

## 3rd Sector Gathering

3SG (3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Gathering) are a combined force of organisations from the voluntary sector and professionals working together to help those who need it most. Their recent activities have involved co-ordinating 2,500 volunteers to help people obtain food and medication and thus far they have helped over 800 individuals or families.

Sarah Williams shared this update and would normally be looking after her children at home but since the outbreak of Covid, she has been working 12-hour days, sometimes more to help those who are most vulnerable.

Sarah has shared the information below which is a useful resource to anyone needing support in the Bath & North East Somerset area. The hub has now taken over 4,000 calls.

**Helpline: 0300 247 0050**

We have a team of experts who can assist, and volunteers in your area.

If you can safely get support from family or friends, or can order items online, then please continue to do so.

- 1 Delivery of urgent supplies
- 2 A friendly phone call
- 3 Collection of medication
- 4 Money matters and work
- 5 Mental wellbeing (including loneliness, low mood, anxiety)
- 6 Advice on keeping fit
- 7 Housing issues
- 8 Supporting your family
- 9 Food and cooking
- 10 Understanding public health advice



## Age UK North, South & West Dorset

### Befriending services & support for vulnerable residents

Staff and volunteers from Age UK North, South & West Dorset have been helping support many of Dorset's older residents during the pandemic.

From taking requests on the phone, to working with a network of hundreds of volunteer organisations across Dorset they've been helping older people with their day-to-day needs. Whether it's arranging the collection of prescriptions, support with shopping, befriending and even facilitating the replacement of a fridge, the dedicated volunteers have been making a real difference.

Bernie, a volunteer with Age UK since 2016 and who is currently helping in the community response call centre, said: "We've predominantly been helping with shopping and prescription requests, but we deal with a wide range of needs that we match with volunteers throughout the county."

"We recently received a call from a lady in Cyprus whose grandmother in Dorset needed assistance and it's been a pleasure to help. We're also enabling befriending volunteers to provide support and companionship to people who are coping alone, or who are struggling with the extra pressures this crisis is bringing."

"We are also proactively ringing everyone who's made contact with us in the last year, to make sure they are doing okay and if we can we help in any way."



## Alzheimer's Society

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, there is a likelihood that 850,000 people affected by dementia will be cut off from their families, their communities and the services they rely on.

We are responding to the pandemic with an organisation-wide Dementia Connect campaign to make sure that people affected by dementia are getting the support they need and that their needs are being considered by their communities, the public and the government.

Through our Dementia Connect Campaign, so far, we have:

- Made over 56,000 welfare calls
- Established a coronavirus [webpage](#)
- Helped our Dementia Friends Champions run sessions online.
- Created a new temporary Companion Call service
- Helped push the Government to publish the number of deaths in care homes and social care settings
- Contacted over 100 Singing for the Brain leaders to help us run virtual sessions
- Developed a new service, Ring and Sing where a group of people who do not have access to the internet are able to sing together over the phone.

### Dementia Connect telephone support

Our Dementia Connect support line is now more important than ever. Anyone affected by dementia can call the Dementia Connect support line for practical information and advice, or just to talk to someone who understands.

Dementia Connect support line: 0333 150 3456

Dementia Connect support line for Welsh speakers: 03300 947 400



### Talking Point

[Talking Point](#) is our online community where anyone affected by dementia can ask questions, share experiences and receive support. It's free and open day or night. People affected by dementia can connect with someone who is going through a similar experience, receive valuable support, and feel less isolated. During the coronavirus outbreak we've seen a significant increase in the number of people using Talking Point, for example, we've seen daily increases of over 300%.

## Alzheimer's Support

Alzheimer's Support has been staying connected with all its families during lockdown with regular supportive telephone calls, online music and exercise sessions and art activity packs. Its Home Support service reopened at the start of May once PPE was secured, and in response to an increasingly urgent need for support and respite for families coping alone with dementia. Day clubs and more than 40 activity groups are still closed. The charity launched an urgent appeal for funds and converted its fundraising Walk to Remember into a virtual event on 16th May. The value and impact of its work was recognised when it was awarded £30,000 from the National Lottery administered Government emergency fund for charities on the Covid-19 frontline.

## Bath Mind

My name is Kate and I am CEO of Bath Mind. Bath Mind is a local, independent charity, and for the past 20 years we have been providing services for people in B&NES who have mental health problems, supporting those with poor mental health to stay well and live their best lives. Services include housing with support, support for people at home, welfare benefits appeals, counselling, training courses, wellbeing groups and an evening crisis service.

However, in the last seven weeks, we have had to do things differently. It has not been possible to provide our usual wellbeing groups, our horticultural therapy sessions nor many of our one to one support services. So, instead, we have developed creative ways to respond to the needs of our communities.

We continue to physically support a number of our most vulnerable individuals with face to face support. This includes residents living in our care home and those we support in their own homes. For the majority of individuals requiring our support, we offer a range of digital options and regular phone support. For example, the digital options include creative writing webinars, support groups via Zoom and video cookery demonstrations.

Our new services, Breathing Space, is an evening service for people at the point of, or in crisis. This service is a non-clinical safe space open every evening from 5.30pm -11.30pm. Because we are currently unable to offer face to face support in a building, we are providing phone support to anyone resident in B&NES who is 16 years plus, requiring intervention.

Our goal is to ensure people continue to receive a high quality, consistent and safe service from us in order to support people's mental health and wellbeing during this challenging time.



## **Bradford-on-Avon Dementia Action Alliance**

The members of the Dementia Action Alliance in B-O-A are continuing to work closely with people living with dementia and other vulnerable older people during this crisis.

We are talking on the phone with people living on their own and running errands for those having to strictly self-isolate.

It is very stimulating being able to make friends with so many new people during this difficult time.

The Community Emergency Volunteers in Bradford are also providing their services and are available to contact through the Town Council and Wiltshire Council, 10am to 6pm, every day except Sunday.

## **Bristol Dementia Action Alliance**

Bristol DAA are now offering their dementia awareness sessions online rather than face to face and their three-hour workshop is also offered online broken down into three slots of one hour each.

They have allocated three of their usual attendees from their Happy Days Memory Café to each of their 23 volunteers who phone them weekly to check they are ok, have their basic needs met and also to have a chat.

They're also running weekly teleconferences in partnership with Alive Activities for those that want to participate. These take the form of a reminiscence session and was more recently focussed on VE Day reminiscences.

Their most recent new activity was a 30 minute "pom-pom" session on social media. Bristol DAA are really making use of all the alternative resources available to continue supporting those living with dementia in the region.

**DAA** Dementia  
Action Alliance



## Centre for Sustainable Energy

The Home Energy Team at CSE have continued to support clients throughout this difficult time, making lots of changes to our usual working practices.

All of our advisers are now working from home with equipment set up to continue to give advice over the phone and we have redirected our free phone number so that this can be rotated between the advisers. All of our usual advice is now given over the phone or over video calls. Where clients are unable to get proof of income to us then some of the caseworkers or volunteers have been able to undertake a socially distanced home visit to pick this up.

We have been fortunate to get funding from Bristol Energy to help people with pre-payment meter vouchers and are able to give people who are struggling financially at this time either a £28 or £49 (single person or family) voucher to keep their gas and electricity on. These vouchers do not need to be paid back to us unlike the fuel supplier ones and can help to make some difference to a few people. All those coming to us for a fuel voucher are also given all of the support that we give all of those referred to us including assessing their water payments.

Here is a text screen shot that a Family Support Worker sent to us, it is from one of the parents that she has been supporting:

Hi sue,just getting back to you....I had a fuel voucher and food bank which has helped so much. They even helped me with my water bill ?? thank you so much sue for all of your [help.xx](mailto:help.xx)



## Chippenham Borough Lands Charity

Chippenham Borough Lands Charity is still open for business, whilst working from home and still taking new applications.

They have also recently launched a new website called [ONE Chippenham](#) which is focusing on essential local community information relating to Coronavirus e.g. volunteer/charity support, updates from our local councils/groups/organisations and businesses etc. but as time goes on they hope it will provide a one stop place where local people can find community information including what's on in Chippenham.

ONE Chippenham will show information provided by local individuals, groups and organisations about the arts, culture, welfare and wellbeing for all ages. If you have any information that you would like them to share please get in touch at [hello@onechippenham.org.uk](mailto:hello@onechippenham.org.uk).



## Citizens Advice Bristol

Citizens Advice Bristol have quickly converted their entire operation to telephone based and have been running at close to normal capacity throughout. They are still very much in business and would encourage customers in difficulty to contact them by telephone, email or even letter.

## Citizens Advice South Somerset

Citizens Advice South Somerset are working well with clients by phone, e-mail and WhatsApp as well as manning national phonelines including Help to Claim (UC). They have produced some simple videos providing Covid-19 advice which are readily available on the homepage of their [website](#).

## Citizens Advice Wiltshire

Wiltshire Citizens Advice is **operating a telephone and email only advice service**, for the time being.

Our face to face drop-in service is currently suspended, due to the coronavirus outbreak. We've taken this decision to minimise the risk to clients, staff, volunteers and visitors, particularly those with pre-existing health conditions and those aged over 65.

Any changes to our service can be found on our local [website](#).

### **We're still here to help**

Our staff and volunteers are working hard to deliver advice services from their own homes and have been fantastic in adapting to this new way of working, virtually overnight.

For more than 80 years Citizens Advice has been here to help people in difficult times, and we will continue to be here to give people the knowledge and confidence they need now.

Unfortunately, we have taken the decision to suspend face-to-face services for the foreseeable future, but we continue to offer advice over the telephone, and by email through our local website. People looking for advice can also chat to an advisor online at the Citizens Advice website.

### **There are a number of ways people can continue to get advice during this time:**

- **By phone**  
General advice will be given via our Adviceline which people can reach by calling **03444 111 444**. This is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm (excluding bank holidays).
- **By Email**  
People can contact us for [advice by email through our local website](#)
- People can [chat online to an advisor by visiting the Citizens Advice website](#)
- People can find frequently updated advice on a range of issues related to the Coronavirus outbreak at [citizensadvice.org.uk/coronavirus](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/coronavirus)
- People looking for advice on consumer issues (e.g. issues related to products or services you've purchased) can contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133** or chat online to an advisor on the [Citizens Advice website](#)
- Anyone seeking to make a new claim for Universal Credit should call the Universal Credit Help to Claim line on **0800 144 8 444** (More info on Help to Claim service below).

## Citizens Advice Wiltshire: Help to Claim Service Update

Since April 2019 we have been offering support to people in the early stages of their Universal Credit claim, from the application through to their first payment through our Help to Claim service. It's a free, independent, confidential and impartial service and our trained advisers can help with things like how to gather evidence for Universal Credit applications or how to prepare for the first Jobcentre appointment.

You can read [our online advice on Universal Credit](#) at any time.

For the time being, we will be **operating a telephone and email only service**. Please see below for details of how to contact us for advice by email or over the phone.

- **Call our national phone line.** You can contact an adviser through our free national Help to Claim phone service:

England: 0800 144 8 444 or textphone: 18001 0800 144 8 444

Wales: 08000 241 220 or textphone: 18001 08000 241 220

Scotland: 0800 023 2581

Advisers are available 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Call the Wales number if you'd like to speak to a Welsh language adviser.

If you need a British Sign Language interpreter, call the textphone number. An adviser can arrange for an interpreter to translate for you over a video call.

- **Talk to us online.** Chat lets you talk to a trained adviser online about your Universal Credit application process. Chat is usually available 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. It's not available on public holidays. If no advisers are available, we'll remove the chat button.



## Department for Work & Pensions

These have certainly been challenging times for the DWP. Lockdown measures saw our workload increasing tenfold within days and of course we had the same issues as everywhere with absent colleagues suffering ill health, shielding or childcare issues.

Our Universal Credit claims process has always been built around an online system but included phone calls to and from customers and face to face appointments. Very quickly it became apparent that this had to be adapted to ensure citizens had access to benefits when they needed them most. We changed our process to remove the need for face to face appointments in the Jobcentre. We replaced it with an enhanced online claim and where necessary one call from the DWP to the customer. On this call we offered an advance of UC to customers who were in immediate financial difficulty.

This new system relies on communication via a messaging system called Journal Entries between the customer and the DWP. The difficult part was trying to change customer behaviour to use Journal Entries and not phone us. Our wonderful network of partners has really helped us with this. The exchange of information has been amazing so we can pass on information on quite a range of topics given to us by local authorities, colleges and other organisations on very diverse topics. Knowing where to go to get help is a big step in reducing people's anxieties.

We are now starting on a round of support calls to new customers to see what help they need. Circumstances vary with some customers just waiting for their employers to put in some safety measures before being called back to work whilst others unfortunately will have a longer time with us as they have been made redundant or are shielding. Many of them have never had to claim benefits before. Whatever the situation we will offer advice and support to help people back to work.

Lynn tells us "Although I've been redeployed to help customers with new claims my day job is sourcing training and provision for customers. Partner organisations have responded with moving training to online courses and interactive websites. Individual appointments are now conducted over the phone, so the same support is still out there even if the delivery method has changed. As citizens we are all becoming more used to a life online and by phone, so our customers have been accepting of this change. The DWP has launched a new [website](#) which gives advice on finding and applying for work.

You may ask has this worked for our customers. Well one of our measures of the efficiency of our service is how many of our customers do we pay the full amount of UC to at the point it is due. We achieved 94.1% during the peak of new claims. That's paid on time and the right amount of UC. (Some customers choose not to pursue claims or have complex financial arrangements requiring additional decisions so 100% is highly improbable)."

The months ahead will not be easy as the country faces a period of higher than usual sickness levels and all the other heartaches linked to the pandemic but we are confident we have a service that is robust and effective and is compassionate to people in very difficult circumstances.



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

## Yeovil Community Church

Coralie from the Community Church, who runs their parent & toddler groups **Poppins**, told us “I am working predominantly online using social media at present to support my Poppins parents. I am live streaming songs, stories and activities alongside posts with practical suggestions and lots of humour. I have linked up with a home-schooling group with a number of contributing teachers who are also parents as well. As we have a number of vulnerable parents it is crucial to try and support them to ensure they know where to get help and support if needed as well as trying to ensure they do not feel alone.



## Wiltshire Community Foundation

In mid-March, as the reality of the coronavirus outbreak began to bite, the Wiltshire Community Foundation became aware of growing concerns in the voluntary sector about its ability to cope.

In response, they launched the Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Response Appeal to provide immediate relief to vulnerable local people through the amazing network of small grassroots community groups operational across the county.

The fund quickly grew thanks to the generosity of people across the county and support from the National Emergencies Trust and companies such as Wessex Water. By the end of May it had risen to over £620,000 and more than £300,000 had been distributed to more than 100 groups – with fresh applications arriving each day.

The groups the foundation has supported have tackled issues including hunger, loneliness, depression and anxiety, education and homelessness. The majority of the groups have been well-established charities who have had to completely re-invent the way they work overnight. Cruse Bereavement Care and Wiltshire Sight are by no means alone in having to switch to online and phone welfare calls with their isolated users.

Others have sprung from nowhere, led by ordinary people who have seen a need in their community and galvanised others to meet it. Devizes Covid-19 Support and Pewsey Community Coronavirus Action are just two examples of groups who have recruited armies of volunteers, many of whom have been furloughed, to deliver food, collect shopping and prescriptions, or just stop to say hello.

To donate to the Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Response Fund or to find out how to apply for a grant, go to [wiltshirecf.org.uk](http://wiltshirecf.org.uk).

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Shield Wiltshire**

A Wiltshire Community Foundation grant of £4,000 has helped recruitment company owner Annette Alchin supply thousands of plastic visors to frontline workers.

She set up Shield Wiltshire, a network of 38 3D printer owners and volunteers in mid-March and by mid-May had made and delivered almost 20,000 visors to Wiltshire and Thames Valley Police, care homes, pharmacies, undertakers and Erlestoke Prison. Mrs Alchin was inspired to start the group after seeing visors selling for £7 online and discovering her brother could make them for a fraction of the cost.

The group has already made more than 13,000 visors with the help of its dedicated volunteers, who range in age from 18 to 71. “There is such a community spirit out there, people want to help and there is such a demand for these things. It takes 45 minutes to print one visor, so if you consider the time and effort these wonderful people are putting into that it is quite phenomenal,” said Mrs Alchin.

## Wiltshire Community Foundation

### Severn Freewheelers

A network of volunteer bikers who give up their time to ferry vital supplies, samples and documents for the NHS, has been given £2,900 from the Community Foundation's Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Response Fund.

The group, formed in 2013, usually provides free out of hours support delivering blood, medicines and equipment to and from hospital from 7pm to 7am each weekday and 24 hours at weekends. "During the virus epidemic we have been asked by the NHS to increase that to a 24-hour service, seven days a week," said chairman Tim Kidwell.

"The bikes are being worked twice as hard as otherwise, which is why we have come to the Wiltshire Community Foundation and I can't stress enough how much the grant will help. In a 12-hour shift you can do 400 or 500 miles. You are talking about a tank of fuel every 12-hour shift so with our workload doubling, so have our fuel costs. The grant will be used for tyres and servicing."



**Pictured:** 3D printer Tim LeMare, 71, at home in Trowbridge



**Pictured:** A Severn Freewheelers bike sets off with another delivery



## Wiltshire Council

We have seen a large increase in rent arrears due to Covid-19 and tenants being in financial hardship – not surprisingly the amount of applications for Universal Credit has increased also. We are relying heavily on foodbanks also to assist our tenants.

In terms of changing the way we work we are all home working so having to deal with customers remotely, either over the telephone or via email. This has definitely been more challenging. We have made an abundance of welfare calls to check on the wellbeing of our more vulnerable tenants and to ensure they are getting all the support they require. We have a dedicated Tenancy Sustainment Service and Mental Health Housing Support Service that can support our Wiltshire Council tenants through income maximisation, budgeting, signposting etc.

We are following government guidelines, taking a flexible approach where needed, to ensure tenants can make their rent payments. If they have any concerns about paying their rent it is really important that they contact us as their landlord to discuss their account.



## Weymouth Town Council

Weymouth Town Council has joined forces with Refresh, churches across Weymouth & Portland and are now running a donation food delivery service and collecting prescriptions and other items for members of the public.

It's working well and they have been visited by their local MP Richard Drax who delivered 2 food boxes for them. They have had various people pop in to help pack the boxes including the mayor and mayoress of Weymouth.

### KEEP IN TOUCH ESSENTIAL AID PROJECT Update 5th April

*Are you self-isolating and in need of some support?*

*We are here to help*



**FOOD BASICS:** If you would like an essential food bag delivered to you or your friends or family, we can arrange this for you. See below for options

**£35 family/couple essentials:** Filled with everyday essentials such as: canned baked beans, soup and pasta sauce; milk; dairy products such as butter and cheese; bread; rice and pasta; tinned meat products, soup, fruit and vegetables, such as potatoes, carrots and onions.

**£20 single persons essentials:** As above but in smaller amounts.

**£10 fresh supplies bag:** fresh milk, veg, fruit, eggs, bread, cheese and butter

CONTENTS OF ALL BAGS WILL VARY ACCORDING TO SUPPLIES

Payments can be arranged over the phone or by bank transfer by the customer or a third party—relative or friend. (Cash or cheques will be acceptable if this is not possible)

**PRESCRIPTIONS/OTHER:** If you require something else or medicines collected we can help with that too. Phone the number below and let us know what you need.

**JUST NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO:** If you feel that you would like someone to chat to or are worried about a neighbour we can offer a listening ear.

**CALL US: Monday to Friday 10 am—3pm: 07514114680**

**After 3pm and Weekends: 07980730029**

OR Email: [juliehursthouse@weymouthtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:juliehursthouse@weymouthtowncouncil.gov.uk)

If you get an answerphone message  
please be assured that we will get back to you.



## Wiltshire Mind

As have a great many other people/companies Wiltshire Mind has had to change its way of working and delivering our much-needed services in Wiltshire. In line with the government recommendations our 8 Peer Support Groups and 1-1 Counselling Service has been closed during lock down. All of our staff are working from home with the office telephone being diverted on a round robin link, if a call isn't answered an email alert is sent to all staff giving us the callers number, enabling us to call them back, this has proved an invaluable tool.

Initially telephone counselling was offered to our existing clients, although there wasn't a great uptake on this. Our counselling department are offering 'wellbeing' calls, these can be weekly/fortnightly depending on people's needs. The call is not 'counselling' but a check in, giving people someone to talk to and the chance to discuss any issues that they may have. Continuity is something we are trying to achieve by allocating clients to a member of staff who will make the calls each week. We are finding that the calls are helpful to people who can be self-isolating, living alone, struggling with family issues, loneliness, depression.

Initially we had envisaged the 'wellbeing' call service only being used by existing counselling clients and Peer Support Group members. However, we have been receiving a great deal of calls from the general public who have never used any of our services before and they have requested a call.

We envisage a great deal of demand for our services once we reopen and we are working on a blueprint on how we can achieve this safely whilst adhering to social distancing.

