



# COVID-19

## RURAL COMMUNITIES

## PULLING TOGETHER



Case Studies from across Rural  
England of how rural communities have  
worked together during lockdown

## **RURAL COMMUNITIES PULLING TOGETHER**

**This booklet details the Case Studies that were provided to the Rural Services Network during the lockdown period of Covid-19 (2020).**

Organisations were encouraged to respond to three questions:

- What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?
- What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?
- Any other comments?

Not all respondents answered all the questions, detailed in this booklet are the answers provided by organisations.

Some answers have been edited or amended for reasons of Data Protection and to comply with our constitution.

**Councillor Cecilia Motley, the Chair of the Rural Services Network said:**

**‘It is heartwarming to see how our rural communities have come together to support their most vulnerable residents in this difficult time. However, our communities raise a number of important issues which need attention and support from Government. Our rural communities should not be left behind.’**

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## EAST MIDLANDS REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** East Drayton Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

In this small village of fewer than 300 inhabitants, we have a team of 10 volunteers collecting prescriptions, shopping, making phone calls to and for vulnerable residents.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Glenfield Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Community Hub, and Glenfield itself has its own Community Support Group.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Lubbesthorpe Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a dedicated e-mail address that residents can contact to ask for assistance .

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**Parish / Local Group:** Eckington Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Emergency Shopping scheme for self isolated. Weekly donation drop off centre for food and supplies to help people in need.

**Any other comments?**

We are working closely with the county and district councils.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Beeley Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Parish Council has become the communication hub and supporting linking volunteers with those in need. The biggest parish has been split into zones with zone coordinators to support.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Things seem to have been slow at being joined up. The County Council were slow to get their response unit up and running and there has been little reaching out to the Parish Council level. Instead they have just blanket requested for volunteers. This can cause confusion at the lowest level.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Alford Town Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are providing a delivery service for medication and if necessary food to residents of Alford and the surrounding villages, manned by volunteers. We also have a team set up to deal with pastoral care who are available to chat to people who are feeling isolated. We have also worked with local groups such as the Silver Band, Football club and craft centre to encourage them to use social media to interact with members and non-members to provide ideas and activities for people to do at home. We have a website, facebook page and helpline set up and work in partnership with the local food bank, shops, doctors surgery and chemist, also with the District Council and Lincolnshire Resilience Forum. Our registered group name is Chester and George Care and Share Group on Facebook which was set up by a local business women.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Anderby Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have 10 members of avert (Anderby Volunteer and Emergency Response Team) who are looking after the vulnerable people in the 2 villages and also volunteers in both villages who get shopping and medical supplies for the residents. We also we have a local shop in Anderby Creek.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are getting on fine thanks in both villages.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Mablethorpe & Sutton Town Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Local call centre - assistance with general day to day tasks (shopping, dog walking, small gardening jobs, pet 'fostering' (for those taken into hospital) telephone befriending service, help with benefits etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Nomix Enviro Ltd

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Our rural village committee have created a shopping list that the elderly or people who need to self-isolate can use within our area on a weekly basis. Their shopping is then delivered to their door by a member of the committee.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

I think that East Lindsey District Council should re-open the weekly food markets, as they are still open in other areas and are of great importance to the community.

**Any other comments?**

It would be of great advantage if all the recycling centres could re-open but comply with the social distancing rules. This would reduce the major problem of fly-tipping that is currently happening everywhere.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Spilsby Town Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Set up an Emergency Team with volunteers who do shopping, collect prescriptions or just make a phone call. There are two food banks run by two different churches who are working together. There is also a phone call service run in conjunction with the surgery. The Good Neighbours Scheme is also in the group helping in the wider area. We have been working with the CO-OP regarding shopping, vouchers and an ID card.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are already working closely with Lincolnshire County Council Resilient Communities Team. I don't think there is a national initiative that could do any more than we already are.

**Any other comments?**

The Team was set up very early, before lockdown, and volunteers came forward, in fact too many and we have a list of people willing to help who have not been allocated. There hasn't been a great demand but we do not know who are helping their neighbours who are not part of our team.

**Parish / Local Group:** Welton-Le-Marsh Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Weekly newsletter (electronic and hard copy) Resilience Pack delivered to every home which includes: hand sanitiser, locally produced face mask, laminated emergency contacts list with fridge magnet, surgical gloves medium and large. Sewing group to sew scrubs and facemasks Volunteer group to shop and collect prescriptions for others Weekly Saturday night online quiz

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Continued improvement to Internet strength

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**Parish / Local Group:** The Mighty Creatives

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are providing the following initiatives for the cultural sector, children and young people and schools: <https://themightycreatives.com/youth-cultural-life-fund-2020/>  
<https://themightycreatives.com/the-mighty-creatives-sector-support-commissions/>  
<https://themightycreatives.com/welcome-to-tmcs-mighty-hub-of-creativity/>

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are part of a national initiative with Arts Council England and End Child Poverty to provide physical arts resources ('Arts Drops') for children and young people - especially for those who are most excluded.

**Any other comments?**

We would welcome the opportunity to connect with isolated rural communities across the East Midlands.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Collyweston Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Councillors and Ex-Councillors acting as volunteers where they can. The Community Village Shop has volunteers who have kept the essential both in the premises, and doing deliveries for those who cannot go out.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Nothing that I can think of, as information has been easy to get to the public by media, etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Cotesbach Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Set up local volunteer group to help with elderly and vulnerable to collect shopping, prescriptions etc

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**Parish / Local Group:** Lutterworth Town Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Tri-organisation of Lutterworth Town Council, Lutterworth Church & Age Concern Lutterworth with the twin aim of attracting volunteers, but more importantly setting up an 'help' scheme for aged, lonely and vulnerable within our community.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Greater devolvement of government monies to Town & Parish councils to provide local help and initiatives

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**Parish / Local Group:** Elohim Christian Church

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

ECC Barlestone with Churches together, with the support of Barlestone Parish Council has launched "Love Your Neighbour" which is a Scheme to support elderly, vulnerable, shielding, single parent families and isolated villagers during COVID 19 crisis. We are helping with food shopping, prescription collection and delivery. We have a staffed help line and are available to chat to anyone who phones in, providing a friendly listening service. We can also arrange a regular phone call to those without other support networks. There is an emergency food bank on site and we are able to signpost to other agencies. A list has been compiled of local suppliers who will deliver fresh goods. In response to locally identified need we have enlisted local teaching staff to put together Key Stage 1 and 2 craft packs which we print and deliver to 91 children to help parents and children engage with fun and educational activities. 1200 leaflets were printed and delivered to houses in the area, plus information and up dates are posted on the community website. There are 25 willing and hard working volunteers, who are provided with masks, gloves and hand sanitiser, along with instructions on social distancing compliance and safe deliveries. We are keeping a log of calls, needs and volunteer response.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Generally the local community is best placed to be able to respond swiftly to local needs, Support with small grant funding has been invaluable from our local County Council. Our Parish Council and

Borough Councillor helped us with information on funding. A help line for organisations to be able to contact with queries as they arise would be very useful...although we are fortunate to have a Next Gen coordinator at the Borough Council who has helped us. Other schemes in the area have been useful connections and helped with shared experiences.

**Any other comments?**

It is encouraging to see communities come together to respond to local needs. Sustainability of these local programmes would be a good starting point for the basis of future initiatives.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Benniworth Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Village divided into sectors and sector co-ordinators appointed. Entire population letter dropped to allow vulnerable residents to identify themselves. As a result we are supporting 8 residents with assistance with shopping, medical items and all necessities. Communications between residents and co-ordinators via WhatsApp group also providing pet care and grass cutting etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Hundleby covid-19 Community Support

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a community volunteer team, who have leaflet dropped our entire village. These include details on how to contact them in case of need etc.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Some guidance on how to keep our volunteers safe. Guidance on how to help someone who has covid-19. Lots of our elderly do not have internet or mobile phones and they are not aware of online ordering etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Wrawby Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The council has given appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses to the publishers of the village magazine which is delivered to every Wrawby household. These numbers and addresses can be contacted at any time by any village resident who needs assistance.

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**Parish / Local Group:** YMCA Lincolnshire

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund's Ageing Better Programme, the TED in East Lindsey Programme was established in 2015 to bring together diverse people in the district aged 50 and over. Our services include Friendship Groups, a number of innovative activities delivered by partners, and the promotion of mindful businesses through our Age Friendly Business Award.

At TED in East Lindsey we realise COVID 19 and the requirements to self-distance can impact greatly on our rural and coastal communities. In meeting these challenges the team, its partners and stakeholders have continued to work together, adapting services to meet the needs of their local communities and prevent social isolation and loneliness.

We have seen aspects of ConnecTED, our offer to communities during this time, extend beyond the East Lindsey District to the whole of Lincolnshire. ConnecTED currently offers:

- A phone befriending service (extended to the county of Lincolnshire)
- Signposting to other agencies
- Emailed fortnightly packs featuring news, reviews, quizzes, short stories, and recipes
- A dedicated YouTube channel with video features on themes such as exercise, healthy eating and working with technology
- 'How to' guides posted on the TED in East Lindsey website (including information on digital devices)
- Campaigns that include the KnitTED Together campaign where people can share pictures of creative knitting and experiences via social media

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**Parish / Local Group:** Clawson

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Clawson Kindness - to support the elderly, isolated, self-isolating and shielding in Long Clawson with contact, delivery and advice. In addition, to encourage community activity and cohesion.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Apethorpe Village Meeting

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have identified our vulnerable residents. We asked for volunteers and have set up a WhatsApp group for the volunteers so that requests for essential supplies can be communicated to the network. Those in need of support have been assigned volunteers to help them.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

A better linkup between national and local initiatives. We have received information from County Authorities some of which appears more suited to advertising and for a youthful audience. Rural communities are faced with different challenges to urban areas.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Preston Village meeting

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Communications delivered to every house and local support for medicine collection, food shopping etc. Village social media has been used to deliver regular updates on latest news. We have identified local 'vulnerable' people to make sure they are well supported.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better access to food shopping arrangements - queues to get into local Tescos etc are excessive.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Tixover Parish Meeting

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a small volunteer group aiming at assisting anyone in need within the Parish. Shopping, Medicine Collections and Dog Walking are on offer though, so far, only the Meds Collection is being taken up in any numbers.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Clarity required between the roles of the many NHS Volunteers recruited by government and that of the independently organised neighbourhood groups driven by local Parishes etc.

**Any other comments?**

Would be very helpful to get access to the list of extremely vulnerable people in the area so we can be sure to target them.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Hartshorne Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Set up Hartshorne Helpers who made over 18000 visors for various organisations in the area including hospitals, medical centres and the local vets. Donating nightwear for people in hospital. Provided regular shopping for approx 50 residents. Delivering prescriptions in the area. VE Day

provided 'picnic' packs for 42 residents who live alone. The local pub opened in the morning and afternoon for 1 hour providing essential items of food. Our Chairman has been our main litter picker on the 3 recreation ground plus many residents ensuring the pavements are kept clean.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Pinchbeck Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Pinchbeck Parish Council are the tenants of Pinchbeck Community Hub & Library. The Parish Clerk requested permission from the Parish Council, to use the 6 room building as a base for provision of storing and allocating fruit/veg and care packages to the elderly/vulnerable and those in self-isolation with no immediate family nearby to help out. A group of 12 like minded people became the core committee of "Spalding & Pinchbeck COVID Kindness Team" with over 165 volunteers onboard who helped by delivering food parcels, fruit and veg, carrying out shopping for those in the area, the collection/delivery of prescriptions/medication. There was also a Wellbeing helpline for those who just needed someone to talk and to help them through the lockdown period. The committee contacted many fruit and veg suppliers, sought funding, had many food and monetary donations from local business and individuals. The volunteers turned the building into a packhouse, deliveries of fruit and veg were delivered to front of building and cars then came to the rear of building (all volunteers) and then they were loaded up. Care Packages were delivered on a weekly basis, to those known to be particularly vulnerable. Care packages were mainly delivered to those who had submitted a nomination form and everyone who was nominated received a lovely food parcel.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Making funding available from the very start to enable systems to be put in place immediately. Almost like an emergency fund which was easily available. I am sure that if this was to happen again, the same committee would come back and just continue the good work they did during this lockdown.

**Any other comments?**

We are still continuing to supply those in need but we are stream-lining our services a little, as we now know of other government agencies that some people can now be sign-posted to. In the early days, it was all hands on deck, with no absolute clear plan in place but over the period of time, the team has achieved good systems and everyone knows what part they are playing. I personally am the Finance/Funding Officer of the group but still become involved with deliveries and operations. We have had one clear leader of the group who has directed the whole team and that has worked commendably. It has been and still is a wonderful journey.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Fulbeck Parish Resilience Forum

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have delivered flyers to every household in the Parish (approx 220), this gives a main contact number and offers a variety of services including dog walking, shopping, prescription collection or just a chat. Where we have identified the greatest need we have allocated a volunteer (usually from the persons own street) to provide a one to one volunteer service. Information also goes out on our

village Facebook group which has 581 members, in our monthly village newsletter and also on village notice boards. Myself and the group deputy have been co-opted onto the Parish Council in order to deal with sensitive information and communicate directly with the Local and County Councils and also with the County Resilience Forum. This is because all members of the Parish Council are self-isolating so felt unable to assist in their full capacity. We also have indemnity insurance under the Parish and County Council. In the early stages we sent out a request on the village facebook page and also had direct offers of help following the flyer drop - we now have 40 volunteers covering all parts of the Parish. These volunteers have continued to work directly with their immediate neighbours to ensure that they have the support that they need. In addition, we have worked with our local health centre and now have a centralised prescription collection and delivery service in place for all residents. My partner collects these on a daily basis and delivers them across the parish.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We have proved to be a very resilient and resourceful group who have coped well as a community and have not encountered any difficulties. However, there are too many bodies at a higher level requesting details constantly, particularly with regards indemnity insurance, health and safety assurances, GDPR assurances, diversity assurances etc. There should be one body for us to have to deal with at a local level that then feeds information up through other bodies as necessary to COBRA as it is this work that has proved to be the most time consuming and, at times, frustrating element of the co-ordination effort. This local body (perhaps the district council) should coordinate the volunteer response to ensure there is local continuity, centralised printing capability, greater usability of the addresses in the parish and that each parish works in a co-ordinated manner.

**Any other comments?**

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**Parish / Local Group:** Roade Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have volunteers available to do food shopping, deliver medication, post letters, speak to someone over the phone, walk dogs and do gardening.

**Any other comments?**

We have a lot of volunteers and NCC are also putting together voluntary groups to help.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Sturton Ward Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Sturton Ward in Bassetlaw, North Nottinghamshire, is a predominantly rural area served by the three Parish Councils of Sturton Le Steeple, North Leverton with Hablesthorpe, and North and South Wheatley. The area comprises c.1,000 households and 2,500 residents, of which around 20% are aged 65+. The area is served by two shops, a GP surgery, three schools, three churches and two village halls. Due to limited public transport and the necessity for many residents to self-isolate, access to essential supplies from our nearest towns is limited. All three villages have small areas of social housing where resident need is significant. Clay Responders 2020, a subsidiary of three

## Rural Services Network – Rural Communities Pulling Together

parish councils of Sturton Ward, North Nottinghamshire, exists to provide emotional and practical support to all Ward residents during the coronavirus epidemic. Clay Responders are split into small teams of 2 to 3 people, offering support across 40 zones covering the whole Ward, with each zone comprising 10-45 houses.

Each team is responsible for:

1. Assisting vulnerable/self-isolating residents to access food, medicines and other services;
2. Befriending residents who feel lonely/isolated by phone.

Each village within the Ward has a dedicated phone number and WhatsApp group for addressing escalating resident needs.

In addition to the above, funding from Notts CC has been used to support the following streams of activity:

1. Establishing a petty cash fund, administered by the Ward's Parish Councils, enabling volunteers to purchase provisions for vulnerable residents who may not have access to cash or online payment methods whilst self-isolating;
2. Running a local food bank for the ward, following the closure of Bassetlaw Food Bank in Retford;
3. Printing information leaflets, distributed by volunteers, to ensure residents are made aware of support available to them during the pandemic;
4. Safely sharing books, games, resources etc. with self-isolated residents in particular, to encourage and promote mental well-being.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Actually the localised / neighbour led help seems to be quicker and more effective at getting the right help to those who need it on the ground

**Parish / Local Group:** Bardney Group Parish Council

**Region:** East Midlands

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Parish Council has joined with the local Churches and Co-op to create a Food bank and deliver food parcels to the vulnerable. The Parish Council have also finished creating a woodland walk and community walk which provides further outdoor space for residents to utilise. The parish council are also offering financial support to village schemes, one of which make scrubs for the local hospital and another is making food for the hospital, ambulance and fire brigade.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better communication regarding Cemeteries and burials. Information has been quite piecemeal and the Church of England have provided more information than the Govt.

### **Any other comments?**

Our concerns now extend to the possible introduction of NHSX especially as the phone signal in our area is quite bad in parts. We also have privacy and data storage concerns over NHSX. Another issue relates to the NHS vulnerable letters as quite a few people who have complex health issues have not received the letter. There is a resident in our community who is blind and has not received the letter and therefore is struggling to access services. Further to this, teenagers are being advised that University Applications etc's will ask 'what did you do during lockdown?'. As a rural village,

opportunities are very limited for grand volunteering gestures and schools are sending a large amount of work for home schooling. Therefore rural children will be disadvantaged when it comes to applying.

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## EAST OF ENGLAND REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** Bentley Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Voluntary network of supporters of vulnerable people in the Parish. Virtual networking of Parish Council.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

It would be useful to know that Farmers are being supported.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Saham Toney Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a team of volunteers to shop and collect prescriptions for parishioners. This is being co-ordinated by myself and the Chairman. All households in the parish were sent a leaflet with information about coronavirus and where to get help.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are managing at the moment with parish help.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Foxton Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

In conjunction with the local pub and our exceptional Neighbourhood Watch lead, a HELP AT HOME initiative has been launched. Each of the 5 streets in the village has a designated contact - and each contact has available to them a pool of help. Each household in the village has had a HELP AT

HOME flyer delivered and each strategic position in the village carries the same detail as a poster. The practical upshot of this is that any resident is only a call away from a collection, a delivery, a prescription pick up or just a good old fashioned chat. Further, we have pushed the service out to the family and friends of loved ones in the village enabling them to check in (via social media) on people for whom they have a concern. A significant amount of space has been given to the scheme digitally

A specific group on Facebook was also established as a place for people to share news and ask about loved ones in isolation in the village. The group grew to over 150 individuals in the village (and also from people with elderly loved ones in the village) within 24 hours of establishment. Further, I have watched the number of 'hits' on our website leap by 2,000 since we made the commitment to digitally connect the village via website, social media and phone. Deliveries have been made to homes, the pub has converted to running a food box scheme (fruit & veg and 'treats' like chocolate - very important in times of lockdown!). The offers of help have been wide ranging, heartfelt and valuable. What has struck me most about these initiatives is how the community was able to rapidly mobilise around delivering this service, which is now an established part of the community activity. We must thank Sam Smith, our village NHW leader, for his contribution on this and the rapid commitment of a 'core' team of people who have stepped forward to help. It is a true community effort.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We'd like rural bus services to collect and deliver produce - and a nation wide parish council digital platform to share and help each other (ie a national website platform which we can all connect in to) and push messages out to the communities we serve.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Sutton Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Sutton Time Bank, Sutton Helping Hands.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are now working with the Community Hubs.

### **Any other comments?**

It is difficult for those 'shielded' residents to get delivery slots from the local supermarkets.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Toseland Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Team of volunteers organised by the Parish Council to do shopping or fetch medicines for those considered vulnerable.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

At the moment, not really. We are a very tiny village, with 8 people on the potentially vulnerable list, heaps of public footpaths and quite large gardens -even for the tiniest cottages - and no pubs or parks. Social distancing is not a problem here, but it is a deep regret because the Parish Council organises wonderful parties usually attended by over 50% of the residents. In fact, we have agreed that once vaccines are available and the "all-clear" has been sounded, we are going to have one hell of a party!

### **Any other comments?**

I would like to commend the ways in which the large supermarkets in St Neots, Cambs, (our nearest market town) particularly Aldi, Waitrose and Tesco have organised their stores to take account of social distancing while shopping.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Warboys and District Day Centre

**Region:** East of England

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Warboys and District Day Centre is a Charitable organisation providing company, socialisation and support to people over 60 yrs of age who would otherwise be lonely and isolated. While the Centre is closed we are continuing to support our members. One of our members has a live in paid carer, the others all live alone I am making phone calls to our members twice weekly. Our volunteers are also contacting members by phone or where appropriate IT on a regular basis. I am undertaking shopping for two of our members who require help with this. I am also liaising closely with family and carers where appropriate. I undertake visits to members if required within the rules of social distancing. We have the telephone number for our local Social Service representative and can contact her if required, however our aim is to continue to provide support to our 14 members from within the Day Centre Structure. My background is that I am a Retired Mental Health professional and am therefore aware of issues around safeguarding and vulnerability, and am aware of reporting mechanisms should any such issues arise.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are a member of the Fare share scheme but have suspended our deliveries during the lockdown. Having information about what is available should it be required is useful for us as we continue to support our members.

### **Any other comments?**

The main issue for our members is that although they are all elderly they are lively and reasonably active, their main concern is that they are missing the socialisation provided by attending the day centre. Hopefully the plans we have in place are helping them to stay connected and supported by the Day Centre.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Councillor from East Suffolk District Council

**Region:** East of England

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A multi- organisational committee has been set up to coordinate the County's response and make contingency plans

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Communication of the Council's plans and some actual coordination. In the absence of any top down initiative a lot of local effort has gone into setting up volunteer arrangements on an adhoc basis and after a fashion they have made themselves known in their own small areas. Rural Suffolk however has some very scattered and isolated places and there is not yet any leaflet for example telling people what is being done.

**Any other comments?**

The supermarkets are evidently not coping with demand for on-line shopping, and are only prioritising those on the Government's shielding list. This is not enough priority coverage - people who thought they had set up routine arrangements because they had mobility problems now find these disrupted, so the priority needs to extend to all those self- isolating. The Central England Co-op is not pulling its weight in satisfying orders for this group - they need to set up a telephone or online ordering system so that people can shop independently. Other traders have done this but they cannot fill the hole left by the Co- op which has over the years achieved a dominant position in these rural areas ( my two local towns have no other supermarket).

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**Parish / Local Group:** Playford Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Volunteer group for helping with errands for people in isolation.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

If we had a better broadband and Wifi connectivity throughout the parish, it would enable us to achieve remote meetings smoothly.

**Any other comments?**

We've been unable to meet in public or to use the large screen TV in the Village Hall needed for viewing planning applications and enlarging the plans - this puts us at a disadvantage.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Saxmundham Town Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme was set up to support the communities of Saxmundham and Kelsale-cum-Carlton, providing emergency food parcels, collecting/delivering prescriptions and acting as a phone buddy to the lonely and isolated.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Face masks and a plan to end the lock down. I think providing free broadband in all areas is an absolute priority so that everyone can keep connected, regardless of income.

**Any other comments?**

People from different walks of life coming together to help their communities is very heart-warming and hopefully will continue long after this emergency is over.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Mid & North Essex Mind

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Posting out leaflets with information as rural areas has lots of people very isolated with no or very poor internet connection so unable to check for information online.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Super Fast broadband to be fitted urgently or some kind of signal enhancer as internet speed at my home is 1mb if lucky

**Any other comments?**

I have been unable to work from home due to being unable to get sufficient connection. Not able to connect my work phone either at my home address. I'm the only person at work unable to work from home solely due to my rural location and poor internet ser

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**Parish / Local Group:** Colney Heath Support Group

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Colney Heath Community Support Group <https://communitysupportgroup.weebly.com> "Matching people in NEED with someone who can HELP'. The Colney Heath Community Support Group is formed of members of long established and trusted institutions in the area including St Mark's Church, the Twinning Association, the WI, Smallford Residents Association, and the Colney Heath Village Hall. They provide a range of support to their local community.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Alconbury Weston Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Formed a group on Facebook calling for Helpers (over 200 signed up) in the villages of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston and Upton. The Alconbury Weston Parish Council circulated every household (population 800 including 175 over age of 70) with contact details of every Parish Councillor offering help and coordinating a named street helper. Using Nextdoor a group was formed for helpers and those needing help in conjunction with the Help Map feature on Nextdoor.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Locating where those who are Extra Vulnerable live. This data was given to Supermarkets! Why not to Parish Councils?

**Any other comments?**

Use Village Halls with a local Surgery to relieve pressure on hospitals

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bluntisham Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Bluntisham Parish Council have a team of volunteers who are able to help those in isolation with collecting prescriptions, shopping using our local shop, dog walking, etc. This is completely free of charge and all volunteers will have photo ID badges and a unique password for each volunteer and person requiring help.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

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**Parish / Local Group:** Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust (RNT)

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

RNT launched 'Ramsey Area Covid-19 Support' on the 30th March and have already responded to over 175 requests for help and recruited 56 residents as local volunteers. We have liaised with the Town, District and County Councils, as well as Ramsey Foodbank, to offer a coordinated approach. Hunts Forum has worked with HDC to set up a network of Recognised (volunteer-led) Organisations to support local communities through the Covid-19 crisis. RNT, on behalf of Ramsey Area Covid-19 Support, was one of the first organisations to be granted this status. In addition to shopping and prescription collection RNT is a referral agency for Ramsey Foodbank, which is continuing to provide emergency food packages to those who are suffering financial hardship. Ramsey Million has stepped in and are covering the fuel costs for deliveries to those in self-isolation. Ramsey Community Bus Association have granted us use of their bus for this and one of their volunteer drivers is acting as 'temporary delivery driver'. Ramsey Area Covid-19 is working to combat loneliness by keeping in contact with as many people as possible via telephone or social media. People looking for work can still access RNT Job Search advice and support by appointment.

Residents can always keep up to date or message RNT via our designed Facebook page, where you can also read a copy of our weekly Ramsey Timebank Newsletter. It has lots of ideas about keeping the whole family occupied indoors. Our Youth Clubs and SPARKS Club for adults with additional needs have been meeting at their regular times but online via Facebook Live. The Youth Club (BOSH) started to post ideas for keeping occupied like so many other clubs have done. These have been appreciated by families across the Ramsey area, however we also wanted to try to have some continuity for our young people who are used to attending our clubs each Thursday. We decided to try 'going live' at our regular club time - initially just for our BOSH club children who are aged 5 to 10s years. We always make sure it's interactive so that everyone is involved and not just watching us do something. We've had a nature session with quiz, a baking week - where children could follow along

at home, sharing comments while they baked. They also shared photographs afterwards of the cakes they had made, which looked fantastic! Then we had a science themed week making lava lamps. Not only have the children loved BOSH 'live' but their parents have too - whole families are now joining in and setting watch alarms to make sure they don't miss it.

Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust is also responsible for the SPARKS club, which is a social club for adults with learning disabilities. Their club has also continued with video's of follow along activities being posted each Monday evening at the time they would have met. They've enjoyed craft activities and keep fit so far and I'm sure they've enjoyed seeing Lisa their club leader. RNT has also been delivering wellbeing and activity packs. RNT is in regular contact with our town mayor, district and county councillors and have been sharing information. We have a representative that meets, via Zoom, with HDC and Hunts Forum on a weekly basis. RNT has ensured cooperative working but the bulk of the work has been made possible by our staff being able to quickly adjust to the ever changing situation and our funders being willing for us to redirect our grant funding appropriately. We also recruited 56 new volunteers who carry out most of the shopping and deliveries. We only have one large superstore in the town (TESCO) and they have been very helpful enabling us to set up a payment system to allow volunteers to do shopping for those in isolation. Access to cash has been an issue but we have managed to persuade most of the residents we support to use online where possible. Communication has been key. Ensuring residents know what is available locally. We use all forms of social media and flyers.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

To be honest local initiatives work best. The way in which national agencies/govt could support the work on the ground is by giving local groups the finance to carry out what their area needs. I meet regularly, on Zoom, with community workers and the difference in need from area to area is quite significant. What would also be useful is a named person to deal with at local authority level to be able to access advice when needed.

### **Any other comments?**

The national initiatives took so long to get going that they are finding that they are replicating what is already happening locally. We were asked to refer to our district council and we are now having the same people referred back to us by them.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Snettisham PC

**Region:** East of England

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Local volunteer group delivering to vulnerable people and other services. Around 30 members. The group is independent of Parish Council, but is funded by it.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Walpole Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Covid-19 page on the website and magazine which is updated at least 3 times a week. Set up helpline for shopping and prescriptions.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Drinkstone

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Food deliveries, medication deliveries, phone calls to vulnerable/lockdown residents, doorstep chats, networking to make sure no-one is left out.

**Any other comments?**

Our village, Drinkstone, was already a friendly, amazing community to live in. We have merely stepped up our help in the present emergency.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Weybread Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Network of volunteers made up of parish councillors and residents set up by the Parish Council who get shopping and collect prescriptions for elderly and vulnerable people in the parish. They are also on the other end of the phone for a friendly chat.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Give our volunteers priority at shops so we don't have to queue. Some sort of nationally recognised permit or something they can show. An accessible list of support networks we can use to find the right contact for residents of other parishes who contact us having been given our number by ie doctors surgery. A fund we can access to buy shopping for residents running out of cash to repay volunteers. Not all have bank cards they can order online or by phone with and if they can't go out they can't collect their pension.

**Any other comments?**

We are being well supported by SALC, the Suffolk Association of Parish Councils, and Suffolk CC give us regular information. Tiers need to work together and anything you set up needs to coordinate with them as well.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Quidenham Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have 3 volunteers who are helping to co-ordinate assistance within our community. To date this has been seen to be working well.

**Any other comments?**

This seems to be working but of course this may change if the lockdown continues for any length of time.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stand bake deliver, Mulbarton

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

I have been working with local community groups to deliver Friday Friendship cake treat boxes to the vulnerable in my village and surrounding area. Every Friday my son (11) writes a poem to go on the box and we deliver over 100 treats to vulnerable residents, struggling families, isolated single people..anyone who needs a cheer up parcel. We call it Friday friendship. We now have people paying for ingredients, Sainsbury's donated 150 cake boxes..people paying for boxes. It's a lovely way to share some friendship. We have delivered over 750 treats since lockdown.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Yaxham Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a volunteer scheme to provide shopping, prescription and other reasonable errands to assist the vulnerable who are self-isolating in our parish.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We have received a grant from the Norfolk-wide covid-19 Community Response Fund, and this stage do not see a need for national assistance.

**Any other comments?**

We would welcome confirmation that our Village Hall is eligible for Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grant, as our local authority, Breckland, seems unsure.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Mundesley Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a volunteers group called Mundesley Cares and delivered food, prescriptions and information leaflets to residents.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Coton village, Cambridgeshire

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Approximately 1000 residents, semi rural, geographically well defined, low deprivation, shop, pub, school, church, with good existing social networks. We have an email group with 200+ members to offer and ask for help, FB community noticeboard, medicine collections, deliveries from local shop and pub, rainbows in windows, art work in windows. easter bunny delivery to >200 households, follow up of all individuals notified as vulnerably by District Council and a grant to provide a small number of mobile phone and tablets to get more people online.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Agreement that medicines will be dispensed by nearest pharmacy (i.e. the one where a volunteer network is set up).

**Any other comments?**

The key is to ensure universal coverage; that everyone has someone to reach out to. The DC supported this by providing list of vulnerable residents. Easier for us than more urban or more geographically dispersed communities.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Elsworth Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Volunteers to shop and collect prescriptions. Local Morrisons providing doorstep deliveries to residents on the vulnerable list. Parish Clerk co-ordinating

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Direct funding for parishes from central government to enable funds to be available without having to go through the usual legal channels of financial control- e.g. if a small parish does not have the ability to use funds more flexibly because it doesn't qualify for the general power of competence because its members were not all elected, it is very much hampered by how its funds can be used.

**Any other comments?**

Holding parish council meetings remotely is an extremely difficult thing to do for small parish councils. It could be costly too and many councillors would not have access as they do not have the technology required. Also the broadband coverage in our parish is very poor. Mobile phone coverage is virtually non-existent.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Examples from Parishes within Cambridgeshire District Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Bar Hill Covid 19 Support Scheme -set up by four people in the village. CAB Help, Food Bank, Shopping and Prescription collection, befriending and 114 Volunteers to cover each of the village streets. Online: <https://barhill.wixsite.com/covid19support>

Milton Covid-19 Support Group, Waterbeach Mutual Aid, Landbeach Covid-19 Group

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Extra funding.

Grass roots organisations have been more agile and effective. Our village Emergency Plans went out of the window - shouldn't that have been the starting point? If they'd been invoked at an early stage at least those villages that had one would have had a starting point.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Guilden Morden Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Identifying and monitoring vulnerable persons in the village

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**Parish / Local Group:** Haslingfield Parish Village

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Representatives of the Parish Council, Warden Scheme, Community Car share, Luncheon Club, Churches and Church & Village Magazine met virtually through Zoom to discuss and gather information on the safety and wellbeing of the vulnerable and elderly residents of Haslingfield Village.

The group initiative led by Cllr Diana Offord was to set up a group of volunteers to maintain contact with isolated and vulnerable residents

The first step was to communicate to Haslingfield residents that the village would be recruiting volunteers by posting a notice on the village website, the Parish Council and the Haslingfield & Harlton Facebook pages and on the village noticeboards.

At the same time the Village Shops announced that they would offer free shopping deliveries to those residents who were isolating and the Car share Scheme set up an arrangement with the Harston Surgery to collect and deliver regular medication direct to the doors of patients in the Village.

A leaflet was posted through the doors of each house in the village letting them know about the support team and encouraging anyone in need of help to make contact through the dedicated email address or the dedicated mobile phone number.

Very quickly volunteers came forward to offer their help with shopping, calling isolating residents and offering advice and assistance where needed. By the end of March 57 volunteers were registered and five volunteer 'hubs' were created to cover 77 residents in different areas of the village. A WhatsApp

## Rural Services Network – Rural Communities Pulling Together

group has been set up for each 'hub' which has access to the volunteers assigned to that particular hub. Every hub has a co-ordinator who assigns a volunteer to a vulnerable, elderly or isolating resident as they became evident.

Since the start of the support many more villagers have come forward to offer their help and they will provide backup to the volunteers as and when needed.

Currently the Support Team are working with 84 volunteers over 5 hubs which support 159 households of 218 residents.

We are particularly grateful to the two village shops; Village Stores and Country Kitchen who have worked tirelessly to ensure they are both well stocked with food and groceries. Our village Clubs, Societies and Churches are maintaining contact with people and advising the Support Team of anyone who may need help. Everywhere we see people responding with kindness and friendship during these difficult and strange times.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Shudy Camps Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

COVID-19 Website and COVID-19 WhatsApp Help and Chat pages. Recruited a team of Parish Volunteers (55) to offer a range of services to the community. We have issued hard copy resource packs to residents not using the internet.

**Any other comments?**

We have been well supported by SCDC and CCC and other agencies although communications from them have sometimes been a little uncoordinated and over-detailed.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Weston Colville Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A self help group on WhatsApp where people have 2 telephone contacts who they ask for help with shopping, prescription collection etc and then a message is sent out on WhatsApp to get a volunteer to fulfil their need. currently working well with all vulnerable people contacted and getting help where needed.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

None current Cambridgeshire support programs are meeting all our needs.

**Any other comments?**

All at risk people have been contacted in the village and have had their requirements met plus help in sourcing food and medicine has been given to those self isolating.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Cottenham Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are a large parish of around 6,000 people. We have set up a Support Team (consisting of Parish and District Cllrs, the Clerk and residents) to co-ordinate help in the village. Over 250 people have signed up as volunteers to help with shopping, prescription collections or just a friendly call (also covering basic mental health help utilising our Finance Officer who is a trained mental health nurse). We have broken the village into 14 areas each with their own co-ordinator. Calls come into a central number and requests are farmed out to the relevant co-ordinator who contacts their volunteers. One key element the Team has been able to implement is a safe payment method. To avoid handling cash an online payment platform was set up by repurposing the online entry system for a cancelled village fun run (organised by a local charity) which then enabled residents (or relatives on their behalf) to load money via credit or debit card into a 'kitty' under their name. We, and charities we are working with, have also been successful in applying for emergency funding. This is being used to provide a "helping hand" to individuals or families in immediate need due to a deterioration in their financial circumstances, primarily to provide food and other essentials. Recipients can choose between a Co-Op Gift Voucher or Morrisons Food Delivery box. The scheme is designed to work as a stop-gap rather than providing long-term support.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Clearer national guidelines for Co-op staff on how to manage social distancing (and in smaller supermarkets generally).

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bunwell Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Bunwell & Carleton Rode Coronavirus Support has been set up by three volunteers from the community and has provided brilliant support to anyone requiring help. Dedicated telephone and email contact services have been set up and solutions have been established for the collection of shopping, medical prescriptions and a caring telephone chat if required. Essentially anyone needing help, whatever it is, are asked to call and they will do their best. The local village shop, Bunwell Stores takes telephone orders and delivers to Bunwell and surrounding villages, very often not charging for the delivery. They are also a post office so we are very fortunate. We are also lucky to have a quintessentially English country garage providing fuel and repairs which has been a real lifeline given the number of larger garage temporary closures. Finally it was suggested we should open a book and DVD loan store in our lovely restored telephone box. Shelves were installed and stocks were also placed in the church porch. Credit also must go to the farmers who locally are pulling out the stops to ensure no shortages going forward. It's right to say that everything is being done by the community including County, District and Parish councils to ensure help is provided where there is a need and looking to the future and better times.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

This dreadful virus has shown the urgent need to deliver 100% fibre optic broadband coverage to the nation, as soon as possible. County Broadband are looking to also support Bunwell and it is hoped that before too long the BT and CB services overcome issues in some remote locations where coverage is lacking.

**Any other comments?**

Overall we have been very fortunate to be supported by caring, fast response services from County and District Councils with regular updates on support services available including Government, financial and direct personal and family help.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Redenhall with Harleston Town Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

<https://www.harlestons-kindness.org/>

By the 21st March almost every street in town had received a volunteer card with the number of a volunteer to call should the recipient need any help. This was achieved with a town map to ensure that all streets were covered and that no one in the community was missed out. The list of volunteers was growing daily and as well as practical help a Chat list was set up for people to call or text to have someone to talk to in the event that they were unable to go out or simply needed to talk through any worries they may have. The volunteers came into their own, with a chat group set up to ensure that requests from South Norfolk District Council for prescriptions etc. came through and were dealt with swiftly, with a link between SNDC and the group and nothing slipped through the net. Shopping for those who were shielded or isolating, and making calls to those who were alone or not online, keeping the links alive. Harleston Town Council have also had a key role, co-ordinating various donations and keeping the accounts, giving guidelines to Volunteers and providing Lanyards so that they could be easily recognised in the town, and, most important getting supplies of PPE to our volunteers to keep both them and the people they are helping safe. Various members of the Town Council have been working tirelessly in the background to help keep the wheels in motion and the local Foodbank was also involved. This was joined up community working at its best. Anyone who needed more specialist help was passed on initially to SNDC and followed up to make sure all was well. Harleston's army of volunteers will continue to support the people of this town in any way they can both now during these unprecedented times and afterward. We are a town united.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Wacton Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Wacton Resilience group has been set up to assist parishioners in helping access vital resources.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Funding Institutes to allow us to access funding for getting information out to Parishioners

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**Parish / Local Group:** Charsfield Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We initially sent a letter through the Parish Magazine saying we were setting up a database of volunteers and asking for volunteers as well as asking if anyone needed help. There is also information on the Village website.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are a small rural village so I am unsure. I would like to say better bus services but the one we have is not used enough, but it doesn't actually go to the right places.

**Any other comments?**

It was interesting to discover there was already little groups of people already helping friends and neighbours and therefore our database was not really needed. The main request we had was for delivery of prescriptions and this was made easier by one of our volunteers working at the dispensary.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Euston Village Group

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Our village group offers the following help to local residents: \* Shopping, \* Collecting prescriptions, \* Communicating with family and friends, \* Back up if a current helper is unavailable, \* Regular chats.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better broadband for all. Less duplication of requests from statutory bodies, we are all volunteers and do not have time to spend on admin type duties.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Kettleburgh Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Regular emails and updates of the Kettleburgh website to keep residents informed of all aspects of help available including details of assistance available, details of local businesses providing take-aways or food, entertainment available on the web and the regular bulletins from SCC and other sources.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Get BT to improve the broadband available. Most of the entertainment available is via broadband and the speeds are variable and dropping. Streaming sometimes is impossible.

**Any other comments?**

The UK needs to draw up a list of what we need 'next time' and make sure that it is available before 'next time'.

**Parish / Local Group:** Lakenheath Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

LAKENHEATH CORONAVIRUS ACTION Jointly supported by Lakenheath Parish Council, District and County Councillors, Lakenheath Good Neighbours, Emergency Resilience Committee and other Community Groups. Supporting those that are in self-isolation or cannot get out, picking up shopping or prescriptions and also making telephone calls to those in the area.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

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**Parish / Local Group:** Saffron Walden Town Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Our Town Council is supporting the Uttlesford-wide Community Response, rather than duplicating effort by setting up our own initiatives. We felt that this course of action would be the least confusing to residents (rather than there being two new contact numbers and overlapping services). We have put all our staff and vehicles on standby to help at any time - for example to help deliver prescriptions etc. We have also assisted the Foodbank by supplying staff and vehicles/drivers.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Anything that would help the Uttlesford Community Response Team.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a Covid 19 response group who assist residents with regards to shopping, prescriptions etc. Working with the church, they are trying to ensure that nobody is missed. They are liaising with the school, local youth project and also the groups available through the district and county councils. Contact has been made with the local food bank to ensure provision is available to users who do not have access to transport to collect at the moment. A group is being organised to assist in providing non-medical face masks for residents if these become needed or are wanted. The church arranges to contact their congregation, by phone, if required to provide a friendly voice.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Possibly a national telephone number which people can ring to get a their local groups number. If it was centralised the government and press have more chance of getting the number known than locally as they would have wider access on the TV or in newspapers etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Clare Baptist Church

**Region:** East of England

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Community response led by Town Council in partnership with this church and a local community support group. Setting up volunteer helpers with co-ordinators across the town helping with shopping, collecting medication and offering telephone support to the vulnerable, isolated and lonely.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Access to cash - without banks, internet or telephone banking. Shopping where supermarkets aren't easily accessible.

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## NORTH EAST REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** Hamsterley Village

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are a very small community in the rural west of County Durham. In response to COVID-19 we have set up a Buddy Scheme, which now has 50 volunteers ready to support the elderly or infirm. In addition we have established, with the help of our one pub and with the approval of the local Police, a weekly mini-market, out of doors, which is just sufficient to help older villagers to avoid the need to go shopping in Bishop Auckland, our nearest town. I run the local information service reaching 170+ households almost daily, and other new initiatives include a village Facebook Page, a local Quiz, and for the first time digital distribution of the Parish Magazine.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

This is absolutely the easiest question to answer that you could have asked! We still have quite a number of households who have either very poor broadband connection or, in fact, none at all. There is a fibre-enabled cabinet in the middle of the village but in a very dispersed, rural community the download speeds decline dramatically over distance - so even only half a mile away, the speeds fall from perhaps 60Mbps immediately near the cabinet to as little as 4Mbps. Mobile connection is also extremely variable here.

**Any other comments?**

We also live in an area where many people run small, or very small, businesses. They are disadvantaged by the broadband issues above anyway, but the current restrictions thanks to COVID-19 will now test them to the limit.

**Parish / Local Group:** Ouston Parish Council

**Region:** North East

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Food banks

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**Parish / Local Group:** Satley Parish Council

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Hand delivered letter-drop to every household identifying volunteers from the community who will collect shopping, fuel, medicine, walks dogs or simply telephone the lonely for a chat. Shopping bills underwritten by the Parish Council in the short-term.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Nothing. Rural communities rarely benefit from national initiatives and are self-sufficient.

**Any other comments?**

Better broadband would help. FTTC to the south of Satley village still does not help those communities to the north or west still struggling with old copper-wire connections.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Alnmouth Parish Council

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Informal Support Groups

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**Parish / Local Group:** Beadnell Parish Council

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Linking with the local Development Trust for the local pub to provide and deliver free hot meals to vulnerable people, volunteers carrying out shopping and delivering prescriptions, setting up a cascade network of identified contacts to ring people, stay in touch and see everything is OK.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Would have been better if the national NHS Volunteer system was delegated to local existing Development Trusts etc where these are in place. Locally we had the systems in place and delivering within days while the national scheme was still advertising. However we have done this within existing

limited budgets or on good will. The Trust has had to fundraise and account for donations to pay for the free meals and any transport costs. They did receive a grant from the County Council but no doubt, when this is all over, they will be back to saving money to maintain their core service.

**Any other comments?**

Support for Volunteering has gone out of fashion with the current government. Communities are having to fundraise themselves in order to enable local volunteering. Its about time it was recognised and promoted especially among younger people, The benefits to the community and the country are immense and in rural areas volunteering helps make areas vibrant and attractive places to live.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Choices4Growth (C4G-CIC) Community Based Mental Health Organisation

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

I not aware that there are any initiatives regarding supporting the mental health of the most vulnerable people in Berwick upon Tweed and surrounding areas during Covid-19

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Additional funding to employ more therapeutic counsellors.

**Any other comments?**

Recently we have seen an increase in those reaching out and contacting us, and currently we are unable to offer face to face support but do offer email and telephone services.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Hexham Town Council

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

"Hexham Community Together" set up - please see [www.hexhamtogether.co.uk](http://www.hexhamtogether.co.uk)

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**Parish / Local Group:** Newton on the Moor & Swarland Parish Council

**Region:** North East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Community Support Volunteers

**Any other comments?**

Would have been helpful to have had health and safety, insurance information right at the start.

## NORTH WEST REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** Kettleshulme Parish Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have organised a volunteer group to help our vulnerable residents. The volunteers do shopping, collecting prescriptions, dog walking and general checking the welfare of residents by phone. The village hall is open daily with a large supply of books, magazines and jigsaws to borrow.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Improved internet and mobile phone access.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Pickmere Parish Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Pickmere Community Group, independent from but closely allied with the Parish Council, has set up a local WhatsApp group dedicated to helping those in the local community who are vulnerable and need shopping or other help at this time. The Group has also been making significant contributions to helping NHS and other essential workers carry out their duties more comfortably and effectively.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Charnock Richard Parish Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

I am a member of Charnock Richard Parish Council close to Chorley in Lancashire. We started off by taking out pots of my homemade jam, marmalade etc along with pictures, cards and poems made by two of our, young, councillors children. Residents proudly displayed their Rainbows and other pictures made by the children in their windows. I also left Homemade produce at the front of my house for people to help themselves to. I cooked biscuits, shortbread and fruit pies for those unable to leave their homes as they were caring for others. As I am in my 70's I was unable to deliver any of this but there was no shortage of help from the younger members of the PC. One of the same young councillors then suggested that we sent out boxes of essential food items to the most vulnerable, isolating, or shielding residents. Our very able clerk to the Parish Council set about working out how we could fund this and soon with the help of the Parish Council, village Charities and Trusts everything was in place.

We created a list each from our own knowledge of the community as to where they were most needed and approached a local pub which had set up a market stall in its grounds to help. We are still

delivering and are very aware of the fact that these deliveries not only feed people but also make people very happy that we are thinking of them, that we care. Many had not seen anyone to talk to for weeks, being in quite remote areas of our community. We have also delivered books to those that wanted them and flowers to cheer people up during these strange and unsettling weeks. Most recently we have sourced some ready prepared, chilled, meals, soups and desserts several times per week which we are also delivering. We checked, with environmental health as to the safety of this. We have been out to visit, at a social distance, people whom we have been told about that are very sad, lonely and feeling abandoned right now. All of this has been done with social distancing and safety of our selves and the recipients in mind.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Our local sheltered accommodation needs live in wardens to help support the residents that live there.

### **Any other comments?**

Our bus service is not adequate. We had to fight to keep one at all in very recent years, taking to local radio and press to make ourselves heard. The powers that be seem to think that we should consider ourselves lucky to have 4 buses per day and none on Sundays. Not everyone drives and not everyone can afford a car even if they do when living on a state pension.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Kirkby Stephen Town Council

**Region:** North West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Town Council Staff have been working through their own 'Good Neighbours' Scheme and Cumbria County Council's 'Support Cumbria' to support vulnerable people needing to self-isolate or shield by arranging a rota of volunteers to collect/deliver shopping and prescriptions across Upper Eden. Individually some councillors have worked hard independently to support the fair share initiative and are seeing some increase in demand for food parcels.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

A nationally co-ordinated economic recovery plan supported locally by locally based project officers helping business through the process of opening up after lockdown.

### **Any other comments?**

Greater clarity in messaging within local government and the third sector would be beneficial. The volume of emails received during the covid pandemic has been overwhelming. A reduction in the use of email in local government would be beneficial.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Lazonby Parish Council

**Region:** North West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Volunteers to do shopping, medical appointments, prescriptions, vet visits, dog walking contacting on the phone for comforting.

**Any other comments?**

To get volunteers and people who needed help and were vulnerable. Volunteers did a leaflet drop as mobile phone signals are rubbish as is the internet connection. Many of our elderly do not use social media.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Penrith Town Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The county are leading area multi authority and multi-sector emergency response teams. We meet weekly to monitor issues, projects, actions and to share information and resources. Representatives from towns, villages and parishes who have established informal Covid-19 volunteering groups via Facebook or websites are supported by hubs and local councils who have also set up an emergency response. In Cumbria we had existing structures in place having endured Foot and Mouth and Storm Desmond.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Foodshare possibly

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**Parish / Local Group:** Medlar-with-Wesham Town Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Council has sent up a Community Support System. All households received a letter with contact details for support and a card to be displayed in the window of the household. The card has a green side which indicates thanks everything is Ok and a red side which indicates that support is needed. Over 50 residents have volunteered to help others in the community. Every road has been allocated at least 2 "wardens" who check their area daily. The centre support phone number and email address can be contacted by those needing support and advising that a red card has been seen. The Centre support have also helped local companies contact the food bank. People have been helped by volunteers doing shopping, collecting prescriptions, ringing up for chats or just walking past and interacting at a safe distance. The Community Centre is also being used for extra storage and packing spaces for the local food bank. The Council website is continually being updated with helpful information and contacts.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Early clear guidance Brief useful updates to go on websites.

**Any other comments?**

The Town Council have been very grateful for the community spirit and willingness to volunteer during this crisis.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Calder Vale Village

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Calder Vale is a small village community clustered around a working Cotton Mill (Lappet Manufacturing). The cotton mill manufactures the highest quality Saudi Arabian men's headshaws (shemagh).

When the World Health Organisation declared that there was a pandemic, a group of residents in Calder Vale came together to form a village support group – The Calder Vale Covid-19 Volunteer Support Group. On the 16th March we met in the village hall and agreed that we would provide support for anyone who was vulnerable or over 70 or self-isolating and had no family to support them, then the volunteers, who are also residents, were here to help with shopping and prescription collection and delivery, carrying out Post Office requests, phone support and other tasks such as bins being put out and back and minor gardening chores. Each volunteer was allocated a row of houses or an area to look after, which has now extended to three volunteers in nearby Oakenclough and Reservoir Road and we are also covering Fairsnape and Bleasdale areas.

The now 15 volunteers recognised that local businesses also needed support, so the local newsagent started delivering fresh milk to the doorstep and delivering local Garstang Market produce. The Methodist Chapel held a monthly Lunch Club with a local business “The Lunchbox” delivering a delicious two course meal. As the Lunch had to be suspended due to the Chapel having to be closed and social distancing it was decided that we would continue to support The Lunchbox and ask if the two course lunch could be delivered outside the Chapel each Friday. The lunches are collected by those that have ordered them.

There is even a Saturday fish and chip supper, made by local business, ‘Turners Fish and Chips’. Orders are phoned and paid for then one of the volunteers collects them and delivers for a chippy tea.

Usually in May we host Bluebell Teas for the many visitors who come to walk in the famous Bluebell woods, but of course these have had to be cancelled. Along with a homemade afternoon tea there was bedding/ summer plants on sale. The volunteers have arranged with the supplying plant nursery to supply these for sale to the local community. We hope to be proactive and as a need arises we aim to rise to the occasion and help as much as we can. The volunteers use WhatsApp, a social media platform, to communicate and the help each other as well as the community!

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**Parish / Local Group:** Yealand Redmayne Parish Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A card through everyone's door with phone numbers on if they need anything and a Whatsapp group of people who respond to the needs of the village.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

It would be great if there was something like a mobile shop.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Grimsargh Village Community Association

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Two groups of volunteers set up at the start and delivered notes to all properties giving contact details should anyone need help with shopping, medicines, etc. The Village Hall (run by us) has compiled a list of local businesses providing free local deliveries, or mail-order provisions.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Now, as we are hopefully passing the peak - clear communications and advice to all on how to best prepare for the lifting of restrictions. Not only small businesses, but community groups and community buildings will need guidance on all aspects: appropriate cleansing regimes, clarity on any responsibilities and where the boundaries for that lie. It would be good not to have to make it up as we go along.

**Any other comments?**

In such an unprecedented global crisis, there are some limits to what national government can do to assist at a local level. A great deal of benefit could/should be gained by instead enabling and encouraging those at the local level to be able to act for and within their communities.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Grindleton Parish Council

**Region:** North West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Grindleton Parish Council have set up a volunteer service of over 50 volunteers who are willing and able to do shopping for those in the village who are not able to do this themselves through self isolation. We have a volunteer group who distribute the prescriptions for those who require regular prescriptions. The church have organised a telephone befriending service. The local WI have organised a group to sew scubas for East Lancs Trust. There are also regular village communications on all social media platforms.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

As we are in a rural area, maybe some better guidance regarding footpaths going through farm yards and crossing land where there is livestock. To help both the farmers and the general public understand the boundaries.

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## **SOUTH EAST REGION**

**Parish / Local Group:** Arundel Town Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

St Nicholas' Church have a team of trained pastoral visitors who have been through the official vetting provided by the DBS ("Disclosure and Barring Service") process who are ready and willing to offer support and companionship over the telephone to residents. They also have lots of volunteers who have offered to collect and deliver essential supplies (e.g. food, medication) for those who need help. Arundel Town Council are also working hard to continuously update residents as to the services that local shops and organisations are offering in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. ATC's website has a dedicated Coronavirus Support page which is regularly updated with this information and the Town Council are using the Arundel Community Network email newsletter system to distribute information to residents directly.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Tenterden Town Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Town Council has supported the setting up of a volunteer organisation to help with deliveries, dog walking, phone support etc for the self-isolating. This runs alongside an existing food bank service for those in need and a "meals on wheels" service provided by the local social hub. This organisation normally serves as a meals and social provider for the elderly but the service is now being handled remotely. The council has made cash available to all 3 organisations plus the local surgery and has released the pavilion for surgery usage. Our local county organisation has allocated on-going funding for the social hub

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

A better overall structure to prevent overlap of services at County, borough and local level

**Any other comments?**

Support direct to charities would be useful, particularly as these charities needed to step in to combat the effects of austerity. Our charities have been lucky in that KentCC agreed funding to ensure their survival but it was not assured.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Quainton Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up the Quainton Support Network of 60+ local volunteers to help those self isolating, the elderly and high risk residents to deliver food, medicines and be on the end of a phone for a chat.. More details at: <https://quainton.org.uk/coronavirus-quainton-support>

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

To engage with the NHS Volunteer Responder campaign so we can co-ordinate support to the highly vulnerable effectively.

**Any other comments?**

Ensuring a quick response by our volunteers is vital so it would be useful for us as a parish council to have some dispensation on issues like GDPR and DBS checks in emergency cases.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Whitchurch Town Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A local community group has been set up to help residents with shopping and the collection of prescriptions. The voluntary groups are working together to help residents. They work with surgeries, NHS, Basingstoke Council and other organisations who can provide special help. They have dropped a leaflet into every house with contact details on.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Birdham Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The village shop is taking orders and delivering to vulnerable and other customers in the village, the local butchers are doing the same. The church has set up a "helpinghandshub" where locals can ask for all sorts of help and the parish council has put updates on the web with telephone numbers to access help.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Knowing that there was funding to immediately put in place food supplies as supermarkets run out. Also funds to buy PPE if necessary for volunteers.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Boxgrove Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The local shop has remained open (one person at a time) and takes telephone orders and is delivering them to the three villages in this parish (and a little further afield).

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

60% of the local population are over 65 so it is difficult to find volunteers in this current situation to help others as they are all shielding. CDC and WSCC do have volunteer hubs though.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stopham Parish

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A parish WhatsApp help group. Making scrub bags for St Richards hospital

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stoughton Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Through networking and local contacts every person who is either over 70, living alone or with a known health problem has been contacted by a neighbour. Good neighbour cards have been distributed. Local businesses have set up food delivery services with the help of volunteers and pubs have started providing take away meals.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

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**Parish / Local Group:** Trotton with Chithurst Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Basic food ordering through parish website and (closed) local pub; free meals for sick and essential workers via local wedding venue kitchen; food and garden produce ordering service via parish website and local garden centre; identified vulnerable residents and paired them up with volunteers to do shopping, prescriptions, and other help; recruited volunteers via parish website

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Provide testing to relieve lockdown (especially of local school)

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**Parish / Local Group:** Burwash Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Sent out leaflet to identify both those needing help and those wanting to help. We are now delivering prescriptions to the whole catchment area for our Doctor's Surgery (covers our Parish and part of 2 adjoining), setting up volunteers to maintain phone contact with the vulnerable, transport for the Surgery and any other queries raised. A network of local volunteers set up accessible by email.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Guidance regarding safe phone contact. Better consultation from district and county

### **Any other comments?**

The Parishes were left for the first 2 weeks without any guidance on practical matters - useful forms and instant access to funding. This has occurred at the end of the Financial year, some very small Parishes may not have funds available. At present things are being organised top down instead of working from the bottom to set up an organisation answering local needs. A for instance is delivering food parcels to those who do not need them and social services failing to ask if we have any vulnerable people.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Etchingham Parish Council

**Region:** South East

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Etchingham is a village of 700 electors so quite small but the response from the community to a call for volunteers mounted by two local ladies is exemplary. They were so quick off the mark the Parish Council decided to support them, e.g. by paying for the printing of the leaflets (example below) delivered to every house in the parish by the marvelous local team of postmen rather than 'compete'. It was the right decision as they have gone from strength to strength and because I am on the 'extremely vulnerable list' I would never have been able to do this as a purely Parish Council initiative.

The following is the excerpt from this morning's e-bulletin, a volunteer based community e letter going to over 500 addresses so also includes residents not necessarily of Etchingham but also from the surrounding villages. The four firms are very local and two at least do not normally undertake home deliveries but have stepped up to the mark in this crisis. I think it demonstrates the friendly, caring community spirit we always suspected was there and has been so ably called to action over the past 5-weeks and will keep going as long as it is needed.

Excerpt from Etchingham E Bulletin- 21st April 2020

"Hi all.

A lot of people are struggling with getting food deliveries from supermarkets.

I have had confirmation, these 4 are delivering and have slots.

[www.eggstoapples.co.uk](http://www.eggstoapples.co.uk)

[www.fishtoyourdoor.com](http://www.fishtoyourdoor.com)

[www.follyfarmshop.co.uk](http://www.follyfarmshop.co.uk)

[www.thesussexkitchen.com](http://www.thesussexkitchen.com)

Obviously there is The Bistro doing their gorgeous take away pizzas.

Also, remembering I have a team of volunteers out every day doing shopping at local supermarkets, prescription runs, dog walks etc. Please don't feel worried or ashamed about asking for help when you have to self-isolate for any reason. I had to call on them myself when my son had symptoms. We all want to stop the spread as quickly as possible"

**Parish / Local Group:** Supporting Crowborough

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We've leafleted our town with contact details for the army of volunteers and we're supporting those in need with deliveries of food and medicines while they're trapped at home.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Access to food parcels to save lots of trips to supermarkets. Additional staff at overloaded pharmacies.

**Any other comments?**

Support from local government.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Ripley Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Villagers have set up a Ripley Corona Support Network, offering food and prescription collections to vulnerable members of the community.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Good question! We seem to have community support pretty much in hand, but I'm sure there must be parishes that are struggling.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Olney Town Council, Buckinghamshire

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A Covid support group to provide delivery of essentials to those who are isolating.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

A national fund to support parish and town councils who have had to invest heavily in remote technology to function.

**Any other comments?**

Also the national broadband and mobile phone infrastructure provision needs to be more universally well resourced. There are days when not only can't the Council function, but neither can local farms and businesses.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Woodgreen

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are a small village, approximately 500 residents, with a church, village hall, pub and community shop.

Our shop is run with assistance from volunteers and although we have had to reduce our opening hours we continue to provide this valued service. We are delivering to vulnerable residents 5 days per week with the help of volunteer drivers. We also offer a collection service which allows people to quickly pop in rather than having to spend time shopping.

Our lovely local pub is providing take-away food and beer and is being well supported by the community as we do not wish to lose it.

Our church organised the delivery of a newsletter to all villagers to see who needed help, who can offer help etc., to make sure that those without internet are contacted - sites like Facebook and Nextdoor are great but we do need to be aware that not everyone has internet, or likes to be on social media.

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**Parish / Local Group:** CrabNiton

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The village has formed a working group of volunteers to help and support the community through this crisis. Called 'Community Response and Back up', (CRAB for short), the group will provide local information and services to residents and businesses and help us stay connected. CRAB has been formed with the support of the Niton and Whitwell Parish Council as a response to Covid 19.

The group will work in partnership with the IoW Council, other Parish and Town Councils and voluntary groups on the island to pool resources, services, and information. We will also be producing and distributing leaflets and posters and you can follow us on social media.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Provision of minibuses to all rural hubs/Parish Councils

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**Parish / Local Group:** Freshwater Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

West Wight Coronavirus Support Hub. Partnership of organisations helping people self-isolating to get shopping, prescriptions and talk to someone if they are scared and lonely. See <https://westwight.org.uk/>

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Financial support and recognition of community coming together, and utilising what is already there. Financial support for existing organisations that are adapting to take on this new challenge.

### **Any other comments?**

The West Wight is isolated being on a peninsular, and there are concerns that current infrastructure that has stopped or reduced due to the lockdown will not be reinstated at previous levels. There are also worries about the impact on the rural economy that is dependent on tourism.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Yarmouth Town Council

**Region:** South East

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

West Wight Sports Centre has established a coronavirus help hub for the West Wight area

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**Parish / Local Group:** Hamsey Parish Council

**Region:** South East

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Here in Hamsey Parish we have set up a volunteer service which is dedicated to helping those that are elderly, vulnerable or self isolating to get their shopping, prescriptions, run errands such as dog walking or taking out their bins and also having the availability to chat to someone for reassurance if they are lonely or worried about the impact Covid-19 is having on them. Where possible all of our local businesses such as farm shops and pubs are offering takeaways/ a delivery service of goods to those shielding. We have made sure to leaflet all households twice to ensure no one is left out and they all have access to any help they require. We are regularly updating our community social media page with details on how to get help from various organisations but to also let people know we are here and they are not alone in this situation. We are also liaising with councillors from Lewes District Council and the community hub to provide support.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Advice to non tech savvy residents on how to use the internet. Perhaps once social distancing restrictions have been lifted then a workshop where people could attend to gain some information and knowledge of how to use simple IT skills. Living within our parish we have a lot of elderly residents that do not have the knowledge on how to access the internet. Giving people the tools/ knowledge on how to use the internet will enable them to stay connected to their families especially at times like these when people are feeling very lonely and vulnerable. Although getting shopping deliveries at the moment are few and far between if everyone had access and the knowledge of how to go online then shopping, paying bills and just staying connected to love ones will be of much benefit to our whole community.

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**Parish / Local Group:** East Grinstead Town Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Council led emergency helpline - shopping / prescriptions and errands - emergency advice or referral onward for any query .

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Co-ordination as to the national response, information as to the food parcels delivery.

**Any other comments?**

It would have been nice to have been advised as to the County response which was slow getting off the ground (we had already dealt with most urgent queries and established our response). Charities have closed down with no ready information to help signpost at a local level. it has been difficult at times but we have just ploughed on to help out the most desperate.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Slaugham Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

I am a Councillor within the Slaugham Parish, which is the Parish Council looking after 4 villages within West Sussex (Pease Pottage, Handcross, Warninglid and Slaugham). Each village has different needs and circumstances and each village is looking after its own villagers for food, medicines, etc. with the guidance of our Slaugham Parish Council (SPC). I first moved to a more 'rural' way of life 40 years ago and then, when moving to Pease Pottage (PP), I was amazed to see how our villagers look after one another even though now PP, and all around this area, is being developed (with hundreds and thousands more houses). In fact, our 'rural' way of life here in PP, is really being put to the test with Covid-19, but I am glad to say that, so far, we are winning. Here in PP, we are very lucky to have a Secretary and Volunteers – who all pull together in such a crisis (despite having other commitments such as: working from home, volunteering elsewhere, etc.). Our PP Secretary has also been busy promoting our local businesses where people can get shopping much closer to home. Our Secretary is looking after our PP residents as far as food, friendship, dog walking, etc, are concerned, and (as a Parish Councillor, following a request from our local medical centre to our Slaugham Parish Council), I am working alongside our Secretary with regard to organising delivery of prescriptions via our Volunteers.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

I know there has been mention of Broadband and, when I first retired, it took me a time to get used to the slow speed of the Broadband at home. I have got more used to it now though – although I recently searched for a better service but, in all honesty, I don't know or understand Broadband speeds and am glad I do not work from home; plus I am glad I've got a bit more used to the slowness.

**Any other comments?**

Only that I fear our 'rural' way of life will be lost if we have more and more developments happening around us (which it seems is inevitable).

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**Parish / Local Group:** Cropredy Coronavirus support Network

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

To offer, shopping, pick up prescriptions, walk dogs, offer a daily phone call.

**Any other comments?**

We are lucky we live in a village that has good community links, so far there has not been for our help. Every house in the village received through our village Newsletter contact and what we can offer details. There are numerous posters throughout village with information on.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Under our Emergency Plan, we have set up a system of villagers registering their needs and a team of volunteers to support them. This includes shopping, collecting medicines, transport or simply occasional friendly phone calls to those self-isolating or in social need. Working with local shop, golf club and farm we have arranged essential supply chains in view of the larger supermarkets' shortage of delivery options.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Extend the government's 1.5m 'vulnerable people' classification to rural villages devoid of transport.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Brightling Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Two councillors taken the role as points of contact that can be telephoned if vulnerable residents require any help. A list of approximately a dozen residents living on their own was identified and they were called individually .

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**Parish / Local Group:** Chalgrove Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Chalgrove PC, many week ago, leafleted all 1150 homes asking those in need to contact me directly. Once their need had been assessed they were allocated a volunteer from our database of approx.

100 residents who were sought via our Facebook page to assist those in need. We currently help with shopping, food parcels, prescriptions, dog walking, phone buddies, accurate advice and guidance, and others.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We appear to be ok at present, and haven't required national assistance at this stage.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Goring Heath Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Goring Heath Volunteers

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

An Older persons network

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stoke Row Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Volunteer group who are prepared to collect prescriptions, carry out shopping, make a telephone call, deliver take aways from the cafe and pub selling food. One pub and the cafe/village shop are open selling food and some provisions. This has proved to be a vital link connection for villagers.

**Any other comments?**

The group of volunteers is self sufficient, we thought about applying for a grant but it became clear there was nothing we needed to buy.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Watlington Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a network of volunteers doing shopping/delivering medication. We have a network of coordinators who know who lives in their street. We have set up a telephone helpline and provided volunteers to deliver medical equipment for the local surgery.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Ashley Parish Meeting

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

As we are a Parish Meeting, we are small - our Parish covers the rural community and hamlet of Ashley. All our residents (bar one) are on email. Before lockdown was confirmed, all residents were contacted and it was established that if anyone needed any help with shopping/prescriptions/dog walking etc to get in touch. We also had a list of volunteers. Throughout lockdown we have been in touch with all residents and even able to carry out Parish planning application matters - all via email. The one resident who is not on email and who is 90 yrs old in July has several people in the hamlet popping in on a daily basis and there's a WhatsApp group set up to respond to his alarm should it go off and the person listed to contact first cannot be there, then there are people listed as back up. I believe that our community has pulled together and everyone knows that there are people here to help if needed. The internet has been a life saver in this regard.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

There is no doubt that the one area where a truly rural community is suffering and that is broadband speed. Home schooling has been extremely difficult for the families with children and this is where we need the most help - not just in lockdown but generally - especially as there will be more people working from home in the future. The rural community is at a huge disadvantage in this respect.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Tangley Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The community has a wonderful network of help through the Parish and Borough Council and local residents so I don't think that anyone is disadvantaged.

The main problem we are having in small pockets of our rural community is the appalling broadband provision for those who were left out of the national upgrade a couple of years ago. Although we have a Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme bid in place this virtually ground to a standstill during lockdown and with home schooling and people working from home the internet provision has been a real issue.

In my view the government needs to forget HS2 and invest more nationally in our broadband provision so that people can work more effectively from home in the future, reducing the need to work in large conurbations and thereby protecting the environment by reducing travel.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Frittenden Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Volunteer scheme for collecting shopping/medicines/ keeping phone contact. This is a joint venture with the local church and was launched with a leaflet drop to every household in the village. This called for volunteers and asked what help, if any, each household needed. A Hardship Fund, financed by public donation and administered by the Parish Council has been set up.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better, quicker, financial assistance to the self-employed

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stanford in the Vale Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Several Groups providing help with shopping, medical requirements. All play areas shut and locked. MUGA unit floodlights switched off.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

People are confused about virus testing and if they should try and find a centre to get tested. We still find that villagers are walking around as if it was normal. Some older residents do not seem to understand what restrictions they should be taking

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**Parish / Local Group:** Herstmonceux Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

In Herstmonceux from the very outset of the social isolation period, the Parish Council has been providing a range of support, from shopping to errands or a chat on the telephone, there is someone that can provide assistance.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Maresfield Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Our Parish consists of three villages with very distinct characteristics. Each village has a community coordinator for volunteers. Calls can be made to the Parish Office who will then forward to the relevant coordinator for assistance with shopping, prescriptions, dog walking and emotional support.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

I feel we have been very ably supported at both District and County level.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Rotherfield Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

"Parish Pals" network of parishioners, working in partnership with our existing and successful senior citizen support group (a registered charity). All senior citizens and vulnerable parishioners have received "flyers" to make them aware that support is available for shopping, prescription collecting and similar. Phone calls are also being made to counter loneliness issues.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Additional financial support for registered charities in this field

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**Parish / Local Group:** Uckfield Town Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have had a group set up to assist vulnerable and self isolating people with food, medicine etc.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

**Any other comments?**

We have a very good community who have come up trumps.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Withyham Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We cover 4 settlements. 3 of these have resident led neighbour-schemes that have been well advertised, in one the church is offering practical help. WPC has written to every household with contacts for their local volunteer groups, details of how to register if they're clinically vulnerable and contact details of the District Shield hub as we are aware that a lot is on social media but not everyone has access. In one of the villages there is a shop and we have ensured they can offer deliveries. We also have a community bus service which has agreed to do shopping trips for a nominal fee.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Supermarket slots to be more available to not just clinically vulnerable but also over 70s and people without transport, even if that means that they're not available to everyone else who could otherwise go shopping.

**Any other comments?**

I have voiced concerns to our District about the Shield Hub's reliance on local volunteers and possible long term resilience of that network if lockdown continues for some time or if it is partially lifted and some volunteers return to work/can't help as much as before. Also a lot of our volunteers are using

the local shops which some vulnerable people can't afford, particularly if they need quite a lot of shopping.

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**Parish / Local Group:** East Ilsley Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Parish Council have set up an Emergency Response Team made up of 27 fit and well volunteers who all live in the village. They are providing shopping, collecting of medicines, dog walking and phoning for a chat for the isolated people for over 25 households in our little village. We started off by delivering a slip to each household advising what we can assist them with. I then act as the central contact and people call me when they need something. I send a message to the group 'WhatsApp' and one of the responders takes on the task. The volunteer then ends up as their 'buddy' and provides on going support to them throughout the pandemic. This frees up the phone line for others to make contact with me. We do a weekly medicine collection round on a Wednesday with our local pharmacy and the whole thing is working very well.

We promote ourselves mainly via Facebook (@eiparishcouncil) or Twitter (@eastilsleypari1) or on our website [www.eastilsley-pc.gov.uk](http://www.eastilsley-pc.gov.uk). We have also placed a number of posters around the village for those taking their daily exercise to see.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We don't have anything for teenagers / youths in our area. We had a couple of volunteers stepping forward under 18 years old and we couldn't accept them on as we didn't feel we knew quite how to look after them.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Burford Town Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Burford Emergency Action Team caring for all "at risk" individuals

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Abolish GDPR

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bishop's Waltham Parish Council

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Support Line for elderly and vulnerable parishioners.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Horsham District Council – Neighbourhood Warden

**Region:** South East

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We set up a local volunteering hub to support the parish residents that we serve and delivered postcards to every household in the parish on day one of lockdown with details of a dedicated hub phone number on it where they can get support with food shopping, medication, dog walking and befriending calls. We utilised volunteers for this who were very keen to come forward to help.

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## SOUTH WEST REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** Godolphin Cross Community Association, Breage Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a Good Neighbours scheme in our village, which has been called upon to help vulnerable individuals with picking up shopping, prescriptions, solve problematic issues etc

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Weekly cash to pay staff

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**Parish / Local Group:** Gwennap Parish

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Mostly individuals offering to collect food and medicines for others and phone calls.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Valuing our food and produce security. Less reliance on imported goods : PPE, problems with supply chain, risk of importing disease especially plant diseases.

**Any other comments?**

Our farm shop has seen a massive increase in trade with people wishing to shop more locally, and the safety of our click and collect system. we hope this will continue. The quiet roads have made a

## Rural Services Network – Rural Communities Pulling Together

massive difference to the amount of people walking and cycling. Dedicated cycle routes and virtual pavements/ footpaths would help this continue.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Launceston Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Within Launceston we are working in partnership with local organisations and have set up a website to connect and support residents. The partnership offers help to people if they need to have prescription medicines collected, have to attend hospital or medical appointments, or just wish to have someone to call them. Residents can upload their details and link with people able to support them. The website also includes local information relating to delivery services. Council officers are taking the calls and then arranging the necessary follow up calls/visits etc. We have had leaflets delivered to the households in the town and surrounding parishes advising of the service, thereby ensuring that those without access to the internet are still able to make use of the service.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

As a rural community, limited broadband speeds and poor mobile signal can make modern methods challenging. These both need improving as a matter of urgency.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Newquay Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Town Council has established a £10k Emergency Resilience Fund for Newquay community and charity groups who need help overcoming barriers to support COVID-19 response - funding has been given to foodbanks, radio Newquay, lions groups, rotary and others to buy food, fuel for transporting supplies and medical staff to different locations and for mobile phones for one community to use. Town Council is also now leading the local effort in Newquay taking over the flu friends network from volunteer Cornwall and co-ordinating it to alleviate some pressures they face. We have also setup a dedicated contact centre for vulnerable people in Newquay to access food and medicines - this is delivered in partnership with both lions groups in Newquay and the Rotary, supported by the flu friends. We have redeployed all non-essential staff to this initiative and it includes regular chats and welfare calls with anyone who registers online. We have also increased our communications and provided useful guides and information about businesses who now offer takeaway and delivery services (i.e. pubs and cafes etc) as they don't have many means to promote this. We are also now establishing a Community Response Cell/group with local partner reps and Cornwall Council to start managing emerging issues and plan for the Town's recovery effort.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Being given powers under the Civil Contingencies Act to be more responsible for local action. It is difficult for Parish and Town Councils to obtain relevant information, due to Data Protection, we cannot be given access to the shielding list - which means someone at Cornwall Council is having to call those on the list from Newquay and refer them to us or ask if its ok to share their details - yet the regulations and acts around COVID-19 list Town and Parish Councils as Local Authorities for the purpose of those acts - so surely it would be reasonable to share the details for the purpose of public health and safety of the most vulnerable in Newquay?

**Any other comments?**

All of the financial support from Government is going to the Principal Councils rather than Town and Parish Councils, we are suffering from loss of income and delivering more without budgets for these new services.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Cirencester Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Emergency Grant Fund £5,000 Cirencester Community Response Group. Information Leaflet (posted to all businesses and residents)

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Rural Recovery Fund to support local councils and community based charities and organisations recover from the social, economic and environmental impact of COVID.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Letchlade on Thames Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Food deliveries, prescription deliveries, dog walking, talking (keeping in touch) with isolated members of the community, making scrubs, face masks, head covers, extenders for masks, laundry bags for scrubs, hearts etc for the NHS and others that need PPE.

**Any other comments?**

Enabling better sharing of data in the early stages so Community Groups, already set up, could access members of the community that may have needed help.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Oddington Parish

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A Good Neighbour scheme pairing vulnerable people with volunteers to shop and collect prescriptions. Virtual social activities (quiz, coffee morning etc) A number of VE Day events. Now undertaking a survey to establish the extent of those with no access to the internet and those who would like training to enable them to make better use of the equipment that they have.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Nothing at present. All of the issues that have come up to date are better handled on a local level.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stockland Bristol Parish Meeting

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are a community of c 100 people. In response to Covid-19 we ramped-up membership and use of our established village WhatsApp group and ensured that everyone had a named 'buddy' to respond to needs (shopping, prescriptions etc). The group has been widely used - and people not on it for whatever reason have been consciously supported. We know that nobody has been overlooked. Our Rector has personally distributed repeat prescriptions throughout the Benefice and so is in direct contact with all vulnerable citizens. We are a resilient lot and are used to little council attention and working as a community to sort ourselves out in most matters (from mowing verges to getting supplies in the snow) However, there is nothing (affordable) we can do to rectify our broadband issues on our own.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Broadband. Promised through 'Connecting Devon & Somerset' since 2017, our community still musters <1Mb. This is difficult here in normal times, but with the entire community at home, with school and University students requiring access for learning, people working from home and the expectation that communication with elderly parents and official agencies (HMRC, Farmers' DEFRA returns) can be conducted online, lives have been unnecessarily stressful. Video calls, streaming and all but the most basic applications are forbidden to us. People simply cannot conduct their work or studies if it takes hours to download a document from a remote server. Netflix - what's that!

**Any other comments?**

I cannot stress how terribly difficult the lack of connectivity has made things. Young people are fractious, people are increasingly suffering from anxiety as they have been deprived of video-calling parents, colleagues, tutors, friends and grandchildren.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Broadclyst Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Support Scheme: Broadclyst Parish Council responded to the pandemic by setting up a Community Support Scheme that utilises a bank of volunteers to support those self-isolating for whatever reason who are without friends, family or other support networks. This extends to shopping, medicines, exercising pets, posting mail, and just being a friendly voice on the end of the phone. At the time of writing (7th April 2020) the Scheme has a database of over 110 volunteers and is actively supporting over 30 households

Information: The council website has a dedicated page for information and advice, as well as online forms to register as a volunteer or submit a request for help.  
<https://www.broadclyst.org/community/coronavirus>

**Financial Hardship:** The website also promotes the Broadclyst Fund, which can give emergency cash grants to people who are experiencing hardship. <https://www.broadclyst.org/community/broadclyst-in-need-fund>

**Communications:** 3,000 fliers were initially distributed across the parish to make residents aware of the scheme and appeal for volunteers, with further fliers regularly delivered to over 400 targeted addresses i.e. retirement bungalows, to remind residents of the support scheme.

**Collaborative working:** The Council is working with local shops and Doctors Surgery to ensure that food and medicines are being distributed across the parish to those who are self-isolating.

**Mental health and wellbeing:** Amongst our volunteers we are lucky enough to have qualified counsellors and a reiki healer offering remote support to those feeling overwhelmed as the impact of Covid-19 begins to hit home.

**Challenges:** Broadclyst is a large parish, covering a geographical area of over 25 square miles, with a population of c.7,000. It is a diverse mix of new strategic-development housing estates and very remote rural farming hamlets, as well as a cluster of more traditional well-established built-up villages. Reaching everybody and working out how best to respond to their very different needs presented a challenge, especially as we recognised early on that many of those likely to need support are the section of our community less likely to have internet / social media.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

The lack of internet connectivity has proven to be a significant hurdle, with many remote farms / dwellings not able to access reliable broadband. As they know they don't have good broadband, they largely don't bother with websites and social media, so communications rely very much on labour and resource-intensive methods such as phone calls or hand delivering fliers.

### **Any other comments?**

We have received many positive and grateful comments across our diverse community; people are very scared and knowing this support is in place is a huge comfort to them. Broadclyst is located on the eastern fringes of Exeter City and was traditionally a rural parish. Strategic development (almost 3,000 new homes) in a predominantly rural setting presents new challenges, with relocated social housing tenants more used to having easy and immediate access to urban infrastructure. Strategic housing is changing the demography of the parish and as a result the nature of our work as we support these families has evolved; we find ourselves responding to issues less associated with rural life.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Devon Communities Together

**Region:** South West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are supporting communities throughout the DCC administrative area with a helpline for town and parish councils and community buildings. We provide general support to these organisations through lockdown so far both in relation to the mobilization of community support and community emergency planning, and issues related to the service/building.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

A national network of the rural community councils (which is what we are) running similar helplines would help install infrastructure to support rural communities in a proactive way. At a community level we have noticed issues around getting steady and affordable supplies to rural shops and especially

community shops. A national scheme to enable rural shops to set up wholesale accounts would be beneficial to ensuring the supply of high demand items.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Blackdown Support Group

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are a local registered charity working in partnership with the Blackdown GP Practice and covering the Blackdown Hills (the Blackdown Hills AONB is a rough guide) which is a very rural area and stretches across the county border of Somerset/Devon and the District Councils of Mid Devon, East Devon, Taunton Deane and South Somerset. We offer voluntary support to any one in need in our area - in ordinary times this includes community transport, social clubs, befriending and sign-posting. All services aim to reduce social isolation, facilitate access to services and improve quality of life for people suffering the effects of loneliness, old age or ill health. Our most urgent priority when the Covid-19 outbreak began was to identify or establish trusted, local volunteer networks to whom we and the GP Practice could safely and confidently refer patients to for support in the community. We have suspended all usual services and have instead kick-started or supported community initiatives which provide a neighbourhood assistance service with shopping, errands, food deliveries etc as well as a prescription delivery service from the GP Practice. This is being done via a network of Volunteer Co-ordinators and groups of helpers in each Parish. Marketing has gone out to community websites, Facebook pages and Parish magazines to advise people that the BSG, the GP Practice, Parish Councils, Churches and Community Groups are working together to support them and keep them safe. We have distributed general guidelines and safeguarding advice for people self-isolating as well as guidance on providing assistance safely - these are available on our website. We are also working hard to network and support our local food suppliers, village shops, pubs, takeaway or deliveries, farm shops and market stall holders, encouraging people to source products more widely and utilise what is on their doorstep. Anyone who lives in the Blackdown Hills can contact us and if we don't have a volunteer who can help it is likely we can sign-post them to their most local co-ordinated group. There is support out there even in the most rural locations and people can reach out to us on our phone line 01823 681 036 Monday to Friday 9-11.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

It would be useful if NHS Good Sams volunteers could be put in touch with local organised support groups where they exist so support can be co-ordinated and dove-tailed. National initiatives should support local schemes because local schemes have in-depth knowledge of the needs in their local area, this is especially so in tight-knit rural communities who have always supported each other in this way.

**Any other comments?**

National initiatives and information seem to be largely online and may fail to reach the most isolated or vulnerable groups. We are passing this information on, along with local information, via volunteers and other methods but it is an ongoing issue.

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**Parish / Local Group:** East Budleigh with Bicton Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Gift parcels to the infirm and elderly at Easter. This will be repeated on VE day along with copies of historical photos of the Village in a small album Making Scrubs for Care Homes. The first 20 scrubs will be delivered this week.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

If we could more easily identify those who are struggling, we could better organise food parcels in addition to the national initiative of parcels to those most at risk.

**Any other comments?**

The Prompt Action Grant is extremely useful.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Hawkchurch Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Local Scheme set up with support from Principal council

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**Parish / Local Group:** Honiton Health Matters

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Both EDDC and DCC send out regular newsletters packed with information, advice and helplines based around Covid-19. They have also set up funding to help organisations like our to respond the needs of those that need it.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Any that would provide funding opportunities to enable us to maintain the services that we as a community are providing for the vulnerable, elderly, homeless and those that have to isolate

**Any other comments?**

We are now experiencing a lot more families suffering with mental health/anxiety problems, who we are supporting but additional funding to take this further would be great.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Parent+ Support Hub, Honiton

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a Mental Health Support Network, so that we can share what everyone is doing and sign-post to each other. We have also started virtual support groups for our Parent+ families.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

An initiative that would fund man-hours for the voluntary work that we are doing, some of us full time.

### **Any other comments?**

Our service has supported 20 new members in 1 month. We are supporting parents/carers of young people, some of whom have highly complex needs, such as being inpatients, having attempted to take their lives and one who has been force fed under intubation.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Seaton Coronavirus Community Group

**Region:** South West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Seaton Coronavirus Community Group page has been set up to help keep the residents of Seaton and surrounding areas informed of what is happening in our community during these difficult times. Seaton Town Council are working with members of the local church, individuals and a support network of volunteers to support everyone in the Seaton area.

The Seaton Community Group has over 160 volunteers registered so far, divided amongst the 9 areas, which have their own individual coordinators, and each area has a backup list of volunteers to step in and assist if needs be. A group of supervisors has been established to offer support, carry out administrative duties and to oversee the coordination and volunteer effort. The supervisory team have constant communication via email and WhatsApp, and these channels are very active amongst the coordinators and volunteers. A dedicated helpline has been set up to help direct enquiries and offer assistance during the hours of 8.30am - 8.30pm. Outside of these hours an answerphone service is set up and messages are listened to and responded to on a daily basis. A useful helpline leaflet and 'Hello' leaflet was distributed to every household in Seaton, with information regarding a helpline & email that has been set up as well as personal information from a volunteer on the 'Hello' leaflet that has offered to assist the residents in their Area. Following on from this initial leaflet drop a facebook page was created to keep to utilise social media as a tool to inform the community of Seaton, and beyond, information regarding the volunteer scheme and how Seaton has been divided up into Areas. With the current restrictions in place to our everyday lives the use of social media has proven a fantastic way of interacting with the community providing help to those who need it, sharing information and advice (both locally and nationally), and keeping everyone informed on the constant changing situation and disruptions.

The STC website has been updated with important information on it, along with details of the helpline and email and a direct link to the facebook page which it manages. The facebook page currently has almost 800 followers, and is steadily growing, which is promising considering the demographic of the area. Official ID Cards have been created and distributed to coordinators and volunteers aiding the self-isolating and vulnerable during the pandemic. These allow the volunteer to shop for multiple people/households at once at any Seaton supermarket, with certain regulations being relaxed, they also act as a form of identification which offers a piece of mind to us all during these difficult times. Guidelines have been put in place and shared to coordinators and volunteers and a structure has been created to help support the community group. A booklet was created by the community group, funded by Seaton Town Council and printed locally, supporting a local business during this difficult time, and then organised and distributed to every household in Seaton. In a short space of time important/relevant information was collated and put in to booklet format and analysis and research of

the numbers of streets and households was carried out and an effective system was put in place for distribution involving the volunteers in place.

A fantastic team effort that emphasise what a community can achieve when working together. We have been able to utilise local organisations such as the Seaton & District Lions to deliver to the community. There is a core group of volunteers established to assist the local surgery with phone calls to vulnerable patients within the community. The community group is working closely with Seaton food bank and local food suppliers & services, and the group is working with the Tesco Fare Share charity to access food that is about to pass its use by date. Twice weekly this food is being collected and delivered to local care homes and animal sanctuaries for them to utilise. Promotion of the participating organisations as well as community activities and local business services takes place via the Facebook page. The positive stories published on social media are well received and appear to be helping the community take pride and ownership of the town - which will be essential moving forwards. The community group has been working closely with Tesco, Co-Op and the local pharmacies to provide up to date information to the residents and to help ease the difficulties that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. Communicating with local businesses a detailed list has been put together to help promote and increase awareness of what is available locally. This not only helps the residents but also helps the small local businesses during this difficult time. This information has been well received, published online and in the booklet, and is updated regularly.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Support to help enable those who are most vulnerable get online and enable them to access information. Clearer information for small business regarding support, restrictions and assistance. Pharmacies increasing their delivery service and being more proactive in aiding the community.

**Any other comments?**

The response since this initiative has been set up has been fantastic and it really shows what an amazing community spirit there is in Seaton. People are supporting one another and adapting to communicate with each other via mediums that they may not have used previously, and using these as a resource to keep the community safe, aware and informed.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Hewelsfield and Brockweir Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Support network of volunteers (offering any support needed), coordinated by myself, and information and contacts details provided via social media, website and leaflet to every household in the parish.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Tellisford Parish Meeting

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a shared order to the Frome Food Hub that delivers consolidated food orders to one house in the village where they are put on the wall and each household then collects.

**Parish / Local Group:** Georgeham Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Community Help Group formed

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

A bigger emphasis on preventing visitors to this popular area for the time being. Currently, there are cars parked in every available space where car parks are not open, even in the entrances to building sites.

**Any other comments?**

The owner of public toilets at a beach who has been told by the government to open cannot get PPE for the cleaner. There clearly has been insufficient preparation to ensure there is sufficient protection for everyone, despite it being known well in advance that the epidemic was on its way to the UK.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Mariansleigh Parish

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Daily email to parishioners with updates on local and govt information, local businesses, food deliveries etc.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better broadband - its laughable. Work from home was the request, for some they are forced into work because the broadband at home is so slow it is not possible to connect to office systems. Food deliveries - despite what is being said its impossible to get supermarket slots sooner than end of May. You either need to brave the shop itself or drive 20-30 minutes each way for the nearest click and collect. There are local butchers and grocers doing superb work but they don't supply, for example, cleaning products.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Goathurst Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Circulated contact details list of people in the village willing to do shopping, collect prescriptions etc to each household in the village.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Berkley Parish

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have registered a Next Door community group and ensured that all of our small community are invited and ensured that there is someone checking on any vulnerable residents.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Financial support for disadvantaged.

**Any other comments?**

Latterly Somerset CC, Mendip Local authority and Frome town council have posted helpline numbers. This is great but we are at risk of duplication confusing the public.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Oake Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Community group has leafleted all homes to ask if anyone vulnerable needs help - medication has been collected for residents. Backed up by Facebook page and posts Community shop also 'looking out' for vulnerable people and providing essential provisions for the elderly. Parish Council very active on Facebook. Information also made available on notice boards.

**Any other comments?**

We are a small parish which has good community spirit.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Under the aegis of our emergency plan we have set up a daily information update linked to our parish website, set up a dedicated facebook and whatsapp presence, a grocery delivery service, collections of prescriptions, a loneliness buddying group, a listening (counselling ) service, our own medical advice service to augment the NHS, advice for parents of young children re online educational and creative activities. We keep adding to the list as people offer and demand is made. We are about to set up a hardship fund in partnership with our village Friendly Society.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We have a number of sole traders /self employed who will have major cashflow problems if funding support doesn't come in until June - speed it up. Accessing info on families in receipt of free school meals and other benefits in general is difficult because of confidentiality, but it would help us target our resources to need.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Clatworthy PC

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are a very small rural community of <100 electors. All support is by personal contact between individuals. The PC has publicised contact details of volunteers able to help those self isolating.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better Internet speeds - currently frequently less than 1Mb/s - and the provision of fibre connections at an affordable price.

**Any other comments?**

Mobile coverage is very poor and consequently ownership of even 3G mobile phones is low. No covid-19 tracing app would be much use here.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Skilgate Parish Meeting

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A Contingency plan for the Parish

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Revised standards in Highways to install broadband network

**Any other comments?**

The current "regulations" stipulate over-specified trenching for broadband on roads for ducting, making fibre network installation very slow and very expensive/un-affordable.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Ashprington & Tuckenhay Village Response Group

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Over 50 volunteers to shop, get prescriptions, dog walk, telephone befriending, virtual village coffee morning, coordinating food deliveries, weekly newsletters etc

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Why are the NHS volunteers for picking up prescriptions not being used? We are doing the prescriptions pick ups but the NHS Volunteers are sitting at home waiting for requests.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bigbury Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Established a Support Group for the many 70+ year-old people in the parish. Identified string of volunteers to help the batched ordering and delivery of essential supplies to the needy from our local shop, which has been quite outstanding in its operation: identified those in need of phone support for lonely. Our parish magazine, distributed widely by email has helped fantastically. Local farmers are using social media to offer 'farm to fork' supplies of meat and vegetables, avoiding need for travel to supermarkets in towns.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

HM Government guidelines on whether 2nd home owners should stay put or travel back to their main residence. This is a prime, coastal holiday area as well as a rural haven in South Devon

**Any other comments?**

We seem to be coping well but better broadband would help! Emailing has been our lifeline!

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**Parish / Local Group:** Newton and Noss Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Coordinators have been allocated small numbers of residents based on local postcodes to oversee, they then call on a list of volunteers who can assist residents with shopping, medicine deliveries, hospital visits, computer assistance with orders of food etc.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Reduction in duplication of advice from Government, District and County. Better enforcement of the travel restrictions in order that second home owners do not "self isolate" in the Parish but pay lip service only to the process.

**Any other comments?**

Large retailers too slow to improve their online services for ordering essential items. Bus service running with no passengers, could have been converted to a local delivery service from our local city for example for central collection by residents.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Salcombe Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

All organisations were passed a Town Council newsletter with up to date information at that point of what local services were available and how to contact them. This was then sent out either by email to the group members or for those without email the club/organisation made copies and passed such to them. Salcombe has in excess of 60% holiday homes so this was directed at residents. The website contains this information and is updated regularly. Within that information there was an offer that volunteers could be contacted to deliver groceries. The health centre has organised that medication is delivered or collected. There have been a couple of contacts made from services with regard to vulnerable people coming out of hospital (routine discharge not Covid) and someone without any family member who needed checking on.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

The community appear to have looked after each other well. Whether a national list of those that should be checked would assist might be interesting.

### **Any other comments?**

Communication with those who might not be on anyones radar remains the biggest problem. My personal suggestion would be that the local media (radio and tv) should have put out a message not that nationally there was support but just a simple telephone number of town/District/County that could be called if someone had a need for assistance whether illness, groceries or another problem. Then a loop of those outside IT might be addressed.

**Parish / Local Group:** South Brent and District Caring

**Region:** South West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Villagers in South Brent have come together to support each other in response to the Coronavirus crisis. A month ago, a group of villagers and representatives from local organisations and businesses made a plan to help those self-isolating and experiencing financial hardship in the village and local parishes.

In a matter of days, villagers had volunteered to support community efforts, fundraising was underway and a team of volunteers organised a leaflet drop to homes across the village, providing details of a prescription collection service, shopping support, takeaway deliveries from local businesses and a phone befriending service. A Facebook group encouraged people to support each other and share information digitally.

Now over 160 volunteers have come forward, the community has set up and launched a new village food bank for those experiencing financial hardship, and over 400 deliveries of shopping have been made to those in self-isolation. Local counsellors, coaches and therapists have set up a listening service to support individuals' wellbeing and mental health and a phone befriending service has made 281 calls to those in isolation. Virtual church services are underway for villagers and email bulletins are keeping people informed about the changing situation.

Much of the effort was supported by staff, trustees and volunteers from South Brent and Community District Caring. Jane Sullivan, Charity Care Coordinator for South Brent and District Caring said:

“It’s been a huge team effort. Some of my volunteers are helping me keep in touch with our regular lunch club and memory cafe attendees. We are working together with The Village Shop, the pharmacy, Foggs Deli, the Coop, the butcher and The Packhorse to support those self-isolating and vulnerable in our community.”

Villagers are being encouraged to look out for neighbours and there have been numerous acts of kindness. These have ranged from anonymous food donations on doorsteps, to offering to grow and share seedlings with the community. The food bank has reported donations of chocolate eggs for local families over Easter, and house plants have been delivered to lots of people self-isolating alone, organised by a village shop.

Dr James Hill is the Chair of Trustees for South Brent and District Caring:

“The response of volunteers, local businesses and donors to the crisis has been outstanding. The spirit of community and co-operation in the area has been wonderful and heart-warming to see and will leave a lasting legacy when we return to more normal times.”

All the latest information for villagers in South Brent and the surrounding districts can be found at [www.sbadc.org.uk](http://www.sbadc.org.uk). The team are now sharing information about how they have organised their response and hope this can be used to help other communities addresses similar challenges.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

I've collated thoughts from various members of the coordinating group:

- Decentralise! When a fast response is required, smaller organisations can act faster and more accurately. An example from finance, Devon Community Foundation Coronavirus Response funding received 31st March versus Government funding distributed through the National Lottery Community Fund – 1st May, still waiting We can see from the infection rate map that this is a regional problem and needs regional solutions ESPECIALLY as we start to ease lockdown and people move from cities to rural holiday destinations that have been less exposed to the virus.
- It would have been helpful at the outset of the pandemic if Parish Councils could have received direct information and advice on key issues. For example the decision to close our public toilets and playpark was taken on the advice of our Vicar, the former Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, several days before the Government issued official advice on this.
- As District Councillor I passed on a great deal of information sent to me by my council. Some of this would have been more readily available if issued direct to Parish Councils.
- I also feel that the Government could have issued more direct advice to voluntary groups such as South Brent Assist. Devon County Council for example stated they would give advice to groups on recruiting volunteers and training them etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Castle Cary Town Council

**Region:** South West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Cary Cares. 100 community volunteers shopping if older and vulnerable people, coordinating phone lines, food box scheme, after service and welfare calls. Website with comprehensive collation of local, District Council, County Council and National gov.uk services and information services [www.castle-cary.co.uk](http://www.castle-cary.co.uk)

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Nothing I can identify at the moment. We are slightly in information overload and the info is disseminated through our website and our emails Cary Crier.

### **Any other comments?**

We won't know the impact for a few weeks and then it will be an emerging issue. We know local volunteers can address day to day issues but also acutely aware that our District and County offers will be taken up when we are out of our depth so to speak. We are in contact with the right people to make things happen for the most needy in our rural community. Transport will be key for older members getting to hospital visits etc.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Shepton Beauchamp Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a Neighbourhood Support scheme with 3 coordinators and numerous volunteers to help those self-isolating, from delivering groceries & prescriptions to walking their dog. We also have a couple of people who are available on their phones if someone just wants to talk.

**Any other comments?**

The local District Council have also put a support scheme in place.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Haresfield Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Local pub has set up a grocery delivery service parish council has set up a service to collate queries and an offer to collect prescriptions

**Any other comments?**

An enormous amount of information has been received and sometimes it's difficult to plough my way through it and know what to send to parishioners. Too much information can be overwhelming for some.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Nailsworth Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Nailsworth TC set up a community support Helpline which links residents with volunteers. Helpline volunteers can collect prescriptions, do shopping, have phone chats and walk dogs for people who are isolating. Nailsworth Chamber of Trade set up a phone and collect service for the Farmer's Market traders. The Chamber of Trade have also worked with local food producers to make high quality frozen ready meals for sale and also to be donated to NHS workers and vulnerable people. The Chamber of Trade are coordinating volunteers making scrubs for the NHS, local surgeries and care homes. Volunteers are using 3D printers to make safety visors. Local shops, farm shops and

businesses have switched to phone and collect, and contactless payments, with special measure in place for people who are more vulnerable, such as priority delivery services outside of their usual delivery areas.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

More coordination between these initiatives! The NHS Volunteers initiative was/is confusing as it seemed to be duplicating what parish and town councils had already set up. There needs to be more and clear protocols, policies and resources for small volunteer groups e.g. a practical step-by-step guide on how to set up groups, what guidance to give volunteers, how to keep volunteers and residents safe, producing ID cards and handling payments. These have been made up on the hoof by each individual parish and town council and this is a major failing by larger authorities, who have shied away from thinking through how to deal with the very real issues we are facing on the ground.

### **Any other comments?**

There is no connection between the larger authorities' emergency responses and those of parish and town councils. I'm not aware their emergency plans have ever been discussed with my town council, and yet it's obvious that we were most definitely expected to take up the burden without any extra resources or guidance. Parish and town councils have stepped up and put together a community response extremely well, but the response from district/county has been sluggish. No standard guidance was offered in the early days by district/county and thorny questions such as how to take payment for shopping when the person in need doesn't do bank transfers, was met with 'just don't do it'. This is not acceptable when you have a vulnerable person with no food.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Wotton Under Edge

**Region:** South West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a local group called Wotton Area Mutual Aid, crisis group for the Town Council, and crisis executive at Stroud District Council.

### **Any other comments?**

I would like to see more support for the self employed who have been unsupported because they haven't been in their jobs for long enough, I think it unrealistic for their previous employer to take them back on to pay them.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bovey Tracey Town Council

**Region:** South West

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A collaborative set-up of Town Council, Community Groups, Volunteers and other local organisations have set-up the Bovey Parish Coronavirus Action Group to support the vulnerable/elderly parishioners.

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**Parish / Local Group:** District & County Councillor, Devon County & Teignbridge District

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Each community has a dedicated local emergency group looking after those self isolating. Also supplying food and prescriptions.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Much more testing particularly in care homes.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Victory Hall Kenton

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Volunteer Group to help shielding individuals and families with prescription collection and provision delivery, whats-app group to coordinate delivery/collections etc. Outreach branch of food bank in village hall to collect and deliver food, toy swap, local provision sewn face masks, puzzle and book swap scheme. There is also telephone contact for those isolated.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are working with Teignbridge HITS (food bank).

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**Parish / Local Group:** Norton Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Supporting local residents by creating a group who can complete shopping and other tasks for residents who are unable to go out. Providing a central contact number and email address to coordinate this.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Nothing we have been kept well informed.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Great Torrington Town Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have a GTTC Covid 19 Task Force: Serving approx 110 homes - Volunteers who offer to pick up shopping, prescriptions and do social phone calling.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

COOP and Lidl doing click and collect arrangements.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Winkleigh Parish Council

**Region:** South West

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Covid Support Service, a phone number and email address where people can ask for shopping to be done medication collected etc.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

PPE for health workers, clarity on masks for my volunteers, Deregulation of food banks so we can easily set one up locally. Our food banks are a bus ride away and if you have to take your children too, it negates the benefits, testing for the staff who work in care homes.

**Any other comments?**

Reduced services means people are unsupported. I have made referrals to Social Services to no avail, tried to get help for people on benefits etc.

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## WEST MIDLANDS REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** Alvechurch Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Set up 'Alvechurch Cares' to help the elderly and vulnerable in our Parish.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Ensure there is no duplication of services being offered by National Organisations which is already being catered for by Local Community organisations, Parish Councils or volunteers.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bredenbury Group Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A fortnight ago we split our parish into different areas and co-ordinators delivered communications to all our parish and some outlying residences. This had their telephone number or email address. This would be the first point of contact and then the co-ordinators would signpost them to someone for support. We have a list of volunteers in each of those areas who were willing to shop, collect medication or phone. I email our Parish Council subscribers frequently to ensure they know we are here for them and have had very positive responses.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We believe we are well served. As we know our residents well we feel that they need to have familiar people interacting with them. We are signed up with Herefordshire Council Talkcommunity.

**Any other comments?**

Having been working on our Neighbourhood Plan over the past two years we already had our Parish covered for hand delivering all our communications regarding the plan through our Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. This meant we had a headstart and were immediately able to bring these people into the initiative. We also have worked with the PCC and send communications through their communication stream. We are a very sparsely populated parish in a very rural area with a large elderly population. We were aware that this would be a challenge for us. We believe that our initiative is currently working well. We have had some of our smallholders leaving surplus eggs at their gates for anyone to collect. We are a community but have no doubt that this will be a massive challenge for us.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Church of England

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

1. Support network for meds, shopping, chat
2. Zoom tea party and other social activities
3. 'I-Spy' treasure hunts around the village
4. Further development of Facebook page
5. Online services of worship
6. Working to support the local shop to stay open and deliver

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Understand better the differences between lockdown in urban and rural areas.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Church of England, Shobdon and Pembridge

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Good neighbour schemes; delivering food and prescriptions, phone calls.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Clearer communications. Definite guidance.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Ledbury Town Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A group called Ledbury Covid-19 has been set up by local volunteers and they have been working with the local authority Covid-19 response team at Hereford. They are providing help to anyone who needs it during this difficult time in the form of shopping, information and signposting. We as a council have supported the group and have printed 6,000 leaflets providing excellent information put together by the group and Ledbury Town Council.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

I think we have linked very well with all initiatives available to us and the group.

**Any other comments?**

I am amazed at how many people in the town of Ledbury have offered help through the Covid-19 group which was set up by two sisters in the town.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Leominster Town Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The town council have joined up with charities, county council and the local COVID-19 volunteer group to coordinate the provision of shopping, medication collection, welfare phone calls, dog walking etc to vulnerable residents. We have agreements in place so that we can all use the same database to enable us to respond quickly to support residents in the town.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better broadband and a training programme to help the more rural residents.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Ross-on-Wye Town Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Ross Community Development Trust is one local Charity who are providing help and assistance to members of the Community who are struggling to get shopping. They offer a home shopping service for those who are isolated and will make daily phone calls to check on the welfare of those living alone.

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**Parish / Local Group:** St Mary's Church, Almeley

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

St Mary's Parish Church has set up a small group of volunteers to collect medication, groceries etc. Walk dogs if necessary, and to phone regularly those members of the community who, it is felt, will need contact.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

I don't think this is relevant for our small community.

**Any other comments?**

We are a very small community where it is relatively easy to find out who might need help, and where it has always been the practice to support neighbours.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Staunton on Wye Group Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Parish Council and other volunteers have formed a close liaison with the local farm shop. Through that liaison essential foods are being delivered to the door for the elderly and infirm.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Clearly viral testing for those working in the local home for the elderly and protection for those working in the local hospital.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Kings Bromley Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

On 21st March the Parish Council delivered a 'You are not alone' flyer to every property in the Parish inviting self isolators to get in touch if they needed shopping or prescriptions getting or just day to day contact. Also it asked for volunteers prepared to do this for their neighbours. The response was dramatic- we now have 75 volunteers and 59 'home heroes'. The allocation of volunteers has been done centrally from the house of the Chairman. The village of 1400 residents has now been organised into 8 self organising areas that communicate through WhatsApp groups. The central organisation works through 'phone and internet. A subsequent flyer has concentrated on helping people to cope with boredom and loneliness, this initiative done with the help of the WI. The system now runs smoothly. The parishioners are kept informed of developments on a daily basis through the Parish Council website and Facebook page.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

The national government should just concentrate of getting adequate PPE and testing delivered, which they have manifestly failed to do, and getting the help to businesses in a timely fashion which they are also failing on. While the furlough system is good, we have parishioners who have fallen through the net and are really struggling -this needs to be addressed. We can look after the local issues.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Expanded good neighbour scheme. Circulated newsletter with important phone numbers. List of Volunteers. Arranged with local co-op to deliver to vulnerable people.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We are coping in the main but when over we need help to start things moving again.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Rochford Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A small group of 5 of us got together to come up with a plan with how we could arrange deliveries of prescriptions and food. We also offer to check on the families etc of the relatives that do not live nearby.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Baddesley Ensor Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Providing hot meals and food parcels

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Finance to be able to reach out to more people.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Mariam Humphreys, Cllr North Warwickshire Borough Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Community has set up areas of Volunteers to support for the residents in their part of the Parish. Parish Councils have been supportive at this time. Local businesses have offered to supply food. Volunteers are getting shopping and collecting medication. Newspapers offered free by local weekly newspaper for the isolated. Free food boxes were offered from The Borough Council if required open phone line to contact by resident or person convened. Council information line for concern re: utility bills. Getting to the bank to pay bills. Help line for Mental Health. Our Council Chief Executive Steve Maxey and his Team are a constant backup for us regarding on going information for our residents.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

We could not plan for this. We have managed the situation at the moment very well. We have the back up of CAVA for the isolation residents contacts. People do think the people they see should be able to do it all. Be the person on phone for reassurance, they did not want another person. I do not see with isolation what initiatives would help from the people I spoke to on the phone. They just wanted out.

**Any other comments?**

Everyone in North Warwickshire is working very hard. In the Hospitals, A&E Units, Mental Health Units, Food Units for the Community. All the Community Volunteers you are amazing.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Shuttington Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Isolation intervention group, supplying home cooked suppers, newspapers, regular telephone calls, medicine and shopping collections for most vulnerable.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

All in place regarding our local very proactive local community.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Albrighton & Donington Parish Councils

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The Village Hall (called the Red House) are using the mini-bus which is jointly funded by two local parish councils to deliver groceries and medicines to isolated and/or vulnerable residents. It is also used each Wednesday to deliver hot meals provided by a local older people's club.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Beechtree Community Centre

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Helping hands voluntary group set up by residents and local businesses with support from Shropshire RRC

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Because of the nature of our activities we have had no choice but to close and furlough staff.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Bettws y crwyn PC, Clun Valley

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Established community facebook page to encourage communication, offers of help and to disseminate local and county information

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Better liaison with supermarkets. and additional funding at county level. I believe that the county is doing its best but woeful under funding over the years has taken its toll. There are limited things that they can cope with, especially following extensive flooding earlier in the year.

**Any other comments?**

Even people with vulnerable status cannot get delivery slots. We are a scattered community of mainly elderly people living in fairly isolated houses.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Church Stretton Town Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Town Council co-ordinates a weekly Covid-19 conference of services and voluntary organisations, now coming together to support over 150 vulnerable residents and promoting publicity of local traders' home delivery offers to maintain the local economy.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

This rural area needs government funding to underwrite a mini-bus outreach of essential supplies to rural villages with a high elderly population.

**Any other comments?**

Need to disseminate widely the best possible solutions being developed across the country. A guide to the pros and cons of the various social media platforms.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Condoover Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Small team of paid/volunteer Parish Support Coordinators - banners in villages advertise this service Prescription/medication collection/delivery service, shopping/food delivery service and a virtual foodbank. There are village and Parish Facebook pages along with a twice weekly e-newsletter, dedicated C-19 support page on website - for news and advice. A local catering company has set up a pop-up shop and take away - with deliveries if needed - Parish Council is setting up a 'pay forward' scheme to complement the food bank and enable local residents to make an active contribution. Advice and support for local businesses through Dorrington Business Network We're currently working to set up a chat-line/ telephone buddy network.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Advice /toolkits on how to set up chatline networks. Practical guides to setting up eg zoom conferencing with public access. Clear restrictions on dog walker behaviour with immediate sanctions/fines for not picking up their mess and for not keeping dogs on leads around livestock.

**Any other comments?**

We need greater protection for the natural environment to stop people taking advantage of the crisis the local authority has limited capacity to respond.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Meriden Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A joint initiative with St Laurence Church where an emergency helpline is 7 days per week 8 til 8. Members of Parish Council and community on a rota. We organise the 50 plus volunteers we have recruited to pick up Shopping, collect medication and phone people who need some support. We have received 360 phone calls so far.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Improved phone signal and faster broadband.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Derrington Village Hall

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A Helping Derrington Group supporting the vulnerable with shopping and other necessities. Supporting the Outreach Post Office (ensuring someone else is always in the premises and to assist with distance control) so it may remain open. Setting up a small pop up shop.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Some form of identification/authority to show to local supermarkets to prove that volunteers are shopping for others, so they are able to purchase more than the restricted number of items.

### **Any other comments?**

A small grant we can use as a float so those shopping for others are not out of pocket until they are able to be reimbursed would be helpful.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Eccleshall Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A member of the local community, supported by a grant from the Parish Council, amongst others, has created 'Eccleshall Cares', which is a community organisation supported by a large team of volunteers, who are working to provide services to help the vulnerable members of the Parish who are self isolating. There is a helpline for residents to register for help. Support is offered in a number of ways, including collecting prescriptions, fetching shopping and just having someone to chat to on the phone. Residents suffering financial difficulties are also able to apply for a food bank pack of essential items. They have a website at <https://www.eccleshallcares.co.uk/>

### **Any other comments?**

The actions and support of local residents for these scheme has been overwhelming and a fantastic example of community spirit within the Parish in such a difficult time for many.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Alcester Town Council

**Region:** West Midlands

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Alcester Community Resilience Network

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

National Grouping of Resilience Networks

### **Any other comments?**

Alcester Community Resilience Network has 216 volunteers organised on a Ward basis, with 15 volunteers manning the call centre. The volunteers have responded to 420 requests, and have distributed 1500 free meals (200 per week) funded by the Town Council; 25 residents are receiving community calls.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Rock Parish Council

**Region:** West Midlands

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

As a parish in North Worcestershire we sent all our residents all 1500 dwellings by Royal Mail a flyer detailing support available.

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## YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER REGION

**Parish / Local Group:** Airton Parish Meeting

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

A parish support group mechanism re shopping, prescriptions, loneliness etc

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**Parish / Local Group:** Carleton-in-Craven parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The local shop keeper has extended his range of goods to cater for those not able to access the nearby supermarkets. One resident has been producing hand sanitiser as a by-product of his business.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Further improvements to the Broadband system. On Mondays to Fridays I have difficulty accessing websites, especially during the morning. Most time-out before getting connected. I was lucky this morning!

**Any other comments?**

Most of the residents in our parish of approximately 1100 people appear to be managing okay. The young members are giving assistance where necessary.

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**Parish / Local Group:** PBA Applied Ecology Ltd.

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

For the duration of the first two periods of lockdown, PBA Applied Ecology Ltd. is providing free assistance with food deliveries to two Settle-based businesses (Drake & Macefield Family Butchers and the Naked Man Family Bakery). PBA vans have been re-purposed and are expected to make up to 750 free deliveries to the local community during this period.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Additional funding support (or corporation tax relief) for rurally-based businesses.

**Any other comments?**

Although we are only a small company, we are pleased to be able to help our local community and to support other local businesses in this rural area at this difficult time.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stamford Bridge Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Local volunteers.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Romanby Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

As a Parish Council we have set up a Street Warden Scheme to help elderly and vulnerable adults in our community - Some 50 people have volunteered, and are helping over 100 residents with shopping, prescriptions, well-being, dog-walking and gardening.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Thirlby Parish

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Parish is co-ordinating support for anyone needing help with shopping, collecting prescriptions etc. Checking in regularly on vulnerable people living alone. Small community so it's working well.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

None. I think we are coping fine.

**Parish / Local Group:** Knaresborough Chamber of Trade

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

1. Knaresborough Connectors - a collaboration of community groups to provide a one stop shop to residents of the town for all forms of support. The start of this group was accelerated to help during the pandemic.
2. Knaresborough Delivers, utilising local businesses who can still source supply of meat, fruit, veg etc this Chamber initiative is now being managed by a local business and is delivering food parcels daily. It has expanded to include over a dozen local businesses offering a variety of products and has expanded to different premises and also now covers Wetherby and Harrogate.
3. Re-opening of the town foodbank - currently in planning but for some reason Harrogate closed down the town foodbank so local groups are getting this going again.
4. The Chamber are surveying businesses to identify "best practice" for businesses once lockdown restrictions are eased - this will provide consumers confidence to come back into town.
5. NYCC Voucher scheme to help vulnerable/self-isolating people with shopping.
6. Volunteers have been identified, over 150 have offered help, to assist people close to them with a variety of requirements. Some volunteers have a "trusted" status to provide a greater level of care.

There are many other initiatives in Knaresborough, too many really to list here, I've included the main ones all of which have been running now for over 5 weeks.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

1. Speed up the implementation of support that has been announced, basically reduce the red tape.
2. Release funds quickly.
3. Encourage other groups offering funding to minimise the red tape involved. I am applying to one group who have a 25 page instruction guide and a 10+ page submission form for funding - this really isn't helpful.
4. Encourage chain stores to keep open in rural areas, a few in Knaresborough (including Superdrug) have closed and have relocated staff to Harrogate. This forces people to travel to Harrogate and is not helpful to the local community or local businesses.
5. Legislate to make Banks do what they should be doing, providing services to rural communities rather than entrenching back to head/regional offices and forcing customers to travel to them.

**Any other comments?**

There has been a fantastic reaction in Knaresborough to this pandemic, so many people have quietly offered support or undertaken and delivered initiatives to help vulnerable and self-isolating strangers in the town survive. More national focus should be trained on local initiatives like these, people using their own time and skills to help out strangers in these extraordinary times.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Kirton in Lindsey Town Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Kirton in Lindsey Town Council has put a community response team in place. We have a team of over 50 volunteers to assist in delivering essential items and essential services, which so far are:

- Obtaining essential shopping/food
- Prescriptions/medicines from the chemist and doctors surgery
- Dog walking (where essential)
- Someone to talk to for the lonely or isolated
- Miscellaneous urgent assistance
- Assistance with delivering of school meals / work

We produced a special edition of our community newsletter, delivered to every home giving advice and information and this also detailed sources of official advice and core contacts phone numbers. We can't be sure of the level of assistance that the community will need, nor how many volunteers we can find (currently approx 50), but I think we are well prepared. Some of these volunteers have DBS/Enhanced DBS in place. Some are first aid trained. Some have access to specialist driving licences (HGV etc). Some work for the police, prison and local council services. Many normally volunteer within the community and are well known and trusted with residents. The situation is fluid and unusual, so the type of help people need may change as things develop. There seems to be a fair bit of neighbours helping each other out, which is great because we will only have a given amount of capacity. There have already been several requests for assistance and the operation seems to be working well. "Need help or support? Fancy a chat?" Members of the local community have volunteered to help those in need and efforts are being co-ordinated by the Town Council.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Joint national communications with collated information available so local residents get instant information which is relevant. When accessing official information, the .gov site provides central contact information which provides a delay in getting the information / directing those in need to any immediate response.

**Any other comments?**

This survey seems to have come late down the line after the initial outbreak and necessary provision of information for residents.

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**Parish / Local Group:** South Killingholme Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

Mutual Aid Support Group

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

If North Lincs Council organised a free meals on wheels service it would be helpful. Food boxes were once only and inadequate. We've set up a fund me site to help volunteers claim money back, alot of elderly can't do bank transfers. We cannot accept cash due to risks.

**Any other comments?**

I have a number of clients falling through the net of social support.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Burton in Lonsdale Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The community shop has offered home delivery of groceries and prescriptions by managing a list of volunteers collected since the pandemic lock-down was announced.

**What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

How about an online register of volunteers and volunteering opportunities, designed and operated nationally but used locally ?

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**Parish / Local Group:** Burn Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

The local pub, Wheatsheaf, is doing a take-away meals service and will also deliver to residents who are unable to leave their house.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Church Fenton Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have set up a Covid19 Action Group which involves 3 Parish Councillors and the Clerk to the PC. We have produced 3 leaflet drops at fortnightly intervals, ranging from information about local services available, mental health and well-being to activities which all members of the local community can get involved with eg virtual quiz night, virtual pub night, VE day competitions etc. Activities to do for both those with young children and those home alone. Details of businesses offering support with food home deliveries. Set up a book and jigsaw swap and quizzes.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Holme Valley Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

**What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

I set up our Holme Valley COVID Mutual Aid group on 12 March and we now have 560 vols for. Population of 30,000, we have 10 neighbourhood networks, website, hot line etc. Doing errands and emotional support but also helping with business deliveries and making and supplying PPE. We are probably one of the biggest and best run MAGs in the UK and supporting the national network. I did this as an individual but the parish have funded hand sanitiser from a local gin maker and are supporting our food bank too.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Less is more... no more initiatives just get resources to the front line - not just nhs but vital services and key support to like food banks, support for business etc. Our longer term issues will be poverty and threat to the High Street. But seems plans are in place for much of this.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Nidderdale Plus Community Hub

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We are coordinating the response across the whole of Nidderdale and Washburn Valley in North Yorkshire. We have facilitated the setting up of 13 volunteer networks across the area, and provided them with best practice so that they can recruit volunteers safely (we emphasise the importance of using DBS checked people where possible) and keep them safe whilst they are volunteering. We have also issued a simplified safeguarding policy so that volunteers know what to look for and the appropriate way to escalate concerns. We provide templates, and have printed for some of the networks, leaflets and postcards that are specific to their area. It is important that self-isolating residents have trust in the volunteer that is coming down their path, so we try to ensure where possible that the is Parish Council branding in each network on the information material that is produced. As a community library, we are now offering home delivery of books and jigsaws, using our own community car and volunteers, and we also worked with the local GP practice which has three surgeries, to do all prescription deliveries to those who are self isolating, using volunteers and one vehicle. This also has the benefit of reducing footfall at the surgery dispensaries. We are about to launch a food bank and are implementing a hardship scheme

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

None, really. We are able to devise solution through working closely with our communities. We just need some money to make up the shortfall in our own fundraising activities, as an enormous black hole is opening up in our finances.

### **Any other comments?**

I hope that the role of community hubs becomes clearer as a result of this crisis. In good times, as well as bad, we are best placed to respond to our communities on the ground.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Thwing & Octon Parish Council

**Region:** Yorkshire and The Humber

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

We have hand delivered flyers with 4 contact numbers to everyone in the parish. We have a facebook page, and being a small rural community we have a good social network and are aware of likely vulnerable people.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

Deliveries from supermarket and doctors for prescriptions, or a local hub for drop off and collection.

### **Any other comments?**

As a rural community we have no local shops, no bus service, and are struggling to book on line grocery deliveries. Our local GP does not deliver to outlying villages and our broadband connection is poor. Services to rural communities needs to be addressed properly especially in situations. Too much talk and no action is often the case.

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**Parish / Local Group:** Stoney Middleton, Calver, Froggatt and Curbar Volunteer Support Group

### **Region:**

### **What initiatives has your local rural community set up in response to COVID-19 national lockdown?**

I have a degree in Public Health and realised a couple of weeks before lockdown that as we were living in unprecedented times and there are many elderly and vulnerable residents in our local community, that something had to be set up quickly and efficiently to provide help to those in need. I felt that I had the relevant knowledge and experience to set up such a local support group. The plan for the group had to be simple and effective. I set up a Whatsapp group for local residents to join, to either ask for or respond to, requests for help, and not for chat or gossip. I contacted the local Spar and they offered to take telephone orders and payments over the phone and the volunteer group would then provide volunteers to deliver the shopping. I liaised with the two local doctors surgeries, who were keen to have local volunteers to deliver prescriptions for them. I set up two sub groups of prescription delivery volunteers who were already registered patients at the relevant surgery. We also offer to provide lonely residents with a telephone support service and have had responses from qualified residents, who would provide this service for free, as yet there haven't been any requests for this service.

A week before lockdown a flyer was created and printed providing details of our services and the contact details of the lead coordinator and the 10 local volunteer coordinators who represent the four villages we cover. This was then delivered to 750 households. We have also set up a food bank in conjunction with our local Spar and deliver free food parcels every week containing staple food and hygiene items to those who need it. The main WhatsApp group has nearly 200 members. Sub WhatsApp groups have been set up for each GP surgery with 10 volunteers on each group to deliver prescriptions each weekday. There is also a sub group for Food Bank volunteers to organise the making up and the delivery of food parcels. Safeguarding was a very important issue. A group constitution has been written, with a risk assessment and protocols for shopping delivery, prescription delivery and for the food bank and all volunteers have a copy of the relevant protocols to safeguard the community.

Our local Parish Council in Stoney Middleton has "adopted" us and we come under their liability insurance. The group is working well with daily deliveries of prescriptions and weekly deliveries of food parcels. We have received many generous donations from our local community. Presently no one has asked for telephone support. The telephone delivery service with the Spar has been so successful for them they have now employed delivery drivers so the volunteers are no longer required to deliver shopping.

### **What national initiative would help your organisation do things better in your rural area?**

## Rural Services Network – Rural Communities Pulling Together

I think that as there appeared to be no national or local initiative already in place for a pandemic it took time to create a plan of action. This could not be put into place extremely quickly which was required so it was up to local communities to put volunteer groups in place to help those in need when lockdown commenced. We did have difficulties with providing support to the GP surgeries as their procedures and protocols didn't extend to volunteers (e.g. one practice still refuses to write the telephone number of the patient on the medication package and our volunteers really struggled in the beginning to find some of the hidden properties in our rural area- they had to return the medication back to the surgery - the surgery had to ring the patient for instructions and the volunteer had to set out again.

I think there should be a new set of protocols for emergencies such as pandemics to make things easier as we cannot follow the strict rules normally followed in normal times. It would also be good for insurance cover to be available - it took weeks for us to be covered and this was a worry. I also think that there are the "hidden vulnerable people" in this pandemic - those who fall through the cracks and do not receive government support. Those who are already on benefits are finding things are the same financially but those for whatever reason are not entitled to support are really struggling to buy basics - hence the need for a food bank locally.

Paradoxically a large amount of people in the vulnerable group were receiving free food parcels from the government but were not in financial need. They are finding they cannot stop the parcels so are donating to us. I think that maybe as a government initiative it would be sensible to recruit an army of volunteers who could then step into action to quickly put into place support groups if this is required in the future. They would need support and training but there are a wealth of people who have stepped up during this crisis who I am sure would volunteer and emergency plans, systems and protocols could be constructed and then a countrywide response could be provided very quickly.

Our local council has been very supportive but obviously did not have the staff, resources or plans to put into action for a pandemic to follow to enable them to act quickly. Ideally this should be put into place using volunteers who are already qualified and are able and willing to put themselves forward to help to reduce the financial strain on local councils and government.

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**COVID-19**

**RURAL COMMUNITIES PULLING TOGETHER**

