

Highland Council
Initial Community Resilience Guidance
For Community Groups Wishing to Provide Support
Version 1 March 2020

Introduction

The current situation is unusual. Where emergency situations occur normally, they are generally confined to a specific geographical area and for a short time period. Communities are well prepared to rally round in these circumstances to provide support.

The current situation is different. This is likely to last for some weeks and likely months and all areas across Highland will be impacted. Therefore, the support that is required within our communities must also be able to continue over this extended period.

Communities are getting in touch with the Council seeking guidance and support to establish and operate local groups. Scottish Government guidance is expected to issue best practice guidance and toolkits for community action.

The following is designed to help groups consider:

- what you could do to support within your local area
- things to think about when you are preparing
- some materials that other areas and communities are already using
- advice for individuals and support on where to seek support
- what the Council is doing and how you can help

We are only at the beginning, but things are moving fast. There is still time to consider how to address the challenges we are going to face and how to avoid the pitfalls that may come later on. Clearly if communities and agencies work together we stand the best chance of effectively supporting our communities through the pandemic.

Section 1: Things to think about

Who is involved

Whilst many people currently feel well and will want to support their local community, the safety of volunteers and communities is crucial. Please ensure that those identified as of greater risk and should be limiting social contact are not involved in direct community efforts. This is in line with Government guidance. These groups are:

- People over 70
- Pregnant women
- People with underlying health conditions (who would normally receive a flu jab)

People in these groups can still be involved from a distance – providing social phone contact or organising from their home location – but should not be providing direct support.

Volunteers also need to be very conscious of inadvertently spreading the virus to vulnerable people in the community. NHS guidance on how to reduce the risk is available on the following website: [NHS Inform advice](#). You can also find updated information on the Council's [dedicated web pages](#).

Working with other organisations

A range of groups and organisations will already be active in our communities. In order to maximise the impact of what you do it is important that you coordinate with other local groups to share knowledge, skills, resources and facilities.

This might include you working with organisations such as-

- Churches
- Community halls/centres
- Uniformed organisations
- Community transport providers who have vehicles

The Council and its partners will also liaise with you on what local activity you are focusing on, what the Council is doing locally, and where work can be co-ordinated as appropriate.

Sharing information - Data Protection

You should be aware that some of the information you collect about vulnerable people is sensitive and take care to protect it from unnecessary disclosure. While it is reasonable to share sensitive information with public authorities and your volunteers to ensure that assistance can be given, you should always be aware of the

confidentiality issues and only share what is necessary at the time with those who have a need to know.

Sustaining support

It is important to consider how to sustain community action for the duration – which could be as much as several months. What is perfectly do-able now may not be so easy in a few weeks. Your group should consider what is manageable whilst balancing providing support e.g. response time, a local rota to spread involvement, deliveries on certain days.

Identifying who needs support

Depending upon your group, you may already have core clients that you as a group are in contact with and are focused on supporting. For new groups, you will want to consider how you share your offer of support across your community. There are some examples of how you could do this outlined in section 3 below.

Social media – Facebook/Whatsapp - is a great way to get your message of support out and to identify who may need help. However, please make sure that people who are looking for support do not have to share their personal details on a public forum. This is important to keep vulnerable people safe.

Section 2: What could you do

Highland is an area where traditionally communities come together to take care of, and provide support for, relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Many communities already have strong and active local groups who are well placed to help locally – these existing groups may welcome new volunteers; in other areas people are keen to set up new groups and responses to the current situation.

Some people are being told to self-isolate because of the virus, others in your community may also find that their usual means support is not available so may also need additional.

We want to encourage community support across all of Highland, especially to help people who may be most vulnerable, and those who are most isolated. It is also important that volunteers and community groups manage their own wellbeing and we need to remind those offering help of the need to keep themselves safe too.

Support can come in many forms from practical activities to providing reassurance and valuable contacts. This could include:

Distribution of food and supplies

- Identifying local needs for supplies of food and other essential items for vulnerable/self-isolating people.
- Collecting and delivering shopping. It is recommended that deliveries are left on the doorstep or a safe place to avoid close physical contact. Supplies should be carefully handled to avoid spreading the virus.
- Passing on information about local shopping options.
- Collecting and delivering prescriptions – if you pick up medicines for someone else you will need to give the name, address and postcode of the patient to the pharmacist when you pick up their medicines.

Providing Information

- Promote your local community support group or consider setting one up if there is nothing already in your area. There are links to guidance on how to do this in the next section. Many are setting up local Facebook pages where people can register and offer help or local information, or where people can ask for help. You can contact the Highland Third Sector Interface to see if there is already a group operating in your area: E: info@highlandtsi.org.uk
- Create leaflets or flyers to let people know about your local group. Avoid face-to-face contact and knocking on doors and consider hygiene when preparing leaflets.
- Provide contact information (phone number, email, Facebook page) for local vulnerable people to contact if they need support.
- Signpost people to appropriate sources of help if needed. Prepare a list of key contact such as NHS Council and third sector groups.

Providing reassurance and emotional support

Local community groups and volunteers can help reduce the risk of loneliness, social isolation and isolation. Here are just a few ideas:

- Phone, text or email people to have a chat and check they are OK. Or use social media – FaceTime, Skype, etc. You can avoid physical contact but offering to make regular contact with someone who can't get out can make all the difference. 'Buddy befriending' by phone is one suggestion.
- Providing a local social hub/platform – as above, this could be virtual activity.
- Reassuring people with accurate and up to date advice and information; and be prepared to signpost people to other sources of help if needed.
- Offer to care for pets.
- Encouraging people who are vulnerable/self-isolating to ask for help.
- Encouraging group members to support and contact each – remember to ask for permission to share contact details.
- Gather and deliver (note earlier advice about hygiene and safe handling practices) books and magazines or materials to support hobbies and craft.
- Recommend films to watch and books to read.

Section 3: Materials and other guidance

The following outlines a range of materials, guidance and examples of community activity which may be of assistance to your group.

Websites providing guidance

The following websites can provide further detail for local community groups to consider. This includes:

- information for new groups – how to set up
- information on how you can support locally

Covid-19 Mutual Aid - Independent guidance for groups setting up is available here:

<https://covidmutualaid.org/resources/>

This will help you:

- Consider how to set up your group
- How you can support
- How you could contact people

UK Government Emergency Volunteer Guidance - You can find UK Government guidance for emergency responders to assist in the planning, coordination and management of spontaneous offers of support from the public during an emergency.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-the-coordination-of-spontaneous-volunteers>

SCVO - The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations has a range of material available at: <https://scvo.org/support/covid-19/resources>

This provides information on:

- Organisations who have materials which may be of use to community groups
- Information for third sector organisations

Example of a local website coordinating volunteering

The following provides an example of a local group who have set up their own website to co-ordinate support:

- <https://acorntheunion.org.uk/corona/>

Examples of local Facebook sites

The following provides examples of local groups who have set up their own Facebook pages to co-ordinate support. These are some examples of what people are doing:

- [Acts of Kindness Inverness and the Highland Facebook group](#)
- [Applecross Coronavirus Community Support](#)
- [Ballachulish Facebook group](#)
- [Kinlochleven Resilience and Support](#)

- [Nairn Task Force](#)
- [South Kessock Residents Association](#)

Identifying who needs support

There are a range of materials that different groups are using within their community to help identify who needs support.

1. **Support card** for people self- isolating to be distributed door-to-door

<https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-cms/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HelpYourNeighbourThroughCoronavirus.pdf>

Hello!

If you are self-isolating just now...

My name is

I live locally at

My phone number is

If you are self-isolating just now due to Coronavirus I can help with:

- Picking up urgent supplies / prescriptions
- Picking up urgent shopping
- A friendly phone call
- Posting mail or dog walking

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep.



Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

2. Ballachulish Materials

Ballachulish Community Council and the local Ballachulish community have developed an information pack and red/green flag system to identify if people need assistance.

Volunteers can help with grocery/leaflet deliveries, distributing prescriptions, making meals, communicating with those not online, dog walking or patrolling the red or green flag system in the area to check for changes.

Their information pack and materials are circulated along with this guidance.

General advice and information on COVID-19 can be found at:

- Highland Council <https://www.highland.gov.uk/coronavirus>

- Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- UK Government [Social Distancing Advice](#)

Health specific advice should be accessed at:

- NHS <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

Section 4: Advice and guidance for individuals and businesses

The following is to assist you to direct individuals to the appropriate direct support for welfare or advice queries.

Highland Council Welfare Support Team

Contact the **Welfare Support Team**. Telephone: 0800 090 1004 or email: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

Highland Citizen Advice Bureaux

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| <p>Caithness Citizens Advice Bureaux 1A Beach Court, Thurso KW14 8AD Phone: 01847 894243</p> | <p>East Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureaux Station Road, Golspie KW10 6SN Phone: 01408 633000</p> |
| <p>Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux 29-31 Union Street, Inverness IV1 1QA Phone: 0808 800 9060 (Advice) Phone: 01463 237664 (Reception)</p> | <p>Lochaber Citizens Advice Bureaux Dudley Road, Lochaber, Fort William PH33 6JB Phone: 01397 705311</p> |
| <p>Nairn Citizens Advice Bureaux 6 High Street, Nairn IV12 4BJ Phone: 01667 456677</p> | <p>North and West Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureaux The Harbour, Kinlochbervie IV27 4RR Phone: 01971 521730</p> |
| <p>Ross & Cromarty Citizens Advice Bureaux Suie House, Market Square, Alness IV17 0UD Phone: 01349 883333</p> | <p>Skye and Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureaux The Green, Portree IV51 9BT Phone: 01478 612032</p> |

Support for businesses paying tax

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's

Time To Pay service. These arrangements are agreed on a case-by-case basis and are tailored to individual circumstances and liabilities.

If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax due to COVID-19, call HMRC's dedicated helpline on 0800 0159 559.

A helpline for Scottish businesses to answer Coronavirus (COVID-19) questions is available on - 0300 303 0660. Opening hours are: Monday to Friday, between 8.30am to 5.30pm.

Section 5: What the Council is doing and how you can help

The Council is working hard to ensure that core statutory services continue at this time. This includes services such as bin collection, homeless provision, burials, services for vulnerable adults and services for vulnerable children. Alongside this we are developing our approaches to ensure that individuals within communities are supported through this challenging period.

The Council's role in times like this is to make sure that vulnerable people in our communities have the support they require, specifically in relation to food and welfare.

Community groups will want to provide a range of support locally but you can specifically support the Council to provide the distribution of food, identification of core vulnerable individuals, and safe social engagement and support.

We have asked community groups to let us know if they are operating locally and what local support they are providing. This will help us to understand what groups or potential groups are out there providing support and make this information available to people seeking help or offering support in these areas. This will help us to reduce duplication and maximise impact.

For any groups wishing to provide support, we would appreciate it if you could let us know by emailing policy6@highland.gov.uk

The Council is also in the process of establishing a community helpline to capture requests for support and also provide a social contact point for those who are isolated. We will circulate these details as soon as they become available.
