this through digital storytelling processes, which can be adapted to be sensitive to each situation.

National Theatre Scotland project: Future Paisley planned a large-scale piece of participatory theatre originally scheduled for summer 2020. The Cultural Services team are working with creative teams from National Theatre Scotland and Slung Low, who are currently working out how to continue to develop and rehearse the piece, where constraints might lead to imaginative, new solutions. The performance is currently rescheduled for summer 2021, and we anticipate that it will take on a different resonance in terms of providing a focus for the whole community to come together again.

Artist residency programme: In response to Covid-19, we will be adapting our residency plans to establish a residency opportunity for an artist to document / respond to the current situation, working within communities.

Civic recognition moments: We anticipate there may, in the future, be plans for civic recognition of, for example, health workers. We are able to support these through community artistic and creative responses, contributing to a shared response and recognition.

We are also working to provide cultural input to isolated members of the community by utilising the Council's local food distribution network.

#### 4.3.3 Support:

We have been in touch with schools and community / third sector organisations to see what practical support we can provide.

For our CODF organisations, we have put in place a change request process for organisations to repurpose their funding where needed, also speaking with them about their position as a result of Covid-19 and establishing what further practical support we can put in place for them.

### 4.4 **Marketing and Communication: Supporting services online**

- 4.4.1 Everything from a marketing and comms perspective must either inform or inspire. RL's marketing and comms team are actively working with services on how to adapt their work to an online presence to meet public needs and, particularly during lockdown and future Covid-19 related restrictions, to support



mental and physical health. This includes updating Renfrewshire Leisure's website with service activities, creating engaging social media content and producing informative e-newsletters to customers. Internally, a separate weekly wellbeing newsletter is produced for staff. The team also actively supports all Council messaging.

4.4.2 Marketing staff work with services to provide a wide variety of content, ranging from in-depth informative material to light-hearted content, all of which has been received positively by the public to date. With all digital content comes analytics and insight. This feedback is shared with services weekly to inform and help shape and grow the online content which they produce. Analytics include information on overall customer experience e.g. customer demographics, how long they are engaged, how they find us and how they have accessed RL content.

4.4.3 Since RL closed its public facing venues, we've seen a large digital audience visit our online channels, including:

- 23,800 website users
- Reaching over 185,000 users via social media
- Social Media engagement increasing by 37%
- Higher open rates than industry standard on RL e-newsletters
- Reach to over 48,500 sports services users via social media

4.4.4 The digital information available to us shows that although our physical services and venues may be closed, users are still looking for RL services and are keen to seek alternative activities and information. We have been able to demonstrate the value in our alternative format content and so next steps include expanding and developing our online offering to continue to support physical and mental health.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - to mitigate the temporary loss of income to RLL as a result of closing its operational buildings due to Covid-19, spend holds are in place across the organisation. In the short term, there are few additional costs associated with moving services to an online or alternative analogue provision. However, as time goes on, there may be some requirement for expenditure associated with, for example, meeting the growing demand for Libraries e-lending service; managing our digital capacity; continuing to manage programmes that remain active.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - the majority of RLL's workforce are part of the local population and as such is being impacted directly by the spread of confirmed cases. So far, staffing the activities listed in this report remains largely unaffected.
3. **Community/Council Planning** - We take cognisance of the fact that Covid-19 will impact on the operations of Council partners and on services to the community. This paper highlights the work being undertaken to mitigate this

impact in terms of Renfrewshire Leisure's ability to provide services that support the health and wellbeing of the community both now and in a recovery phase, and which can be integrated into the seven new volunteer hubs.

4. **Legal** – N/A
5. **Property/Assets** – N/A
6. **Information Technology** - ICT are working to ensure staff have the capability to work from home wherever possible to reduce social contact in line with government and health guidance.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** –
  - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.
8. **Health & Safety** - Advice and guidance is being given to protect the health and safety of employees and service users when carrying out community focused services for RLL in line with government and health guidance.
9. **Procurement** – N/A
10. **Risk** – Due to the severity of the global pandemic and Covid-19, there is a risk to the delivery of the services with staff levels being reduced. This is being closely monitored by RLL's Senior Leadership Team and the Council's Emergency Management Team. Business Continuity Plans have been reviewed and the risk has been added to the Corporate Risk Register.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – N/A
13. **Climate Risk** – N/A

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