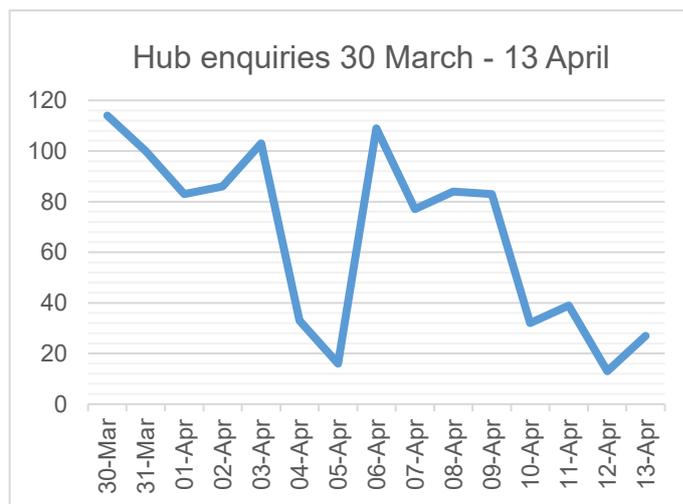




Weekly News Bulletin for Community and Voluntary Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Partners and Hub Update Subscribers

Facts and figures

- **71** community & voluntary groups are registered with the Hub, co-ordinating over **1,980** volunteers
- **385** people have identified themselves to the Hub as vulnerable
- **3,233** shielded residents of West Berkshire have been identified by the NHS, of which **1,670** have registered on the government's website
- **Over 70%** of WB shielded residents registered on the government's website have indicated they do **NOT** require any more support
- The Hub received **396** phone calls and **68** emails last week, including over the Easter weekend (when total enquiries averaged 28 per day).



Our new digital platform came into operation on Tuesday, allowing us to track volume and types of enquiry in more detail. We hope to share this information in the coming weeks. For now, we can report that:

- The majority of individual queries to the Hub continue to be around shopping and prescriptions
- Queries around anxiety and mental health are increasing as the lockdown continues
- Requests for support around grief and bereavement are expected to increase in the weeks to come as the numbers of Covid-19 related deaths rise nationally

Frequently Asked Questions

Why has the number of WB shielded residents identified by the NHS increased by 40% in a week?

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including those aged 70+, those with an underlying health condition, and pregnant women. Extremely vulnerable (**shielded**) people are those with some clinical conditions that put them at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Last week, the NHS in England added another cohort of people to the shielded category, which meant numbers rose nationally. The Government is writing to all of these shielded people with advice on the more stringent measures they should take in order to keep safe. You can find out more about caring for shielded people in the government's [guidance for carers](#).

How are shielded and clinically vulnerable residents being supported in West Berkshire?

The Council is telephoning every shielded resident who has registered their contact details on the Government website, whether they require support or not, to check they have everything they need. We understand that those who have been identified but have not registered are being contacted directly by the Department for Work and Pensions. As of Thursday morning, council officers have phoned more than **820 people** across West Berkshire. If the phone isn't answered, we can call on the police to undertake a welfare visit. Any needs arising are being forwarded on to the relevant community group directly from the Hub. In addition, the Government is arranging for food parcels to be delivered to those in need and for supermarkets

to prioritise these people when allocating delivery slots. Clinically vulnerable people are being called by GP surgeries and social prescribers and our Adult Social Care colleagues are checking on the welfare of those already on their books.

Unfortunately, we have no control over what is being done at the national level to help shielded residents of West Berkshire and we cannot share the NHS list of shielded people with groups due to strict Government rules. Some people have contacted the Hub to say they don't want the food parcels – we are advising them to donate the parcels to the foodbanks (see below). Any help from local groups to facilitate the collection and delivery of unwanted food parcels to the foodbanks would be much appreciated.

What is the situation with foodbanks for those in need?

We are fortunate in West Berkshire to have the resources of two excellent foodbanks that can provide food parcels to those in need:

- [West Berkshire Foodbank](#) Tel: 07955 626621 or email: info@westberks.foodbank.org.uk
- Spotlight Foodbank Tel: 01256 242330 or email: admin@spotlightuk.org

We have set up a central distribution point at Newbury Rugby Club where volunteers from community groups can pick up food parcels provided by foodbanks for onward delivery to households in their areas. This week, we are helping community volunteers deliver 79 Spotlight food parcels to families around the district. We really appreciated this feedback from a member of a local Village Volunteer Team! Our communications team were there to film the volunteers in action – **watch the video [here](#)**



What assistance is available for vulnerable people needing transport to hospital appointments?

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust provides pre-arranged transport to and from appointments via the [Patient Transport Service](#) (PTS), for those that satisfy the eligibility criteria. Patients will be asked a series of questions to assess whether they qualify for the service - if they satisfy the criteria then they will be able to book transport. However, due to Covid-19, SCAS have restricted bookings so that they can now only be made within 72 hours of the appointment. This restriction is not made clear on the website.

Unfortunately, other community transport options are very limited owing to the availability of volunteer drivers, as many fall into the vulnerable category themselves. We have no new advice on this other than the Government distancing guidelines, which is to create as much space between you and the passenger as possible i.e. suggest the passenger sits in the back seat on the opposite side to the driver.

What local funding is available to support community groups in the relief effort?

Greenham Trust has established a **Coronavirus Emergency Fund** where community groups (*not individuals*) are eligible to apply for funding to top-up current activity i.e. additional costs incurred whilst responding to their community's needs in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. This might be travel expenses of volunteers, leaflet printing costs, obtaining and storing local food bank supplies, etc. Groups will need to accurately demonstrate the costs before submitting any proposal.

For claims up to £1,000, email: grantenquiries@greenhamtrust.com. For amounts over £1,000, please apply via the [Good Exchange](#). Further advice is available from Jill Owen at Greenham Trust: Email: jill.owen@greenhamtrust.com or Tel: [01635 817302](tel:01635817302)

What help is available for those facing financial difficulty?

Many households will be facing growing financial hardship as the lockdown continues and more people find they are on reduced incomes. There is a wealth of information available on the council website to help [residents](#) and [businesses](#) facing financial difficulty as a result of Covid-19.

What help is available for those at risk from domestic abuse?

Periods of enhanced stress can put an even greater strain on domestic relationships, which can lead to an increase in domestic abuse incidents. Help will always be available to people affected by domestic abuse. We have published a [leaflet](#) containing information on who to contact and what to do if people feel unsafe. There is never an excuse for domestic violence.

Hub team changes – new staff

After nearly four weeks of intensive work to get the Community Support Hub up and running, the Building Communities Together team and ‘honorary member’ Alice this week stepped back from full time cover of the Hub. We are delighted to welcome new team members from among council staff, covering the food, welfare, medicines, Hub manager and logistics roles on a rota basis. Some staff will be working remotely from home, particularly over the weekends, so please bear with us. Jo will continue to be the single point of contact for Town and Parish Councils (Mondays to Fridays).

Lockdown measures have just been extended for another three weeks but we anticipate that vulnerable and shielded residents of West Berkshire will continue to need your support for at least the next three months and maybe more. The Hub will be there to provide support and advice throughout this period.

Raising awareness of local community support

We know households in some parts of the district have yet to receive the Council’s Covid-19 advice leaflet through their letterboxes. In response to concerns that isolated people may be unaware of the community support available locally, we’ve arranged for 2,300 postcards providing the Hub’s contact details to be delivered by Royal Mail to households in the affected areas. In addition, we’ve had the advice leaflet translated into Hindi, Urdu and Portuguese and these have been shared electronically by our friends at Community Connections. They are also available on the council’s [website](#). We are now working on a large print version of the Covid-19 advice leaflet for the visually impaired.

Our public health colleagues have produced some printed guidance and a colourful activity sheet aimed at vulnerable residents who may be in need of extra support. We know that some groups have already distributed printed leaflets to local residents but, as the lockdown continues, we feel it’s important to keep refreshing the message that help is available. We’d be grateful for your group’s assistance in distributing this material. **Please let us know how many vulnerable people your group is currently helping, to assist us with print numbers.**



Celebrate your good work!

We’re always looking for photos and good news stories to publish on our Facebook page and social media to celebrate the incredible work that is going on to support local communities all over West Berkshire. And our vulnerable residents really do appreciate what you are doing! You can share posts and photographs using **#WestBerksCommunity** and **#WBCommunityLove**

Check out www.facebook.com/CommunitySupportHubGroup for more examples of great community work and positive feedback received by community groups, volunteers and the Hub.

Individual cases

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.

With very best wishes,

The Hub Team