

# Sheffield COVID Business Recovery Plan

## ***Who is this plan for?***

This plan is for civic and city leaders spearheading Sheffield's economic recovery response. It has been produced by the Sheffield Business Response Group – a co-operation between the Cabinet Member for Business and Investment and the private sector.<sup>1</sup> It identifies interventions to help focus our collective efforts and resources to address the impact of the COVID crisis on Sheffield businesses and jobs and provide a route map for recovery.

The plan focuses on our business response and is designed to complement other recovery plans to form the city's COVID response.

## ***Why is it so important?***

The last six months have been very challenging for most businesses. Those in sectors most reliant on social interaction or visits deemed non-essential, such as retail, hospitality and culture have faced dramatic reductions in demand, with many closing temporarily or operating at significantly reduced levels. We enter the autumn with warnings about a second wave of the COVID virus, creating further uncertainty and anxiety for the City.

The demand for support has been vast; the Council has distributed £100 million in grant funding whilst Business Sheffield has responded to over 6000 calls and provided 3000 1-2-1 business advisor sessions since March to support businesses to remain solvent through lockdown.

As the economy opens up and we all learn to live within the restrictions that keep us COVID-safe, the nature of the economic challenge is evolving<sup>2</sup>. Many businesses are looking for new ways to operate; opening up and trading safely is a top priority, yet this is often necessary but not sufficient to regain pre-COVID levels of economic activity. Businesses are also seeking to explore new markets, work more digitally and remotely and invest in new equipment to increase productivity or deliver new products. All of this will require continued support from the City, its regional partners and Government.

The vast majority of business sectors are experiencing lower demand owing to increased uncertainty. Over 40% of businesses recently surveyed are looking to scale down their operation in the coming months. Those businesses able to make adaptations and flex to changing consumer needs have a more positive outlook. However, it is clear that restoring consumer confidence to enable people to re-engage in economic activity is critical to retain jobs and maintain incomes in the medium term.

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<sup>1</sup> The Council has co-chaired a Business Response Group (BRG), charged with overseeing development of a Covid 19 Economic Recovery Plan. The BRG is made up of representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Sheffield Property Association, Sheffield Digital, Cutlers Company, the Culture Consortium, Unight Sheffield and both Sheffield Universities.

<sup>2</sup> BRG's COVID 19 impact on business survey analysis (July/August 2020)

The scale of the economic impact of COVID 19 is only just becoming clear, as the UK enters the deepest recession since records began. This recession will have knock-on effects for people's wellbeing, proving again the links between the economy and health. We also know social inequalities are widening, and that not all communities are affected equally by the health or economic impacts of COVID 19. Young people, people from BAME backgrounds, women and people with health conditions and disabilities have been highlighted as being particularly severely affected and we need to act now to reduce the worst effects on our society. We also need to consider both the short and long term impacts of our response on the environment. Supporting businesses through this period is essential to help retain jobs and incomes. Without mitigating action at all levels of Government, unemployment is likely to soar. Together we need to take immediate action at city and district level, to promote consumer confidence, help businesses to adapt and survive and ensure that the foundations for economic renewal are not eroded during this unprecedented time.

COVID 19 has presented the city with new challenges but in some cases the pandemic has highlighted and even accelerated pre-existing trends. For example, increased automation was already posing challenges in terms of adapting workforce skills to changing employment demands but COVID has brought about an acceleration of digital transformation and contact-free services, remote working and distance learning. The impact on the high street as a result of declining retail expenditure in physical shops and stores was already leading to questions about the future role for both city centres and districts centres. This action plan needs to take account of work that was already happening to try and address these issues. Equally, we need to acknowledge the nature of these trends means they require a long-term approach and will not be solved by this short-term action plan alone.

Sheffield has significant assets and strengths which can provide opportunities, if leveraged appropriately, to produce sustainable economic activity to pull the city and region out of the COVID-generated recession. The University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) and Sheffield Hallam University's Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC) are at the heart of Sheffield's innovation strengths and will play a key role in the City's recovery. The city has a burgeoning digital and tech sector and a city centre that was already adapting to the changing role of the high street. Sheffield's unique offer as The Outdoor City sitting within the Peak District National Park also presents a particular opportunity to promote itself as an attractive and safe place to visit, live and work within the context of COVID.

Many of these assets will be developed through long-term solutions, rather than short-term projects, but they remain part of the City's COVID response by building resilience and strengthening key parts of the economy for the future.

## ***What does the Business Recovery Plan do?***

Our COVID Business Recovery Plan provides a framework for action across 6 priorities identified by the BRG and informed by business survey responses. Against these 6 priorities, the plan highlights areas for immediate action (RELIEF), recommends ideas for short term interventions to help businesses adjust to the new economic environment (RECOVERY) and articulates key challenges for long term economic success (RENEWAL). This work will inform our bids for relief and recovery funding and help to shape the city's long-term economic strategy.

### **1. Stimulating demand in the local economy**

COVID 19 has undermined consumer confidence; even as the economy re-opens demand remains low. Stimulating demand, improving consumer confidence and identifying new market opportunities will be essential in the short term to keep businesses trading and maintain jobs.

### **2. Opening our city and district centres safely and securely**

To enable people to re-engage with the city, staff and consumers need to feel safe. This relies on our businesses and infrastructure operating in a COVID-safe way. Ongoing support is required to enable businesses and transport providers to put appropriate measures into place. Without intervention and in the absence of an effective vaccination programme, people will continue to feel unsafe for years.

### **3. Developing our skills base as a city to help communities get back to work**

COVID 19 has disrupted existing training and education, and it will inevitably lead to significant levels of unemployment as Government job retention schemes wind down. This priority puts forward some short-term steps to alleviate these issues whilst also looking ahead to a longer term strategic response to skills.

### **4. Helping to stimulate the conditions to encourage more start-ups in the city**

Our business density is historically low compared to other major cities and while new start-ups in Sheffield tend to be successful, there aren't enough of them. If there is to be a legacy from this pandemic it should be more start-ups and scale ups in this new environment, taking every opportunity to build further resilience into our economy.

### **5. Stimulating investment in culture to help rebuild confidence and visitor numbers**

The culture and hospitality sectors have been most affected by COVID, leaving a lot of businesses vulnerable. The sector is integral to our city's vibrancy and attractiveness; as such we must identify ways for the broader business community in Sheffield to get behind its recovery.

### **6. Working with business leaders on a longer-term economic strategy for Sheffield**

As we learn about the wholesale economic effects of COVID we will need to refocus our plans to tackle systemic economic challenges, both old and new, through a new economic plan. This will require a refresh and repurpose of the City Growth Board, to develop new ways of working effectively with regional partners and strengthen private sector collaboration.

### ***The structure of the document***

The following sections of the plan are structured around RELIEF, RECOVERY and RENEWAL interventions for the 6 identified priority areas.

**RELIEF** interventions are focused on immediate actions to keep business solvent and trading during severe restrictions on economic activity. These interventions have shaped our response to date.

**RECOVERY** interventions are focused on helping businesses and communities adjust and adapt to a new normal and overcoming the longer-term effects of COVID 19.

**RENEWAL** interventions are about ensuring the long term structural weaknesses in the economy are addressed and a more resilient, sustainable, fair economy emerges. The interventions within this phase may be less defined, and will take place over a longer time period (approximately from 1-3 years).

The interventions set out in the action plan will inform Sheffield City Council's proposed 'COVID 19 Economic Recovery Fund', which will enable commissioning of projects designed to provide immediate relief to businesses and the economy. These interventions will also work in conjunction with the [Sheffield City Region Renewal Action Plan](#), bidding for recovery funds and to mitigate the long term impact of the crisis.

### ***What does success look like?***

#### **Outcomes of our plan for our people, business and places**

1. People are able to travel and work in COVID-safe conditions, in good jobs that support their health and wellbeing.
2. Business failure rates amongst profitable and productive companies are minimised and good quality jobs are safeguarded.
3. Businesses have the confidence, information, support and infrastructure they need to operate through and beyond the current crisis, to adapt to changing circumstances.
4. New businesses are born and supported to grow and thrive and new inward investment secured on the basis of external companies choosing to establish a presence in Sheffield
5. We will seize opportunities to rebuild and renew our economy whilst becoming a cleaner and more sustainable city.
6. Our places and venues, in the city centre and in local neighbourhoods, adapt to the changing circumstances
7. Visitors and residents will be able to visit, learn about and enjoy the cultural, leisure and green spaces that Sheffield is renowned for.
8. School leavers and college leavers move on to meaningful, well-focused education, employment and training.
9. Unemployment and under-employment is minimised, including amongst disadvantaged groups and communities.
10. Workforce skills are enhanced to meet current and future demands, enabling people to fulfil their potential and thrive.

## **PRIORITY 1: STIMULATING DEMAND IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

Factors that stimulate indigenous business growth and attract new businesses, investment and talent to the city are perhaps less well understood and harder to influence directly but the BRG believes that within the context of the challenge of COVID, the best way to maximise the long-term impact of the Government and Sheffield City Region proposals in Sheffield is to ensure they are supported by interventions that drive economic activity and demand for labour. This includes improving consumer confidence, city marketing and opening new market opportunities through pivoting, supporting innovation and strengthening localised supply chains.

### **RELIEF**

#### **Access to support (advice and finance)**

- **Advising and signposting businesses to finance for businesses**, including any future Government grants that are locally delivered. This includes a programme of webinars related to COVID issues and sector specific business support sessions. Utilising Business Sheffield's gateway service as a business helpline to access support services and grants, alongside signposting to other business networks.
- **Link into SCR's 'Services and Knowledge Support for COVID-19 Adaptation' intervention** (subject to confirmed funding). This intervention includes scaling up the business support offer, specialist areas like HR, legal, company formation and structure, health and wellbeing (especially mental health), and health and safety (including COVID adaptations). This intervention could include **additional business support within Business Sheffield** to provide hands on 1-2-1 advice with SMEs to assist in prioritising action plans to survive, adapt and recover with a view to long term strategic growth and resilience.
- **Support the delivery of the 'Flexible Investment and Recapitalisation' element of SCR's Renewal Plan** (subject to funding), deploying a range of flexible investment mechanisms to support the adaptation and survival of viable companies and accelerate growth. It includes grants, loans and patient equity investment.

#### **Harnessing the Make Yourself At Home initiative to build consumer confidence in the city**

- The initial objective of the initiative is to boost economic resurgence in the local economy, as well as provide a platform for cross sharing of how people can re-engage with their local culture and communities as businesses and venues reopen.
- This will include working with local media to achieve greater awareness and engagement with the business community, enabling businesses to make effective use of the campaign, and for those businesses to become ambassadors in all social media related activity.
- Whilst businesses will be the primary focus, there also needs to be greater awareness and engagement from the general public, as that will ensure a wider audience base for their activities, benefitting the whole city. Cultural engagements and interventions will be critical to achieving this.

- Content (including a mix of on-site articles, video and social posts) will be produced in collaboration with a range of events and businesses to profile the campaign. Social networks will be deployed to extend this reach.
- ERDF funding through 'Re-opening the High Street Safely' grant scheme (RHSS) will be spent on additional staff capacity to improve engagement directly with businesses, content, media and production and dissemination.
- The ambition is to have all physical measures put in place across the city and district centres be branded as part of the MYAH scheme.

## RECOVERY

### **Build on Make Yourself At Home to build the city's national brand and profile and support the city's economic ambitions**

- This will include working on external investor campaigns (across all sectors, with relevant city partners)
- Addressing the skills gap and talent attraction campaigns
- Attract inward investment
- Supporting universities to attract and welcome new students to the city
- Supporting the cultural sector to firmly establish culture as a key product, identity factor and export of Sheffield
- Supporting the meetings and live events sector to reopen and build demand to support hospitality and tourism businesses across the city
- Utilising sports and the outdoors to position Sheffield as a city with an unbeatable way of life

### **Enable businesses to sustain and even thrive under COVID**

- **Supporting business growth through all engagements** encountered during COVID 19 and through the collective efforts of intermediaries in the city and private sector leaders. This includes working to support manufacturing businesses, as a core business base of the city, to realise emerging opportunities.
- **Supporting the hospitality and tourism sector to meet industry standards and implement current guidance.** Support businesses to engage with national and regional campaigns and execute a sustained city marketing plan to build confidence and strengthen the reputation of the city for visitors and business travel.
- Addressing the climate emergency will require **large scale investment to improve the energy efficiency of Sheffield's buildings.** We will encourage these developments and endeavour to maximise Sheffield's take-up of available government and private sector funding for energy efficiency works such as the Green Homes Grant. We will work to ensure that Sheffield businesses are in a position to benefit from the available investment initiatives, and that individuals and landlords are encouraged to take up the grants, reducing the city's carbon footprint, saving people money and improving living conditions and health.
- **Promoting innovation support for SMEs** by utilising the new contacts made through the grants and survey work and captured through social media and intermediaries; improving effective referrals throughout the city into accelerator and incubation

programmes; improve access to a broad range of expertise and facilities, and assisting with finance and scaling ambitions.

- **Deliver the ‘Leadership Support’ intervention of SCR’s Economic Renewal Action Plan** (subject to funding), focused on supporting business leaders to improve strategic decision making. This includes support to enable decision making on investment in technology (e.g. AI), low carbon transition, employee health and wellbeing, social responsibility and to develop new markets.

### **Intensify interventions relating to supply chains and procurement**

- Working with SMEs to enable them to bid to be part of OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) supply chains. This often requires SMEs to have appropriate quality control / accreditations. This is particularly relevant in Sheffield City Region as we don’t have many tier 1 integrators (who directly supply to OEMs) and create demand for tier 2 supply chain.
- Harnessing anchor institutions procurement through the city’s Progressive Procurement Group. This work would build on the relationships formed and strengthened through the initial response to COVID.
- Awareness raising of existing opportunities with the broad Sheffield / Sheffield City Region business base, through the promotion of existing portals; tools; training etc. available locally and nationally.
- Direct approaches to local companies to better understand their capabilities using an account management approach.
- Working with local public sector organisations to better understand their tendering requirements and processes; and to encourage local companies to be given the opportunity to bid for contracts;
- Meet the Buyer events and platforms – Promotion of existing planned events and also the potential to work with organisations to put on specific events and establish online showcasing, if a business case is established.
- Exploring the potential of delivering specific ‘Masterclass’ events to provide advice and training to businesses in respect of submitting successful tender responses;
- As part of the SCR Renewal Action Plan, working with companies to **remove some of their identified barriers** that prevent them from supplying target companies
- **Utilise intelligence gleaned from engagement** with local companies in respect of their capabilities. If there is sizeable demand for companies wishing to supply a particular organisation and/or sector, work with those organisations to raise awareness of capabilities, potentially leading to specific events or activities .
- Linking to the **‘Supply Chain and Procurement’ intervention in SCR’s Economic Renewal Action Plan** (subject to funding).

## **RENEWAL**

### **Supporting businesses to identifying new market opportunities through research and innovation**

- Supporting delivery of the Sheffield City Region Strategic Economic Plan which places innovation at the heart of business growth and aims to offer structured support for businesses of all sizes and for different forms of innovation (R&D/application of new technologies/translating ideas into new or improved processes /pivoting/new products/service-development)
- Actively promoting the benefits of innovation in all of its forms to raise demand. Better integrate with higher level skills activity (particularly digital and leadership) to develop and expand innovation potential and capacity for businesses through targeted internship and mentor programmes.
- Identifying specific opportunities for pivoting and innovation as opportunities arise. For example, working through the Business Sheffield and other BRG partners' events programme we will help our city's businesses to be more aware of the challenges and opportunities relating to transitioning to a low-carbon economy, including new market opportunities.
- This work strongly links to Priority 4 regarding start-ups (see page 16) but our approach needs to recognise that both transformational and small-scale incremental innovation are important for the city's economy.

### **Further developing of City brand within the context of COVID**

- By April 2021 there will be a new digital interface for the city of Sheffield combining several existing websites and content.
- From this base we aim to work with partners and stakeholders across the city to better promote Sheffield in a joined up way as a place, and make the most of a number of inherent qualities which will be more desirable post-COVID – access to green space, diverse sector offerings and an independent and vibrant way of life full of culture.

## **PRIORITY 2: OPENING OUR CITY AND DISTRICT CENTRES SAFELY AND SECURELY**

It goes without saying that Sheffield's economic recovery relies on businesses being able to reopen and staff and customers feeling safe in the city. Whether they are reopening shops, getting back to the office or restarting production, businesses may need advice and support in how they follow COVID guidelines. Individuals, whether they are customers or workers, will also need reassurance that they can go to work and move around the city safely and as easily as possible. In order to create a safe and as pleasant an environment as possible, and to enable people across the city, including those who may have additional barriers to access business services and opportunities, there needs to be underpinning social and physical infrastructure. This includes childcare, public transport, active travel measures and changes to the public realm to allow for social distancing. Our approach also needs to link to the challenges and opportunities of addressing Climate Change imperatives, including accelerating zero carbon transport and energy outcomes.

### **RELIEF**

#### **Opening our City Centre and District Centres**

- **Adapting public space and infrastructure** to support social distancing measures across 52 district centres:
  - Pavement widening, road closures, signage from floor stickers, queuing systems and hygiene practices.
  - Installing lamp post banners in every district centre to promote social distancing
  - Providing café seating barriers on loan free of charge to any business
  - Street spaces and places to support outdoor business trading and cultural activities - including physical provision and reallocation of public highways to enable increased space to be used for outdoor trading.
- **Increase levels of walking and cycling** to reduce demand on public transport and car use, with a view to developing lasting behaviour change. This will include continued capital investment in active travel infrastructure, as well as potential revenue streams to provide wrap around support for training and engagement.
- **Creating an exemplar** on Pinstone Street to demonstrate what can be done across the city to reclaim streets that have been closed.

#### **Giving businesses the most up to date and straightforward advice and support and streamlining processes to give them the best opportunity to operate effectively**

- **Providing advice on reopening** - Two comprehensive reopening guides have been produced and regularly updated to give retail and hospitality sectors the most up to date guidance. This has been complemented with a series of sector specific webinars, virtual Q&A sessions and regular mailings to hospitality businesses across the city region via Marketing Sheffield.
- Implementing the new **Temporary Coronavirus Pavement Café Scheme** which is free of charge and aims to allow any business with a straight-forward application to put seating outside to comply with social distancing requirements as quickly as possible.
- **Visits to all key district centres** to check on hospitality businesses being COVID secure and **connecting hospitality and visitor experience businesses in district centres** so they are linked into the support available. Funded by ERDF, **3 COVID Secure Ambassadors**

**recruited** to visit businesses to advise on COVID secure measures but also on business activities.

- Signposting to advice on disability accessibility to improve access to services for disabled people.

### **Confidence building with Make Yourself at Home**

- Engaging with the public to let them know what steps businesses are taking to make customers feel safe and secure and promote new retail and cultural experiences.

## **RECOVERY**

### **Supporting sectors particularly affected by COVID measures**

- **Reopening of Retail & Hospitality:**
  - Develop and implement a holistic plan to successfully allow the reopening of bricks and mortar retail, and the hospitality sector, whilst ensuring safety and providing reassurance to consumers and businesses.
  - Ensure the continuation of this support by establishing industry workshops and working groups.
  - Working with industry bodies and businesses to share best practice and start to stimulate demand.
  - Consider short-term projects to address vacant units on high streets as a result of declining shopping in physical retail stores – including changes of use to facilitate training, start-up space and digital access.
- **Conference, meetings and Live events:**
  - Supporting the meetings and events sector towards reopening into 2021 (and in some cases managing extended closure).
  - Developing and implementing a **sector specific programme of business support** through industry workshops, working groups and direct to businesses.
  - **Providing overnight coach parking** in the city centre for coach operators and group organisers wanting to bring groups into the city centre.
- **Childcare sector:**
  - **Monitor and review childcare provision** across the city to ensure it meets short-term demand and that childcare providers are able to access appropriate business support measures.

### **Measures to support active travel and public transport infrastructure**

- **Accelerate active travel plans** across the city, including delivery of the Transforming Cities Fund and Sheffield's Transport Strategy.
- **Bus and Tram recovery package** – A capital and revenue fund established to provide local enhancements to the bus network in response to impact of COVID 19 including a travel support scheme.
- **Confidence building measures** to support future bus use and investment in infrastructure and quality services, as well as continued commitment to develop the bus

and tram network, through capital investment and engagement with related policy mechanisms.

- **Access to local centres** – As home working becomes more prominent, demand for local centres is likely to increase as communities seek opportunities to make use of facilities and services closer to home. An enhanced package of safety, accessibility and resilience works are proposed to support the vibrancy of local centres and improve access to them by sustainable means.

## RENEWAL

### Redefining the role of Sheffield City Centre

- Ensuring there is enough land to meet business and employment needs, including potentially different floor space requirements as a result of COVID.
- The city's bid for the **Future High Streets Fund**, if successful, will help to 'future-proof' the area around the High Street, Fargate, Castle Square and the top of Angel Street both in terms of improving its long-term vibrancy and its capacity to support social distancing through more open space. Plans include event space, increased outdoor seating for cafes and bars, and new landscaping.
- Highlighting continued confidence in the City Centre, at **West Bar Square**, the partnership between Legal & General, Sheffield City Council and Urbo will bring forward £150m investment in the first phase of 200,000 sq ft of Grade A office space, 350 built-to-rent (BTR) homes, and landscaped public spaces.
- Advancing the development of **Heart of the City 2**, the city's commercial, leisure, retail and residential focal point, attracting occupiers and recognising the importance of quality public realm within the context of COVID 19.
- Continuing with developing the city centre housing offer to increase the residential population of the City Centre at **Sheffield Housing Zone North** and the **Devonshire Quarter**, including opportunities for family housing.
- **Castlegate** presents an opportunity to integrate the city's COVID 19 response as part of a new mixed use development, incorporating residential, office, retail and event space.
- Build on the success of **Grey to Green** as a means by which to improve the environment of the city centre, whilst also incorporating sustainable urban drainage, biodiversity and allowing for greater social distancing.
- As outlined in [Sheffield Plan: Our City, Our Future – Issues and Options 2020](#), future planning for the city needs to take account of challenges presented by COVID, including:
  - Greater importance of green spaces;
  - A need to reassess the requirements for office space;
  - The disproportionate impact on lower paid and less skilled people;
  - The future role of the City Centre;
  - Greater need for high quality, efficient digital infrastructure;
  - An expected reduction in commuting;
  - The increased importance of good and appropriate design of buildings.

### **Reimagining the role of District Centres**

- Explore the use of local Business Improvement Districts for local centres to enable local businesses to enhance existing services and run local marketing campaigns.
- Empowering more localised cultural activities linked to the keystone cultural institutions of the city.

### **Integrating the city's response to the Climate Emergency and COVID recovery**

- We will explore options to stimulate demand from businesses for improvements which will reduce energy use through accessing grant funding to provide advice, and funding for improvements, to reduce their carbon footprint and reduce energy costs.
- Addressing the demand for freight and logistics services, especially with the increase in delivery vehicles. Building on successful measures such as the eBike and the HE electric vehicle scheme, there is a potential to help businesses with new methods of delivering these services.
- Roll out of electric vehicle network to support transition to low carbon local economy and provide lower costs for businesses that could utilise this technology

## **PRIORITY 3: DEVELOPING OUR SKILLS BASE AS A CITY TO HELP COMMUNITIES GET BACK TO WORK**

Like any city, Sheffield faces long term challenges in how to improve its skills profile and ensure that there are opportunities to progress and retrain. The city also faces skills shortages in some areas which could act as a break on economic growth. But COVID 19 has created a sense of urgency around some key issues: it has disrupted existing training and education; it will inevitably lead to significant levels of unemployment as Government job retention schemes wind down and the impact of reduced demand for some services is felt. The unprecedented speed of the increase in remote working has made increasing digital skills, both basic and more advanced, even more vital than before. This action plan puts forward some short-term steps to alleviate these issues whilst also looking ahead to a longer term strategic response to skills.

### **RELIEF**

#### **More joined up working between skills providers and employers across the city**

- **Simplify communications** for individuals and businesses to help them understand the skills system, including opportunities to retrain and develop new skills.
- Leading skills providers will work with employers to **provide training routes** through to employment in key vocational sectors such as construction and health.
- **Provide more impartial advice for both individuals and employers** to help navigate training options, provide clear routes to employment, utilise individuals' transferable skills and support businesses to diagnose their skills gaps. This would complement and link to the SCR Renewal Action Plan.

#### **Identifying cohorts most at risk from COVID 19 disruption and recession, and finding ways that the business community can support them**

##### **Young People:**

- Business groups in the city will join up in partnership with the Council to give small businesses a **single gateway to access the Kickstart scheme**. The scheme is designed to create hundreds of thousands of 6-month work placements aimed at those aged 16 to 24 who are on Universal Credit and are considered at risk of long-term unemployment.
- Linking to the delivery of the 'Young People's Skills Guarantee' within the SCR Economic Renewal Plan. Examples of activity include:
  - Youth Hub to provide a single point of contact for young people to access independent advice and guidance
  - A mentoring scheme linking schools with recent graduates
  - Improving access to services for emotional wellbeing and support

##### **People at risk of being made redundant:**

- There is a gap in the current system for people who require immediate support as soon as they are aware they are being made redundant to start the transition towards new job opportunities, rather than waiting until they are officially unemployed.
- We need to accelerate the opportunity to access retraining and upskilling support, working with Sheffield City Region to access Adult Skills monies to deliver on a bigger scale and more quickly.

- This could potentially be addressed through the Advance SCR programme and the SCR Renewal Action Plan (subject to funding).

#### **Most Vulnerable (including long term unemployed):**

- Short-term solutions to address immediate challenges for those digitally excluded including opportunities for businesses to support widening access (for example, replacing and recycling or disposing of old kit, and repurposing unused office premises)
- Focusing on scaling up and investing in existing infrastructure and programmes that we know work well rather than creating new programmes, and building key partnerships between agencies and providers that improves an individual's engagement and experience.
- Job brokerage is key to this element of work and requires job matching and labour market professionals, to provide a bridge between businesses looking to recruit and job seekers with the right aptitudes, to ensure that the eventual outcome for these groups is sustainable employment.

### **RECOVERY**

#### **Address poor levels of digital use and innovation within the city's workforce and business base**

- Providing access to digital skill diagnostics for employers/workforce and tailored provision pertinent to specific industries. Digital specialists will be required to support organisational digital diagnostics and encourage better utilisation of digital tools, technologies and techniques to aid business productivity. This links to the delivery of 'Digital Adoption and Upskilling' intervention within the SCR Renewal Action Plan (subject to funding).

#### **Matching skills provision with the local labour market**

- Improving impartial advice and guidance.
- Better promotion and marketing of opportunities.
- Improved employer engagement in the city to support an education, training and skills offer that matches employer ambition and future need.

### **RENEWAL**

#### **Strengthening employer voice in skills system**

- Create a city-wide offer that links schools and colleges with employers in key sectors to strengthen employers' role in terms of engagement with individual programmes but also developing future strategies and projects.
- Enable employers who are already good at this to share their best practise.
- Improved regionally-focused industry advisory networks at local universities.
- Supporting SMEs to sponsor, mentor and support degree (and other) apprentices in key subjects.

## **Digital Inclusion**

- Accelerate the city's work on digital inclusion, recognising the increased emphasis on digital interactions as a result of the pandemic.
- Ensure that digital skills are embedded into support for those already facing barriers to employment and engagement e.g. disability, learning difficulties, poverty, homelessness.

## **Developing the skills for a low carbon economy**

- In order for Sheffield to achieve its ambition of zero carbon emissions by 2030, workers across a range of industries will need to learn new skills and ways of working. We will work with employers and with SCR to ensure that the city has the skills and knowledge necessary for the rollout of electric vehicles, widespread retrofitting of buildings and construction of low carbon sustainable buildings, and to support sustainable entrepreneurship.

## **PRIORITY 4: HELPING TO STIMULATE THE CONDITIONS TO ENCOURAGE MORE START-UPS IN THE CITY**

Sheffield has seen a significant increase in start-ups in recent years but has frequently seen lower start-up rates than other major cities. The reasons behind this are complex, and can't be easily solved in a short-term action plan. But we know that start-ups will be vital to Sheffield's economic recovery, and there are things that we can put in place to bolster existing work in this area. We need to take the friction out of the system and talk about it with one voice: there is already a lot of excellent support available in the city but as a business it can be confusing to work out which support is right for you. If we don't do this, Sheffield is at risk of falling further behind other cities, with knock on effects for individuals' employment, progression and wages.

### **RELIEF**

#### **Communicate and scale up the existing offer for start-ups in the city**

- Sheffield Incubator and Accelerator Network (SIAN) is in the process of creating a simple website that will provide **signposting** to the network members as sources of start-up support. The website is being funded by Sheffield Tech Parks. Additional support for this initiative would allow the website to provide a more detailed source of information, enable the network to undertake some communication activity and explore longer term ambitions around creating an angel investor group.
- Maximising the 'Launchpad' programme delivered across the Sheffield City Region. It brings a wide range of start up services, including workshops, events and one to one support from business advisors and coaches. It is fully inclusive and designed to help ambitious entrepreneurs set up and run successful businesses and support SME's with up to 10 employees to take the next step and grow their business. It works closely with its partners in the Sheffield Incubation and Acceleration Network to refer start ups and small businesses with physical office and co-working space in the city, alongside acceleration programmes such as Kollider and Twinkl Hive.
- Ensure that start-up support capacity and programmes addresses the needs of people who have **recently been made redundant** (or are at risk of being made redundant), those who have decided to, or been forced **to close their business** and are considering starting another one and women who are under-represented as business founders.
- Link start-up support to **supply chain activity** (page 7 ) and innovation activity and the opportunities this creates for new business.
- With additional funding, develop an **enhanced start up programme** to work with additional new start enquiries and deliver activity directly in **district centres** using community networks and the strong community response teams in the district centres of Sheffield who have good links in their high streets and communities to access community buildings and resources to deliver targeted place-based activity. These new enquiries should be linked into the start-up infrastructure in the city including those incubation and acceleration opportunities available through SIAN.
- Link to activity around the Sheffield City Region Renewal Action Plan, which proposes a **Digital Hub that will deliver digital adoption** to established businesses but also support more tech businesses to start-up and scale-up. Tech advisors would work as mentors in

those start-ups to link those new businesses into the business and incubation offer across the city alongside access to a co-investment fund which will focus on pre seed and seed investment.

- Subject to funding, potentially contribute towards existing **city investment funds** that provide equity investment for start-ups in specific sectors.

## **RECOVERY**

### **Introduce a ‘wraparound’ service to complement existing provision**

- This service would bring together existing provision and support it by filling gaps and providing signposting to resources and networks to create a more integrated offer. It would provide a single point of access to the city’s support for start-ups and would be a focal point for communications activity to promote Sheffield as an attractive destination for start-ups to develop and thrive.
- There is potential for these gaps to be addressed through the SCR Renewal Action Plan. Gaps identified so far include:
  - An enhanced start up programme to work with additional new start enquiries and refer effectively throughout the city into accelerator and incubation programmes and assist with finance and scaling ambitions. This could include providing dedicated start-up support in district centres using community networks to communicate the offer, improving access and engagement with support across the city.
  - Specialist advice
  - Individuals who can act as ‘connectors’ to introduce and link entrepreneurs with organisations that have problems to be solved.
  - City-wide mentor programme where our successful entrepreneurs and start-up/scale-up experts share relevant experience and know-how to support new start-ups.
  - Investment

## **RENEWAL**

### **Develop regional capacity to deliver solutions-based innovation**

- Challenge based models could be developed, connecting entrepreneurs with established businesses and anchor institutions, facilitating collaboration focussed on developing practical and commercial solutions to recognised industry problems or societal challenges affecting the city. The process would match skills with specific problems, as well as providing a way for existing start-ups to identify potential ways in which to flex their business model to enhance long term viability and impact . This model could involve the public sector and universities in the city to address issues and problems they are currently facing.
- For example, Sheffield is a centre of expertise in sustainable innovation, and the low carbon economy is a growth area for the city and nationally. We will explore options for

increasing the number of start-ups in the low carbon sector with a focus on those with the potential to scale.

- Engage and encourage more established businesses in the city to act as incubators - to either act as a catalyst for new spin out businesses or offer space and expertise for people with ideas that complement their business model.

“TwinklHive launched in October 2019, we support missional companies who want to make a difference in their sector to reach their goals and to create real impact - we do this by providing investment, mentorship, residency in our Sheffield office and also by helping them to build and market their products. Our goal is to attract 50% of our investment companies to open operations in Sheffield. To date, the Hive has invested in 8 companies, 4 of which have operations in Sheffield. In total TwinklHive has created 26 jobs.”

Tim Elgar, Head of Culture and Leadership, Twinkl

### **Continue to recognise the importance of place for start-ups**

- Promote the role places can play in supporting start-ups by encouraging economic clusters, where close proximity allows them to transact business more cheaply and easily; to resolve their problems quickly and efficiently; and learn earlier and more directly, about new practices. In Castlegate, for example, there is potential for an emerging concentration of interdependent knowledge-based businesses that are intrinsically linked through common or complementary creative and digital technology.
- Ensure there is provision for different types of start-up space, including non-office and flexible indoor and outdoor market spaces, which can still benefit from proximity to the city centre.

### **Creating a pipeline of ‘deal ready’ indigenous businesses for investors**

- Through start-up networks, identify businesses with greatest potential for growth.
- Work with these businesses to ensure they are investment ready.
- This would link to SCR Renewal Plan interventions on investment readiness.

### **Launch a new approach to promote Sheffield as a place to invest and start a business**

- Underpinned by research, package Sheffield as a destination for start-ups and investors excited by innovation - focus on our specialisms and signature places to help differentiate the city, and tell the story of why innovative companies thrive in the city.
- Harness contacts through wider business networks as part of the city’s external engagement.
- Utilising ‘Make Yourself at Home’ as part of a promotional communications campaign.

## **PRIORITY 5: STIMULATING INVESTMENT IN CULTURE TO HELP REBUILD CONFIDENCE AND VISITOR NUMBERS**

Culture plays an important and somewhat undervalued role in local economies, particularly in cities. Culture draws in talent, drives regeneration and stimulates creativity and enjoyment for residents. Yet the culture sector has been one of the sectors most affected by COVID-19, with nearly £11m in lost income from ticket sales, retail sales, sponsorship and donations reported through a recent University of Sheffield survey.

The vast majority of the city's culture and creative sector are small or micro businesses and many people who work in the industry are self-employed. Meetings, conferences and live events are the mainstay of the city's tourism and hospitality sector, and given the new restrictions many venues are not allowed to reopen or will find it economically unviable to open until 2021.

The BRG recognise the importance of the sector to Sheffield's long-term economic success and this plan supports the sector's Culture Recovery Plan and identifies ways for the broader business community in Sheffield to get behind its recovery.

Nationally there are calls for specific support for businesses in the hospitality, culture, arts and recreation sectors that are unable to operate at normal levels of capacity. The sector needs targeted support at viable firms who have higher fixed costs to prevent venues closing and job losses. Existing schemes like the, The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme should be extended for self-employed and freelancers in sectors affected by local restrictions.

### **RELIEF**

#### **Protecting cultural assets**

- Joined up city-wide strategic approach to support **its** cultural assets, including for those organisations that are unsuccessful or ineligible for Government support. Joining forces with other cities and organisations to make available a contingency support fund for these hard hit sectors.
- Utilising the University of Sheffield Impacts Snapshot and University of Sheffield Submission to DCMS to make the case for continued medium term investment in culture.
- Supporting creatives, especially micro-businesses and freelancers:
  - ensuring the city's business support offer is relevant and accessible, including digital infrastructure and training;
  - creating opportunities for graduates and young people in the sector to help to increase diversity in the sector
  - co-ordination of a collective arts sector Kickstarter programme (minimum cohort 30) to make it accessible for arts organisations
  - Assistance to small cultural organisations with apprenticeship schemes
- Supporting cultural organisations to adapt and develop new business models and income sources in order to survive the medium and longer term.

#### **Creating confidence for the sector and its audience**

- Communicating and promoting the city's cultural offer as it reopens to the public – including linking to the Make Yourself at Home campaign – using case studies/ambassadors to reassure visitors that venues are safe

- Reopening guidance for the sector that includes evolving updates to enable organisations to plan collaboratively, constructively and with confidence
- Engagement of wider business community: developing a programme for the business and culture sectors to support each other to regenerate the city centre; promoting commissions, community arts and media projects
- Potential for a fund to underwrite/subsidise cultural events in order that event organisers can plan with confidence and deliver creative content that encourages people to re-engage with the city centre
- Support for Create Sheffield (Sheffield's Cultural Education Partnership) to strengthen the cultural education offer for children and young people, focusing on activity designed with, by, for young people living in areas of socio-economic deprivation, inspiring creativity and developing individual social and cultural capital.
- Skills time banking scheme linking businesses and creatives, based on the existing time banking scheme run by Sheffield Creative Guild.
- Support for grass-roots music venues.

## **RECOVERY**

### **Establishing a strong research and data baseline**

- University of Sheffield UKRI year-long research (unique in the country) will use data from Sheffield audiences to inform how sector responds nationally to COVID: venues, audiences and freelancers.
- Move forward with South Yorkshire local authorities' report by Chamberlain Walker – Unlocking Culture, Arts and Heritage in South Yorkshire
- Lead national understanding of Covid recovery; learn from and contribute to other national research and best practice, to provide tools for advocacy and lobbying.

### **Linking strategic partners and advocacy**

- Culture Collective and Culture Consortium to forge stronger links to wider networks in the city, regionally and nationally
- Build a stronger relationship between culture and heritage
- Harness Sheffield City Region's commitment to culture (set out in its draft Strategic Economic Plan) for investment and advocacy on a national level – see notes above too.
- Engage with the Northern Cultural Powerhouse to 'level up' culture in the North

### **Promoting 'shovel-ready' opportunities**

These would include:

- Future High Streets Fund bid – renewal of Fargate with high quality street scene and indoor/outdoor events focus, to create vibrancy and dwell time.
- Darnall Community of Culture – 2-year programme of creativity linking Darnall and the City Centre, celebrating diverse communities
- Harmony Works – new music education centre accessible to all the city's young music-makers, in a beautiful repurposed Grade II Listed building in Castlegate quarter.
- Tinsley Art Project – major public sculpture by internationally-renowned artist Alex Chinneck, showcasing heritage and twenty-first century design and engineering.

- S1 at Park Hill – nationally-significant new arts complex in iconic Listed structure
- Castlegate – Sheffield’s historic core, with many cultural regeneration opportunities

## **RENEWAL**

### **Establishing a longer-term vision for culture and its role in the economy**

- Developing a strategy for investment at a regional and national level, including building stronger relationships with Arts Council England, British Film Institute, National Lottery Heritage Fund, other funders and philanthropic investment.
- Delivery of the City Council’s developing Cultural Assets Strategy, especially renewal of the Central Library/Graves Gallery building to provide spaces for knowledge, learning, art and creativity that the city can be proud of.
- Recognising the value of the city’s cultural and creative assets as part of a vibrant city centre
- Increasing diversity within the cultural sector’s workforce and leadership.
- Putting young people at the centre of the city’s cultural vision.
- Securing development funding for new and existing projects.
- *Make Yourself At Home campaign* to help celebrate the culture on offer in Sheffield, to bring both visitors and talent to the city.

## **PRIORITY 6: WORKING WITH BUSINESS LEADERS ON A LONGER-TERM ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR SHEFFIELD**

As we learn about the wholesale economic effects of COVID we will need to refocus our plans to tackle systemic economic challenges, both old and new, through a new economic plan. The approach adopted by the Business Response Group has demonstrated the ability and appetite for the public and private sectors to work effectively together at a time of challenge and difficulty with a focus on a common purpose. It is important that the way in which partners across Sheffield work together changes and adapts to the new economic conditions, and that there are opportunities for the full diversity of businesses and economic actors to be involved at the appropriate levels.

### **RELIEF**

- Cabinet Member for Business and Investment working with the **Business Response Group** for fast and responsive business leadership in recovery planning. This represents a new collaborative relationship with the private sector, meeting weekly throughout the crisis to give front line feedback and guide the business response to COVID 19.
- **Direct business surveys** undertaken to assess how businesses are operating during lockdown, the impact on their trading activity, the critical challenges they face and the support they need. To inform our initial response and shape the short term interventions and calls for recovery funding.

### **RECOVERY**

- **Creating Sheffield's new Economic Partnership:** Learning lessons from the positive partnership activity of the former City Growth Board, and building on the impetus of recent successful collaborations illustrated by the BRG's approach; the City Growth Board will be replaced with a new private sector led city partnership. The partnership will forge constructive linkages across the Sheffield City Region to build synergies, and draw in trusted partners with specific knowledge, experience and expertise to add value and coalesce around a common purpose to shape and facilitate delivery of a new economic strategy for the city.
- Services and projects will be designed with the involvement of intended users to maximise effectiveness and accessibility.
- In order to bring a fresh perspective and ensure we have access to the latest data and economic thinking we will look to **engage independent external expertise** to help drive a new economic strategy forwards, engage stakeholders and advise civic leaders.
- **Strengthening the elected member/ business interface** – reinstate business 1-2-1s / visits with Cabinet Members.

### **RENEWAL**

- Core policy areas, not covered in detail in the Business Recovery Plan but **fundamental to a longer term economic strategy:**
  - Sustainability and moving to a low carbon economy
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Innovation and entrepreneurial culture