

Information from New Forest District Council

The Coronavirus Hampshire Helpline (Hantshelp4vulnerable) went live this week and can be contacted on 0333 370 4000.

The helpline is available seven days a week, from 9am-5pm, and is for vulnerable people who do not have support from families, friends or their local community, and who need urgent assistance with essential food or household supplies, collection of medication, or who are at risk of loneliness.

The Town Council will also make available here in the next few days more information on obtaining supplies for those in isolation being organised at Town Council Buildings.

All Town and Parish Councils

Copied to:
All District Councillors

Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

My Ref: BJ/MW
Your Ref:

Date: 03 April 2020

Dear Town/Parish Council

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Helping New Forest Residents Most In Need

Thank you to the many people who have volunteered their help to support our vulnerable residents during the Coronavirus pandemic. Local people, Town and Parish Councils and community groups across the District are showing great strength and resilience, working hard to assist one another.

As a Council we are continuing to focus on supporting our communities, by reprioritising our staff and resources to essential services such as refuse collections, homelessness and local business support. This is not easy, as we face our own staffing challenges and the need to adapt to new tasks. We are grateful to all our staff who are working tirelessly to adjust and deliver support of this common aim to help and protect our community.

We would like to take the opportunity to update our Town and Parish Councils on the latest information from the Government and our own local response to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

The Government has identified those within our own community who are at the highest risk of severe illness ('the clinically extremely vulnerable') if they contract COVID-19 and have therefore been advised to isolate themselves ('shielding') for a period of at least 12 weeks.

This extremely vulnerable group are being contacted by NHS England to confirm that they are considered to be at risk of severe illness if they contract COVID-19. It is acknowledged that many of these people will have a support network of people around them who can help with shopping or collection of prescriptions which can be left at the front door. However, there will be some who have no friend, family or other networks locally to do things for them, for all or part of their period in self-isolation. For this 'shielding' group of individuals, the Government is arranging for the basic provision of food and household essentials to be supplied and delivered directly by major food service suppliers with established national delivery infrastructure, on a weekly basis.

The role of the Hampshire wide Coronavirus support line and local response centres that have been established over the past week is to manage a reserve supply of food to that provided direct by the Government, to ensure that no individual in this extremely vulnerable group is without a food parcel. The District Council has received a 'one off' share of the reserve bulk supply of food from the Government. This arrived into our local centre on Tuesday 31 March and consisted of supplies to make up 20 standard food parcels to fill any immediate gaps from within the extremely vulnerable group. This has already been utilised.

newforest.gov.uk

Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA

It is possible that there will be further gaps before the Government system is fully operational. We are working hard to establish arrangements with local supermarkets and we are, where possible, redeploying District Council staff to support the delivery of some of these individual needs including food parcels, as well as supporting all our partners in the New Forest.

The Government recognises that there are other individuals who are not "shielding" but have to self isolate. For this group in our community we will make our 'best efforts' to support them in partnership with Community First, our Voluntary Sector Lead, and we already recognise the fantastic work that is taking place in our community from Town and Parish Councils and local volunteer groups. We therefore may require the support of Town & Parish Councils and other volunteers to continue to help us meet any gaps from outside of the extremely vulnerable group. The Council has provided £25,000 to support local efforts (including our 4 local Foodbanks). In addition, Hampshire County Council has made £5,000 available to New Forest District Council to support local efforts in the District. We will try to support all efforts taking place across our communities, by Town and Parish Councils, local communities and voluntary groups. **Access to the funds identified can be made if needed by completing a simple grant application form (attached).** It is hoped that this will enhance the ability of local volunteers to access supplies and support those in our community with the highest need.

Information and advice is available from the new County wide helpline which also provides practical support to vulnerable residents. The Coronavirus Hampshire Helpline can be contacted on **0333 370 4000**. The helpline is available seven days a week, from 9am-5pm, and is for vulnerable people who do not have support from families, friends or their local community, and who need urgent assistance with practical issues including the supply of food parcels, collection of medication or who are at risk of loneliness.

It is vital that all local volunteers take precautions to ensure their safety and those of others. We urge all volunteers to adhere to Government's guidance on how to volunteer safely. Public Health England have published guidance on how to volunteer safely - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely--2>

Once again, thank you to all our Town and Parish Councils, the voluntary sector and community groups for their help in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our New Forest community, we still have some way to go but working together we can make a positive difference to many individuals in our community.

Yours sincerely



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