



CABINET- 30TH JULY 2020

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY RESPONSE- COMMUNITY CONNECTION- BUDDY SCHEME

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR- SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the community response buddy scheme including current activity and planned step-down/transition.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report summarises the buddy scheme to date by briefly setting out some of the headlines and operational statistics. It explains the plans for transition of the current model and makes some recommendations for decision.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet:
1. Note the information contained in this report
 2. Agree to allocate £130,262 of funding from Social Services earmarked reserves, as outlined in the financial implication 10.1 to 10.6 of this report. This budget would cover the proposed appointments for a period of 2-years.
 3. Agree to establish a precursor for Corporate Volunteering, building on the goodwill evidenced in Appendix 1, by supporting staff to continue in the buddy role by adding a category to the Leave of Absence Policy of up to 2 days per annum in hours, pro rata. The expectation being that this would be matched with an equivalent period of their own time. Evaluate the results after 6 months by surveying the staff and managers involved with a view to establishing a wider Corporate Volunteering Scheme.
 4. Note that a further report will be presented relating to the Corporate Review on Corporate Volunteering.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To effectively plan for step-down/transition of the buddy scheme.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The buddy scheme began on the 16.3.20 with a need to deliver a community response to support the following group to remain self-isolated:
- Over 70 and/or with an underlying vulnerability related to a health condition.*
 - With no other support network or close family
- 5.2 That same week 385 staff responded to an initial e mail asking for volunteers to support this group; to provide support with shopping, prescription pick-up, keeping in touch etc. This initial staff volunteer cohort included school based staff and Elected Members. Volunteers were categorised by postcode area so that they could help as close to their own community as possible.
- 5.3 A dedicated COVID vulnerable telephone line was set up and 76,620 letters were sent out to all households informing that if people met the criteria above they could request support. At the same time 50,000 'Good Neighbour' cards were distributed among the community and to Elected Members, AMs and MPs.
- 5.4 The Corporate Policy Unit has managed the system with assistance from across all Council services. Services that had effectively shut down mainstream activity offered staff to the Buddy scheme as part of the normal working week.
- 5.5 Guidance to buddies is well-developed and has been issued by e mail, SMS and through a dedicated web page.
- 5.6 At peak 1560 Vulnerable People (VP's) were registered on the scheme, as at 30.6.20 the figure is 1157, see current activity below which has gradually reduced the numbers. The COVID telephone line has been listed on the COVID webpages and has been promoted on social media and in the general advice leaflet that went to all NHS shielded households**. Housing have also conducted reassurance calls to all vulnerable Caerphilly Homes tenants, this added a few more referrals. Referrals now tend to come from client support bodies e.g. Social Services, Housing, and Supporting People providers. We expect that 'Test, Trace and Protect' may increase referrals slightly as the government advice will be for anyone self-isolating that cannot access food/medicine to contact their local authority or the third sector. However, this will be a different demographic, more likely to be socially-connected and therefore probably able to access support without intervention.

5.7 **Other Activity**

Welsh Government Food Parcels- For NHS extremely clinically vulnerable people** a weekly home delivered food parcel has been available from WG, if no other support network exists. 296 people on the NHS shielded list, resident within Caerphilly county borough, have requested a weekly food parcel and this system is also administered by the Council with a daily upload to the Welsh Government system. The shielding period will end on the 16th of August, this group will be encouraged to shop for themselves and priority online shopping slots will remain available to them.

Pharmacy Deliveries- To alleviate the long wait times for Buddies and communities we have offered enhanced DBS checked Council drivers to supplement pharmacy delivery arrangements. 7 local pharmacies have taken up the offer of support.

Community Response Partners- In the first week a group of partners was convened to share information during this period including: Adult Services, GAVO, Integrated Well-being Networks, 50+ Forum, Parent Network, Families First, Flying Start, Supporting People,

Housing, Age Cymru, Emergency Planning etc. Information on community support resources has been created and circulated within the group including businesses offering food delivery services, details of local COVID mutual groups, third sector support services etc. This information is kept up to date and is also shared on the main COVID webpage.

Foodbanks- Foodbanks came under pressure as volunteers self-isolated and donations dried up. A temporary system has been put in place by Community Regeneration to support provision with vouchers, donations and delivery. A triage system is in place to connect the individual to a local voucher distributor. Foodbank volunteers prepare parcels, with Community Regeneration staff coordinating and delivering parcels. Stock is replenished and managed from Llancaiach Fawr by securing food donations, and monetary donations from the private sector and community group. Over 2000 people have received foodbank support.

5.8 **Current Activity**

The level of support offered on the buddy scheme by Council staff is not sustainable as services have started to resume, however there is still a need within communities, albeit the medium term aim is to encourage personal resilience among VPs. It is difficult to anticipate what the balance between demand and resources will look like, however plans need to be put in place for staff returning to normal duties over the coming months. This will equally apply to other community response type activity e.g. free school meals delivery and foodbank delivery. To estimate and plan for demand needs in the buddy scheme we have gathered data in two ways:

- A survey of all buddies to ask how the role has been for them and whether they have any interest in continuing to volunteer in the role. 150 responses have been received and are summarised as Appendix 1.
- Reassurance calls to all VPs have been made to ask how they are and what level of support they think they might need until lockdown eases for this group. See Appendix 2.

5.9 **Step-down proposals**

It is proposed that the management of the buddy scheme transfers to the Council's Community Regeneration Team, as soon as practicable, this will allow

- Easier identification of vulnerable people in communities
- Better engagement
- Identification of new service needs in communities
- The opportunity to build on and expand the COVID mutual aid groups
- Mobilisation of community assets in empowered co-production
- Support the Resilient Communities strand of the Public Service Board's (PSB) work

To support this a Volunteer Coordinator role will need to be established for a 24 month period that will sit within the Community Regeneration Team. GAVO have indicated that they would be willing to commit a proportion of their WG/WCVA COVID funding to part fund this role for the remainder of the financial year..

The Communities First Legacy funding covers 8 areas, broadly coterminous with council housing estates, the geographical spread of activity would need to increase to borough wide. The Community Regeneration Manager has assessed that the team have enough administrative capacity to run the scheme, working with GAVO and the Volunteer Coordinator, but would need additional in-house engagement capacity. The Grade 7 Community Engagement Officers would need to be increased by 1 more staff member on a

24-month contract, in line with the GAVO Volunteer Coordinator role. The Community Regeneration Team would work with the existing mutual aid groups building on a pilot transfer of VP's to the Risca/Pontymister COVID mutual aid group. Working with GAVO meets the PSB theme for Volunteering on which they lead.

The data gathering for VP's is indicating that 29% are in the green category as no longer needing support. Their records have been suspended in case circumstances change or there is a second wave of coronavirus that puts full lockdown back in place. 35% of people are categorised as red due to multiple health needs or mobility issues; social isolation and digital exclusion contribute to this categorisation. The remaining amber category 36% may be able to increase their resilience fairly quickly with the right level of tapered step-down community-based support. This could be support to access food and medicine by deliveries, help to gain confidence to shop for themselves, and accessing other community services as restrictions ease.

The Community Regeneration Team would, working with the GAVO Volunteer Coordinator, take over the management of the system to develop a mixed model of volunteer support as outlined in 10.1 to 10.6 below. A mixed system would provide greater resilience and ability to flex with demand and would, at the same time, allow staff to return to services as they come back online. The Community Regeneration Team would be able to offer the best model of support to VP's by working closely with communities.

5.10 COVID Community Volunteers

We are working with GAVO to agree a role description for the public who have signed up to help in the COVID effort with the Volunteering Wales website. Our recommendation is to recruit Community COVID Volunteers from this cohort in conjunction with GAVO, providing training on:

- Social distancing
- Data protection
- Safeguarding level 1
- Shopping and handling cash
- Prescription pick-up
- Dementia awareness
- The guidance already developed for the buddy scheme

5.11 Staff Volunteering

One of the aims of the Team Caerphilly: Better Together strategy is to implement a Corporate Volunteering Scheme. The Buddy survey has indicated that **95.4%** of the 150 staff who responded (out of 590 buddies) would definitely, or likely, want to continue volunteering in a similar capacity in the future. The staff involved have gained a definite sense of pride and worth- see Appendix 1.

As a precursor for Corporate Volunteering, building on the goodwill evidenced in Appendix 1, it is proposed that staff are supported to continue in the buddy role by adding a category to the Leave of Absence Policy of up to 2 days per annum in hours, pro rata. The expectation being that this would be matched with an equivalent period of their own time. The results will be evaluated after 6 months by surveying the staff and managers involved with a view to establishing a wider Corporate Volunteering Scheme.

By allowing staff to continue in the Buddy role with, potentially, a little encouragement through paid time off in supporting older and vulnerable people will undoubtedly help combat longer term loneliness and isolation beyond the COVID period as well as provide resilience in the Buddy Scheme.

The oft quoted research is that highly lonely people suffer the health equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and that highly lonely people are twice as likely to develop Alzheimers. Maintaining a buddy-type befriending scheme would be a preventative service at the same time as allowing staff to feel involved in their communities and the Team Caerphilly effort. **Corporate Volunteering is also a PSB strand with links to external partners including ABUHB's 'Ffrind i mi' project.**

It should be noted that there are 99 school-based staff that are currently volunteering as Buddies as part of the original cohort of staff volunteers. Any decision to allow school staff to continue on the scheme within normal working hours would be a matter for school governors.

5.12 Service Support

Some services may be able to continue to allow staff to continue in a support role for a few hours a week while step-down/ transition to more usual working takes place.

5.13 Community Mutual Aid Groups

There are 15 of these with varying levels of activity across the county borough. Those in the Risca/Pontymister, Phillipstown, Graig-yr-Rhacca and Lansbury Park areas are the most active. There are less VPs registered here as the community has mobilised to support people.

The Community Regeneration Team are very keen that community groups should be encouraged and supported to pick up the effort, and where the groups have flourished it is because they have often been supported by the Community Regeneration Team e.g. Risca, Lansbury Park and Graig-yr-Rhacca. As an example, the Risca/Pontymister group have 7 administrators and around 100 active volunteers supporting 143 individuals with the type of buddy support the local authority staffing cohort is providing. We have begun a dialogue with them to transfer some of the VP's in the NP11 postcode area over to community-based support and are beginning the work with some of the other more organised groups.

5.14 Suggested timeline

By mid-July:

- Agree the Volunteer Coordinator Role with GAVO- pending Cabinet decision for appointment
- Begin recruitment of COVID Community Volunteers
- Work with the Risca/Pontymister COVID group as a pilot for transfer to community groups
- Agree a precursor Corporate Volunteering scheme for staff who wish to continue as a buddy- pending Cabinet decision

By mid-August

- Recruit/redeploy an additional Community Engagement Officer in Community Regeneration- pending Cabinet decision
- Complete transfer of the scheme to the management of Community Regeneration- Community Regeneration will manage the support to vulnerable people working closely with the GAVO Volunteering Manager

5.15 **Conclusion**

The buddy scheme has been highly successful at protecting the at risk cohorts, both the clinically vulnerable* and the extremely clinically vulnerable**. Staff involved have gained a real sense of purpose and of being part of Team Caerphilly. The feedback from the VP's has been overwhelmingly thankful and positive and has helped demonstrate a high level of goodwill toward the support the Council has offered as part of the Community Response. However, it is not sustainable in the long-term and services are moving back to normal activity, some at greater speed than others. Unlike other Councils we did not rely entirely on

the voluntary sector options to provide this support, but because of this the service was far quicker to set up, more comprehensive and offered a good level of security that no-one should be left at home unsupported. The step-down model should be a mixture of voluntary/community sector support and staff support, with an opportunity to kick-start Corporate Volunteering as a preventative service against loneliness and isolation.

The crisis has provided an opportunity to harness, support and expand the community resilience demonstrated in many communities across the borough. It provides opportunities for meaningful dialogue with communities and at the same time has allowed staff to directly support vulnerable people and feel involved in the effort. Both facets support Team Caerphilly: Better Together.

The legacy and learning will also be important in the context of the Team Caerphilly Transformation Strategy and other strategic and partnership aims, including working better with and empowering communities and developing proud and trusted staff.

Although this scheme is being established initially to offer support to the most vulnerable in our communities, linked to the COVID crisis, it is hoped that the infrastructure, once in place will enable the Council to further build on the volunteering opportunities within our Communities.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The assumptions made are that the level of need will taper as lockdown eases, however, we cannot assume that it will remain on the current course. Test, Trace and Protect during the winter period may bring an increased need. The assumption is that the community and voluntary sector can pick up on the role. Both GAVO and the Community Regeneration Team are keen to support this as much as possible.

While buddies have positively indicated that they have gained much out of being part of the scheme and want to continue, if they had the time, we cannot guarantee that they will do so.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

7.1 Corporate Plan 2018-2023

It will not be possible to achieve the Objectives contained within the Corporate Plan unless the Covid-19 outbreak can be controlled.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 The COVID Community Response supports the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:

- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities

- 8.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the sustainable development principle against which all public bodies in Wales should assess their decision-making. The aim of the legislation is to ensure the well-being of future generations through maximising the contribution public bodies make towards the well-being goals. The principle is

also known as the five ways of working and the following are relevant in relation to this report:

PREVENTION – Helping vulnerable people and actual or potential COVID cases to stay at home is intended to prevent spread of infection. Planning sustainable services to prevent vulnerable residents being without support if a second wave of coronavirus happens.

COLLABORATION – Working with the community and voluntary sector will support the Team Caerphilly: Better Together ethos and in particular the objective to work better with communities. Test, Trace and Protect will be delivered by joint working with ABUHB and Public Health Wales. GAVO are a key partner in the PSB and supporting volunteering and Corporate Volunteering are strands of both the Transformation Strategy and the Well-being Plan.

INVOLVEMENT- Working with the local community COVID/Facebook groups on the response involves them in community well-being.

LONG-TERM- Supporting Corporate Volunteering as a befriending service would be a key preventative measure for loneliness and isolation for older and vulnerable people in communities. Making stronger links through the efforts of the Community Regeneration Team between vulnerable people and the communities they live in also supports longer-term well-being.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Social exclusion is more prevalent in older people and other groups vulnerable for health or disability reasons. The Community Response Buddy scheme has been a reaction to a public health crisis. The step-down service must be carefully planned so that the currently supported group remain connected within their communities and are helped to build up their personal resilience.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 GAVO have indicated that they would be willing to commit a proportion of their WG/WCVA COVID funding to the cost of a Volunteer Coordinator role. The salary level of the role is £24,175- £26,822 plus on costs (max £32,554). GAVO have indicated that they could commit £20k to the post for the remainder of 2020/21 (subject to GAVO board mid July). Extending the post to 24 months (from 1.9.20) to support corporate community volunteering would be a total cost of £64,108, with a contribution of £44,108 from the Council from the start of the financial year 2021/2022.
- 10.2 There could be a need to DBS check Community COVID volunteers, depending on the role they undertake. GAVO could administer this system and have indicated that they could contribute to some of the costs but that their funding would not be able to cover all. A basic DBS check with admin fee is £29. A £4000 budget to contribute would be sufficient to cover the volunteer cohort.
- 10.3 Transferring the scheme to Community Regeneration, a more natural home than Policy, would require some additional capacity to reflect that the geographical coverage would be greater than the Legacy areas. An Engagement Officer at Grade 7 is suggested at a cost of £36,077 including on costs for 2020-21.

- 10.4 Volunteer expenses will need to be covered by the step-down/transition Buddy scheme. A small budget should be available for mileage costs etc. The Community Regeneration Team already run such a system of foodbank volunteers. The suggestion is a £10k budget to be managed by Community Regeneration.
- 10.5 There is an indirect financial implication on allowing staff 2 days pa during the working week to continue in the buddy role as a precursor Corporate Volunteering Scheme. However, it is not possible to quantify this as take-up will be a matter for individual staff.
- 10.6 The total direct cost to deliver on all the recommendations in the report to the Council would be £130,262. This will allow the two appointments for a 2-year period, with the associated budgets.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Community Regeneration Team have indicated that they have the capacity to take over the Buddy Scheme, subject to additional engagement capacity as set out above. The Team have the requisite skills and the administrative capacity to run the scheme. A GAVO Volunteer Coordinator should be based in and work closely with the Team.
- 11.2 A precursor Corporate Volunteering Scheme should be properly evaluated after 6 months and a further report which will capture these findings will be provided and framed within the Corporate Volunteering corporate review.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report.
- 12.2 The Head of People Services has advised that it does not seem fair to consider paid time to be given to employees who volunteer for the buddy scheme only, as many employees volunteer in other areas. If the Council wishes to consider giving employees paid time for volunteering, it would be more sensible to develop a corporate policy and include such a recommendation for consideration at that time. **The proposals detailed within this report considers these comments and offers an appropriate way forward.**

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 None

Author: Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy

Consultees: Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Ed Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Interim Corporate Director Public Services
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Planning.
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
Steve Harris, Interim Head of Business Improvement Services & S.151 Officer

Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language and
Consultation)
Trade Unions

Background Papers: None

* Clinically Vulnerable People: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>

** Clinically Extremely Vulnerable: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#who-is-clinically-extremely-vulnerable>

Appendices

Appendix 1 Buddy Survey Summary

Appendix 2 Vulnerable Persons Data Assessment

Appendix 1 Buddy Survey Summary

150 responses out of approx. 590 buddies. 385 original volunteers have been supplemented by staff, either 'offered' by their managers, or formally redeployed into the Buddy role.

74% of respondents signed up as a volunteer

61% supporting with shopping weekly

58% supporting with prescription pick-up

92% supporting with a friendly phone call

68% have a greater sense of pride in the organisation and being a member of Team Caerphilly

50% would definitely like to volunteer in a similar capacity

45% would maybe like to volunteer in a similar capacity

Other support responses (examples): picking up hearing aid batteries- paying bills at Post Office- help with texting, topping up mobile phone- weeding the garden- help accessing e-Library resources- helping with on-line banking- walking the dog- putting bins out-been able to help when he can't get an online shopping slot

How have you made a difference?(examples): definitely no ability to shop on-line- able to buy at supermarket prices rather than corner shop- my gentleman is blind and would have been unable to social distance easily if out and about- daughter is also elderly and vulnerable, not sure they would have managed- been able to help with anxiety about their situation- helped with queries about the Welsh government food parcel- have a good old chinwag in the garden- lady has cancer, without a supermarket shop her diet would have been limited- just being on the other end of phone- helped with the loneliness- seeing my children once a week has given him a smile- formed a new friendship- my lady has no family or friends under 70 who would have been able to help her- she is 87 and I can't imagine how she would have queued for 50 mins outside a pharmacy- taken a weight off their shoulders- helped her keep up her gardening by picking up items she wanted- has family help with shopping but was embarrassed to ask her grandson to buy personal items- been able to stay in touch with her son who lives away- he moved to Wales during COVID due to an emergency relocation and has no family nearby, been able to help with household items and cleaning products for his flat- she is happy to ask her neighbours for small shops but would be embarrassed to ask for a big weekly shop- he lives in a very rural area and would find it very hard to get essential supplies, I am happy to help

One positive experience (examples):a smile says it all really- I don't have any close family and know I would need this type of support if older- a listening ear when they are really low- it give me a sense of purpose in lockdown- helping people who would have struggled gives me a great sense of gratification- it's been a pleasure and a privilege- community cohesion is greater- every time I go she is waiting in the window smiling- feeling like I am helping in a dreadful crisis- finding out facts about the area I would never have known and my children seeing how positive volunteering can be- meeting people in my community I would never have met otherwise- we always have a laugh and it's nice to see them smile- I work full time and have a little one but this few hours a week helping someone else has been so positive for me- it is helping me cope with the situation we are all in- it has taught me that helping people gives you great satisfaction- their faces lighting up when I arrive with their shopping- knowing that simply posting a birthday card can mean so much for someone- picking out birthday cards for her daughters who live away- seeing their joy when I turned up with flour- I suffer from lack of confidence and anxiety, being a buddy has really helped my communication and I have benefited so much mentally from helping other people, so much so that I want to look at a career in social care.

Can you tell us why you answered as you did when asked whether you would like to be involved in future (examples):it has been difficult balancing work and family and buddy

commitments- I would be only too glad to continue- I don't think I will be able to continue when I am back in full time work- as long as I have the time I am happy to help- always been interested in volunteering but have never done it in the past- at the start I was a little nervous but am now proud of what I have done- it depends on my change on workload and returning to family commitments, kids clubs etc- it just depends on my time- I am happy to help whenever I can- I couldn't commit because of children's hectic after school schedule- as long as I could do it around my work- I would like to stay in touch with them- I have enjoyed meeting new people- as we get back to normality it will depend on how much spare time I have- it's important to give back to the local community, the only thing that stops me is lack of time- I hope that more good within CCBC will come from this pandemic and stay for future years even when this is all over. Community used to mean lots to people in previous years let's make this a new team and community- Simply put, if it is needed by the community then it is a valuable thing to be involved in.

Appendix 2 Vulnerable Persons Data Assessment

Calls to every vulnerable person (1500+). 971 responses. Categorised as:

Red: definitely in need of continued support (many on the NHS shielding list**)

Green: no longer needs support

Amber: somewhere in between support and no support

Total figures:

Red: 342 (35%)

Amber: 349 (36%)

Green: 280 (29%)

500 people were not contactable but it would be reasonable to assume that there would be another 150 that could be categorised as Green.

Greens

Subsequent calls to the Buddies to double-check their opinion of whether support can be withdrawn. At the same time, asking the Buddies if they have capacity to take on a replacement vulnerable person, to help with flex in the system as some teams go back to normal roles.

Many of the people who originally called us for help at the start of the lockdown were in need of support because their usual methods of getting food delivered were unavailable - no online delivery slots, or friends and family were themselves self-isolating after displaying Covid-19 symptoms. Many of the Greens have now been able to get online delivery slots, or someone they know is helping them with their shopping. This means our community response has done exactly what we hoped it would do – identified people who were in danger, alone, and within our reach, and supported them to get all the way through the lockdown, until they were either self-sufficient or able to be supported by friends/family.

Reds

Many other people registered will need support for some time. Around half of the people classified as Red are also on the “shielded” list, having medical conditions that make them ‘clinically extremely vulnerable**’ to Covid-19. These are people with organ transplants, severe heart and lung conditions, certain types of cancer, and similar ailments that mean they should stay at home to avoid the virus. It is unlikely it will be safe for these people to return to normality any time soon, perhaps until a working vaccine is widely available, and they are likely to need support of some kind for months. Other people on the Red list fall into two broad sub-categories: those with multiple serious ailments that are not on the shielding list, but on the next lower list of ‘clinically vulnerable**’ ailments (milder heart and lung conditions, diabetes, Parkinson’s, and many others); or people with physical disabilities that prevent them from doing their own shopping.

Ambers

The Amber category includes a wide range of people, mainly those with illnesses in the ‘clinically vulnerable’ category, people over 70 but otherwise physically well, people displaying symptoms of Covid-19 and needing short-term support while self-isolating, and those with physical or mental health issues that make shopping for themselves difficult. A significant number of people in this category have managed to arrange delivery of shopping but have asked to continue with their Buddy either for prescription collection only, or in case online delivery slots are unavailable – these people may be able to be managed out of the system with the right support.

Next steps

Many vulnerable people are now able to access food through on-line shops or local delivery or are asking their Buddies to top up fresh food items only. A relatively high number now only need help collecting prescriptions either weekly or monthly. Handing over to a model where community volunteers, or engaged community support networks, should help with building personal resilience. Many of the people our call handlers spoke to highlighted the value they placed on the social interaction from their Buddy – this means they may be reluctant for support to be withdrawn even if it is no longer needed, and handing over to phone-based befriending support may play an important part in our step-down. Age Cymru are providing a telephone befriending service.

Feedback

Call handlers routinely reported praise for the Community Response, both for the individual Buddies and the way the system had been organised:

- *“Mr S praised and thanked Rhian to the highest saying she’s a genuine diamond.”*
- *“Gwyneth advised she has been in awe of how CCBC has managed during the pandemic with the buddy system and free school meals.”*
- *“Stacy doing a wonderful job gathering Gail's shopping and she has asked could we give her five stars.”*
- *“So grateful to Ann the Buddy and said that CCBC has really come up trumps through this tough time.”*
- *“Both Mr and Mrs M advised me that they cannot put into words how grateful they are of the support that Tara has given them both. Mrs. M informed me that she loved Tara to bits as she was a kind and considerate young lady”*
- *“Karla advised that Colin her buddy has been professional, discreet, friendly and appropriate. With so much negativity in the media it has been reassuring to have something positive going on and this service has put her at ease. Really grateful for the service provided.”*
- *“First class service (member of a myeloma support group and we are one of the only councils delivering this service - Marlene said that her support group members are very envious). Service has been brilliant. Cardiff, RCT etc don’t have this.”*