

Helping to Reduce Social Isolation

Our teams across the council are carrying out vast amount to reduce social isolation in the city, working with internal and external partners to support anyone who needs it, but in particular the elderly and most vulnerable.

Keeping in Touch

Befriending Service

With funding from Age Cymru, the Into Work Volunteering team are providing a local befriending service to those aged over 50. Volunteers are trained to provide information on local services to help and signpost people to that support as well as being on hand for a chat.

Welfare Calls

Throughout the pandemic the Independent Living Community Engagement Officers have been providing daily welfare calls to vulnerable citizens. Most welfare calls are to existing service users who live alone or have little contact with anyone, however the need for welfare calls are identified by the Independent Living Service contact officers and through the Adviceline. On average, the team contact 15 citizens every day. Contact is regular, with the service user choosing how often they wish to be contacted. The call consists of a general chat but also ensuring medication is being taken, and that citizens are eating well and feeling safe.

The Community Living team are ensuring that the most vulnerable council tenants are supported at this time, carrying out extra welfare calls to residents and can arrange a wide range of services and support for the residents as needed.

The Telecare team also carry out proactive welfare calls and to date have carried out an additional 807 calls to vulnerable individuals.

Whilst delivering a meal, the friendly Meals on Wheels drivers provide a caring welfare check for all clients and refer to other services when needed. Customer numbers have increased for Meals on Wheels, with 475 customers and 2,500 meals a week being delivered.

Home Delivery of Click and Collect Books

For those that cannot access our Hubs and Libraries, the home delivery click and collect service has been set up so that books can be delivered to customers' front doors. People can call the Library line, pick the books they want to read

and they will be delivered. Nearly 1,000 deliveries have been made since April 2020.

Help For Local Volunteer Groups

There are numerous grassroots local organisations that have emerged and established themselves as a response to Covid-19. The Council hosts the Volunteer Cardiff website where, as well as the volunteering opportunities themselves, clients can search and access support in their local area.

In just 6 months (from the 1st April to October 2020) there have been over **100,469** hits on the website. For those without internet access, clients can call the Advice line and will be put in touch with local groups that can help.

The 'Anchor Organisations' who support smaller volunteer groups meet fortnightly with a manager from the Council's Advice Service. Information is disseminated, safeguarding is supported and training is also sourced and provided for volunteers. Any training required by volunteer groups can be organised through this forum.

Community Inclusion Officers in the hubs work with local organisations to help them establish groups or services, a grants officer is also available to assist groups to access funding from a range of sources.

Digital Social Inclusion

Online sessions

Across the Council, teams have rapidly stepped up their digital offer to ensure that the elderly and most vulnerable are been supported by using digital solutions as a way to reduce social isolation. These have included virtual catch-ups, clubs and meetings on platforms such as Zoom and Teams.

Independent Living Services have set up a number of virtual groups to help keep individuals and communities in contact and have worked with over 25 local groups to help them set up their own digital groups to keep members connected. These have included;

- *Monday Meet Up*
A weekly catch up with a cuppa & low impact exercise
- *Cardiff City Football Club (CCFC) Foundation Partnership*
Connecting Generations with CCFC Foundation Bringing 16-24 year-olds together with over 50's with fun, games and a quiz.

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- **Cardiff Sporting Memories Club**
Held weekly, giving the chance to share sporting memories

During December, Independent Living Services will be providing some Yuletide cheer by running three online Christmas events as part of its 50+ 'Healthy Body, Healthy Mind' festival. Each event will be packed with singing, quizzes, seated exercise and lots of information about council and partner services to help older people stay healthy and well in body and mind.

Online Events through Cardiff Hubs are currently providing a wide range of online events aimed at maintaining customer connection with the community, particularly those customers that may be isolated or vulnerable. The new Hub website is an easy place to browse many online sessions provided by not only Hub staff but by other services too. The website is easy to navigate and there are lots of free online events for customers to join in with. Events include:

- Keep on Moving,
- Goldies,
- Wellbeing Wednesday,
- The Social Hour
- Coffee and Book Talk.

Cardiff and Vale Wellbeing group – An online weekly lunchtime course is run by Adult Learning and the Pen and Paper Company. The sessions are structured around the five pillars of wellbeing and aims to explore personal wellbeing and mental health management through engaging activities (Creative Writing, Macro Photography, Arts and Crafts, cookery etc.).

Tea and Tech group – Run by Adult learning, this is an online weekly digital wellbeing group.

Removing Barriers to Digital Deprivation by Upskilling

There is a wide range of support available for those who are digitally excluded. The new Digital Cardiff team (part of Adult Learning) have been working incredibly hard since lockdown to offer training and learning sessions from basic digital support to more specific health and wellbeing related technologies, sessions include:

- **Daily digital surgeries** - free digital support and guidance that fits the needs of the individual. Clients can call the Advice line if they can't request help electronically and will be called back and given the help and support they need.
- **Digital health technologies online** – Weekly webinar sessions exploring how to manage personal health and wellbeing using a range of

technologies and software. Previous sessions include 'managing diabetes digitally' and 'mental health digital applications'.

- **Digital Support Live** – Weekly webinar sessions exploring general technologies and promoting online services. Previous sessions have included 'Using the NHS Track and Trace application' and 'using Google Classrooms'.
- **Basic Digital Skills (BT Skills for Tomorrow programme)** – Accredited one day workshops tailored to the client's needs. This basic digital skills workshop lets clients select their modules and tutors are on hand for any support they need. BT and EE volunteers from the Cardiff area support the ongoing delivery of the project.
- **Fit Bit Course** – Online digital health course that promotes the use of digital health technologies to take control of personal health. Working in partnership with Public Health Wales and Digital Communities Wales. The online classroom offers a space for individuals to share tips and experiences, access health resources such as tutorials and YouTube videos and learn how to use digital health technologies such as FitBits and MyFitnessPal applications.
- **Adult Learning digital courses**- Adult Learning moved from face to face delivery to online in May 2020, courses are currently offered digitally through Google Classrooms. Traditionally, the classroom setting has always been a space for individuals to socialise and learn new skills, which is why the team have used full course online engagement through Google Meet (video calling software). This allowed pre-existing groups and a host of new students the ability to communicate easily; learners have found this invaluable. Online courses include Gain Confidence Online, Digital Skills, Getting to know your Smartphone and Tablet and Computing for Beginners.

Removing the Barrier of Digital Deprivation - providing kit and internet access

As well as the digital learning sessions that have been run to improve digital skills, there are also various tablet gifting schemes, so those on low incomes and without access to the internet can apply for a tablet.

- **Devices Dot Now Tablet Gifting Scheme** – Free data enabled devices are gifted to the most vulnerable in the community using partner organisations to identify clients they work with who would benefit from a device including; Cardiff People First, Oasis, Women's Connect, Ty Canna Mental Health Services, Four Winds Mental Health Services, Independent Living Services, DICE disability program.

- **Cardiff Council Tablet Gifting Scheme** – The Cardiff Digital Team are offering free data enabled devices for the most vulnerable in the community. The tablet gifting scheme provides an encompassed digital support package to those who are socially and digitally isolated. Digital Inclusion Officers assist each individual in setting up their device and ensuring that they are able to access services. Officers check in regularly with clients. Eligibility criteria applies (no access to a device, no access to the internet and on a low income) 38% of individuals who have applied to the scheme so far have indicated that they are socially isolated.
- **Community Living Table Scheme** – tenants of our sheltered schemes will be able to access tablets to help them attend virtual activities, the team will be able to allocate tablets to those who cannot afford to buy their own.

In addition to this, there are many partner organisations who run their own schemes. Our Digital Cardiff team hold information about all of these schemes and who is eligible so clients can be referred into the scheme that best suits their needs.

What more is planned?

Face to Face Social Activities

As it is now permitted for 15 people to meet inside and 30 people to meet outside, for an organised activity, work is underway to commence offering conventional activities on a phased basis from the 7th December¹.

Organised outside activities will initially include:

- litter picks,
- walking for health,
- nature walks,
- tree planting,
- and gardening groups.

Organised indoor activities will initially include:

- knitting and crochet,
- book clubs,
- social mornings,
- friends and neighbour groups
- arts and crafts.

¹ Members are reminded that this was intended prior to Welsh Governments introduction of higher level restrictions during Dec 2020.

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In the New Year it is proposed to further develop the indoor programmes, these include jewellery making and working with acrylics, pottery, life drawing and indoor bowls.

There will also be a reintroduction of support group networks with regular Hub partners focused on health, wellbeing and overcoming isolation. These will include; Macmillan Cancer, the Dementia and Parkinson's café and Public Health awareness sessions. This proposal also lays out the plan to reintroduce the mobile library so resource can be accessed more easily within the community.

The Community Inclusion Officers in the Hubs can help organisations as they restart their services in the Hubs.

Classroom based Training and Learning

It is planned that from the 7th December, some face to face training and learning will be reintroduced. This will start with digital learning sessions in 4 Hubs with small groups of learners, to allow for social distancing. In the New Year it is proposed to increase the type of course and the number of Hubs that sessions are run from, to cover more local communities. Learning together is a great way of reducing social isolation.

Reintroduction of face to face digital sessions (by appointment) - It is proposed that the digital services provision is expanded and will be delivered in additional Hubs and libraries in the North of the city. One to one ICT support will be provided to individuals who are digitally excluded. This service will primarily target individuals that are socially isolated and looking to 'connect online' with friends and families.

Adult Services – Supporting the Most Vulnerable

Acknowledging the importance of maintaining social contacts with service users and carers across Adult Services, arrangements have been put in place to provide and maintain a weekly welfare telephone call checks to those individuals assessed as the most urgent, using the Red Amber Green RAG coded system.

In addition, for example, within older peoples' day services, at the lockdown in March all service users and their carers were offered at least weekly telephone contact by a member of staff from each of the three day centres – the majority took up the offer and these have continued. They have provided valuable continuity of links with day services and the staff, have

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given carers ideas of activities to try at home and have been a consistent point of contact in these difficult times.

Adult Services has worked in close partnership with its commissioned service providers to support the delivery of alternative forms of service to support individual service users and their carers. This has provided funding continuity for organisations. Examples of these include:

- The Alzheimer's Society making weekly phone calls to their service users and delivering online the usual weekly Singing for the Brain sessions, and other social groups.
- Sight Life (previously called Cardiff Institute for the Blind) have regular telephone contact with members of the groups they usually hold, and have organised some online groups, supported to provide a specialist service for people with a visual impairment. This is in addition to the usual information and advice and assessment service they provide for the Council.
- Moorland Road Community Centre changing their luncheon club into a community meal delivery service. The staff and volunteers arranged for some mobile phones to be provided to some of the users so they could keep in contact with one another.

Information about e.g. carer organisations have been discussed with individuals and information provided.

Gradually and safely some sitting services are being resumed to support eg carers in most need. All situations are being carefully risk assessed, reviewed and monitored.

The Ty Canna team have changed their mental health services during the pandemic by facilitating 22 groups virtually including peer group counselling, cookery groups, language classes, drama and pampering sessions. Exercise groups have also been facilitated by a member of the team and strong links have been developed between Ty Canna and Sports Cardiff, with ideas afoot for future work together to support people in the future.

A network of businesses have supported the mental health outreach service by providing Tablet computers to support more people getting online. IT support has been provided by other service users, especially the youngsters who have been supporting some people who have never used the internet before. Funding was secured to set up counselling services to support people suffering with anxiety due to Covid. This included 3 sessions for individuals, and peer group support.

Ty Canna has also produced a newsletter that is reaching 230+ services user monthly. There has been some great feedback from service users regarding

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this including: *'Nice to see what was going on throughout Ty Canna. Thank you for all that you do for your service users - the service and its staff are priceless and the only reason I am still here '.*

Summary

Overall there is a very wide range of digital activity aimed at preventing social isolation, and there is also help for people to get on line. More face to face activity will be phased in during the winter both outside and in venues such as the Hubs. Help is available for volunteer organisations and any training needed can be provided to them. Community Inclusion Officers in the Hubs can help organisations who want to restart their groups to do so safely. External grant funding opportunities already exist and the Council's Grant Officer can help find the right grant for each organisation.