



COMMUNITY GROUPS COVID-19

NEWSLETTER



17 April 2020 | Issue 2

Working Together to Support Our Communities

Dear Colleague

Welcome to the second of the Council's newsletters for colleagues in the voluntary and community sectors working with us in helping Brent respond to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. It gives the latest about what we are doing as a Council to support our communities; it also signposts resources and support from other agencies that can be drawn on in tackling the challenges that face us all at this difficult time.

The pandemic has challenged Brent, but Brent has risen magnificently to the moment. The huge strength of community in our Borough has been proved by over 500 volunteers registering on the council's volunteering platform to date. The Council and its partners are working tirelessly to deliver key services and support to all Brent's communities and neighbourhoods. Together, we are getting grants to businesses, connecting volunteers to those in need and sending out food and supplies to the vulnerable. Every household has received an information booklet detailing key contact numbers and these can also be found at the end of this newsletter. You may have seen a clip of film showing some of this work accompanying the Queen's address to the nation a couple of weeks ago.

This pandemic leaves virtually nothing that we take for granted in day-to-day life untouched. Something this far-reaching demands a comprehensive approach, making the best of the knowledge, resources and capacities of all our organisations – and of those of the Brent community as a whole. We are working together to help the most vulnerable and to ensure our Borough is an ever more supportive, cohesive community, delivering huge results through hundreds of small acts of heroism every day, proving the value of a cohesive, inclusive Brent, where everyone helps to face and overcome common problems together.

Something this huge leaves much for us to think about, learn from, remember – and even celebrate. The Council is launching a project to celebrate community during COVID-19 with the launch of **#BrentTogether**. This will highlight all the brilliant work being done to support our communities through this pandemic. We want to shout about the people, groups, organisations doing fantastic work in Brent; please encourage your contacts in the community to tell us what you're doing and how others can get involved using the hashtag, and we'll spread the word. More information at: www.brent.gov.uk/brenttogether

This newsletter is intended to be a key resource to help underpin this huge effort. It outlines the range of support available; providing reminders of some of the information in the first edition, providing updates since it appeared and giving further information about what is available. This edition has a particular focus on key areas of support including food, housing, bereavement, money and energy; there is also information about support for businesses. Please let us know about things that should be included in future editions and how we can improve the newsletter; contact details are given at the end.

Shazia Hussain
Assistant Chief Executive, Brent Council



Working Together

As the last edition explained, the Council's arrangements for working with voluntary/community organisations through the outbreak are based around

thematic groups. Each of these covers a service delivery area and is led by someone from a lead organisation working to help deliver a coordinated approach

and provide each sector's point of contact with the Council. They are coordinated by CVS Brent. Theme leads are:

Theme	Lead Organisation
People with Disabilities and Mental Health	Brent Mencap/Brent Carers Centre Ann O'Neil/Anne-Marie Morris
Older People	Age UK (HHB) Julian Lloyd
Young People and Children	Young Brent Foundation Chris Murray
Homeless People	Crisis Atara Fridler
Foodbanks	Sufra Rajesh Makwana
Advice and Information	Citizens Advice Brent Jacqueline Carr
Cultural and Community Groups	Step Up Hub Tebussum Rashid

The Thematic groups have been doing great work over the past few weeks. This includes working with us on the volunteering offer, providing food to those most in need, outreach youth work, supporting the homeless and offering a wide range of advice to communities as well as supporting older people. We

continue to ask organisations and community groups providing services during the Covid-19 outbreak (new or established) to give us information about themselves, the services they provide and the communities they support so we can ensure a coordinated approach, provide information and let people know

what help is available. This is done by completing a simple form that can be found here:

Community Group form.

For further support and advice on volunteering, advice and support on the themes then please contact:

support@cvsbrent.org.uk or
020 3011 1690.



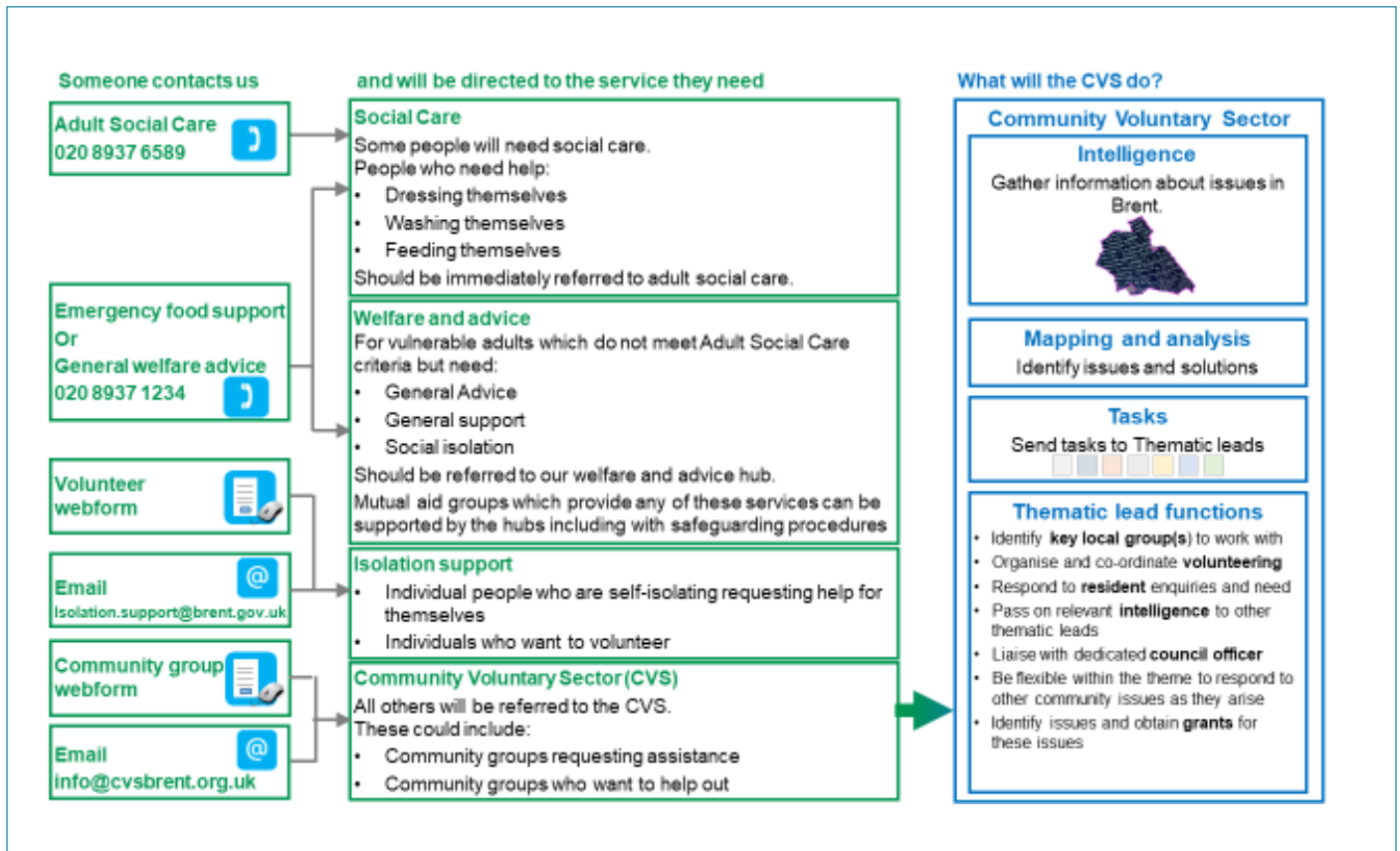
Accessing council services

Referral Process

The Council has adopted an easy

to use referral approach for those wanting to access our services,

which we ask all organisations needing to make a referral to follow:



Brent Council Helpline

There is a dedicated Council helpline for people needing support on **020 8937 1234** (open 8am-8pm, Monday to Friday). Deaf and hard of hearing customers can call us using SignVideo from their own home, free of charge (between 9am-5pm, Mondays to Fridays).

Outside these hours there is also a dedicated email address: **coronavirus@brent.gov.uk**.

Urgent concerns about any Brent resident can be raised with the Council using this emergency email address:

ASCcoronavirus@brent.gov.uk

Information in accessible formats,

including BSL videos, advice in other languages and Easy Read, is available on the Council's website. Please see link below: **www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/coronavirus/public-health-advice/accessible-formats-and-different-languages/**

Citizens Advice Brent

The numbers to call are:

1. **0800 144 8 444** for people making a new claim for Universal Credit for the first time only.

2. **020 8438 1241** for local agencies who want to speak to a member of the Help to Claim team (please note the change).

3. **020 8438 1249** for all other enquiries, including benefits and current UC claims.



Mutal Aid Groups

Communities and neighbourhoods across Brent have established local groups to provide mutual aid for vulnerable people. Although neither the Council nor the CVS are managing these self-organised groups or what they do, the thematic leads will provide them with help if asked - acting as key conduits for sign posting, providing information and advice to support their activities and the needs of

local people.

The CVS has developed guidance for any self-organised group working with volunteers and this can be found at www.cvsbrent.org.uk. Support and advice on the work of mutual aid groups is also available at:

<http://covidmutualaid.org//>

Please note that to help ensure a coordinated response and make the best use of resources

available borough-wide, we are asking that any voluntary sector referrals for support or volunteers are made through the CVS and not via the mutual aid groups - who are currently focussed on particular neighbourhoods and/or communities.

Grants of up to £500 are available. Please email support@cvsbrent.org.uk or call **020 3011 1690** for further information.

Volunteering

Over 500 volunteers have come forward to help provide support for vulnerable residents during the pandemic and we are grateful for their commitment.

They have a range of skills and experience. To match these with the roles needing to be filled we are asking voluntary/community organisations to let us know where volunteers with particular

strengths are most needed.

This can be done by completing the community group form on the Council's web pages for volunteering: www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/coronavirus/volunteering/. Alternatively, call **020 3011 1690** where you can leave a message and your call will be returned within 24 hours (Mon-Fri 9-5pm).

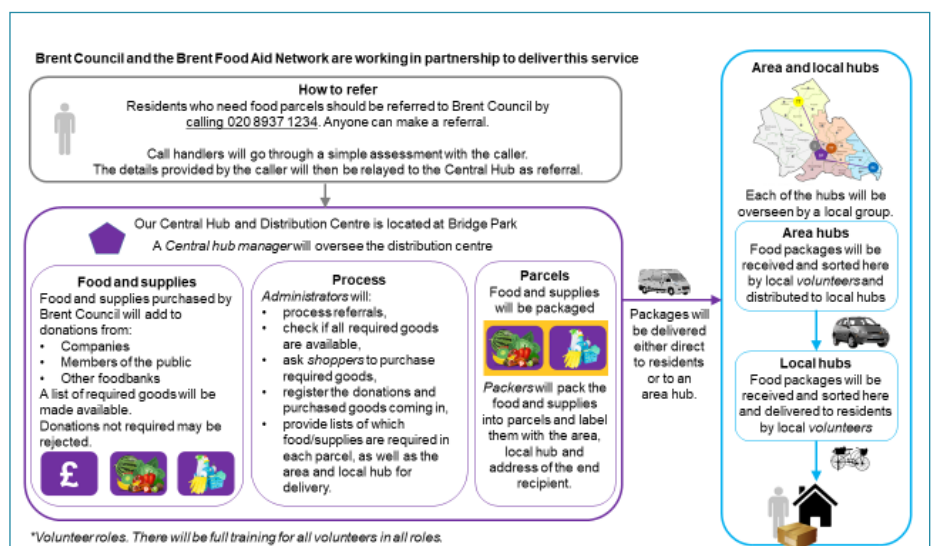
The Council for Voluntary Services has developed downloadable guidelines (.pdf, 157.2kB) for volunteer networks, to help keep volunteers and the people they are helping safe.

Anyone wanting to volunteer can continue to register using the Volunteering sign up form on the Council's volunteering web page.

Food Support

The last newsletter explained how Brent Council and the Brent Food Aid Network are working together to deliver foodbank services, as shown in the diagram to the right:

Residents needing food parcels can be referred to the service by calling **020 8937 1234**. Anyone can make a referral. Callers will be taken through a simple assessment; the details provided will be relayed to a Central Hub and Distribution Centre, located at Bridge Park where the foodbank service will be provided.





Food banks in Brent (including donations)

- Sufra – Sufra NW London, 160 Pitfield Way, Stonebridge, NW10 0PW
- Brent Food Bank – Vestry Hall, 21 Neasden Lane, NW10 2TS/ Lindsay Park Baptist Church, The Mall, Kenton, HA3 9TG
- Rumi's Kitchen – Harlesden Community Centre, 21 Craven Park Road, NW10 8SE

Sufra have compiled a directory and newsletter which can be downloaded from their website.

Support for those who are self-isolating

The National Health Service has

identified 1.6m people nationally who have medical conditions putting them at the most significant risk if they contract Covid-19. These individuals have been instructed to self-isolate for 12 weeks. The Council has contacted these people to ensure that they have the support that they need and will continue to ensure the support these people need is available. This work continues.

Further information is here, including how to check if a phone call is genuinely from us.

There are local Brent community groups who can help people needing things like food or medicine to be delivered to them during the current lockdown. Please email isolation.support@brent.gov.uk.

For more information call

020 3011 1690.

Prescription collection and deliveries for residents

Brent Council and Brent NHS Clinical Commissioning Group are working alongside the Middlesex Local Pharmaceutical Committee to help Brent's community pharmacies by organising delivery of prescribed medicines to residents who are shielding, self-isolating and/or vulnerable by volunteers. Pharmacists and GPs can register people on the list for prescription delivery, as can individual residents needing this service. The Council will be contacting pharmacies shortly inviting them to sign-up to this service and further information about the service and how it can be accessed will be given soon.

Homelessness and Housing Support

Anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness can call the Housing Contact Centre on 020 8937 2000, choosing option 3.

If you are worried about someone sleeping rough, please report the location to [@tell](https://twitter.com/tell).

streetlink by calling **0300 500 0914** or visiting [streetlink.org.uk](https://www.streetlink.org.uk)

Local teams will contact them with services to find emergency accommodation. Further information is available by visiting the Streetlink London website.

Private tenants

Private tenants threatened with eviction can call Brent Tenancy Protection Service, on **020 7874 8414**.

Bereavement Support

Brent Bereavement Services can provide individual counselling by trained volunteers. Anyone wanting to talk to someone

following the death of a loved one can call Brent Bereavement Services, on **020 8937 4098**. More support for dealing with

loss can be found at: www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/adult-social-care/end-of-life-care/dealing-with-loss/.

Registration of deaths

Registration services are being provided remotely. To register a death please call **020 8937 1010** or click here to Book an

appointment to register a death by telephone.

More information can be found at: [www.brent.gov.uk/services-](https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/births-marriages-and-deaths/deaths/register-a-death/)

[for-residents/births-marriages-and-deaths/deaths/register-a-death/](https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/births-marriages-and-deaths/deaths/register-a-death/).



Benefits Support

Discretionary Housing Benefit

Anyone needing help to pay rent while waiting to receive Housing Benefit, or to meet the gap between the Housing Cost element of Universal Credit and their full rent charge can:

- Apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment, or
- Call the Housing Benefits team, on **020 8937 1800**

Overpayments

Changes in circumstances can lead to over-payment of Housing Benefit. Anyone wanting to discuss over-payments can call the Council Housing Benefits Overpayments Team, on **020 8937 2589**

Local Welfare Assistance

Anyone needing support to help deal with a one off emergency, and who is entitled to Housing Benefit or certain Department of

Work and Pensions benefits can apply for Local Welfare Assistance.

Council Tax support

Anyone on a low income, or whose circumstances have changed, and need help to pay your Council Tax can:

- Apply for Council Tax support, or
- Call the Council Tax team, on **020 8937 1790**

Energy Supply Support

The Government/supplier agreement includes a commitment that no one on a prepayment meter will be disconnected during the outbreak.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and domestic energy suppliers have agreed on how to support customers affected by Covid-19. These measures focus on prioritising customers who may need additional support and supporting customers financially.

Households who are vulnerable in any way – including in particular (but not limited to) those including residents who are of pensionable age, children under five, or who have a disability or long-term medical condition – should ensure they are on their supplier's Priority Service Register in order to be eligible for additional support

where appropriate.

Customers are encouraged to resolve non-urgent queries online as call centres are experiencing an increased demand for their service.

Difficulty in Making Payment

Many people are seeing reduced incomes just at the time when they are likely to see their energy bills increase as they spend more time at home.

The Government/supplier agreement commits to supporting customers experiencing a financial impact as a result of Covid-19. Supplier action may include giving customers more time to pay their bills, a payment break, reducing debt repayments or access to a hardship fund. The exact course

of action will depend on the customer's circumstances and the supplier's policy, so customers should contact their supplier to discuss. The full agreement can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/873960/Supplier_Agreement_19.3.2020.pdf.

Process with Individual Suppliers

The table below gives contact numbers for the six largest energy providers and sets out their proposed arrangements. Advice from smaller suppliers will be available on their websites.

Supplier	Comments
British Gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks customers to arrange for a friend or relative to top up their prepayment meter for them should they be self-isolating. Customers who are unable to do this should call 0330 100 030. - Customers with smart prepayment meters can top up online, via their app or by calling 0333 202 9612. - British Gas are contacting customers with prepayment meters who have been identified as vulnerable to find out what support they need. - Customers who are struggling financially should call 0333 202 9802. <p>Source: www.britishgas.co.uk/covid19</p>



Supplier	Comments
EDF Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks customers to arrange for someone else to top up their key or card for them – if this is not possible, call the dedicated prepayment team on 0333 200 5110. - Advises topping up more than usual to ensure customers remain in credit and stop any interruptions to the supply. - Most meters operate with a non-disconnection policy which means that if the meter runs out of credit after 6pm, power will not be cut off until 9am the following day.
E.ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks customers to get support from a trusted friend or relative to top up their meter for them, and, where possible, to top up more than usual. - Emergency credit for classic [i.e., not smart] gas prepayment meters is increasing from £5 to £50. This is also in the process of being put in place for electricity meters as well. Their website provides detailed advice on how to ensure the emergency credit limit is raised. - Customers who are self-isolating and running low on credit need to contact E.ON on 0345 303 3040. For electricity customers, they will attend the property and provide enough credit on the meter to ensure that customers remain on supply throughout their self-isolation period. For gas customers, they will attend the property to supply a maximum of £5 credit, and send a card in the post containing additional credit. - Customers with smart prepayment meters can top up online, via app or phone. Smart meters have emergency credit of £15 for dual fuel meters and £20 for electricity meters. Any customer that self-disconnects for more than four hours will be contacted to see if they require support. - The website notes that the average household with a dual fuel tariff spends around £60 a fortnight on energy. - Customers who are struggling to pay their bills are asked not to call unless the bill is overdue or they are on an existing repayment plan. Customers are able to reduce their Direct Debit payment online by up to 20%. <p>Source: www.eonenergy.com/coronavirus-update.html</p>
npower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks customers to arrange for someone else to top up their meter on their behalf. Where this is not possible, customers should contact npower directly on 0800 073 3000. - Emergency credit on prepayment meters has been increased £7 to £45 – this is approximately a fortnight's supply for an average household on their standard prepayment tariff. - If any customer is struggling to pay, they should contact npower on 0800 073 3000. <p>Source: www.npower.com/help-and-support/coronavirus/prepayment/</p>
Scottish Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks customers to arrange for a friend or relative to top up their meter on their behalf. If this is not possible, the customer should call 0800 027 0072. - Customers experiencing financial hardship should call 0800 027 0072. Direct Debits can be managed online to lower monthly payments. <p>Source: https://community.scottishpower.co.uk/t5/Extra-Help/Coronavirus-COVID-19-information-for-ScottishPower-customers/ta-p/15029</p>



Supplier	Comments
SSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks customers to keep at least 14 days of credit on their meter in case they have to self-isolate. - If customers need to top up their prepayment meter during self-isolation they should ask a trusted friend or relative to assist. If this is not possible, SSE can take payment over the phone and arrange for an engineer to deliver a key or card with credit on. If the customer is unable to pay, SSE can offer temporary credit or reduce additional payments on the meter by calling 0345 072 9495. - Customers with a smart prepayment meter can top up online or by calling 0345 026 0677. - Anyone with a prepayment meter who is struggling to pay should call 0345 600 2006. Other customers struggling to pay should call 0345 070 7373. <p>Source: https://sse.co.uk/help/coronavirus-questions-and-answers</p>

Advice from other suppliers will be available on their websites.

Other energy support

Groundwork London provides a Green Doctors service. This charity helps residents save money, stay warm, and improve energy efficiency in their homes. It is

providing free consultations for anyone on a low income or over 65 or with a long term health condition or disability. The aim is to help save money on energy bills and stay out of debt. To book

a consultation call **0300 365 5003**. Further information is available on their website www.greendoctors-london.org

Business support grants

The application process to claim the Small Business and Retail/Leisure/Hospitality grant funds is now live. Since opening for applications two weeks ago, Brent Council has paid out a total of £12.3 million to 875 businesses to help them through the Covid-19 crisis under the Small Business Grant Scheme and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality grant schemes.

It would be extremely helpful to ensure that the information in this section is shared with any business which may be eligible for either programme:

- **Small Business Grant Scheme**
The Small Business Grant Scheme makes one-off grants of

£10,000 available to businesses currently eligible for small business rate relief, rural rate relief or tapered relief to help them meet ongoing business costs. A BACS payment will be made once the details have been verified. Business eligible for the Small Business Grant must complete this form.

- **Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Scheme**
A one-off grant of either £10,000 or £25,000 (depending on the rateable value of each business) is now available to eligible businesses in these sectors to help them meet ongoing business costs.

Businesses can check their eligibility by reading the government's official guidance here.

Businesses eligible for this payment must complete this form.

For more information visit www.brent.gov.uk/businessgrants
Sign up for Business e-news For the latest business-related news from Brent Council straight to your email inbox, click here to sign up and select 'Business e-newsletter.'



Funding opportunities

Council grants and funding

The Council offers a range of grants and funding opportunities to voluntary organisations. For more details visit www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/community-and-voluntary-sector-support/community-grants-and-funding/

Brent 4 Community

Brent 4 Community is a community funding support website. Voluntary and community organisations, charities, community groups, social enterprises, and voluntary organisations can search through hundreds of Government, National Lottery, charitable trust, and other funds available. Visit www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/brent.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/873960/Supplier_Agreement_19.3.2020.pdf
Brent Community Lottery

Brent Community Lottery is a weekly online lottery established by the Council to support local voluntary groups and good causes in Brent. Tickets are only £1 per week, with 60% cash raised going directly to local good causes and prizes up to £25,000. For more information and to buy a ticket visit www.brentcommunitylottery.co.uk.

London Community Response grant

London Funders is the cross-sector membership network for funders and investors in London's civil society. It is coordinating a £2 million emergency fund provided by the Greater London

Authority (GLA) and City Bridge Trust to support community and voluntary organisations facing immediate financial pressures and uncertainty because of Covid-19. Wave 2 of this fund is now opened with grants for both crisis response (up to £10k) and delivering differently (up to £50k) available.

Details can be found here.

Government Aid for frontline charities

The Government has announced a package of £750 million in aid for frontline charities working with the vulnerable to fight the coronavirus. As part of the scheme, £360m will be directly allocated by government departments to those charities. Another £370m will go to small local charities, including those delivering food and essential medicines and providing financial advice. The Government is working up details of the scheme.

Sport England support package

Sport England have announced a support package of up to £195 million to help the community sport/physical activity sector through the outbreak.

The package includes:

- a new £20 million Community Emergency Fund, which is open now for local club and community organisations to bid for grants between £300 and £10,000;
- a new £5 million fund for existing Sport England partners facing specific and immediate financial difficulty; and

- £55 million put aside to support the sector during the social distancing restrictions to fund new and innovative ways to keep people active and, once the outbreak is over, to help organisations get back to business and adjust to a different environment.

Serco Foundation: funding available from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund

Any Serco employee (including those employed by them to provide parking services in Brent) can nominate any voluntary organisation, known to them or their local community, which is providing meaningful and valuable support to others during this worldwide pandemic. For further information and to apply **e-mail info@sercofoundation.org**. The expectation is that grants of £1,000-£5,000 will be given but larger grants will also be considered.

Big Society Capital

Big Society Capital has set up a resources hub and information page (including information on funding) for charities and social enterprises, please visit:

<https://bigsocietycapital.com/covid-19-information-social-investors/>



Domestic abuse:

For residents where a partner or family member is making home feel unsafe

We are all being asked to stay at home to protect our communities. For some people though, we know home won't feel like a safe place. Domestic abuse takes many forms; it doesn't always mean being hit or physically hurt. It can be humiliation, bullying, threats, withholding money, or stopping people from calling or texting friends and family. Several local and national agencies can offer support if a resident or someone they know is affected by domestic abuse; details are given below. But in an emergency, always call **999**.

Advance in Brent

Advance is an independent, client-led charity for all of those living in Brent who have experienced domestic abuse (male or female, including teenagers) and their children.

- Call **07398 454898** Monday to Friday 10am to 6pm

- Email **brent.admin@advancecharity.org.uk**

Domestic abuse helpline services

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline is available 24 hours a day on **0808 2000 247**.

Young people needing support and advice can contact Childline on **0800 1111**.

Male victims of domestic violence can contact Men's Advice Line on freephone **0808 801 0327**.

For more information on the national guidance to support victims of domestic abuse from the during the Covid-19 pandemic please visit **www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse**



Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Everybody has a responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from harm.

Anyone working in the community may come across situations that might cause concern about people they are working with or someone else in the family home. It is essential that if something does not seem right, it is reported as soon as possible.

If you have any concerns that a child or vulnerable adult is being harmed or at risk of harm contact Brent Family Front Door and/or

the Safeguarding Adults Team.

Concerned about a child? Contact - Brent Family Front Door

- Telephone: **020 8937 4300**
- Online: Brent Council website/safeguarding children

Concerned about a vulnerable adult? Contact – Safeguarding Adults Team

- Telephone: **020 8937 4098**

- Email: **safeguardingadults@brent.gov.uk**

- Online: Brent Council website/adults social care

If you believe a child/adult is in immediate danger or you have witnessed a crime-taking place you should call the police – call **999**.



Emergency support available

Adult Social Care

If you or someone you know needs urgent help washing, feeding or dressing themselves but does not have any friends or family to support them, call

020 8937 6589.

Emergency Childcare

For emergency childcare (for vulnerable children or children of key workers), call **020 8937 3010.**

Person at Risk

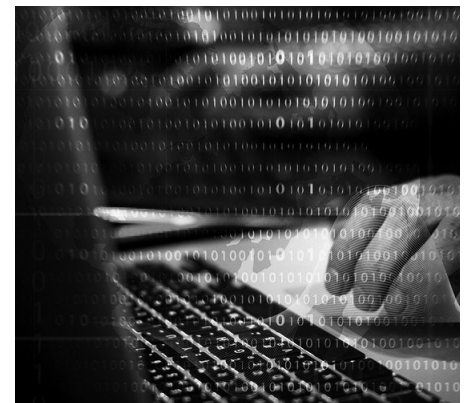
If you have any concerns about a person being harmed or at risk of abuse, call the Safeguarding Adults Team on **020 8937 4098.**

Beware fraud and scams during Covid-19 pandemic

Law enforcement, government and private sector partners are working together to encourage members of the public to be more vigilant against fraud, particularly about sharing their financial and personal information as criminals seek to capitalise on the Covid-19 pandemic. Take Five to Stop Fraud is a national campaign that offers advice to help everyone protect themselves from preventable

financial fraud. For more information visit **www.nca.gov.uk**

Reports to Action Fraud can be completed online **www.actionfraud.police.uk** or by calling **0300 123 2040**. If you've been the victim of an online scam contact the Citizens Advice Scams Action service online or over the phone **0808 2505050**. If you've been scammed out of money, report it to your bank first.



English for Speakers of Other Languages

A new six-month, online English for Speakers of Other Languages course will give Brent's new and emerging Eastern European and

Latin American communities the chance to improve their English, free of charge. Anyone interested should email

MFCCommunityESOL@brent.gov.uk to book their place. Places will be issued on a first come, first served basis.



Social Distancing

Social distancing is a key element of the national effort to address the Covid-19 outbreak, ensuring health services are there for everyone needing them – and saving lives. Following the Government's guidelines has never been more important, and the Council is committed to ensuring they are adhered

to – not least by supporting the range of support set out in this newsletter.

While we can take exercise once a day, we must not congregate in parks or form crowds where the virus can spread. If you see a large group of people gathering – in a park or elsewhere - please call our community safety team

on **020 8937 1058** or by email **community.safety@brent.gov.uk**. Please also bear the importance of social distancing in mind when planning and delivering support and other services.

Contacting the Council

Much of the coverage of the outbreak emphasises using technology to make contact. For people who don't have internet

access, the council is circulating a booklet containing the main council phone numbers to call if people need help. The most

important contacts numbers are set out in this newsletter.

Further Information

For more information about the things covered in this Newsletter, visit **www.brent.gov.uk/coronavirus**.

If you have a question email **coronavirus@brent.gov.uk** or call **020 8937 1234**.