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1. COVID-19 Response

1.1 Community Resilience Hub

The Community Resilience Hub continues to support the needs of communities across the district with support from Parishes, Community and Voluntary Organisations, all playing a vital part in the response. As we move away from the emergency response, the demand for support on the Community Resilience Hub is reducing. The hub team are still working hard to deliver a service, but the level is lower and a new pattern is forming. Although demands have eased, the Community Resilience Hub will continue to operate like other districts and boroughs. Our work is evolving into projects and workstreams which the Healthy Communities Team

will take forward, as part of the 'new norm'. The hub is mindful should there be a Covid-19 second wave and another emergency response required, it will be able to adapt, and respond appropriately.

As at 12th June we had registered 350 individuals or business/community groups in South Northants as active volunteers (via the county hotline).

205 individuals were referred to SNC's Community Hub to arrange appropriate help and ongoing support. Some individuals had multiple requests, generating 261 requests for help.

These covered requests for help with:

- Food deliveries (119 requests)
- Prescription collection (80 requests)
- Support with loneliness (21 requests)
- Other (41 requests) – Posting mail; help to get online; Medical transport.

1.2 Current Government Guidance on Covid-19

Current Government guidance can be found [here](#).

1.3 Virtual Parish Forum

Thank you to the Parishes that have registered an interest.

The virtual Parish Forum will take place on the **morning of Friday 10 July**. We will be in contact shortly, with those of you who submitted agenda items and registered an interest in attending.

1.4 Financial help for residents

Many people are finding themselves in an unforeseen period of financial difficulty, struggling to pay bills or needing to claim benefits for the first time. There are several ways in which we can help:

Help with rent payments

Anyone struggling to pay rent, may be eligible for either Universal Credit's housing element or for Housing Benefit. Universal Credit has replaced any new claims for housing benefit for working age claimants; it has also replaced Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits, Income-Related Employment Support Allowance and Income Support. New claims for Universal Credit would replace any of the benefits someone may already be

claiming. People can apply for [Universal Credit online](#). Those without access to digital services or have with queries regarding claiming, can **call the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644**.

Those already on housing benefit, will need to contact our benefits department to notify us of a change in income or household circumstances. Claimants can complete a change of circumstances form on our [website](#) or call us on **01327 322140**.

There are some circumstances where someone would still apply for housing benefit as a new claim. Those living in supported accommodation, temporary accommodation, entitled to the Severe Disablement Premium or where they and their partner are both of pensionable age. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit www.southnorthants.gov.uk.

Claim Council Tax Reduction

People whose income has reduced, may be entitled to Council Tax Reduction (CTR) which can reduce the overall bill by up to 91.5%. People may also be eligible for a discount or exemption on their council tax depending on individual circumstances. [Contact us](#) to apply for CTR or to look at other discounts or exemptions.

Council Tax Hardship Fund

The Government has provided funding to set out a Council Tax Hardship Fund and provide further support to households most affected by Covid-19 by reducing the council tax liability for residents in our area. If people qualify, we will reduce their bill and notify them; they do not need to apply. We are in the process of administering this scheme and will keep our website up to date as more information becomes available.

Visit www.southnorthants.gov.uk and put Council Tax Reduction into our search engine at the top of the page to see any further developments.

Other benefits

You can use a [benefit calculator](#) to check eligibility for other benefits including New Style Employment Support Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Attendance Allowance.

Help with mortgage payments

Anyone who has been on Universal Credit or an equivalent benefit for over 9 months and is struggling to pay their mortgage, may be eligible for help with their [mortgage interest](#).

Further financial support

If the Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on your finances, and you need further financial support, please visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus for more Government initiatives regarding support for self-employment, losing your job, being unable to work or being on furlough as well as any impact you may experience on existing benefits.

Our Money Advice Service

Many people are suffering a financial crisis during these difficult times and don't know where to start. They don't have to shoulder the burden alone. **South Northamptonshire Council's Money Advice Team** provide a free, independent, confidential and supportive advice service to help with a range of financial issues. Residents can approach the service for advice and assistance on debt, money management and budgeting, benefit eligibility and completing benefit forms. Our Money Advice Team can also represent in court to prevent eviction due to rent or mortgage arrears. Advisers are still operating via email and on the phone. Email

moneyadvice@southnorthants.gov.uk

or call **01327 322067 / 01327 322138 / 01327 322107**.

1.5 Keeping active and well

Our [webpages](#) include a range of resources to help you keep fit and active while staying at home. Please look at these and link to them from your own websites/ social media.

We also have information on local walks and cycle routes and local arts and craft opportunities:

Walking routes

If you are looking to find some new routes, visit [Walking in England](#) for information on routes; ordnance survey maps; finding a walking club and walking books.

Arts



The **Friends of The Heseltine Gallery** are hosting an online exhibition: 'Art in Isolation'. They would like to hear about how you have coped during lockdown and if art has helped you in any way. Have you, your family or friends produced something visually artistic as a result of reflecting on the effects that the Coronavirus has had?

Any medium and style of art can be submitted, as long as the image is appropriate to share on the internet. All ages are encouraged to take part, so if you have a budding young artist, or an elderly relative in the district, tell them

about the exhibition. The deadline is **30th June**. There will be no formal selection process, but images of the work must be good quality and high resolution; the project manager reserves the right not to include unsuitable images. Limited to three submissions per person.

Send your entries to friends@theheseltinegallery.org with the following details:

- Artist name
- Medium
- Price (if you would like to sell your work, with contact details on how people interested can get in touch with you)
- Short description about the work and any comments you would like to make about the impact art has had on your isolation period.

Entries will be added to the website: theheseltinegallery.org.uk.

The exhibition will run from 11th July to 1st September, promoted on social media.

The **Annual Open Exhibition** for local artists had to be delayed from May. New dates will be early December, with details and submission forms on the arts page of our website nearer the time – so keep drawing, painting and making ready for that! In the meantime, artists interested in taking part in the October **South Northants Art Trail** should register now: <https://www.arts-sn.org.uk/>

Further information from Sue Carverhill, **Arts Development Officer**: Sue.Carverhill@SouthNorthants.gov.uk

1.6 Help and Support from partner organisations

Please continue to check our [list of partner organisations and links to services](#) that can help with money, debt, housing and employment problems; domestic abuse and substance misuse as well as services to help those with mental health issues; children and younger people; older people and veterans and those experiencing bereavement.

Please signpost to these resources.

1.7 Developing community groups [snvb](#) are offering support to anyone who has:

- set up a group to support their neighbourhood during lockdown
- Would like to continue some of these activities after lockdown
- Is wondering how to set up the group officially in order to access funding for the work and find more volunteers

They can provide advice and support to help:

- explain the different models available and help you to decide the best one for your group.
- discuss the benefits of becoming a properly constituted group.
- advise you about how to find trustees to bring together your committee, how to develop your constitution (rules for how your organisation works) and all the policies you will need.
- run funding searches to find suitable funders for your project

- give advice and support on all aspects of making applications to those funders.
- help you to recruit and retain volunteers. They can provide you with examples of volunteer agreements and when you need more volunteers, help you write role descriptions and advertise those roles.

Contact Jeanette@snyb.org.uk for advice about developing your group and funding.

Contact Lorraine@snyb.org.uk for advice about volunteers.

1.8 Celebrating Community Champions

Northamptonshire ACRE invites all neighbourhood support groups to join in celebrations of Northamptonshire's Covid 2020 community champions.

These celebrations will showcase the work of volunteers during the pandemic.

Use [NACRE's online form](#) to tell them how your group has supported others during this pandemic.

Forms need to be received by **31st August 2020**.

1.9 Scams awareness fortnight



Citizens Advice are running their annual Scams awareness campaign

from 15-28 June. It focuses on awareness of the scams that have emerged as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. Posters and resources can be downloaded from:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/sa19

2. Other business

2.1 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

As well as offering Disabled Facilities Grants to help people keep living independently at home, our Private Sector Housing Team also offer Discretionary Grants to provide rapid adaptations to resident's homes to aid palliative care services and facilitate hospital releases. We have worked successfully with local hospitals and hospices to provide their patients with adaptations.

Early in the pandemic we contacted nearby hospitals to identify patients who could return home, with appropriate adaptations, thereby freeing up beds for Covid-19 patients.

Working closely with our colleagues at Northamptonshire Adult Social Services, we were able to facilitate a return home for a long-term patient in Danetre hospital. Using one of our trusted stair lift contractors, operating an emergency service in line with government guidance, we installed a stair lift within days of the referral being received. This allowed the patient to return home after many months in hospital. You can find more information on [Disabled Facilities Grants](#) on our website or call our Private Sector Housing Team on 01327 322299.

2.2 Ban on evictions extended

On 5 June 2020 the MHCLG extended suspension of evictions from social or private rented accommodation by two months until **23 August 2020**. Our Housing Options Team are here to advice and assist anyone concerned about their housing situation. Please encourage anyone who needs help to [contact our team](#) as early as possible so we can work with them to help prevent problems escalating and homelessness from occurring.

2.3 Biodiversity plans for Parish and Town Councils

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places the following biodiversity duty on all public bodies:

‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’.

The duty applies to all local authorities, including parish and town councils. Its purpose is to raise the profile of biodiversity and make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision making. Undertaking the biodiversity plan gives you an opportunity to work with local groups.

Case studies from other Parish Councils has included managing grass verges in a different way to promote wildflowers, and letting plants grow in certain areas – graveyard, cemetery, or plots of land, having wildflower zones and of course, planting trees to

provide avenues and areas to enhance the local environment for wildlife and your local community.

[Northampton ACRE](#) can also help/ provide links to a variety of biodiversity suggestions, such as:

- Street lighting – moving to more eco friendly bulbs, LED lighting. [Salix Finance](#) can help with interest free loans to councils.
- Changing their planting on the verges or parks e.g. to wildflower planting
- Encourage residents to be more environmentally friendly e.g. not cover front gardens with hard standing, which can cause run off but maybe gravel to allow drainage, ensure ‘hedgehog tunnels’ between gardens, plant more bee friendly plants etc.
- Better flood management – Northants County Council Flood awareness toolkit is very good.
- Encourage residents to use a carbon calculator to see what their carbon footprint is and how they can reduce it – there is a good one developed by the [University of Chester, for Ashton Hayes](#) parish.

[Plantlife](#) have a lot of useful advice on projects. You can also download their [Good Verge Guide](#).

[Magnificent Meadows](#) provide advice and guidance on protecting and restoring meadows and grasslands