

Cllr Barbara Williams

April 2020

During the last few weeks since the Lockdown due to the Covid19 outbreak, I have been keeping you all updated regarding information and generally supporting our community as best I can during this very difficult time, I truly thank everyone for the support shown to our residents, especially those registered to help with shopping and getting and delivering prescriptions to the more vulnerable, and Jan for acting as coordinator also the sterling work Central Stores are doing.... I thank you all....

Caring for the vulnerable

There are two schemes running to support the elderly and vulnerable.

The national scheme for the 'shielded group'. These are the people who are most at risk if they contract coronavirus (cancer patients etc).

These people will receive dedicated support. Please see the attached FAQs for more information on the scheme.

Below this is a group of people who we know need support but do not meet the shielded criteria.

Many of these people are our residents we have been supporting

The [Worcestershire Here 2 Help](#) scheme has been created to support these people.

If there is anyone in need of support beyond what our parish organisation is able to sustainably offer, then you should fill in in the forms on the website.

There are two forms:

- One for people who are in need of support and do not have any existing help from adult social care, friends, family or another organisation
- One for people who are making offers of help (this includes voluntary groups)

There is also a dedicated number which is: 01905 768053. This can be used Monday to Sunday between 8am and 8pm. The demand for this service is growing

The Here2Help initiative will provide support in matching Local Voluntary Sector capability and any Local Authority capability to local needs. For that reason, it is important voluntary groups providing support register as well as those individuals needing help. Hopefully any unmet demand can be monitored and actions put in place to meet that demand.

Coronavirus update from Public Health England

New guidance from the Cabinet Office

There was some confusion, especially last weekend, over the rules about whether or not people could drive to a park or green space for their one form of exercise a day. The Cabinet Office has issued new [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#) to answer this and other questions.

GOV.UK WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Service A new GOV.UK WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Service has now been launched. The purpose of this product is to combat the spread of misinformation propagated through WhatsApp on an Official Government channel. To use the service, members of the public simply add +44 7860 064422 to their contacts and send a WhatsApp message saying "Hi".

Impact on our services

No other services have been affected since our last update. A full list of affected services are available on our update pages www.wychavon.gov.uk/coronavirus and www.malvern hills.gov.uk/coronavirus

Our revenues and benefits and housing phone lines are extremely busy so there may be a delay in answering or returning a call. Please bear with us.

We are pleased to say the staffing position amongst FCC (WDC) and at The Depot (MHDC) remain strong and we have been able to maintain all our waste and recycling collection services with the exception of bulky waste collections.

Signs ups for our garden waste collection service is showing strong growth in both areas and in Wychavon is double the number that would normally be expected at this time of year.

We are aware of some companies offering to empty wheeled bins for a charge, particularly in the Malvern Hills area. We have put messages out to warn residents this is unnecessary.

We are also starting to develop communications around fly-tipping and household duty of care as with the Household Recycling Centres closed and people spending more time at home, the number of house and shed clearances etc are increasing. This could potentially increase the opportunity for rogue traders.

We are advising residents not to carry out house clearances etc unless they can store their waste as we are unable to take side waste, as it would overwhelm the collection service.

Payments to businesses

We have now received £55million from the Government to start paying support grants to eligible businesses across both council areas. More than 1,800 businesses across both council areas have registered their details so far. We are raising awareness of the fact businesses need to register to receive the funding. A promotion on social media is currently running and has been seen more than 40,000 times across both council areas and we are sending regular updates to businesses

signed up to our mailing list. We will also be calling around businesses next week to ensure nobody is missed.

All the information businesses need and the application form can be accessed through our coronavirus update page www.wychavon.gov.uk/coronavirus and www.malvern hills.gov.uk/coronavirus

Changes to benefits

The standard Universal Credit allowance has been increased for the next 12 months.

Single people under 25 will now receive £342.72 (up from £256.05)

Single people over 25 will now receive £409.89 (up from £323.22)

Couples under 25 will receive £488.59 (up from £401.92)

Couples over 25 will receive £594.04 (up from £507.37)

Working tax credit has also been increased for 12 months with the planned basic element rising from £1,995 per year to £3,040.

People claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit will also see an increase in their Local Housing Allowance.

The Government has also automatically extended awards and suspended reviews or reassessments across all benefits for three months including Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

Face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits have been suspended for three months, including any new claims.

For PIP claimants, if an assessment has already taken place this will continue to be processed. If an assessment has been scheduled, claimants will be contacted by the assessment provider to discuss how this will be taken forward.

ESA and UC claimants whose cases have been referred to the provider will be contacted to take this forward.

We have also heard that the DWP on the PIP helpline message seem to be allowing 3 months for the return of PIP2 forms.

Free parking

Malvern Hills District Council has introduced free parking for NHS and health care staff in all of its car parks.

In both council areas NHS and health care staff can also park in on street parking bays for as long as they need, while carrying out essential duties and displaying supporting evidence eg ID badge.

School meals voucher scheme

The Department for Education (DfE) has launched a national voucher scheme for children eligible for free school meals, allowing them to continue to access meals whilst they stay at home.

Schools can now provide every eligible child with a weekly shopping voucher worth £15 to spend at supermarkets while schools are closed due to coronavirus.

Read the full announcement at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/voucher-scheme-launches-for-schools-providing-free-school-meals>

Pet owners and livestock keepers

The existing advice for pet owners and livestock keepers on maintaining the welfare of their animals during the coronavirus pandemic has been updated.

Anyone with symptoms of coronavirus should arrange for someone else who is not self-isolating to care for their livestock. Where this is not possible, they should ensure the basic needs of the animals are met while adhering to PHE guidelines.

If they are too unwell to care for their animals and there is no one to help, they are advised to call their local authority.

Read the guidance for pet owners and livestock keepers:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals>

Be scam aware

There are a huge number of scams circulating at the moment. We have added information to our coronavirus update page with links, warning people to be on their guard. Promotion has also been carried out using our other communication channels.

If you are made aware of any scams then please contact the Trading Standards team on 01905 822799.

With people struggling financially, concern is growing about the potential for loan sharks to start preying on people in need. Advice on what to do and how to report loan sharks is available below.

<https://www.stoploansharks.co.uk/warning-issued-over-loan-sharks-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

Keep Safe

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