

# Clerk's Report on actions taken around the COVID-19 national emergency March – April 2020

Our first task was to divide the parish up into manageable units that one (or two) people might be able to look after, based on local knowledge around natural boundaries, settlements and clusters of houses and people. Councillors then agreed to allocate themselves to one or more of these areas (chosen because of their own local knowledge or where they had connections). We then asked them to identify people who might be willing to volunteer using their own personal and social networks to identify particular people and make an approach to them. Our previous general request through the church magazine and website didn't produce any volunteers.

The proactive approach worked, and no-one we asked declined to help. We have 25 Community Helpers across the entire parish now who are linked to a local councillor. Our aim at this stage was to create the network and not give them too much responsibility. They all had personal thank you emails from the chair and vice chair, and I had sent them a short document explaining what the council's overall plan was, and how they could play their part in it.

Throughout this part of the plan, we have only ever asked volunteers to look out for people in need as part of their regular daily routine – so exercising, shopping, and doing other essential work that is permitted. We gave them quite a tightly defined list of people that we considered 'vulnerable' that went beyond government definitions:

- Age (not just over 70)
- Status (single, single parent, single household)
- Poor financial health
- Chronic health problems
- Disability (mobility, sight, hearing, mental health)
- Responsibility for dependents
- NHS and other critical workers
- Isolated people
- Farmers
- Any of these people who refuse help

Our Newsletter was delivered to every household, along with a red and green window sticker to show if people were OK or not OK, plus a further poster to show people delivering where they could leave those items. So once all these newsletters had been delivered we could ask our Helpers to walk with a purpose, and look out for windows displaying the red – or not displaying anything at all.

If they see a red card or have concerns about a resident, the protocol at the moment is to report back to their councillor contact and not to approach them personally unless they know them well enough. We have already had one very bad reaction from a resident who didn't want any contact at all.

They've already had the first of a weekly email (very brief) highlighting a particular topic that we want to get over. First week it was when the newsletter would be delivered, how to get food delivered, their protections under GDPR and a good news story. The reason behind this is to build a network of people working as a team, confident that they have a useful purpose, encouraged and with useful information to share.

Our approach has been to work at a very personal and connected level, and the information we make available to people is specific to their needs. Liskeard have taken the approach of a 17 page document that lists all the help that's available from their patch and the ones surrounding it. Ours is to be selective in what we promote (medicine, advice, and mental health support) with each document on the website, promoted through our Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor pages. We also feature my phone and email address as a single point of contact, although other councillors details are available to their Helper.

We will consider asking our volunteers to take on other tasks as the situation evolves and advice from government might change.

The feedback we are getting is very encouraging, and although we have only 5 active councillors able to get out in the field, we're managing at the moment. What is especially useful is the WhatsApp group for very quick and simple communications, and the willingness of those councillors to be receptive to my requests for help. Through my networks and contacts, I'm able to tap into a variety of other sources of info that come together to produce our response.

Already, I have a growing list of things to introduce/change/aspire to as this threat recedes (including basic IT training for councillors). We're thinking that there may be a second wave in the autumn, and there could be an issue with heating and fuel going forward.

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