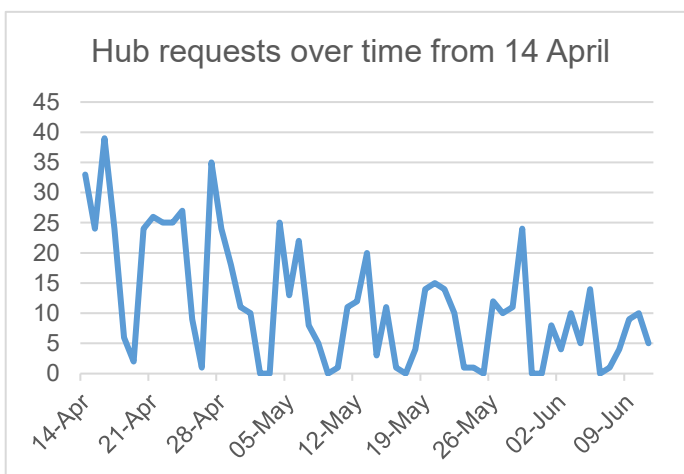




## Weekly News Bulletin for Community and Voluntary Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Partners and Hub Update Subscribers

### Facts and figures

- **2,807** shielded\* residents of West Berkshire have registered on the government's website out of a total of **4,437** identified by the NHS
- **78%** of shielded residents registered have now indicated they do **NOT** require support
- Nevertheless, **2,499 residents** have been contacted by council officers to check they have everything they need and **14 police welfare visits** have been carried out where our calls or emails were not answered
- **67%** of all requests for assistance to the Hub this week were from shielded residents



*\*shielded people are those who have received a letter from the NHS telling them they must stay at home for 12 weeks because their health condition makes them extremely vulnerable to Covid-19. The shielded list is under constant review by GPs and hospital clinicians, and they are responsible for informing people that they have been removed from the list.*

### Government changes to the way shielded and vulnerable people are supported

The total number of NHS shielded in West Berkshire has increased this week and continues to fluctuate, as individuals are added or removed by their GP or hospital clinician. The Government has recently made changes to the process for informing people that they have been removed from the shielded list and has written to GPs to ensure this is done appropriately and sensitively.

The number of shielded residents in West Berkshire who have registered on the Government's website as needing support has reduced to 615. Of these, 533 were scheduled to receive Government food parcels this week. We understand that everyone on the shielded list is now eligible for a priority supermarket delivery slot without having to sign up for a food parcel. As a result, we expect the number of people receiving Government food parcels to reduce further, leaving a smaller number of people who either cannot access the supermarkets' online food ordering systems or cannot afford to buy food for themselves.



Meanwhile, the Government is exploring local government models for devolving food support for the shielded. All options guarantee existing priority supermarket slots. Further consultation with local authorities is expected before a way forward is agreed and changes are implemented. This week, the Government announced that an additional £63 million is to be distributed to local authorities in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to coronavirus.

Medical experts are meeting on Monday 15 June to review Government shielding policy and an announcement on the next steps is expected by the end of next week.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Can the Hub influence the shielded list and Government food parcels?***



We continue to receive calls from people who are concerned that they have received a letter or text from the Government telling them that they have been removed from the shielded list (see above). This decision is made by medical professionals and we advise people to contact their GP if they have concerns, as it is not something we can influence.

5 June 2020

#### **Update from the National Shielding Service**

We also receive calls from people who have stopped receiving Government food parcels or longer wish to receive them, or who find that the contents do not meet their dietary needs. We advise people to go online to the Government website if they wish to de-register or re-register for a food parcel, or if they wish to register special dietary requirements, as the food parcels are distributed from a central supplier and outside of our control. People can register on the Government website [HERE](#)

We receive multiple sets of shielding data for West Berkshire from the Government on a daily basis. We merge and review this twice a week so that we can work out what has changed, when food parcels are scheduled for delivery and who may be in need of further support. You can find out more about the shielded patients list on the NHS Digital website [HERE](#).

### ***What help is available for those needing transport to routine medical appointments?***

Most community transport schemes have had to close during Covid-19 as volunteer drivers may themselves be shielding. We encourage GP surgeries to explore the following alternatives with patients before advising them to contact the Hub, as social distancing rules mean that many community groups are unable to provide a transport service, much as they would wish to do so. The majority of volunteers are members of the public who do not have access to suitable vehicles, although we know some community groups work with local taxi services and others are fortunate enough to have volunteers with large 4x4 vehicles.



**NHS**  
**South Central**  
**Ambulance Service**  
NHS Foundation Trust

[South Central Ambulance Service](#) runs a non-emergency patient transport service (NEPTS) which can be booked and managed online once the patient is registered (referred by GP or self-registered by calling **0300 123 3235** with their NHS number). Currently, bookings can only be made 72 hours in advance of an appointment.

[NHS Volunteer Responders](#) can provide transport to hospital/medical appointments but the support needs to be requested by the GP, hospital or other professional and referrals can take up to 72 hours to approve.

### ***When will bus services in West Berkshire resume?***

Next week, we'll resume some of our Connect minibus services, including those between Newbury and Downlands villages, Thatcham - Theale, Thatcham – Beenham/Calcot, Lambourn - Swindon and Hungerford Town.

Passengers must have a face covering in order to travel and the exact fare must be offered as change cannot be given.

You can find out more about the changes to our Connect minibus service and other bus services in West Berkshire [HERE](#)



## Newbury Rugby Club and WBC Transport



As those who regularly collect food parcels from the rugby club will know, the Hub brings together WBC Transport, Newbury Rugby Club and volunteer delivery drivers from community groups across the district to facilitate the distribution of [Spotlight UK](#) food parcels. This is a two-way operation, with volunteers from Streatley and elsewhere bringing in food donations to the rugby club, when they are not suitable for use by [West Berkshire Foodbank](#) or 'grass roots' food supply initiatives run by community groups such as [The Lambourn Junction](#).

Recently, the team at the rugby club received a 3kg bag of rice and other bulky items as well as a donation of lettuces from someone's allotment! None of this goes to waste, as a member of the rugby club takes it to [Loose Ends](#), where he is a volunteer. On another occasion, the team was able to collect and store food donated by a local business whose freezers had broken down and ensure that it got to [Newbury Soup Kitchen](#). The [Newbury Community Resource Centre](#) is also delivering food supplies and parcels to those in need. It's great to know that all these organisations are

working together to help individuals and families struggling to afford to buy food in these difficult times.

In an emergency situation, we have spare food parcels up at the rugby club, which the team is able to deliver immediately to those in need. One lady in Hungerford was so grateful to receive her food parcel, she burst into tears – the WBC team member had included a packet of blueberry muffins from her own shopping bag as she dropped the parcel off on her way home from work.

## Celebrating Carers Week 8-14 June 2020

It's national [Carers Week](#), recognising the great work of carers, not just during the pandemic, but each and every day. People of all ages care for people in all types of situations and circumstances. This can be a tough job at the best of times, but the current situation has brought additional challenges.

Young carers (under 18) provide regular and ongoing care for a parent or family member which means they often miss out on social activities. During lockdown, some of our young carers have been unable to leave their homes as they have been shielding vulnerable family members. Here's a video clip of Joe Sutton, our [Young Carers Project Worker](#) speaking to some of our young carers about what it's like to be a carer in lockdown and why they're looking forward to taking part in their new Virtual Youth Club.



## Good news stories – please keep them coming in!

During the transition period to the new Hub arrangements, we have not had as much time as we would like to keep up with your good news stories. However, in the weeks to come, we will be featuring more of these on our social media and [Hub Facebook](#) page and you can find more stories, photos and videos about the wonderful work of West Berkshire's volunteers on our [Local Heroes](#) website.

With our grateful thanks and best wishes

*The Hub Team*

*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.*