

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Report
Health and Adult Social Care System COVID-19 Response
System responses –Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action

4.6 Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action

- 4.6.1 Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action (TCCA) was established 23 March 2020 to ensure a strong partnership approach to supporting residents through the Coronavirus pandemic. The Partnership between the council with Stronger Together and Thurrock CVS launched to support anyone self-isolating at home without friends or family to help with tasks such as shopping or collecting prescriptions, or befriending.

TCCA Call Centre

- 4.6.2 A dedicated call centre was established and staffed by staff from council services who had been affected due to lockdown, such as those working in libraries. Staff quickly learnt the skills to be able to open and manage a call centre and online enquiry form seven days a week. A dedicated number was issued to those 'shielding' and a public number and web enquiry form was publicised to anyone with a need for support to self-isolate at home. As of 28th May 3191 interactions have been made with Thurrock residents requiring support in order to self-isolate

Community Shielding

- 4.6.3 Prior to April 1st 2020 support focused on our most vulnerable residents identified by the NHS who are following Government shielding guidelines and are completely self-isolating for 12 weeks because they are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (we have referred to them in other internal documentation as 'Category A' residents). The Council is receiving a number of different datasets pertaining to these individuals and strong partnership working arrangements between Public Health, TCCA and service colleagues have meant we have been able to respond quickly where needs have been identified (see further detail below).
- 4.6.4 By 1st April 2020 the TCCA Call Centre had made contact with and delivered essential items to over 250 people in this category ahead of food boxes being delivered by central government. Initially the number of residents in Thurrock identified as shielding was 3,026 – this number has been updated on four occasions since first being released and at the time of writing, this figure is now 9,735. This large increase in shielded individuals since the generation of the initial list is reflected nationally, and is due to a number of factors, including national review of clinical criteria and reviews of specific patient lists by all GPs and hospital clinicians. It should be noted that between iterations of the shielded list, a number of patients have also been removed where their cases were no longer found to meet criteria (those patients have been notified).

- 4.6.5 A dedicated phone number to help this group to stay at home was launched and all in contact with TCCA through calls relating to food deliveries, or requesting support, were advised to call this number. Thurrock's GP practices also been sending a local text message out to their shielded patients as they are identified, which provides this dedicated phone number.
- 4.6.6 When first identified as someone who should shield at home, a person is contacted by NHS England to confirm they are within this group. The person is asked to register with a national portal to indicate if they have any needs to access food, medicines and social contact or basic care. As people register, information is released to their Local Authority to assist support when someone has indicated there is a need.
- 4.6.7 Each day the TCCA call centre contacts people new to the list who have identified a support need. Calls relating to basic care are made by Thurrock First. As of 28 May 2020 1,535 residents in Thurrock have indicated a need with accessing essential supplies including food. In mid-March a food distribution centre was established with bulk purchased supplies to help those shielding. To date, 435 Council purchased food boxes have been provided to residents shielding. 29 have been provided to people in an emergency situation and considered likely to meet the criteria for shielding status prior to the registration being confirmed. The total distributed to date is therefore 464. Data is supplied by central government on the status of centrally-supplied food deliveries, and TCCA follow up locally in cases where it was recorded that the centrally-supplied box was not delivered – e.g. due to access issues with the property.
- 4.6.8 Not all residents who are shielding and contacted to register with the national helpline have done so. There are almost 5,000 residents in Thurrock who have yet to register with the national portal at the time of writing. Central government is keen to ensure as many as possible register their needs centrally and commissioned a national call centre to contact those who had yet to register. From May 7th, councils were asked to contact those who the national call centre failed to contact, and to report back on the outcome of contact made. Data on failed contacts is flowing to Councils on a daily basis. , and we have so far received information relating to over 1,300 failed calls requiring a further action. Council has agreed a process for contacting these residents. 683 residents were sent letters mid May and to date, 139 [had either registered or been removed from the shielding list by their GP or clinician](#). A further 651 letters were sent May 27th 2020.

TCCA Volunteer Response

- 4.6.9 Essential to the ability to support residents is the volunteer response organised and managed via Thurrock CVS. Volunteers were encouraged to register their interest prior to a short recruitment process to verify identity and seek character references. Once recruited, volunteers would be contacted with appropriate tasks to support in the community including shopping, collecting prescriptions, befriending and even dog walking requests.

4.6.10 As of 28th May, 520 volunteers had registered with Thurrock CVS, and a total of 1411 tasks supporting local residents had been supported. These include:

- 712 shopping requests
- 77 befriending requests
- 432 medicine collections
- 76 food bank collections
- 3 utility top ups and
- 3 dog walking request.

4.6.11 The willingness of local residents to volunteer to help others at a time of need was amazing. Many wanted to do so much more than they were asked to help with due to the numbers who offered their support. Those who did help others spoke with pride about the contribution and difference they were able to make at such a difficult time.

4.6.12 In order to capture this level of community spirit and ensure it is sustained beyond the lockdown period, CVS has worked with Stronger Together of which council is a partner to develop OurRoad – a digital platform that encourages and supports residents to mobilise and support others in their area through simple acts of kindness with varying degrees of commitment or time required. OurRoad will launch in Volunteers Week 1- 7th June, a national opportunity to reflect on the dedication of people willing to give their time to help others.

Impact

4.6.13 As well as the practical tasks completed to help people self-isolating whether through the effort of volunteers, or through the delivery of essential food boxes, it is clear that TCCA has achieved so much more while supporting local residents.

4.6.14 Countless individuals and family members have shared their gratitude and thanks with CVS and council either direct or via social media channels.

4.6.15 Emergency food boxes have been described as a life line. People have shown their appreciation not just for the food and provisions provided, but also for the time taken to check in with residents at an appropriate social distance by redeployed staff delivering these across the borough.

4.6.16 Shopping provided to be a huge challenge, especially in the early days of lockdown when priority internet slots had yet to be issued. CVS was quick to devise a safe and efficient way for people to have their shopping carried out by a volunteer and to pay for the goods they chose, retaining dignity at a time of need. Numerous social media posts have thanked individual volunteers and CVS for supporting this need, as well as with other practical tasks such as collecting medicines.

4.6.17 The strength of partnership working in Thurrock between the voluntary sector and council is a further example of the impact from the response to

Covid 19. As soon as it was clear that the virus would have an unrepresented impact on our communities, CVS and Council discussed the scope of a local approach, looking to each other's strengths to lead where appropriate. The Stronger Together Partnership provided an appropriate channel to galvanise the support and buy in from a wider partnership which, for the period of the emergency response, expanded to support discussion around local challenges and appropriate support.