

## ***Responding to Human Need by Loving Service***

### **The Third Mark of Mission in the Covid-19 Crisis**

In the months and weeks since the Covid-19 lockdown began, local churches have found innumerable ways to continue to serve the needs of their communities. The worshipping lives of the congregations has moved on-line with amazing speed, enabling far more to join in prayer and worship than might usually be expected in the pew. And, as the impact lockdown and the virus itself have become clearer, churches have responded with all kinds of support ranging from highly developed social action projects to thousands of informal acts of neighbourliness. Our buildings may have been closed as part of our concern for the common good, but the church itself has not only been open but reaching out.

It is now clear that there will be no rapid return to ways of life pre-Covid. Initiatives that felt at first like short term experiments are now becoming part of the church's planning for the future. Many of the ways in which churches have cared for the welfare of their people and the wider community are going to be features of church life for a long time to come.

Against that background, and recognising that guidance and legislation from the government, and advice from the church, is evolving all the time as strategies for tackling the crisis develop, we have had a number of requests for more support for parishes who want to establish more initiatives in support of the local community. In some cases, the call is for assistance to ensure that local ideas are implemented in ways that follow best practice. We are very aware that central guidance can only complement, not replace, local knowledge and local energy, but it is often helpful to connect to the experience that others have built up over time.

Christian Social Action is often where the churches come together to demonstrate practical ecumenism. In offering loving service to neighbours, differences between Christians are of little significance compared to the witness we can offer together. In trying to model that practical ecumenism, we are very grateful to our colleagues in the Roman Catholic church where the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Caritas

Social Action Network prepared some excellent guidance for their parishes during the Covid-19 crisis. The St Vincent De Paul Society is an international organisation founded in 1834. It is a lay volunteer led befriending organisation, which seeks to alleviate poverty in all its forms.

Caritas Social Action Network is the official domestic social action agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales. It is a network of 48 Caritas dioceses and independent charities committed to the principles of Catholic social teaching.

With their permission, we have lightly edited this material for Anglican audiences and hope it will be useful.

This material is not intended as a definitive “how to” guide or as a set of rules. In serving our communities, local knowledge and resources usually shape what is possible. But in response to those who asked for some guide lines, we believe these – already “road tested” by our Roman Catholic colleagues – are well worth wider sharing.

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## Examples of help parishes can give

**NB: Remember that nothing should be done which could endanger the health and safety of either the helper or recipient or those living with them. Refer daily to the [NHS guidance on Covid-19](#) and refer to any policy or guidance published by your diocese. Please complete a full risk assessment for your chosen action, using, for example, [Appendix 4](#).**

What is the need? (see <a href="#">Appendix 1</a> )	What would help	Some typical risks	Could we overcome the risks and have the skills and resources? How? <i>(for parish to complete. Initial suggestions below)</i>
Combating isolation/loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a listening, befriending helpline</li> <li>• Friendly phone calls to people</li> <li>• Group meetings online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome response if not initiated by the person</li> <li>• Extra support requested but helper unprepared</li> <li>• Unintentional emotional abuse</li> <li>• With online meetings you are exposing yourself to far greater risks, we would not advise this option at present</li> <li>• Distressed callers who might need professional support</li> <li>• Not knowing how to end the conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter sent to people whose address is known (but not their phone no.)</li> <li>• Coordinator(s)/ led by a Coordinating team with a DBS and central phone no</li> <li>• Training on main advice to stay well and access essential services in the area</li> <li>• Clear understand of what befriending is and is not (see <a href="#">Appendix 3: Telephone befriending at a time of crisis</a>)</li> <li>• Brief volunteers on safeguarding and GDPR practices</li> <li>• Brief people on using IT technology (as required)</li> <li>• List of other services to hand e.g. Samaritans, Citizens Advice Bureaux, etc</li> <li>• Keeping logs of all calls</li> <li>• Scripts for team to refer to</li> <li>• Regular team briefings/handovers</li> <li>• Build up useful suggestions/knowledge</li> <li>• List of clergy, lay ministers, etc offering spiritual support</li> <li>• Collect (anonymised) case stories of your work to promote The Church's work</li> </ul>

Following the above model, you can use the risk assessment in [Appendix 4](#) to help all stay safe and your support to be as effective as possible using the above or other options below:

What is the need? (see <a href="#">Appendix 1</a> )	What would help	Some typical risks
Supporting people who are vulnerable or self-isolating and can't go out with practical help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shopping for essential items, prescriptions and medication, items for posting, etc (remember contactless delivery and safety principles above)</li> <li>• Hot meals: sharing microwaveable meals</li> <li>• Dog Walking volunteers</li> <li>• Signposting team</li> <li>• Referring people for support to other services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Government Guidance on handling money</li> <li>• People not observing Government Covid-19 guidance (see <a href="#">Appendix 2</a> also)</li> <li>• Allergic reaction to particular ingredients</li> <li>• Loss of an animal (pet)</li> <li>• Support interpreted as offering advice rather than signposting</li> <li>• Complaints if people haven't given consent</li> <li>• Keeping safe up-to-date simple records</li> <li>• Not passing on correct/complete information</li> <li>• The agency may not respond as expected</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Supporting Church charities</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact local agencies</li> <li>• Fundraising/in-kind donations (e.g. maildrop, social media campaign), volunteering and prayer. Article for local press.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church agencies overstretched and work impaired/lost</li> <li>• Some people could find it difficult being asked for money when they may be in financial difficulty themselves</li> </ul>
Support in kind for local projects (like foodbanks: e.g. <a href="#">Trussell Trust</a> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging donations/support for local projects</li> <li>• Safe delivery to them.</li> <li>• Ask if they need volunteers: Foodbanks, hospices and mental health charities are likely to be particularly in need at this time. Citizens' Advice Bureaux may also need help with the volume of people needing financial advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is not up-to-date or unsafe</li> <li>• Potential contact with Covid-19</li> </ul>
Advice on volunteering outside the parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering helpline to enable parishioners to engage in initiatives</li> <li>• You might want to speak to your local authority Social Services Dept or the local council for voluntary service or volunteer bureau because they will be appealing for volunteers to help take food parcels to vulnerable people and you may be able to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clarity about providing information rather than unfounded recommendations</li> </ul>

	work with their systems. Equally they may have a pool of DBS-checked volunteers	
Prayer and liturgy support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E/ mailing prayer resources (e.g. <a href="#">Appendix 5</a>)</li> <li>• 1-1 prayer partners</li> <li>• Prayer over the phone/internet accessed from home e.g. Accessing services online/streamed, advice on joining in Communion services.</li> <li>• Intercession Ministry</li> <li>• Getting people to pray for others and join in at a specific time each day</li> <li>• A group of people pray together alongside a Communion service being streamed or at the same time as the local priest is celebrating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra support requested but helper unprepared</li> <li>• Protect people's data (e.g. don't send round-robin emails under GDPR. Group emails sent to organiser and recipients as bcc</li> </ul>
Encouraging people to deepen their commitment to ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emailing suitable podcast/streaming material to volunteers and other parishioners interested</li> <li>• Discussion group online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People without access to IT and the most vulnerable are excluded</li> <li>• Technology dependent</li> <li>• Discussion to abide by rules on confidentiality, etc</li> </ul>
Plan for what you can do when restrictions start to be lifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be significant impact on the mental health of many people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards your church being mental health-friendly,</li> <li>• Provide a small peace or memorial garden or quiet garden,</li> <li>• Get people trained to help bereavement or trauma support and work with other charities to support this</li> </ul>

## Getting organised

Bringing together individuals using the phone/video-conferencing, etc to form a network might include:

- The Clergy, lay ministers and others, Parish Safeguarding Representative and an administrator acting in a voluntary capacity
- People in the parish holding a DBS certificate
- The local outreach or social action group, if there is one
- People with skills in setting up and coaching those not familiar with online media
- People with a relevant professional background, such as counselling, health or social care.

Services which are based on contact by telephone to address isolation and engage people are the most straightforward way forward. Referring people onto services or volunteer opportunities, offering a shopping or prescription collection service or cooking meals for people, etc. are all possible.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding processes exist to keep vulnerable people safe so are directly relevant to supporting people in the pandemic. The [Government Safeguarding Guidance](#) is simple to understand and very helpful on this. For example, it says, “We understand that people want to help others who are already ill or at particular risk. We wholeheartedly welcome such efforts and want to assist volunteers and the people receiving support in ensuring that help is provided safely.” Do read this guidance and its [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) carefully. **It is important to remember that self-care is really critical at this time, particularly given the likelihood that this is a marathon and not a sprint.**

In the examples in the table above, only one area would require a DBS certificate for working with vulnerable adults, that is, handling money, and there are safe ways to do this without the need for people to handle cash with the risks of virus transmission and financial abuse. However, people remain vulnerable to other forms of abuse (e.g. emotional from telephone support services), e.g. if volunteers happen to leave vulnerable people more worried, anxious or isolated after their weekly call than before. Helping people maintain security (e.g. not posting messages for help in their windows), having ID with photographic ID, using a special password when bringing the shopping can all help reduce concerns and keep people safe and well. There is detailed guidance on both volunteers and recipients on keeping safe with a shopping-type service here and in a video [here](#). Some Councils are issuing keyworker ID cards and Volunteers ID cards, would this be useful to you? Contact the Council to ask them if they can help you with this

## Other useful information

- **Emergency funding:** Charity Bank has compiled a [list of emergency funding sources](#) for charities and social enterprises, in response to the pandemic.
- The Government (Office of Civil Society) has announced a [£750 million package](#) to enable charities to continue their vital work during the outbreak available to organisations providing key frontline services to vulnerable people affected by Covid-19. Details of eligibility and how to apply to the funding will be available on the [gov.uk](#) website in the coming days. The National Lottery Community Fund will be involved. [Contact the central Covid-19 team](#) on for further questions.

- **Communication:** The Government's Campaign [Looking out for each other](#) aims to inform those who are well and not at risk, of the things that they can do to help support their friends and neighbours who need to stay at home because of Coronavirus (Covid-19). There are visual resources to guide people on what kind of help can be offered and how to do it safely (e.g. posters, social media images/messages, web banners, digital screens).
- [Doctors of the World](#) have translated NHS advice into 36 languages and counting!
- The Church of England Website includes FAQs and other guidance for churches & agencies, based on emerging Governmental pandemic strategy.
- Faith Action has collated [guidance](#) from national bodies representing different religious traditions.
- Very sadly, some of those who contract Covid-19 might not recover. This is a shock in itself and it is likely that some people could be traumatised by sudden death. [The Art of Dying Well](#) (Catholic support service on living, dying and bereavement) has excellent materials on its website. [The SVP, in partnership with the Art of Dying Well](#) and others are running weekly webinars at 6pm every Thursday addressing a series of topics, including telephone befriending, addressing grief, seeking and finding those in need etc. Government advice on what to do after death and in particular, [about funerals, is available](#). If someone thinks a person is a risk to themselves or others they should contact the police or social services, depending on the degree of risk. For other concerns try suggesting they speak to their GP or use the NHS helplines and resources.

We thank all who have contributed to making the Toolkit possible and wish you well with using it in bringing the Gospel to those in need

## Appendix 1: Coronavirus Pandemic: Parish or SVP Conference Action Plan Template

### **1. The tools at our disposal: which resources do we have in the parish that we could contribute?**

Do you have access to contact details of existing volunteers? The volunteers (especially with DBS checks) may work in visiting groups, existing partnerships with local charities, financial and material resources, specific skills in social care, IT organising, etc. Volunteers who are themselves needing to socially distance might be willing to spend an afternoon on the phone with others. Others may be willing to run deliveries or to coordinate from a distance as no social contact within 2m is safe and no one must enter another person's house.

Generous people may wish to respond to a need but may not know how to do so safely and in an effective way. Can you help by addressing any barriers to volunteering? Safeguarding vulnerable people is vital. You will not need DBS checks e.g. for Knock and Drop services as you must not enter people's homes, but awareness of safeguarding (e.g. with finance (DBS), ringing isolated people in distress, etc) is vital.

### **2. How might the pandemic further affect those in need?**

At this time of great uncertainty, we are expecting to see a rise in material poverty, financial poverty, the poverty of isolation and indeed the poverty of hope. What are the greatest needs in your local community and what support might you be able to contribute?

### **3. How can we find those in most need?**

Are there existing outreach activities such as soup runs or food banks that could help? Are there local charities you could support? Do you know people who are being asked to socially isolate who may need support? Could you ask local projects to send you requests for assistance?

**4. How can we care for isolated members of our own community?**

Do you have access to contact details of people of those in need of support? Starting, perhaps, with those visited regularly

Do your parish priest and other authorised ministers need help?

How will you coordinate your responses? Which means of communication will you use? Is there merit to having a designated phone number? With communication, which technologies are at your disposal (post/phone/social media/Skype/Zoom) to contact the volunteers and those you want to help? You must find ways to meet which are not in-person.

**5. How can we make this support effective and lasting?**

It looks as if the pandemic will last for some months. The needs will change, so how will you review your plans?

What needs to be put in place to care for your volunteers to ensure that they do not put themselves at risk in terms of health and burn out?

**6. More resources can be found at:**

**Links to CofE Resources**

[www.csan.org.uk/policy/Coronavirus](http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/Coronavirus)

<https://www.svp.org.uk/svps-response-covid-19>

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/Coronavirus-guidelines/>

[CSAN Reaching Out Toolkit for project guidance in particular for working with older people in general](#)

## Appendix 2: Additional Guidance on safety for volunteers and recipients in a shopping scheme

**Deliveries can be a serious opportunity for infection of the people you are delivering to, and also to you. As people can often not appear to have the symptoms when they are in fact infectious, you must think that everyone we meet could have Covid-19 virus and behave accordingly. Every contact is an opportunity for infection. We ask for your help to keep people safe and to help us keep you safe, by following this guidance.**

### 1 Advice for volunteers

A key consideration is to ensure people can do this safely and always act within the Government Covid-19 guidelines. For most things other than home visits (**which are not recommended**) you should not need personal protective equipment (PPE). The guidelines below follow the “no contact” / minimal contact principles.

- Touch as few surfaces as possible
- Stay 2 metres from others (6 feet) at all times
- DO NOT touch your face unless you have just washed your hands
- Stay away from people coughing or sneezing

#### *Before you go*

Ask the recipient to order and pay by phone so you don't have to handle any money or give change – a virus risk.

#### *At the shop*

1. Wash hands with water and soap for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser foam or gel.
2. Use the shop packing service and ask for it to be in bags which are not too heavy. Avoid walking round the shop to collect items if you can. If you can't, always stay 2 metres apart
3. If possible, stay outside of the shop and let the staff come out to you to give you the shopping. Do not touch your face, especially your nose, eyes or mouth.

#### *At the recipient's home*

1. Knock on the door – that is, don't use bell or knocker.
2. Place shopping and receipts(s) **on the doorstep**.

3. Walk away and **do not wait to be thanked** – communicate only by waving from a distance of over 2 metres (6 feet), through a closed window or chat by phone. Make sure you appear cheerful if you can so you're not making the person feel ashamed or stigmatised.
4. If the person comes to the door as you approach and needs to speak to you, walk back a car's length to speak and then ask them to close the door to enable you to leave the package safely.
5. Wash hands with gel/soap and water after delivery and **DO NOT touch your face, mouth or eyes including handling your glasses if you wear them UNLESS you have just washed your hands**

#### Back at your home

1. Wash your hands as soon as you get home.
2. Remove and wash your clothes and, once clothes are in the wash, take a shower. Clothing: these are recommended good practices based on evidence from the literature reviews, testing and effective hand hygiene procedures
3. Wear short sleeved tops ("bare below the elbows")
4. Change immediately if clothing becomes visibly soiled or contaminated.
5. Wash clothing worn at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric
6. Wash heavily soiled clothes separately
7. Any headgear must be worn unadorned and secured neatly.

## **2 Advice for people receiving shopping from someone else (please ensure they receive this in advance of the visit)**

As sometimes this infection goes unnoticed you must think that everyone we meet could have Covid-19 virus, even if they display no symptoms. Every contact is an opportunity for infection. We ask for your help to keep you and the person bringing you some shipping safe, by following this guidance:

- 1) Do NOT open your door to thank the deliverer. Waving from behind a closed window is optional! If you need to speak, ask them to stand at least 2 metres (a car's length) away from you - if you can't hear, call them on the phone.
- 2) Payment: should be over the phone as the virus can be on notes and coins.
- 3) Leave the shopping in the bag on doorstep for as long as possible – at least an hour. A longer time is preferable. If your doorstep is not secure then bring them into the house, wash your hands and leave them for an hour there.
- 4) If you can't carry heavy boxes or bags, please take your time to bring items in separately. **The deliverer must not bring your shopping into your house, that is too much risk.**
- 5) Dispose of the shopping bag in a closed bin.
- 6) Because the virus can stay on your shopping, rinse the outside packaging in the sink before putting it away if you can.

7) And then wash all over your hands and wrists with soap and water thoroughly for 20 seconds.

It's a lot we know. But it just might save a life.



The\_Art\_of\_Dying\_  
Well\_Telephone\_Bef

**Appendix 3: Telephone Befriending at a time of crisis (from the Art of Dying Well):**

Appendix 4: Risk assessment for designing our response

Response:		Name of lead assessor:	
Date completed:		Date for review:	

				<b><i>If high or medium risk rating, then complete below:</i></b>				
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	What are we already doing?	Risk Rating (L, M, H)	Action to be taken to control/reduce risk:	Who will action?	By when?	Reassess: Has risk been lowered?	Date completed

Source: [CSAN Reaching Out Toolkit](#) (used by Father Hudson's Care, 2020)