

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**North East Area Council****Report of the Area Manager****Agenda Item 7****July 23rd, 2020.****The North East Area Council Local Responses to the Recovery Period**

- 1. The Commissions and Grants of the North East Area Council continue to be flexed to meet the needs of the local communities.**

The North East Environment Team are supporting Neighbourhood Services through keeping all areas litter free, emptying litter bins and cutting small grassed areas of public open space. Support to volunteers and community groups has been maintained. Neighbourhood Services have asked for their thanks to be passed on for their help.

District Enforcement Officers are undertaking patrols with a view to being more the “eyes and ears” on the ground and a visible presence on the streets. Regularly reporting in any areas of fly tipping and community and neighbourhood intelligence. They are also linking with Parks Services ensuring that play equipment is not being used and reporting any damage. Enforcement Services have asked for their thanks to be passed on for their help.

Private Sector Housing Management Officer – Chris Platts is now helping Enforcement Services with their reactive work in the North East communities, and is helping to progress cases, taking telephone calls, dealing with landlords etc. Enforcement Services have asked for their thanks to be passed on for his help with their caseloads.

Stop Smoking Service – Sarah is still providing support and help to residents who are trying to stop smoking, or would like to give up smoking, but from her home.

Ad Astra - has taken the decision to furlough their staff but are still working with us on a voluntary basis and every day they have Facebook Groups for our young people from Outwood Academies Shafton and Carlton and are also running dance sessions on Zoom. They are also still making sure that there is enough sanitary ware available in Schools for young ladies.

Age UK Barnsley continues to offer support to all current service users and new ones that have contacted them during the recent events. New volunteers who have joined them over the past few weeks who are shopping and telephone befriending. They are also be continuing to support older people through a telephone Information, Advice and Guidance service.

DIAL and CAB are continuing to offer an online and phone welfare benefits and financial advice.

2. The Community Responders

The Community Responders are Volunteers who are working with people who are either shielding, or have been assessed to be vulnerable, through helping with shopping or telephone befriending.

The Area Team has received 100 requests for support:

- 48 shopping requests
- 52 befriending support

Some Community Responders have been assigned to more than one case, some cases require ongoing support, and some cases are too complex for the Community Responders to deal, and have either been referred to Age UK Barnsley, or Social Services.

A total of 82 Volunteer hours has been spent on this initiative

Feedback about the Volunteers experience as a Community Responder

1. *“Overall it’s been great. Selfishly I’ve got a lot out of it: a bit of structure into my week and feeling able to contribute in a small way to the challenges facing everyone during these strange times. It’s certainly not been a difficult task in any way. Hopefully it has been equally helpful to the people I’ve been linked up with. The arrangements have run very smoothly, largely thanks to Christie’s coordination and support. I expressed a preference to help with shopping and ideally to deal in cash as I wanted to avoid online banking or messing about with shop vouchers; I appreciated this being agreed with the two people I was matched with. The PPE, other equipment and guidance on how to work together and keep both me and them safe whilst dealing with the shopping was very helpful. I was put in touch with two extremely nice folk in my community and it’s been a pleasure working with them. Neither has made any unreasonable demands and both have been kind throughout our dealings, which has been great.*

If the need arose in the future, I would have no hesitation in volunteering for a similar role again. There have also been brief discussions about exploring other volunteering opportunities in the community when we’re eventually back to more normal times, which I look forward to following up. Whilst writing may I repeat my thanks to Christie personally. Her support, which she has gone out of her way to provide, and her extremely effective and personable approach have made a huge contribution to the smooth running and enjoyment of this experience. Thank you for including me in this scheme.”

2. *Supporting the community has and will always be important. Community is when we all come together and rally our efforts. When the time came that the community needed me to step up and take on the role of a COVID-19 Emergency Community Responder, I was only too happy to do so. My role is to deliver shopping supplies, it doesn't feel like much but being able to support the most vulnerable easily, is a great experience. COVID-19 has brought uncertainty to the most vulnerable and isolated members of our community*

and making sure that they feel supported, even by a basic gesture, keeps them going and offers reassurance.”

3. *“The Community Responders scheme has been well thought out and the support from David Gill and Barnsley CVS has been outstanding. Considering the small amount of time, we all had to prepare, the Council responded remarkably. Volunteering as a Community Responder has taught me new skills, such as Safeguarding in Adults, that I was never had the opportunity to do. I look forward to continuing to support the community.”*

4. *“I wanted to do something to help the community while we were in lockdown, for reasons a) I wanted to do something practical but with arthritic knees it was not going to be delivering food parcels or distanced visiting so it was going to be organisational and or befriending
b) I needed to do something to help keep my own mental and emotional balance healthy.
When I was approached, I was more than ready as we had been in lockdown for over a month. The training was to the point and clarified some of my concerns about the kind of relationship befrienders should have with their link people. I have to say I haven't followed this exactly. The three people I have been linked to have known their own reasons for being befriended and I have worked with that. The calls have, on the whole, been positive, upbeat and humorous. We've found we have things and places in common. I've been a listening ear and a sounding board for some worries and some plans for when lockdown finishes. I've helped sign post on to other services when asked but most of all we've talked about everyday life in a pandemic and had a good laugh at past times and current goings on.”*

5. *“Just a quick note from myself regarding the recent befriending I have undertaken during the COVID lockdown. I feel that the volunteer scheme itself was fantastic idea and has probably helped the volunteers as much as the clients themselves. I have personally enjoyed befriending and regularly chatting with the lady I was paired with, she has had up days and down days and I could clearly hear a change in her voice when she received a call from me, which was great for me to know I had made a difference to someone rather than just wasting time during lockdown.”*

6. *“I retired from NHS this year and when the coronavirus hit us, I felt I had to help in some way. The NHS volunteer responder and the Barnsley community responders program seemed ideal for me to help - so I signed up and was accepted. The training was quite straight forward - all online and good documentation to follow and use as reference. At first I was nervous talking to the callers but after the first few calls I grew in confidence - I find I can phone up without any concerns and look forward to listening and can offer advice - I find the normal questions are around loneliness and not sure of what can or can't do - so I always have the guidelines open and ready to do a quick search - making sure I have their first name and take direction from what they are asking me. Listening to the history of the callers and their family in the Barnsley area is great for me - as I have just moved into the area in the*

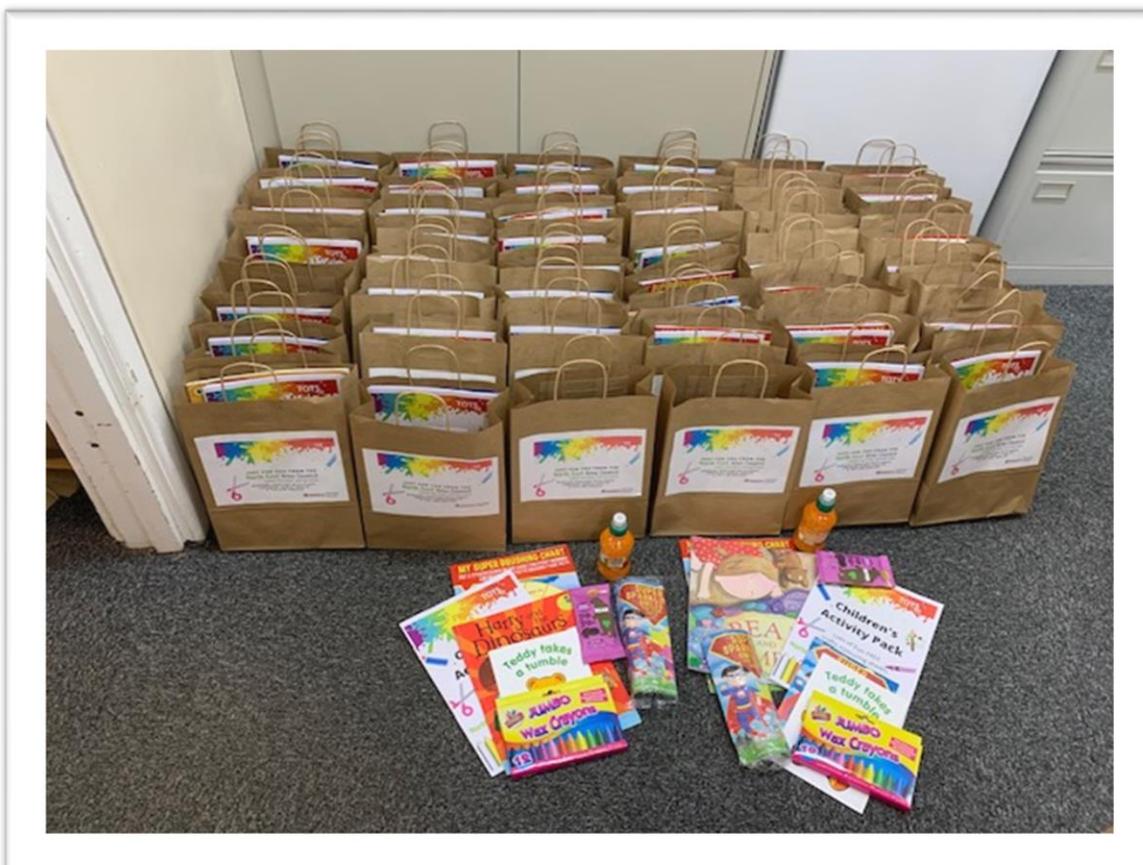
last 2 years. I now look forward to the calls and feel I am doing something that is helping and letting our key workers get on with normal working."

3. Activity Packs

Over 430 Activity Packs have been delivered to vulnerable families across the North East Area Council for Tots, Juniors and Teens. The cost of the Activity Packs to the North East Area Council was minimal thanks to the partnership working of several Services within the Council, all working together to help families during this difficult time.

The Activity Packs were made up and then distributed to the local Children's Centre, Churches, Youth Groups and a Community Interest Company whose focus is supporting young people, who in turn took the Activity Packs out to the young people's homes. They were distributed to the young people across the four Wards of Cudworth, Monk Bretton, North East and Royston through 6 different community organisations.

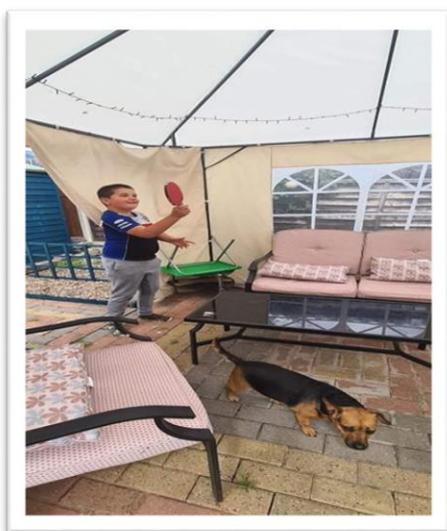
Included in the Activity Pack was an age specific activity book which was innovatively designed by Parks Services, some crayons, an age specific reading book which was kindly donated from the Library Service, a drink and a snack, and some road safety information from Highways. The Tots bags included toothbrushes and toothpaste, kindly donated from Public Health, and the Juniors and Seniors Activity packs included a table tennis set kindly donated from the Sport and Active Recreation Team and Table Tennis England.



To highlight an example of the benefits of partnership working in the local communities, the table tennis sets have had a very positive impact on the young people who have received them. Feedback reflects how much families have enjoyed playing with these sets in their own homes. It has enabled families to enjoy a sporting activity safely together during this difficult time. Additionally, it has taught young people additional skills such as being a member of a team, maths skills from scoring and has improved hand eye co-ordination. To date over 300 table tennis sets have been distributed., and several young families have asked for their thanks to be passed on for these lovely sets.



Through distributing these table tennis sets to vulnerable families through local community networks, it ensures that young people are given opportunities to take part in sporting activity which they may otherwise have missed out on.



There is significant scope to conduct more of this sort of work in the future, as the North East Area Team, Library Services, Park Services, Highways and the Sport and Active Recreation Team have a proven track record of working together on grass root initiatives and delivering positive outputs and outcomes for people who live, and work, in the communities of the North East Area Council.

Recommendation

That the Members note this report

Caroline Donovan
Area Council Manager
 23rd July 2020