



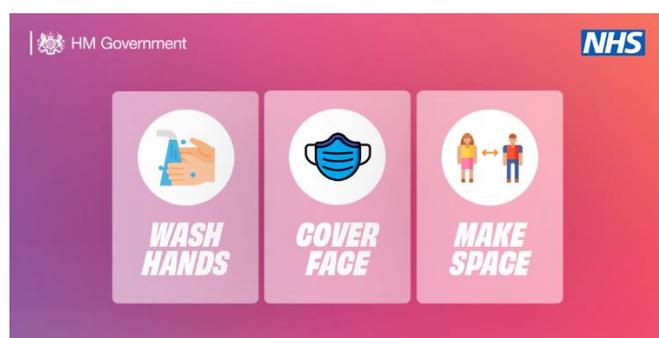
Weekly News Bulletin for Community and Voluntary Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Partners and Hub Update Subscribers

Updates from the Community Support Hub

“Let’s all help keep West Berkshire open” - We are still experiencing relatively low numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases in West Berkshire (latest data [here](#)) but as we all know, social distancing is still of utmost importance to help stop the spread of the virus. We have all seen in recent weeks how various areas of the UK have had local lockdowns put in place, with various businesses having to close and more restrictions being put on people’s day to day lives.



We do know that most people are following the guidance. However, the Council has received a few messages from concerned residents experiencing others not following social distancing advice.



Therefore the Council will be reminding residents of the importance of everyone keeping their distance from others when they are out and about, including anyone not in your household or bubble. Key messages include: wash your hands often or use hand sanitiser, wear a face covering where required and keep a distance of a 1+ metre from others.

Government advice: [Staying safe outside your home](#) and [COVID-19: reducing transmission](#).

Volunteer and Community Group Status Update: Following results from the recent Co-ordinator survey, and a ring round to the Co-ordinators, the Hub team has determined the following headline numbers so far:

- 46 groups are still active (with more than 2,100 volunteers as of April)
- 14 groups have shut down, but are ready to swing back into action if needed (814 volunteers in April)
- 20 groups yet to confirm (35 volunteers in April) – please let us know your status if you haven’t already

Thank you for your feedback and we remain very grateful for your support to the community!

Government’s Latest News and Guidance on Covid-19

Reducing transmission of coronavirus - Public Health England published guidance on 13 August for the public which provides a summary of actions they can take: [Guidance](#).

New NHS Test and Trace app is being piloted; trials have started (13 August).

The app has been designed to work alongside traditional contact tracing services and testing. It will not track individuals and does not hold personal information such as name, address or date of birth. For some features, the app may require more information from the user (e.g. if you are booking a test) but only if the user gives their explicit consent. The app will log the time and distance a user has spent



near to anyone, even if they don't know them, so it can alert them if necessary if that person later tests positive for coronavirus, and help them easily book a free test, and quickly get their results.

Starting this week, residents on the Isle of Wight and NHS volunteers will receive unique codes via email and post to give them early access to download the app, with residents in Newham, London, getting theirs soon after. They will be part of a trial period as the NHS Test and Trace programme rigorously evaluates the app in real-world settings to monitor performance and identify improvements ready for national launch.

Links for more information: [Announcement](#) and [Privacy notice](#).

Connecting residents through WhatsApp - Frilsham Support Group Case Study

The Community Support Hub was delighted to interview Tessa Allum of the Frilsham Support Group, who explains how the village WhatsApp Group played a vital role in connecting residents and co-ordinating local support throughout the coronavirus emergency.

Thank you Tessa, for sharing your valuable insights with us. First of all, how did the WhatsApp group for Frilsham get started?

My pleasure. I'd first like to say that I'm so impressed by all the wonderful efforts co-ordinated by other community and volunteer groups in neighbouring towns and villages throughout West Berkshire.

Regarding Frilsham, our villagers have always been supportive to their neighbours in normal times, so nearly everyone in isolation already had someone looking out for them when coronavirus struck. A number of volunteers also came forward and the Frilsham Support Group was formed.

One of our first activities was to set up the WhatsApp group in February to support this active community spirit by co-ordinating efforts or providing assistance for those isolating or vulnerable who needed a little extra help.

In fact, at the end of last year, I had been toying with the idea of setting up a private WhatsApp group for villagers to stay in touch. However it was in February, when an Italian friend of mine, in touch with friends back in Italy, said that the British have "no idea what's about to hit them," that I realised we needed something simple, and quickly.

Based on what she was hearing from her friends and family in Italy, the enormity of the situation really struck me. Therefore the WhatsApp group was created even before our lockdown started. I knew that WhatsApp would be an effective communications tool to provide the latest news and alerts about the coronavirus emergency to our villagers in addition to the Facebook community page that had been in existence for some time.



What's the difference between the Frilsham Community Facebook page and the WhatsApp group?

The two platforms have some similarities in that they are both used by members of our community to share news about the village and the coronavirus situation, but both serve slightly different purposes.

The Facebook page has members from the village, but also from the surrounding area. On Facebook, villagers post news, views, discussions and photographs. It has been a useful way for the support group to post information that has some degree of 'longevity' as posts remain visible for some time. Although in usual

times we try to restrict commercial posts, recently we've relaxed that rule so that we can support our local businesses as they struggle to recover.

On the other hand, our WhatsApp group is an instantaneous messaging service supporting Frilsham residents and people close to them (in some cases, family members living elsewhere who may need to get in touch with someone in the village to look in on their relative). It is a platform for more immediate requests and very local news alerts. Initially we thought it would be used for quick callouts for help needed, such as collecting a prescription, help with shopping or with a recalcitrant boiler. People can ask for help directly via WhatsApp, or remain confidential by messaging me privately, whereupon I will put out a discreet request for assistance on WhatsApp without naming the individual.

I am able to shop regularlyworking every day and can go in protected NHS time so shelves not normally full and can go to both Asda and Sainsburys....more than happy to get shopping for people and drop off at end of day....just send me address and shopping list.....

17:50

The volume of messages was intense at the beginning of lockdown, with information being exchanged on what was happening and how people were coping. Grocery deliveries were difficult to obtain, so when someone was able to book one they would offer to obtain urgent shopping for others.

For a short period, anyone who managed to get bread flour or yeast let people know and happily shared it out. As it has evolved, the WhatsApp group now includes offers of giveaway spare plants - tomato, courgette and cucumber were popular – clearout items of furniture or toys, and more lately excess garden produce from all those exchanged plants and seeds.

What tips would you have for anyone wanting to set up a WhatsApp group?

To launch the Frilsham Support Group, we delivered leaflets to every household in the village. These promoted the WhatsApp group as a way to ask for help, but also to offer to volunteer. We quickly had over 40 people offering to help.

We directed all WhatsApp joining requests to a single point of contact to reduce any confusion. All people had to do was download the app if they didn't already use it, and email or text me their mobile number. Then I immediately added them to the group. We also made it clear that this was a simple messaging service for Frilsham residents, and not an advertising platform.

Once your WhatsApp group conversations get underway, you'll find the chatter can get very cluttered if you are not careful. We therefore have been politely encouraging people to 'Reply Privately' to group messages, rather than 'Reply' to all. It's key to teach everyone this habit so that important messages don't get lost.

In addition, to help make important announcements stand out, I preface these with short key words such as "REQUEST FOR HELP" or "FOR INFORMATION."

REQUEST FOR HELP : is there anyone who could collect a prescription from the Downland Practice in Chieveley? Preferably today, and preferably someone under 40 ??

09:42 ✓

What's in store for the future?

As far as upcoming activities are concerned, our focus is on making sure people know we are still here and ready to help – they may choose to keep isolating, or have to quarantine, or if lockdown restrictions come back in. We plan to keep the WhatsApp group going, as it's really helped foster an already strong community spirit and keep people in touch with each other. I'm also really delighted that people have made new friends and connections through the group.

Anything else you'd like to share?

This was definitely work of a team! I'd like to thank profusely the 'core team' volunteers who each took the lead in their particular areas of support. Also, a huge thanks and shout out to our District Councillor, Carlyne Culver. Throughout the lockdown period Carlyne held weekly calls with the volunteer group leaders across our Ward to keep us all updated on the latest news from the Council and to offer her support on any matter. These calls were also a great way to hear about the superb volunteering activities happening in other areas of West Berkshire, and to share ideas with one another. This support has been absolutely brilliant!

#GetActivityConfident with Get Berkshire Active

Outdoor Ever Active taster sessions on 19 and 21 August to Improve Wellbeing and to Support those with Long Term Health Conditions

Get Berkshire Active is piloting some outdoor, gentle intensity community sessions next week as part of their Ever Active program. These are perfect for those who might not have been active for a while, may have been shielding, and/or are looking to rebuild their confidence about getting out and about again. The free, under-an-hour sessions will strictly follow social distancing guidelines, and need to be booked in advance, by emailing the relevant contact details below:

Wednesday 19 August – *Walking Wednesday*: 10.30am meet outside the entrance to reception at Shaw House, RG14 2DR. Please book by 5pm, 18 Aug by emailing Kirsty.Heath@getberkshireactive.org

Wednesday 19 August – *Gentle Bodyweight Circuits for those with Health conditions*: 10.00am meet outside the front of the main building, Henwick Worthy, Sports Ground, Thatcham, RG18 3BU. Please book by 5pm, 18 Aug by emailing hayley.kirby@me.com

Friday 21 August – *Feel Good Friday Walk*: 10.00am meet in the car park next to Adventure Dolphin, Pangbourne, RG8 7DA. Please book by 5pm, 20 Aug by emailing nick.rance@getberkshireactive.org

Friday 21 August – *Gentle Exercises* (can be done seated or standing): 11.15 am. Parking is on The Street, under the pine trees just past the Old Fire Station Nursery, RG7 5ES. Please book by 5pm, 20 Aug by emailing nick.rance@getberkshireactive.org

 Ever Active is a Get Berkshire Active programme that supports older and disabled adults who are seeking to improve their health and fitness and reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Ever Active is funded by West Berkshire Council and Reading Borough Council. More information and the activity calendar can be obtained on: <https://getberkshireactive.org/ever-active>. All participants must agree to the code of conduct when booking. For further information please contact nick.rance@getberkshireactive.org

REMINDER - Health and Wellbeing Conference 2020, Friday 11 September 2020, 12.30-3 pm

The Health and Wellbeing Board (Wellbeing in West Berkshire) invites you to join The Health and Wellbeing Conference 2020 on 11 September, 12.30 – 3pm via Zoom. The event's aim is to share insights and promote discussion about how we can learn from the COVID crisis, keeping what's gone well and learning from what hasn't, to strengthen our communities, improve our wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in the months and years to come.

Signing up for the conference and breakout sessions is free and easy via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com). You will be sent the conference link and password a few days before the event. You can submit any questions in advance to: kamalbahia@nhs.net

Good news stories – please keep them coming in!

We love to feature your good news stories on our social media and [Hub Facebook](#) page and you can find more stories, photos and videos about the wonderful work of West Berkshire's volunteers on our [Local Heroes](#) website.

With our grateful thanks and best wishes,
The Hub Team

Please ensure that all queries about individual cases are directed to the Hub via the general email westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk or by calling **01635 503579**. This is to ensure they are dealt with promptly, effectively and in line with guidelines on dealing with vulnerable adults.



The banner features a circular logo on the left with the text 'Health & Wellbeing in West Berkshire' inside. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'The Health and Wellbeing Conference 2020' in a bold, purple font. Below this, a blue bar contains the date 'Friday 11th September' in white. At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the text 'The path out of COVID towards a fairer, more inclusive community built on kindness, resilience and wellbeing.' in white.