

Covid-19 bulletin #1

23rd March 2020

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Local information

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Please click on the link below for the latest information from the Council. On this page, you will also find information about H&F CAN (Community Aid Network), including a link for people who are interested in volunteering to help others in the community.

<https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/articles/news/2020/03/responding-coronavirus-covid-19-together>

Support for residents and taking on new volunteers

We are collating information and updates from local groups and organisations – focussing on whether you can provide any help to local residents who need it, and whether you can make use of the many local people who are ready to volunteer. If you haven't already done so, please take a couple of minutes to respond to the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZFLQY6N>

Do also please keep us updated on your services, or initiatives in addressing needs in the current situation. Email: admin@sobus.org.uk

General advice for H&F organisations

Hopefully, by now organisations have completed a business continuity plan, and reconfigured services in such a way that social distancing advice can be followed, for example with staff working from home. Continuity plans should also have planned for a reduced work force, and how priority clients will be contacted and supported.

Sobus has been contacted by a number of local groups, asking what they should be doing right now for their service users – particularly when their regular activities have had to stop. In general, we would suggest that you:

- Make contact with your service users – starting with those likely to be most vulnerable. This would include older people (who have now been advised to self-

isolate for an extended period of time), those with underlying health conditions or mobility problems.

- Check that they're okay and who they have available to help them with essentials – food, medication etc.
- Ask what help they may need in the next couple of weeks for essentials – food and medication, or anything else that is a priority issue, which might include attending hospital appoints. Although most outpatient appointments have been cancelled or are being done over the telephone, clinics are still running for urgent cases, and transportation might be an issue for some residents
- Other relevant information e.g. language needs – that people who are contacting or helping this person might need to know.
- Seek the user's consent to share their details through the Community Aid Network, which is a network of local organisations and the council, working together to ensure support is provided to those who need it. In the event that your organisation cannot help, the H&F CAN will find another organisation or volunteer to help. Their information will only be used to meet their needs during the Covid-19 situation.

Make sure you record this information so that it can be easily and swiftly sent to others within your organisation or externally if necessary.

It could be that the most useful service you could offer for the time being is to make regular contact with your clients to check on their wellbeing and what help or support they might need with essentials. They may have a friend, relative or neighbour who can help them now, but this might change over the coming weeks.

Volunteers:

Establish what staff/volunteers you have or think you might have over the coming weeks. Lots of staff are already working from home, and we're expecting volunteering numbers to fluctuate.

Existing volunteers might drop off as child care/health affects their availability or ability to volunteer, but at the same time, huge numbers of residents are actively looking for opportunities to help their neighbours.

There is a central point for residents to register to volunteer via LBHF, <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/help-your-neighbours-volunteering-our-community-aid-network>

Volunteering and DBS checks

In general, a sensible approach might be that if a vulnerable resident needs assistance that would involve a volunteer entering their home or undertaking any kind of financial transaction with the user, this should only be done by a volunteer with a current DBS check. If it is a question of delivering shopping or medication to someone's front door, without entering the home or any exchange of payment, this could probably be done by a volunteer without a DBS check.

Also, if you require DBS checks for staff and volunteers then here is a link to a fast and efficient online checking service:

https://dbscheckonline.org.uk/?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=AdWords&kw=dbs%20checking%20service&mt=p&gclid=EAAlQobChMlw9eym6mm6AIVV-DtCh036Q_TEAYASAAEgLy1vD_BwE

COVID-19 Mutual Aid Group

Covid-19 mutual aid groups are small local groups of neighbours and local people set up within the local communities to support vulnerable people. As a forum people share information on volunteering, help for the community particularly those that are isolated.

A number of Mutual Aid Groups have established in Hammersmith and Fulham that operate mainly at ward levels. Guides on how to help is available. For more information on how to join, follow the links to existing groups in Google Docs (see below).

See links:

- Hammersmith and Fulham COVID-19 Mutual Aid Groups: this include list of ward level groups, resources on how to help:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XZDKAPUUB4RD1leZer-fpsWaXHHtmiOQHYYT-wwO15Ek/edit#gid=744591903>
- Advice and guidance: <https://covidmutualaid.org/resources/>
- BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-51979390>

Translated information

Doctors of the World and British Red Cross have put together Coronavirus (Covid 19) advice in a number of languages, including: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Dari, Farsi, French, Hindi, Kurdish Sorani, Mandarin, Pashto, Portuguese, Urdu, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Vietnamese. Other languages will follow in due course. You can find them here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=193qQN9I04Dvf0N9L5zeWTiXK_DRbrAxg

National guidance and information

Government advice

There is guidance for the Charity Sector from the government during the COVID crisis: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector>

See information below on financial support from central government.

NHS support for extremely vulnerable patients:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are also setting up a new volunteering portal for very vulnerable patients to access support for daily tasks. This will be available

from Tuesday 24 March. Given capacity, only the highest risk patients should be directed to this service.

Patients who do not have family or friends that can help, can also be directed to www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable to register for additional support with daily living tasks such as shopping and social care.

NCVO advice

As part of their support to organisations on Coronavirus, NCVO have provided 'first step' advice. This includes sections on:

- contingency planning (with links to some helpful guides)
- planning for financial impact
- the changing policy of key funders

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus>

Financial support and funding

Most organisations will face financial pressures during this period. Funding is obviously critical and funders are beginning to respond to this situation.

Government support

On 17 March the government announced a new package for support for businesses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-andbusinesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-announces-additional-support-toprotect-businesses>

Some Key issues to consider might be:

- new support arrangements for Statutory Sick Pay
- arrangement for business rate relief for those organisations that pay it
- coming soon, loan guarantees to cover business interruption – with an interest free period of 6 months
- extended arrangements for delaying tax payments. Accountants Thomas Coombs, have developed some guidance on access the Government's business support package: <https://www.thomascoombs.com/news/accessing-the-latest-covid-19-stimulus/>

Annual returns to the Charities Commission

Please follow the link regarding the commitment from the Charities Commission around flexibility on annual returns. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/filing-charity-annual-returns-during-thecoronavirus-pandemic>

Grants and funding

GLA and City Bridge

The GLA and City Bridge have created an emergency fund for community and voluntary sector organisations. “The emergency scheme will be coordinated by London Funders and will be available to organisations facing immediate financial pressures and uncertainty because of the coronavirus. These include increasing demands for services, higher staff absences, fewer volunteers and lower donations.” More details will be available next week on the London Funders website: <https://londonfunders.org.uk/>

Money Saving Expert Grant

MSE is releasing £1,000,000 to provide grants of £5,000 to £20,000 to small registered charities, or local arms of bigger charities, across the UK – to help with specific UK coronavirus-related poverty relief projects.

Examples could include foodbanks, charities engaged in community aid, financial advice help and more. MSE aims to get the money distributed within the next couple of weeks, and is looking for projects that are up and running, or are in the process of being set up – as we want to deliver help at speed.

Follow this link to Martin’s blog post there is a link to the Application Form, applications close on Wednesday 25th March (this may be extended).

https://blog.moneysavingexpert.com/2020/03/i-m-making-p1m-available-to-fund-urgent-small-charity-coronaviru/?_ga=2.220656216.1956760126.1584961726-1629480433.1574858297

Other useful information

Free Supplies through www.givingworld.org.uk

We are here to provide free of charge clothing, food items, toiletries, cleaning and household products so the most vulnerable people in our communities can stay safe and well.

COVID-19 presents us with one of the greatest challenges we have seen during our lifetimes. However, during this difficult time we, at Giving World remain committed to supporting people in crisis by providing our service in the time of their greatest need.

We understand the need in our communities will grow. Please be assured that we will continue to service our partners and your beneficiaries’ needs, whilst following all the latest government guidelines for employee and volunteers’ safety.

If you are not already registered with us to access free of charge business surplus stock, you can do so here: <https://www.givingworld.org.uk/charity/>

Browse the available products here: <https://products.givingworld.org.uk/product-categories>

Any queries contact us by email: admin@givingworld.org.uk