



Community Action Isle of Wight *at the Riverside*

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Community Action IW has been very busy throughout the recent, challenging months.

We have been part of the Community Cell group set up by the local authority to assess and respond to the crisis and we set up a website of useful information to support the Isle of Wight Council Helpline Staff, local support hubs and the public generally: <https://www.iowcoronavirus.co.uk/>

We helped the creation of a string network of 26 local hubs covering the whole Island, supporting them with up to date information on emerging policies and requirements and sharing good practice around community activity, volunteer responses and other issues. These hubs have continued to provide prescription collection, shopping and in some cases hot meals, welfare calls and more.

We worked with the hubs and the IW Coronavirus Community Help group to help recruit volunteers for the hubs and also the public sector and care homes and the total number of volunteers from around the geographic hubs got to over 1400 at its peak.

We secured £19,000 of funding from the national NET programme to support Covid related responses and are just about to secure circa £70,000 of National Lottery funding to support further community resilience development work on the Island.

Within Cowes Community Action set up a team of around 24 volunteers who have helped 300 people with a mixture of prescription collection and shopping, with over 400 prescription trips and over 200 shopping visits being undertaken to date.

In relation to our support work in Cowes, it became clear that we needed a mechanism to help some people manage their payment for the prescriptions and occasional shopping being done on their behalf, so we set up a system whereby volunteers paid for the shopping and we then reimbursed the volunteers and invoiced people for the shopping once it had happened. To date over 150 transactions have been managed in this way and we've helped the NHS Children's Mental health support team with the shopping payments for some of their clients who they have been supporting.

In partnership with the IOW council, we have been assisting with follow up calls for vulnerable residents who have contacted the council helpline. The aim with each call is to ensure that residents got the help and support they asked for. We also identified those who would like regular welfare contact to ensure things were still going well. A room at County Hall was provided, with 4 workstations for CAIW staff and volunteers – all calls were required to come from a council number. Over 1200 outbound follow up calls have been made to residents.

The Island's Council for Voluntary Service



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Our Optio voluntary car service of course had to stop but we continued to undertake welfare calls to over 450 of our members throughout. At the very start, all members were contacted to ensure that knew the Isle of Wight Council helpline number and that they had enough food and medicines at that time. Not all members required ongoing calls but 50% did and that has reduced slowly over the course of the pandemic.

We've also supported the great work of the Embracing Age Wight Mask Ask, acting as the Newport distribution hub for their personal protective equipment provided for free to care homes and providers.

Much of the day job has not stopped it has just changed in its nature with continuing support for our Home Office funded refugee settlement project, development work around Community Lead Housing continuing.

Our Riverside home has continued to host a small number of staff both from ourselves and from other groups within the building but has been closed to the public and our Active Living Learning Disability day support stopped but we are slowly re-opening albeit with reduced numbers everywhere due to the need for social distancing.

Our Island Community Ventures trading arm has been particularly busy in challenging circumstances with Godshill Post Office and Shop providing a lifeline to local residents in the village and also taking on a large number of local shopping deliveries.

Scarrots Lane Bakery, whilst having to shut the shop in Newport for a period, continued to supply a number of village shops across the Island and also provided home deliveries in the Newport and Carisbrooke area.

The current challenge is trying to re-start the Riverside, the Active Living Service and the Optio voluntary car service both safely and as cost effectively as possible and all have now started back up albeit with restrictions. New limits on numbers allowed to use our different rooms and one way systems through the building are being put in place and for Optio plastic screens have been installed in some of our drivers' cars and new rules and procedures on how the car service works introduced.

The challenges will continue to evolve but we will endeavour to keep coming up with the best solutions we can in the circumstances, to enable us to continue to provide as many useful services to Island residents as possible.

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