

Devon Community Foundation

COVID-19 Response Weekly Briefing 04 June 2020

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's briefing. We'd like to make this as useful and interactive as possible, so welcome feedback and suggestions about content.

If you know anyone else who'd be interested in receiving the briefing, feel free to forward, and encourage those to whom you forward to email nicola@devoncf.com to be put on the mailing list. Briefings will come out on a Thursday.

Click on the **BOLD COLOURED** links to be redirected to useful resources - Right click on the links if you want to open it in a separate window.





Mutual Aid Groups

A feature of the crisis at local level has been the emergence, or renewed visibility, of neighbourhood mutual aid groups, helping to support those isolating, or struggling with the effects of the lockdown. The APPG report we began to look at last week has a focus on mutual aid, and raises some interesting questions.

- We have become used to a system of clearly differentiated service provision, from increasingly professionalised charities, to needy beneficiaries, where the helper and the helped are distinct entities. Mutual aid groups inhabit the space between formal volunteering and informal neighbourliness. Not a new form, but overlooked in recent years, mutual aid pre-supposes that we are all in need of help in some way and at some time, and that fellow citizens have a role of play in providing that support, without the mediation of a formal organisation.
- The report suggests that Devon's signature small to medium-sized towns and rural villages, with settled populations, are generally most conducive to ground-level community action. This agrees with local data, which paints a picture of even coverage, in urban and rural areas alike, across the county.
- Areas with lower levels of mutual aid nationally generally have: greater mobility of population; lower levels of neighbourhood trust, more social inequality, and fewer opportunities for people of different backgrounds to mix. The report saw fewer mutual aid groups in some disadvantaged areas, though it did not consider informal whatsapp groups or established offline social networks, which may be more significant in some of these areas – more work needed on this!
- Where might the renewed interest in this form of citizen action take us in the future? The report calls for studies of the longer-term potential of these groups. It suggests that organisations working with volunteers, as well as government, must start planning now to harness the volunteering legacy of the crisis, through recruitment programmes, especially ones targeted at groups with lower volunteering levels.
- How do/should mutual aid groups link with formal charities and local authorities? The national Covid-19 mutual aid website discourages mutual aid groups from working with councils and civil society organisations, a decision that the APPG does not support. But local Covid-19 mutual aid groups are independent of those who set up the website. Levels of contact and coordination with local authority-led services and charities vary from place to place. Again, it would be fantastic to learn more about these relationships, and to map the various models in use across Devon. We're planning to look at some of this in Exeter, and will be happy to share findings.

This What Works Wellbeing [blog](#) draws on existing knowledge about volunteering. It highlights the importance of valuing local knowledge, and references the difficulties we have seen on the ground with the intersection between the NHS responders scheme and local groups.



Hot News!

We'll be hosting and curating a fortnightly series of free webinars on aspects of community in the wake of the Covid crisis. This is what to expect in the first instalment, featuring our very own **Martha Wilkinson**:

Local communities are our homes, our workforce and our customers: the role of community wellbeing in business

Community wellbeing is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential. Thriving communities require thriving businesses and vice versa. This webinar and its successors will explore where commercial and public benefit overlap and what we could do better going forward to build increasing prosperity for everyone. Well before COVID19, consumers were choosing products which represented their values. The pandemic has put increased emphasis on this trend with a particular interest now in localism and inclusivity.

Register for the webinar [here](#) – all welcome!

Spotlight on ... Dementia



For all of us, these last few months in lockdown have been difficult, however for those living with dementia and those who care for them this change to the way we live has been particularly impactful. Although having dementia is not believed to increase one's risk of developing Covid-19 its symptoms may make it more difficult to comply with preventative measures such as regular hand washing and social distancing. **Alzheimer Europe** has produced an [opinion piece](#) which explores the challenges posed by the pandemic for those living with dementia, informal carers and health and social care professionals as well as setting out a series of recommendations.

Although dementia can affect adults of any age the majority of those living with symptoms are older adults who are already considered to be at a higher risk of becoming infected with Covid-19. According to **the Alzheimer's Society**, 70% of people in care homes have dementia or severe memory problems, posing a huge challenge to care home staff battling to keep their residents safe. This has also meant that those living in such settings have not been able to see friends and family which is particularly heart wrenching for those involved, as dementia is a progressive diagnosis.

With the understandable increase in anxiety around the current pandemic, it has been widely reported that fewer people are presenting at their GP surgery, resulting in a decrease in diagnosis of many serious health conditions. [NHS Digital](#) reports that the dementia diagnosis data has been affected by Covid-19, however experts are unable to estimate the extent of the impact at this stage.

As with many long-term conditions, dementia demands a lot of the families of those diagnosed. During this stressful time, it is essential that those caring for a loved one with dementia are adequately supported and many of the resources we will cover in this briefing are aimed at both those with dementia and their carers. **Dementia Carers Count** has produced a series of videos to share useful tips for [coping during Coronavirus](#). **The Alzheimer's society** also has a National Dementia Connect [Support Line](#), which is staffed by Dementia Connect Advisers, and is open for extended hours in the evening and over the weekend/bank holidays at this time.

In Devon

As we have seen time and time again whilst putting together these weekly briefings there are a huge number of groups and organisations providing support to those living in Devon and they have proven themselves to be wonderfully adaptable during these strange times.

Tamara James from **The Alzheimer's Society** (Devon and Torbay) told us *“This is a very difficult time for people affected by dementia, and we are hearing from so many people who are struggling, particularly during the lockdown but, we are also hearing fabulous stories of communities coming together and really providing fantastic support to their neighbours.”*

Jonathan Hanbury from **Atlas Care** explained that *“We have been in contact with families across Torbay & Devon who are shielding and struggling with dementia and universally we hear of the steep cognitive deterioration that has occurred due to isolation. Individuals who prior to Covid were managing really well, doing activities and staying social have now had to remain stuck indoors and alone for months and this has precipitated a decline in mental health, often hastening the need for health & social care intervention. What has amazed us is how well people have taken to remote support and those living with dementia haven't been fazed at all by chatting to someone through a tablet.”*

- **Memory Matters South West CIC** are producing a [weekly newsletter](#) full of uplifting stories, many of them local to Devon, as well as a weekly activity sheet. They have also moved their [weekly workshops](#) online; they are FREE and anyone living with mild to moderate dementia is welcome! They have continued their dementia advice and information service over the telephone and digitally via zoom. They were also successful in a bid with Devon Community Foundation Covid19 Response Fund and were able to purchase some refurbished Ipads/Galaxy Tabs to loan to their customers living alone.
- **The Moments café** is one of the services usually offered at the Memory Matters South West Hub in Plymouth. The café is now being hosted via zoom every Tuesday at 12pm.
- **Age UK Devon** are promoting two free [online courses](#) available to help those who care for someone with dementia to find appropriate coping strategies and remain socially connected.
- **Devon and Torbay Dementia Adviser Service** are proving welfare calls to all existing service users and have started offering befriending telephone calls, carried out weekly by their volunteers. The volunteers have been really creative when making these calls, and have been singing through the phone, hosting quizzes and listening to music together. They are also holding their weekly 'singing for the brain' groups online via Zoom.
- **Remember that Song** is a singing group hosted at St Thomas Church in Exeter. Since the lockdown they have been emailing those members who have access to the internet a weekly singalong and, for those who don't, keeping in touch via phone calls and letters. They are also producing a [newsletter](#) which includes both musical and non-musical resources.
- **The Ness Centre (Atlas Care)** who provide respite and therapy as well as supporting those across Devon living with dementia are increasing their [1:1 home based work](#) giving informal carers a break and bringing much needed social connection and cognitive stimulation to those living with dementia. They have also been excited to run a pilot of their new project MemoryCOACH which enables them to offer families 1:1 coaching through video conferencing, running activities, therapies, and online support. The first pilot ran in April with 10 participants and was a great success. Alongside this they are working with some care homes to offer activities through video calls for residents who are stuck in their rooms due to the virus.
- **Devon Carers** have remained open and can be contacted via their helpline and webchat 8am-6pm Monday to Friday and 9am-1pm Saturday. They have produced a [Covid-19 special bulletin](#) full of resources for those caring for loved ones.

DCF Funding Update

The crisis fund remains open for response phase applications, but the panel now meets weekly. We are currently developing criteria for the next phase on funding – news available soon on this.

St Matthew with St Sidwell PCC - £10,000

Exeter
Provision of weekly food parcels to families identified through local schools and Wellbeing Exeter Community Builders to help combat food poverty

Teign Valley Larder - £500

Teign Valley
Purchase of essential food and toiletry items to maintain stock in a newly set up community larder responding to an increase in local food poverty incidences



Coronavirus | 
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Devon Coronavirus Response & Recovery Fund | 

Click to donate to the national appeal | 
#shouldertoshoulder #GiveLoveDevon

Call for Input : Addiction and Substance Missuse

Next week we'll have a focus on the impact of the crisis on need in this area, and on the organisations who work to support those affected. Please do be in touch with any stories, examples, reflections from your own experience, or with details of people and organisations we ought to talk to. Please email: insights@devoncf.com.