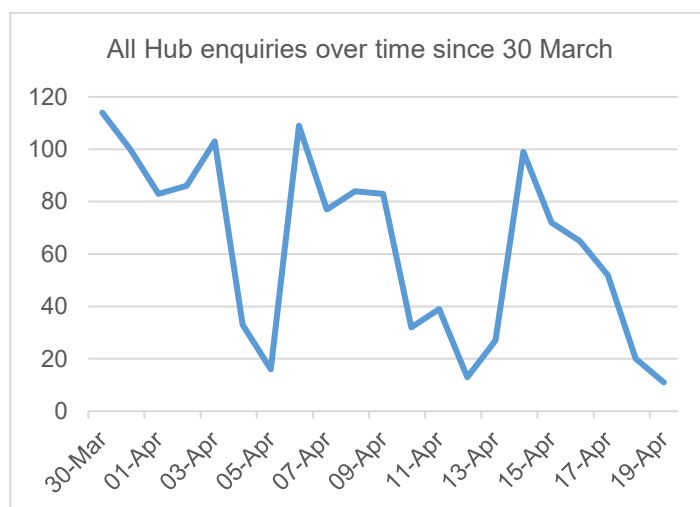




## Weekly News Bulletin for Community and Voluntary Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Partners and Hub Update Subscribers

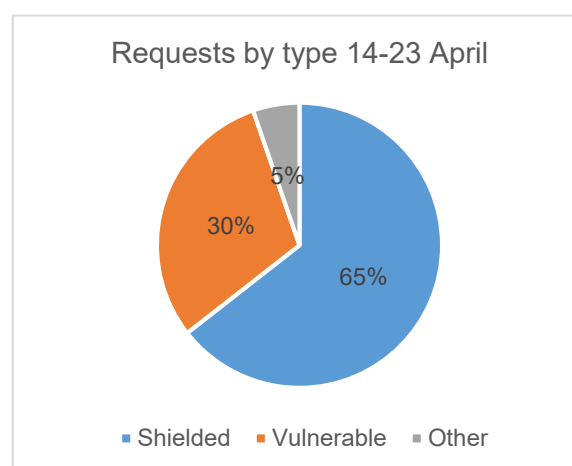
### Facts and figures

- **89** community and voluntary groups and town and parish councils are registered with the Hub and Volunteer Centre West Berkshire
- These groups are co-ordinating at least **3,000\*** **amazing volunteers** across the district  
*\*not all groups have provided numbers*
- **3,233** shielded residents of West Berkshire have been identified by the NHS, of which **2,118** have now registered on the government's website
- **Over 70%** of shielded residents registered on the government's website have indicated they do **NOT** require any more support
- More than **1,000** shielded individuals have been phoned by council officers to check they have everything they need.



Our new digital platform allows us to track volume and types of enquiry in more detail and in real time. We are refining the platform to allow us to identify categories of request. In future, we will be able to tell you what proportion needed help with food, medicine, transport and emotional support. For now, we can report that:

- Over half of calls and emails to the Hub are seeking information - these are dealt with by our contact centre staff, who can signpost people to community groups, council services and other organisations
- Of those that are put through to the Hub team because they need help, around two thirds are people who are **shielded** (they have received a letter from the NHS telling them they must stay at home for 12 weeks)
- The remainder are from people who are isolating because they are **clinically vulnerable** (over 70, with underlying health issues or pregnant women) or they are **vulnerable for other reasons** e.g. in food poverty
- The majority of queries dealt with by the Hub team continue to be around food, shopping and prescriptions



What we can't measure in graphs and numbers is the incredible amount of work that is going on in local communities to support those in need or who are vulnerable as a result of Covid-19. The enquiries we get through the Hub are just the tip of the iceberg. We know that, as well as helping out with shopping, prescriptions and distribution of food parcels, volunteers all over West Berkshire are walking dogs, mowing lawns, transporting people to appointments and providing a friendly voice at the end of the telephone. This support provides a lifeline for these vulnerable people and we at the Hub salute each and every one of you.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Why are shielded residents receiving food parcels that they don't need from the Government?***

Extremely vulnerable (**shielded**) people are those with some clinical conditions that put them at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Shielded people receive a letter from the NHS with advice on the more stringent measures they should take in order to keep safe and are asked to register on the Government's website to indicate whether they do or do not require support with things like food supplies and deliveries. Ticking the 'yes' box makes them eligible for priority slots for supermarket deliveries. However, it also means that they are sent a Government food parcel, whether they want one or not. Those who deselect the support with food option have found that they lose their eligibility for priority delivery slots with the supermarkets.

Unfortunately, we have no control over what is being done at the national level to help shielded residents of West Berkshire. We cannot share the NHS list of shielded people with groups due to strict Government rules. We are advising shielded people to tick the 'yes' box for food support if they want a priority supermarket delivery slot, even if they do not want a food parcel. Unwanted food parcels can be redistributed by foodbanks to those in need. Any help from local groups to facilitate the collection and delivery of unwanted food parcels to the foodbanks would be much appreciated.

### ***Is there any financial support available to assist community groups?***

The council will upon request make available a **£500 community float** to groups and organisations providing shopping support to people identified as 'vulnerable' under COVID-19 government guidelines. The float can be used to reimburse volunteers who have made a personal payment for shopping they have carried out for a vulnerable person. The community group will be responsible for requesting reimbursement from the vulnerable person and the group will need to have a bank account. To date, five groups from Purley, Beedon, Streatley, Hungerford and Theale have taken up the council's offer. Please contact us for more information.

In addition, Greenham Trust has established a **Coronavirus Emergency Fund** for community groups to **apply for up to £1,000** funding to meet additional costs incurred whilst responding to their community's needs in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. This might be travel expenses of volunteers, leaflet printing costs, obtaining and storing local food bank supplies, etc. Groups will need to accurately demonstrate the costs before submitting any proposal by email to [grantenquiries@greenhamtrust.com](mailto:grantenquiries@greenhamtrust.com).

### ***How can we help vulnerable people who are struggling to maintain good mental health?***

As the Coronavirus outbreak continues and social distancing and isolation measures remain in place, the nation's mental health has undoubtedly been affected. In response, the 'Every Mind Matters' platform has been updated to incorporate the new COVID-19 mental health guidance, providing content to help people look after their mental and physical health while staying at home. This includes further updates to the 'Mind Plan', as well as tips and advice for parents who are concerned about their children. Public Health England will continue to update this content and signpost users to further helpful information and resources.

### **Advice leaflet for West Berkshire residents seeking extra support**

Up at the Hub distribution centre this week, we distributed 750 printed copies of the advice leaflet and activity sheet created by our public health colleagues. We took advantage of volunteers arriving to collect food parcels to hand over bulk orders of leaflets for onward delivery to vulnerable residents by groups in Hungerford, Hermitage, Lambourn, Inkpen, and Tilehurst. Orders from groups in Bucklebury, Basildon, Compton and Upper Bucklebury are next to be processed, while another 600 leaflets will be posted out to shielded residents who require support.

The A4 size leaflets and activity sheets will now be distributed by volunteers to those they are already supporting in their communities, and we are so very grateful for their help with this. Orders can be collected by prior arrangement from the Hub distribution centre at Newbury rugby club. Please let us know if you would like a supply of leaflets for the vulnerable people you are supporting in your local community.



## Citizens Advice West Berkshire

Although face-to-face sessions cannot take place, Citizens Advice are still open and there are many ways to access their free, confidential and impartial advice. They can help with income maximisation and benefits as well as employment and Universal Credit and they also offer a local Carers Advice Service. You can access Citizens Advice via our [website](#).



## Scottish & Southern Electricity Network Priority Service

SSEN offers a Priority Services Register (in partnership with Thames Water) for vulnerable residents for whom a power cut is particularly distressing and difficult. This is a completely free service and is in no way connected to the electricity supplier sending out the bills. SSEN look after the network for the whole area. The service offers support and assistance in the event of a power outage, whether planned or unplanned, or in the event of a water shortage. Information and registration is available on the [SSEN website](#).

## What you need to know about coronavirus and food

The Food Standards Agency has published new guidance on coronavirus and food, including advice on food hygiene, food packaging and social distancing while shopping. You can find out more [here](#).

## Farewell to Alice in Logistics

This week, the Hub team said goodbye to Alice, whom many of you will know as our Logistics lead over the last five weeks and the main link between the council and community groups. Alice has now returned to her day job with the council's property team and we will all miss her breadth of knowledge and no nonsense approach. However, she leaves behind a detailed description of her role and a comprehensive instruction manual which will enable her successors to continue her good work.

*"Thank you for the amazing work that you are doing in your communities and I wish you all the best." Alice*

As time goes on, new team members from among council staff will be covering the individual Hub roles on a rota basis. Some staff will be working remotely from home, particularly over the weekends, so please bear with us. Jo will continue to be the single point of contact for Town and Parish Councils (Mondays to Fridays).

The image shows a testimonial box with a light orange background. At the top left, there is a logo for "Community Support HUB" with "XXX" below "HUB". To the right of the logo are three stylized human figures in yellow, orange, and white, with their arms raised. Below the logo and figures is a testimonial in red text: "Fantastic help for me as a Dementia Carer and my Mum 87, in isolation. Well done to everyone and all the organisations in West Berks who are making a big difference in difficult times." followed by a thumbs up icon and a heart icon.

## Celebrating our Local Heroes!

We have set up a brand new [local heroes page](#) on our website where you will be able to read about all the fantastic work the community is doing to pull together and help each other during this challenging time. And our vulnerable residents really do appreciate what you are doing! We will be including examples of positive feedback like this from a dementia carer and her mum.

We have also set up a [www.facebook.com/CommunitySupportHubGroup](https://www.facebook.com/CommunitySupportHubGroup) page to support all community groups and volunteers, providing and sharing advice, good news stories and guidance.

## Individual cases

Please ensure that all queries about individual cases are directed to the Hub via the general email [westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk) or by calling **01635 503579**. This is to ensure they are dealt with promptly, effectively and in line with guidelines on dealing with vulnerable adults.

With very best wishes,

The Hub Team