

## **New emergency support line launched for vulnerable people needing urgent help**

Today (Monday 30 March) Cumbria County Council and partners have launched a new emergency support service for people at high risk of becoming seriously ill, as a result of COVID-19, and who do not have support available from friends, family or neighbours.

Those at high risk include people over 70 years old, pregnant women and those with underlying health conditions who should be protecting themselves by staying at home. The majority of these people will already be receiving support from family, friends or local voluntary groups with tasks like shopping or collection of medicines if they require it. But we know that a small number of people will not have this support. If they have no alternative, these people will now be able to call the Freephone number to request help with getting food, medicines, essential supplies and home deliveries.

Cumbria County Council has been working closely with District Council, CVS, Cumbria Community Foundation, community and voluntary sector, private sector and military to establish these new arrangements. To support the new helpline every district is coordinating a supply of essential food, medicines and supplies which can only be accessed via the emergency helpline or email. The requests received asking for help will then be matched with local support and supplies being offered by community groups, volunteers, councils and businesses.

**The Emergency telephone support line is 0800 783 1966**

**Or you can email your request for help to [COVID19support@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:COVID19support@cumbria.gov.uk)**

**Further details about this support service can be found online at [Cumbria.gov.uk](https://www.cumbria.gov.uk).**

**The telephone 'call' centre will operate Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5pm and 10am to 2pm at weekends. The service will also accept referrals from members of the public who may be concerned about people in their community.**

Cumbria is already seeing widespread community and voluntary sector support for the response to COVID-19 and informal support, including neighbourhood WhatsApp groups and community Facebook groups, alongside a commitment from existing community emergency planning groups, local churches and faith groups and formal voluntary sector organisations who are working with councils and NHS.

**Cllr Deborah Earl, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, said:**

*"People who are self-isolating or shielding must not go out to get food shopping, many of these people have good support networks who they can rely on. But for those who don't we are launching the new emergency support helpline.*

*"It is important that people who may need support speak to their family or friends and ask for help to make arrangements for the delivery of food, medicines or essential services and supplies.*

*"Together we can look after each other. We want to reassure the public that we're ready to provide support to our most vulnerable residents who may not have friends or family available to help them.*

*“In some instances we may need people in the community to make us aware of those who are most vulnerable or isolated....”*

**Carolyn Otley, Cumbria CVS, Chair of Community Resilience Group:**

*“It is important to speak to others and ask them to help you to make arrangements for delivery of food, medicines and essential services and supplies, and look after your physical and mental health and wellbeing.*

*“It’s been reassuring to see there is already widespread community and voluntary sector support for the response to COVID-19 across Cumbria. We all must continue to work together to help those who are isolated or at high risk.”*

The helpline will also accept referrals from members of the public who may be concerned about people in their community.

For up to date information on COVID-19 in your area, please go to <https://cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus/communities.asp>.

Ends

Notes for Editors

1. Providing the support and supplies to the helpline are six district ‘virtual’ hubs. They’re not physical buildings in specific locations available for public access. They are back office resources providing the supplies and coordinating the offers of help and assistance which can be accessed via the helpline and email.
2. The new welfare coordination hubs have been set up as part of a wider network of support across the country at the request of the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government to support 1.5 million people who are shielding. But in Cumbria the offer of help and assistance has been extended beyond those ‘shielding’ to a wider group of people who are vulnerable and at risk.
3. The Government and NHS are already supporting people in Cumbria who have been identified in the highest risk group, and who are unable to rely on family or friends for adequate support throughout the period of shielding. Shielding is a measure to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. For this group, Government are arranging for the provision of a basic package of food and household essentials to be supplied and delivered by major food service suppliers with established national delivery infrastructure.

**Bite-size message**

Cumbria County Council has launched a new emergency support service for people at high risk of becoming seriously ill as a result of COVID-19 and who do not have support available from friends, family or neighbours. People with no wider support network. **The helpline can be accessed on 0800 783 1966 or via email on [COVID19support@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:COVID19support@cumbria.gov.uk). Full details can be found online at [Cumbria.gov.uk](https://cumbria.gov.uk).** This new support service has been set up by Cumbria County Council as a result of close partnership working with District Council, CVS, Cumbria Community Foundation, community and voluntary sector, and private sector. This service provides a vital link between people at risk, and those who are able to help them.