

COVID-19 update

Responsible officer

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1.0 Summary

1.1 This paper presents an overview and update on Shropshire Council's work in the community to address the impact of COVID-19 on people in Shropshire.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee members to:

- note the report.
- identify any specific areas of work they would like to look at in greater detail and;
- prepare any question they may have of directors.

3.0 Background

3.1 To respond to the COVID-19 crisis, Shropshire Council and partners is taking a multidisciplinary approach to ensure that we support the vulnerable, either directly or through our support of communities. To achieve this, the council will:

- Gather data to help us identify and support vulnerable people in Shropshire.
- Develop community reassurance teams to connect people to the vast array of community support available in the county.
- Ensure that people have the food and supplies that they need.
- Support the mental health of our workforce and our population.
- Ensure that we continue to safeguard people during this uncertain time.
- Provide grants to community groups, the voluntary and community sector and to tackle food poverty.

3.2 The purpose of this work is to ensure that people across Shropshire receive the support they need through this crisis. The work recognises that Shropshire has

many thriving voluntary sector community groups, hubs and services, that are both commissioned and that have organically grown within communities. Additionally, as a local authority, our elected Members work tirelessly within their communities to ensure that people are supported and have what they need.

3.3 We have identified the following categories of vulnerable people as vulnerable or having specific needs and may require additional food/ information and/or support during the pandemic.

- 'Shielded' Individuals (taken from the Public Health England list).
- Self-isolated without support (with means to pay). This list is expected to grow as infection rate increases and family and friends are no longer available to collect on their behalf.
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- Homeless and accommodated homeless.
- Low income families entitled to free school meals.
- Children in need who are on the Child Protection Register.
- Economically impacted as a result of 'Stay at Home' instructions, (with no income, or very low income). We will need to work appropriately with the existing welfare system to ensure food is provided to the most needy.
- Additional list from social care and council tax systems.

In addition, vulnerable adults are able to self-refer by calling the Council's customer services team, who have set up a dedicated telephone number for this purpose.

4.0 Current work

4.1 Gathering data to help us identify vulnerable people in Shropshire.

Public Health, IT and the Insight team are working collectively to build a database of vulnerable people. The vulnerable list of people is being generated from a match across multiple data sets, including those that are available within the Council (such as Adult and Children's social care), those being provided externally (such as Blue Badge), or by partners (such as housing trusts). The match also includes the shielded list from Central Government with the result that a wider picture of those deemed as vulnerable across the county will be identified.

Additional information will also be considered to determine a priority, such as frequency of occurrence across multiple data sets and risk assessments already provided by different service areas. This will allow for individuals to be contacted by the Council to understand the needs, if any, and assist with targeting the correct services for support. The list of people will be updated as refreshed source data is received.

The data will be used to inform Customer Services, the Telephone Reassurance Team, and the Community Reassurance Team activity. It will also be connected to the food hub and data will be collected to understand what services people have received during this time.

As of 11 May, Customer Services had received 1,569 calls. The phone lines were open over the Bank Holiday, Friday and Saturday. The service also made proactive phone calls to those who have identified as vulnerable over outbound calls – 4,097 of a list of 5,383 (shielded/ vulnerable Government list) to date. Additional staff have been recruited to continue this work. It has also completed all calls on the very vulnerable list (29). Customer Services are working to pull together our full list of people that have been proactively contacted through Social Care, Housing, and others at Shropshire Council.

4.2 Community Reassurance Teams

We have developed temporary area-based Community Reassurance Teams (CRTs) to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The teams provide support to the new and existing community groups set up in response to COVID-19, Town and Parish Councils and other organisations.

The teams are there to ensure that the council:

- has information about what is happening;
- can advise residents who are getting in touch with us, and
- ensures that the information and guidance we need to share gets to the right people.

The role of the CRT is to understand the new solutions from within the community, identify them as being appropriate to solving a particular challenge and supporting the solution to be put in place. We will also identify gaps in provision and be there as emergency backup if needed. The teams want to work with communities to complement and enhance the amazing work already happening to ensure that everyone gets the help and support that they need to stay at home and stay well and healthy.

The CRT are a local point of contact for groups, local councils and Shropshire Council Members, and will be able to help with calls for support from them that are coming forward, as well as ensuring the delivery of the things we are being asked to do by Central Government. This will include promotion of, and assistance with, the small grants programme for local groups.

There are five teams supporting the county:

- Central (Shrewsbury, Pontesbury, Atcham, Cressage and surrounds).
- North West (Oswestry, Ellesmere, Whitchurch, Wem and surrounds).

- North East (Market Drayton, Shifnal, Albrighton and surrounds).
- South West (Ludlow, Bishop's Castle, Clun, Craven Arms, Church Stretton and surrounds).
- South East- (Bridgnorth, Cleobury Mortimer, Broseley, Much Wenlock and surrounds).

The work will also ensure a systemic approach to identifying and connecting volunteering opportunities, by working closely with the NHS volunteering programme and local community and voluntary sector groups.

As of the 11th May the team have carried out the following work:

- Five area teams with 37 staff involved are operating across the county. 11 Day Services staff are helping with Member support, 8 are focusing on food packaging and delivery, 2 on food procurement and 2 on the administration of the emergency food hub, 14 are working on food parcel follow up calls. 14 other staff have been identified for emergency stand by to join the teams if needed.
- Food parcels have been delivered to 875 households
- B&B food provision for the homeless- 577 hot meals provided and 140 weekly food parcels.
- 5 packs of PPE delivered to staff.
- Follow up calls to 440 people.
- 631 volunteer organisations and businesses have been collated on a new Community Volunteering Directory that is being shared internally.
- £75K Community Grant scheme established, with 39 organisations supported to date.
- 17 training sessions have been arranged including public health, nursing and sexual health, safe ways of working, having difficult conversations, Enable, safeguarding, social prescribing, Children's Services, Social Care and mental health. Some of these are being re-run and recorded so they can be added to the intranet.
- Procedure for food purchasing and invoicing has been set up. Only used once to date.
- 148 discussions with groups and individuals have been logged, with 126 referrals addressed. This is remarkably low and demonstrates the resilience of the local population and the effectiveness of the community offer

TYPE OF REQUEST	SOUTH EAST	SOUTH WEST	CENTRAL	NORTH EAST	NORTH WEST	TOTALS PER TYPE OF REQUEST
FOOD/TOILETRIES	6	18	33	8	13	78
MEDICINE	2	0	1	1	2	6

BEFRIENDING	0	1	0	0	1	2
WELFARE CHECK	3	5	12	5	7	32
OTHER	1	1	1	2	3	8
TOTAL PER AREA	12	25	47	16	26	
GRAND TOTAL	126					

4.3 Ensuring that people have the food and supplies that they need

The Shropshire Council Food Hub has been set-up in response to the Government introduction of 'shielding' and the call to create a network of hubs covering the whole country for the most vulnerable. The hub offers help to those people who don't have a support system in place, and to assist those people with serious medical conditions who have been told to remain indoors for 12 weeks because of the COVID-19. The hub will also supply food and other supplies to people in the Shropshire Council area who are vulnerable and who are isolating due to COVID-19. The hub works closely with IT, the Insight Team, Public Health, the CRT and Customer Services to ensure that our most vulnerable are supported in the way that they need.

As of 7th May we have delivered to 875 households, reaching over 1,730 people. Since the 7th May, there has been a significant reduction in daily food deliveries due to new processes and connecting people directly to an improved offer of online and telephone shopping.

4.4 Supporting the mental health of our workforce and our population

COVID-19 is inducing a considerable degree of fear, worry and concern in the population at large and among certain groups, in particular such as older adults, care providers and people with underlying health conditions.

In public mental health terms, the main psychological impact to date is elevated rates of stress or anxiety. But as new measures and impacts are introduced – especially quarantine and its effects on many people's usual activities, routines or livelihoods – levels of loneliness, depression, harmful alcohol and drug use, self-harm or suicidal behaviour are also expected to rise.

Additionally, employees of the NHS, Local Authorities, the community and voluntary sector, as well as the private sector, may experience significant distress while supporting those who have COVID-19 (or suspected COVID-19), those who are bereaved, and those who are shielding or isolating.

Additional resource has been agreed to support mental health for our communities, this includes funding for bereavement counselling, workforce support (public service, care home, VCSE), online support for adults, and social prescribing for children and young people. It is felt that this work is vital to ensure help for people now and to lay the foundations for good multidisciplinary working going forward. This work is connected to postvention support for suicide and will form the basis for ongoing collaboration on bereavement.

The resource available for people has been published online and in print and can be found at: <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2020/05/mental-health-resources/>. Additional resources will be published shortly regarding bereavement.

4.5 Ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach to safeguarding

Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership are meeting regularly to ensure our statutory duties about keeping people safe are continuing effectively. This meeting sits as a workstream of the Communities Group under our emergency planning arrangements to tackle COVID-19. It provides partners with an opportunity to escalate issues that compromise our ability to continue our essential safeguarding activity where they have not been resolved using normal escalation processes.

The following areas of activity have been identified as essential safeguarding activity that must continue during these challenging times. All partners are expected to continue to play their part in keeping our community safe.

For Community Safety we have identified the following essential areas:

- Domestic Abuse (including Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences where people in high risk domestic abuse situations are discussed).
- Mental Health Act Assessments.
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels which is where people who pose a risk to our communities are discussed.
- Police monitoring those on High Risk Management Plans.

For Adult Safeguarding we have identified the following essential areas:

- Safeguarding concerns being reported through First Point of Contact at Shropshire Council.
- The undertaking of “Section 42” and “other” safeguarding enquires.
- The review of Safeguarding Plans.
- Multi-agency case conferences about any people where there are significant concerns about risks to their wellbeing and/or safety.

For child safeguarding we have identified the following essential areas:

- Safeguarding concerns being reported through First Point of Contact at Shropshire Council.
- The undertaking of “section 47” enquiries.
- The review of Child Protection Plans.
- Carrying out pre-birth assessments.
- Child in Need plans.
- Contact with vulnerable children and families who are known to schools.
- Local Authority Designated Officer activity which tackles concerns about those in positions of trust.
- Child Death Overview Panel.

For Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership we have identified the following essential areas:

- Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership virtual meetings.
- COVID 19 Partnership Emergency Planning.
- Performance and activity monitoring of our essential safeguarding activity.
- Statutory Case Reviews .
- Critical awareness raising messages.

4.6 Community and Voluntary Sector Grants Programme

Small Grants

The Council has made a total of £75,000 available to distribute in grant funding to community /VCS organisations running local initiatives to help with the COVID-19 response and other funding pressures brought about by the pandemic at a local level. Wave 1 of the funding provided grants to approximately 39 community groups, and Wave 2 of the funding closes on 22nd May.

The Small Grants Programme is aimed at supporting very local initiatives. Many communities have begun initiatives to help people who are finding it difficult to cope with the current situation. This programme will provide financial support to help these initiatives take off and be sustained throughout the Coronavirus crisis. Additionally, some community facilities and village halls will be facing lost income during this time and so the Council wants to help ensure that they are sustained as well.

The maximum grant available through the Small Grants Programme will be £500 per grant.

Medium Grants

The Council has made available £90,000 for VCSE organisations who are supporting people during this time. The criteria has been focussed on supporting the

areas of key voluntary anchor organisations and those who have lost income due to Covid-19.

4.7 Support to Business/Economic Development

It should be noted that a future paper will describe in detail Shropshire Council's support to local business and its approach to economic development and support during the Covid-19 crisis.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
None
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
All
Local Member
All
Appendices