

COVID-19

Telford & Wrekin Council

Protecting the Medically Shielded

Telford & Wrekin Council utilised data and collaborative relationships to target additional resources at those most vulnerable to the pandemic

Context

Early on in the pandemic, Telford & Wrekin Council realised that vulnerable households would need support – in particular, the means to purchase food, access medicines and make social contact to address loneliness, anxiety and other wellbeing issues arising from Covid-19. As a Co-operative Council, it recognised that it had a duty of care to all vulnerable residents, whatever their background. There was a clear political commitment to use resources to provide support – for example a workforce that could be redeployed to new roles. It had willing partners and an established network of volunteers that it could work with and draw support from. The Council is a recognised voice in the community with the effective means to communicate and reach vulnerable residents.

Development

Activities were developed through a ‘Gold’ Community Support Group that brought together key services and resources to design and implement support mechanisms in response to the challenges it identified – for example, difficulties accessing food supplies and prescription medicines. The council identified the challenges that households were facing through various points of contact, such as the Community Support team, elected members, and partners including the Telford Crisis Support Network and Interfaith Council. Using this feedback, it continually reviewed and developed its response. The Council’s approach was to ensure that any vulnerable resident, whatever their background, could access the support that they needed. This was achieved by working together with community groups, community volunteers and local businesses.

Implementation

Council activities included:

- Delivery of packed lunch/food vouchers to children who qualified for Free School Meals. 52,000 packed lunches were delivered directly to the homes of families in need. It also

started a breakfast scheme in June 2020. Initially in 12 target wards, it has now been rolled out Borough-wide for children eligible for Free School Meals

- Establishing a Community Support Helpline and response team available 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Over 6,000 calls were made to the Community Support Helpline and approximately 4,000 of these were referred to the Council's Community Support Team for practical help
- Over 5,000 "safe and well" calls were made to all households on the national shield list. Where people couldn't be reached by telephone, a visit was made. As part of this a 'Keep in Touch' call was offered – as of September, more than 5,000 KIT calls have been made
- Identifying over 11,000 at-risk households, which were called by redeployed Council officers and community volunteers. It also called over 10,000 households who were either Adult Social Care clients or had children with Education Health & Care Plans
- Establishing a food service – linking residents with supermarket delivery slots and local Foodbanks
- Providing over 300 laptops to eligible children in more than 50 primary schools as part of the Laptops for Learners scheme. In addition, more than 200 devices were delivered to care homes, the women and children's unit and extra care facilities. Stakeholders were involved in the process, using the following methods:
 - All households were written to twice by the Council Leader
 - Social media videos providing information about the Council's response, viewed 785,000 times
 - Email updates to 78,000 subscribers
 - Daily "newsroom" updates
 - All social care clients called by the Council.

Co-operative values and principles were embedded in this activity by working with partner organisations and community volunteers to provide expertise and capacity. The Council provided grants of £105,000 to food banks, charities tackling homelessness and organisations providing mental health and domestic abuse support.

Review

The Council's objective was to provide support and assurance to vulnerable households during the national lockdown. Through the scale of the activities implemented and the work put in place to track the outcome of each contact, the Council was confident that it delivered on its objective. This reflected co-operative values and principles as, together with its partners, it demonstrated that it cared for others and took social responsibility to ensure that vulnerable households, whatever their background, could access the support they received. Telford & Wrekin will continue to support voluntary and community groups as they grow and develop their capacity as part of its focus on building stronger resilient communities.

For further information contact:

Jon Power

Organisational Delivery & Development Service Delivery Manager – Telford & Wrekin Council
jon.power@telford.gov.uk | 01952 380 141 | www.telford.gov.uk