

A guidance note on churches' community action during COVID-19

The current pandemic has brought many challenges, but it has also brought out the best in many people with millions of 'ordinary citizens' looking out for their neighbours, particularly for those who are most vulnerable.

As part of this society-wide movement, many churches, parishes and deaneries are already involved in community ventures, assisting those who are most vulnerable during the current pandemic. This group extends beyond the 1.5 million people who have been identified through the NHS as requiring 'shielding'. Some government departments suggest that there may be as many as 15million people who face particular financial and social pressures beyond those faced by all of us.

What can churches do?

How might churches best help with work 'on the ground' in a way that is most constructive and that minimises duplication with work being done by other community groups or through the Government Good Sam initiative?

What follows is not an exhaustive list, but a series of signposts that we hope will prove useful.

- If you are already engaged in community support initiatives, please continue with what you are doing (subject to ensuring that you are following both Government and Church of England Safeguarding best practice for the pandemic and you are observing physical distancing and hygiene guidance).
- You might also want to check with other local groups either directly through your existing contacts or through www.yourneighbour.org to see if there are opportunities for shared resources and joint planning.
- If you wish to offer your initiative alongside other local efforts or to join an existing scheme run by another community group, we suggest that your first port of call is goodneighbours.org.
- Depending on what you are already doing or intend to do, it might be appropriate to contact other organisations. We suggest that this is best done by making contact first of all at a local level and then 'moving up' existing structures until you have found the level that best responds to your needs, questions or offers of help.
- These structures might vary across the country, but in general they are: Parish Councils, Local Authorities, Local Resilience Forums.
- The Red Cross is also helping to co-ordinate the voluntary and community sector response to COVID-19 and, in particular, its engagement with Government run initiatives such as Good Sam. Your local or area Red Cross Branch can provide details.

The situation is fluid and new structures or ways of working might emerge. We will endeavour to keep you updated about any such changes.

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