

NEWS RELEASE

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



PR 3466

07 April 2020

For Immediate Release

Community co-ordinating hub established and help getting out to those most in need

Councils across Norfolk and the rest of the country have been setting up community hubs so that the promised government support can get through to those most in need in our communities. This includes providing food essentials, collecting prescriptions and medicines, ensuring that people feel safe and making sure they know who they can turn to in their times of need.

The Government announced it would be stepping in to directly support about 1.5 million people identified as vulnerable across the country, and councils across Norfolk are actively contacting those people identified in their districts.

But public services in Norfolk were aware that the list would not identify everyone in their communities who need support. A Norfolk-wide helpline was established and community volunteers, local charities and council staff stand by to assist those who need it and are not being helped already.

West Norfolk is no exception. With the expert knowledge provided by our Lily service and their network of co-ordinators, over 500 calls have been made to residents on the Government's shielded list to find out what they need and how they can be supported. Many of the staff dealing with the calls have been redeployed from other areas of the council, to ensure the calls are worked through as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In addition, letters were sent out to every resident by all Norfolk councils, referring them to the helpline number 0344 800 8020 if they feel they need assistance for essential food items or medicines, or wellbeing support. Calls to this line go through a triage process so that people are directed to the organisation that can help.

Calls for residents in west Norfolk, that are not related to health or social care are answered by our council information centre staff and staff redeployed from other teams. A new call centre has been established, dedicated to handle these calls only. Staff have

been trained specifically on what support can be provided. They give people who are isolated and vulnerable, who are not on the shielded list, help, support and signposting to other organisations. The feedback from people that have been helped has been phenomenal.

Cllr Brian Long, Leader of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, said: "We have been inundated with offers of help from community, parish and church groups that have set themselves up to support people in their villages and parishes, and from businesses who can offer deliveries or free supplies. It is totally humbling and very, very welcome. The Lily team have collated all this information on to their website so that people can find out what is available in their own communities and so that people who are handling the calls can also get in touch with local community groups who may be able to provide assistance to residents in their area.

"So far, that approach has proven to be very effective. We are all helping each other to make sure those that are vulnerable, isolated or in need are getting support. What is really heart-warming, is the number of stories we are hearing about how neighbours are helping their elderly neighbours, safely, either by doing errands or just being available at the end of a phone. The number of small and large community groups that have set themselves up as a source for support for their local people has been beyond anything we could have expected. We've even had businesses, such as Crane Buildings offering people and vehicles to run errands or undertake physical work if this is needed to make life safe for vulnerable people."

A host of businesses have also assisted with the development of a physical food hub, where food parcels are put together to help those who are unable to access the basic supplies that they need. This is the centre where the Government food supplies are dispatched from, along with support for those who are in emergency need of supplies and cannot get out or have no support networks of their own. The borough council wants to give a big thank you to the following companies who have helped get the premises established in such a short space of time.

Shaun Hodgson Engineering Ltd
AMR Group
Smith Building Services Ltd
West East Anglia Asbestos Ltd
Brights Cleaning Services
Beacon Water Treatments Ltd
UK Fire Safety Management Ltd
Focus Security
1-2 Call Drainage & Groundwork Ltd
Nationwide Pallet Racking Services Ltd.

The council has been working closely with King's Lynn Food bank, local supermarkets and other suppliers to make this food hub work.

Cllr Stuart Dark, borough council cabinet member for Emergency Planning, said: “The first food parcels went out this weekend, and we have responded to numerous requests for assistance through referrals to Lily of from the vulnerable list and from calls to the dedicated helpline. We are delighted that we are up and running and already providing much-needed support to people in our communities.”

“The feedback we are receiving from the community is amazing, whether it’s been about supplies people can’t get hold of such as baby formula, or collecting and delivering medication, or simply being available to provide reassurance. Many, many vulnerable people are isolated and extremely anxious, the team members are able to help alleviate their fears and help them feel less isolated. They are then referring on for befriending support through Lily if this helpful. The team are also able to make referrals through the GoodSam app, which offers four types of support including check in and chat and community support.

“I am pleased to say that community spirit is alive and well in west Norfolk and we are all truly grateful for the way so many groups, organisations and individuals are coming together to help those most at risk. I would also ask, that those who are able to help themselves using the information available on community websites and Facebook pages and on the asklily.org website, should do so. This frees up phone lines for our staff to deal with those people who are unable to help themselves or who have complex needs. I would also ask that if anyone has friends, family or neighbours who are not on social media or in receipt of a local newspaper, they share this information with them when they call them.”

“All this work is helping to protect those who need to remain isolated. My message to everyone else is to follow the updated guidance which is ‘act like you’ve got it’. This weekend, more than ever we need people to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives.”

Anyone who feels that they can volunteer should go through the Voluntary Norfolk website <https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/>, businesses who are able to offer support should email covidbusinessresponse@voluntarynorfolk.org.uk.

Working with the Norfolk Community Foundation, councils have launched a Covid-19 Community Response Fund, which will be directed to charities on the front line of caring for people across the county. To make a donation visit the Norfolk Community Foundation website www.norfolkfoundation.com/giving-philanthropy/covid19communityresponsefund/

People are asked to keep checking the Borough Council of King’s Lynn & West Norfolk and Norfolk County Council websites and social media channels for updates.

The county-wide helpline 0344 800 8020 is open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and for emergencies on Saturday and Sunday between 10am and 4pm. Arrangements for the Easter weekend are being made and further updates will be provided.

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