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COVID-19 partner response – Caring for People COVID-19 community response

Argyll and Bute communities have risen to the challenges of the past six months and produced an inspiring community response to COVID-19. This update reports on the community response work of the Caring for People Tactical Partnership and local Caring for People Teams. In March 2020 those most at risk from COVID-19 in the community were asked to stay at home and subsequently lockdown measures were introduced. This meant that a community response which made sure people still had access to food, medicine and other supplies become vital. Local communities across Argyll and Bute had already started to mobilise and form local resilience groups. The Caring for People partnership, comprising of Argyll and Bute HSCP Public Health, Argyll and Bute Council and the Third Sector Interface, was set up to provide guidance, community support, and ensure that no area was uncovered and no one was left behind.

- Caring for People helpline set up for people who were self isolating/vulnerable and whose usual support network was no longer available. This was to ensure that everyone had access to food, essential supplies and support.
- The local Caring for People teams worked with local organisations and volunteers to arrange for food delivery, other essential shopping supplies and medication delivery.
- As well as basic needs of food and medication, the Caring for People group understood the impact this emergency was having on mental health and wellbeing. The Helpline could therefore put people who feel lonely in touch with others to provide a friendly ear and if people are experiencing mental health problems they could also be directed to a range of services where they can get help.
- The local teams linked in with the Community Food Project, which distributed food parcels to those shielding and in vulnerable groups across Argyll and Bute. The Community Food Project was a large-scale operation which worked across Argyll and Bute to ensure that people could access food. This was made possible through significant partnership working.
- Those who were shielding were regularly supported through calls from shielding team, who provided support with food, medication, physical activity and emotional support, among others.
- Leaflets on where to go for help, money worries, and general wellbeing were distributed to all households in Argyll and Bute via Royal Mail and partners such as the Scottish Fire & Rescue Services helped to move leaflets across Argyll and Bute so that they could be sent out with food parcels.
- Other resources were also developed, such as guidance on how to volunteer safely and a website with information about businesses and groups who were helping locally.

Staff were redeployed from NHS and Argyll and Bute Council to help deliver the service, which also included local volunteers. The greatest asset was the people involved across the whole Caring for People response including staffing, volunteers and those in the community response.

- The Caring for People helpline supported over 3400 people and took over 5500 calls, with over 500 calls a week during the busiest period.
- Over 3000 people in Argyll and Bute were registered as shielding and statistics published by COSLA recognise the exceptional effort within Argyll and Bute to get in contact with those shielding and check their needs. This was undertaken by the Argyll and Bute Council Customer Contact Centre, and a number of teams including Caring for People then worked together to ensure needs have been fulfilled.
- Through the Community Food Team (part of Caring for People) 44,811 fresh and ambient food parcels delivered to vulnerable, shielding and free school meal households.
- Over 990 people in Argyll and Bute registered to volunteer as part of the Caring for People community response.

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