

VAC Community Links

part of the Care Navigation and Social Prescribing Service with Age UK
Camden and LB Camden Wish+

Covid 19 response and learning

Voluntary Action Forum

6th May 2020



Week 1 (March 16th)

- **Seamless transition – within hours: all VAC staff phone numbers transferred to personal mobiles; online working resource.**
- **Community Links (social Prescribing) 0800 number and VAC reception immediately used by residents as helplines. Insights in to preparing for new types of referral, and urgency of response required.**
- **VCS survey activated to update new COVID directory to keep track of support emerging for residents, identify capacity needs in sector and aid new types of referrals through Community Links.**
- **Staff workplans and hours revised e.g. half time and part time Community Links team to spread hours across whole week.**
- **By Friday 21st March referrals and signposting all for COVID information and advice, food, medication delivery.**
- **Distress calls from people who have never had to rely on charity before: self isolating; job losses; running out of food; new benefits claimants..... And from people who are scared and panicking.**

Weeks 2 – 4 (to 10th April)

- **Referrals in first 10 days April were 3 times normal rate. Still predominantly food (now varying from food parcels) and medication deliveries.**
- **Lots of pressure on the early responder voluntary and community sector, and Good Gym for screened, managed volunteers to deliver prescriptions.**
- **More referrals coming from VCS in neighbourhoods – people with higher needs.**
- **By week 4 first domestic violence calls, and increase in mental health issues. Pressured on befriending. Check in and chat.**

Week 5 – 8 (to 6th May)

- **Panic calls for medicines and food subsidising, and other needs emerging esp. mental health issues (isolation, tensions due to overcrowding, neighbour disputes, employment and financial anxiety).**
- **Steady stream of welfare / advice referrals.**
- **Estimate 70% calls from people given number by council officer esp. housing.**
- **High referrals from NW1, NW3, NW5 and NW6 postcodes.**
- **Volunteer brokering service set up by LBC to mobilise volunteers; more neighbourhood support emerging from end April.**
- **Issues arising with food provision – appropriateness, piecemeal provision.**
- **Disproportionate impacts on BME communities emerging continually (social prescribing data; intelligence from community groups; national picture).**