

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

Date 6th October 2020

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Graham Breeze
Portfolio Holder for Digital Services**

**REPORT TITLE: Powys County Council support for shielding individuals
during the COVID 19 pandemic**

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the end of “shielding” and the council’s welfare calls.
- 1.2 To provide information on the future planning to support our vulnerable residents during the ongoing pandemic.

2. Background

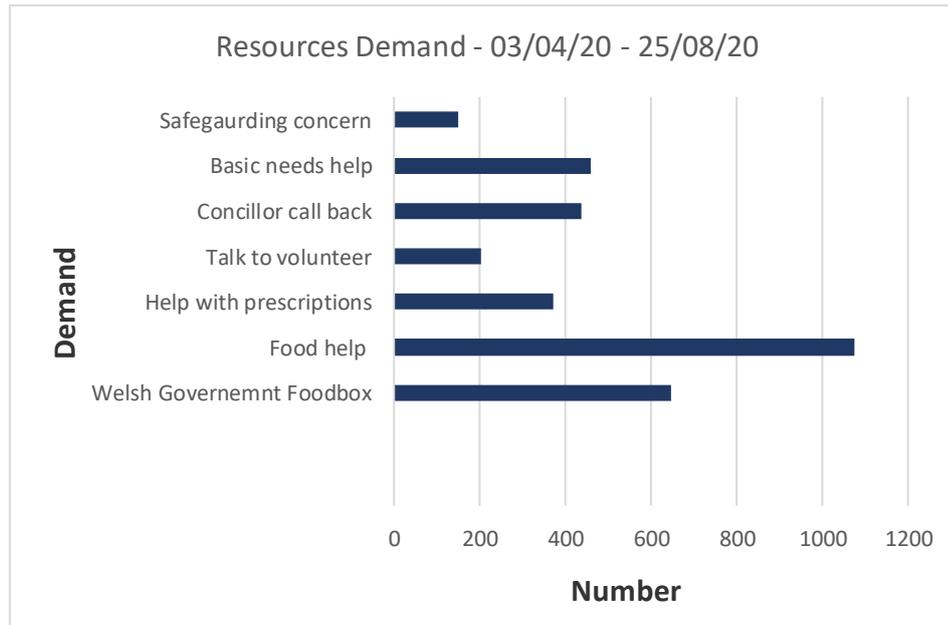
- 2.1 On 23rd March 2020 the UK Government took the unprecedented step to try and limit the spread of COVID-19 and announced that residents with serious underlying health conditions would need to “shield”. This meant that many of our residents were unable to leave their home and unable to get the basic needs of food and prescriptions.
- 2.2 ‘**The Shielded Group**’ were identified by the NHS and were advised by letter to self-isolate. The council received details for all these individuals from Welsh Government and contacted each of them to offer them a Welsh Government food parcel and to identify other needs they may have. The Council also identified other Powys residents as being vulnerable from data held in Social Care, Housing and Customer Services and welfare calls were made to these individuals too.
- 2.3 The role of the local authority has been vital in supporting our vulnerable and shielding residents throughout this challenging period. We acted as the first point of contact for all individuals with concerns about their own individual situation.
- 2.4 The delivery of that support was very much a collective effort between many services and individuals within the authority as well PAVO and other local groups. To support the voluntary activity, the Community Sector Emergency Response Team (CSERT) was established by the

Regional Partnership, led by PAVO. Local councillors and volunteer groups also provided a critical role.

2.5 The support the Council offered to our vulnerable residents included: -

- **Welsh Government food boxes** - Those in the Shielded Group who were unable to rely on family, friends or local community support were provided with a basic package of food and household essentials, delivered direct to their door weekly by a food service supplier.
- **Emergency food parcel** - Those in the Shielded Group that required a WG food parcel but did not have enough food until they received their first delivery, were asked whether they would like their details passed onto PAVO, if they did an automatic e-mail request was made to PAVO requesting that they contact the individual to provide the necessary support.
- **Help with getting food** - For those that had not yet received a food parcel or had no other means of securing food, a service request was automatically e-mailed to PAVO who were able to provide a food shopping service.
- **Help with getting medicines/prescriptions** - For those that had no means of securing a delivery of prescriptions then a service request was automatically e-mailed to PAVO who provided a prescription collection and delivery service.
- **Befriending Services Social contact / wellbeing support** - For those residents that were socially excluded or had no other support network, a befriending service was offered via PAVO.
- **Daily Living Support** - Residents were asked whether they needed support with daily living, if they did then this instigated a service request to the council's Assist team who contacted the resident to discuss their requirements and put in place additional support should it have been needed.
- **Council call back** - To ensure contact was maintained with our residents during this time the council offered a weekly or fortnightly call back service.
- **Councillors call back** - The residents were also asked whether they would like their details passed to their local councillor so that their councillor could make a call back to them.
- **Safeguarding Concerns** - Any safeguarding concerns that were brought to the attention of the call handler were followed up with Assist or Childrens Front door.

2.6 The chart below illustrates the requests of support from our residents from the 3rd April 2020 to the end of the welfare calls on the 25th August 2020. A total of 23,791 calls have been made.



- 2.7 Feedback from residents who have received a welfare call and support has been extremely positive with the council receiving several compliments. The below lists some of the feedback received from our residents.
- *“I would like to thank all at Powys County Council for all their help during this difficult time,”*
 - *“I think this has been a wonderful service, thank you to everyone,”*
 - *“Thank you. I will miss these calls but all I can say is thank you,”*
 - *“This has been a brilliant service. I have really enjoyed these phone calls and I for one will be sad that I will no longer be speaking with you. I am thankful you are still thinking of us by offering this PAVO service. Brilliant,”*
 - *“Everyone in Powys County Council has been brilliant, I can’t thank them enough. I really do enjoy getting these phone calls,”*
 - *“The service you have provided over the last three months has been outstanding. I have never felt belittled by any of the welfare callers and I know my husband, who is 87, really appreciates them too,”*
 - *“Brilliant service provided by you and all of your colleagues in Powys County Council. I live on my own, so I look forward to receiving them. Thank you,”*
 - *“Please can you put it on record on wonderful I think this service Powys County Council are offering to all vulnerable people in the county. I have friends in America and when I tell them the service my local authority is offering; they are amazed and staggered that a local authority cares so much for its residents. In America people are only a number and have no identity, a faceless society. Therefore, on behalf of myself, neighbours, and the many thousands of vulnerable people in Powys, can I thank*

not all the welfare callers, but those behind the scenes such their managers and all those involved in this process. In this time of uncertainty, it is reassuring to know that there are people out there who care for you and are not out to get something for themselves. I will be writing to my local MP to praise you all.

- 2.8 When shielding was paused on the 16 August 2020, the Welsh Government Food Parcel scheme also came to an end. However, support continues to be on offer to those who are on the Shielded Persons List (SPL), This includes: -
- Food: Priority supermarket shopping slots will continue to be available to those on the SPL after the 16th August 2020.
 - Medicines: The National Volunteer Prescription Delivery Scheme will be available until the end of September.
- 2.9 Other support i.e. Social Care contacts / well-being support will be led through the Local authority and existing relationships that are in place with Community Voluntary Councils to provide the wide range of support that the communities require.
- 2.10 During Covid there were various community-based groups set up (including local organisations, town and community councils, county councillors and other interested parties). CSERT has established 13 community support networks based on the community connector localities and led by the community connector service.
- 2.11 In addition to coordinating the voluntary action in each of these areas, the networks have connected with 120 new COVID voluntary initiatives across the county. PAVO have provided guidelines and safe volunteering information to groups and several have received formal support via the PAVO Development team. The Community Connector service also provided funding to a number of these groups to enable them to carry out their Covid 19 response.

3. Planning going forward

- 3.1 The SPL will continue to be maintained and updated should there be a need to ask individuals to shield again in the future. The Local Authority will continue to hold the SPL and continue to receive updates from Welsh Government monthly, (shared via Objective Connect). The frequency of this will be revisited to meet future needs i.e. in the event of local/national outbreaks. The only exception will be where individuals have exercised their right to be removed from the SPL upon request these will be forwarded to the council as they are received.

- 3.2 Should there be another lockdown locally or nationally we will want to ensure that our most vulnerable and shielding residents are safe and well and that their needs are met. We propose reinstating the support that was in place previously, taking the lead role in offering support for sourcing food, medicines, prescriptions, and well-being, including the reintroduction of the welfare calls.
- 3.3 In July 2020, the Regional Partnership Board agreed that the CSERT would be reconfigured into a Community Support & Response Group (CSRG) to lead in community response to Covid19 (See annex 1). The CSRG will report to and through the RPB's Workforce Futures Board.

4. Advice

- 4.1 We have already seen many towns and cities across the country have varying lock down measures imposed. A second wave is occurring and similarly additional measures may need to be imposed in Powys at some point. Therefore, there is a need that we are prepared and ready to support our residents should this happen.
- 4.2 The same provision will not be provided for a local area lockdown and a whole Powys wide lockdown due to the Chief Medical Officer currently concluding that shielding does not need to be re-introduced during current restrictions being enforced.
- 4.3 We will work closely with Community Support & Response Group (CSRG) to support the coordination of the third sector activity, to galvanise and harness the contribution of the voluntary sector across Powys in order to deliver what matters to people, improve the independence of individuals and reduce the demands on statutory health and care services.
- 4.4 Community resources that are available will be important in ensuring our residents can access the support they need. This will be discussed in conjunction with PAVO to ensure that there is a balance between ensuring our residents remain safe but not stifling community responses.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 Support for vulnerable residents who contact us during a full or partial lockdown for Powys will be provided by CSRG. Active unified communications by the Council and PAVO will be implemented guiding residents to the support provided by CSRG.
- 5.2 Support for any vulnerable residents known to Social Care will be managed through their normal case worker as appropriate.

6. Legal implications

(State here any legal implications and confirmation that the report has been approved by the Monitoring Officer)

7. Data Protection

Considerations were given both nationally and locally as to the appropriate use of personal data in the delivery of support to those on the SPL. Going forward any changes as to the use of such information will be reconsidered to ensure ongoing compliance and protection of the individual's information and privacy.

8. Comment from local member(s)

9. Integrated Impact Assessment

9.1 There is no impact assessment completed at this stage.

10. Recommendation

10.1 There are no recommendations as this report was produced for information and awareness.

Contact Officer: Diane Reynolds
Tel: 01597 826008
Email: diane.reynolds@powys.gov.uk

Head of Service: Diane Reynolds

Corporate Director: Ness Young