

## COVID-19

### Bassetlaw District Council

# Protecting the Vulnerable

Using a community-based hub to tackle health inequalities caused by Covid-19, especially targeting extremely vulnerable persons

#### Context

In March 2020, Bassetlaw District Council and its partners established a support hub in the Community Voluntary Services offices prior to a Local Resilience Forum Hub being set up. The Bassetlaw hub benefited from the Community and Voluntary experience in local delivery, which gave direct access to data on vulnerable individuals. As a result, the hub immediately made contact to assess needs, coordinate service provision and, most importantly, provide reassurance – especially to those living alone across a large geographical area with many isolated communities. The primary focus was to meet the needs of ‘extremely vulnerable persons’ (EVP). Bassetlaw had over 7,000 people in this category; over 6% of the population – the highest level in the East Midlands and above surrounding areas. The initial priority was food provision, the hub taking over from the Foodbank which suspended its operations. Following this a prescription delivery service was established for pharmacies who could not meet this need.

#### Development

After setting up the hub, the Council faced a much larger demand as welfare checks identified a range of complex emotional support needs beyond the EVP target group. This included those suffering the economic impacts of Covid-19, those entering the welfare system for the first time and those facing delays in universal credit. There was a huge surge in demand for food: four times more than the normal Foodbank demand. The partnership was able to access data from e-Healthscope including age, frailty and those living by themselves or who had dementia. Liaising with its County Council colleagues, it excluded those in receipt of support from social care and targeted those in age bands of

70 and above. As a consequence, a further 1,700 individuals were identified, all of whom were contacted by the Bassetlaw Hub.

## Implementation

The Council's established social prescribing partnership provided an immediate, flexible and holistic response to the myriad of local support requests that sprang from Covid-19. The partnership's objective is to reduce health inequalities and use community empowerment to bring about long-term improvements. The value of a shared approach between the District Council, Community and Voluntary Service and the Clinical Commissioning Group was clearly shown. The Council will pilot this learning into new models to tackle health inequalities, including responding to a second wave of Covid-19 and other health inequalities, helping to relieve pressure on the NHS. Its objective is to provide a more holistic approach to improving health and wellbeing in Bassetlaw by promoting a population-based service. This will work with local communities using a community development action model to help residents act together to improve their conditions. The approach will include targeted population work dealing with specific issues linked to rurality and ethnicity.



Bassetlaw Local Resilience Forum Hub

## Review

The Council's experience has demonstrated the benefits of a social prescribing link with workers embedded in health and social care settings. The partnership is at a critical point in its development; after working together for several years, the local insight gathered since March 2020 has caused it to pause and look to 'reset' how it works together. The council has discovered that in some areas of Bassetlaw, spontaneous voluntary action, with communities looking after each other, is sustaining itself in a way no partnership or programme has ever achieved. The Council has championed a 'can do' attitude while responding to Covid-19. Traditional barriers of multi-agency boundaries, data sharing etc. were quickly set aside, particularly at local level. The challenge it now sees at a strategic level is to prevent agencies reverting to their default positions. The needs of the district differ greatly, which has been the partnership's collective challenge to date. Too often, it has witnessed how national programmes and city-centric approaches fail to deliver the impact intended. Lasting change is driven by communities themselves and it has begun to see the green shoots of this appearing. The Council will build on the strength of the

partnership to improve impact across Bassetlaw. Its collective vision is to work differently and better together so that people get the right support at the right time. It will measure its success by the improvement in the health and wellbeing of its community and the reduction in health inequalities.

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