

Herts Community Solutions is a network of voluntary sector support organisations working in Hertfordshire to support the health and wellbeing of our communities



FELXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

OVERVIEW

This week's newsletter focuses on how the Herts Community Solutions (HCS) partners have adapted our services over the past 6 weeks, focusing on the current needs in our community and finding solutions. We have been truly inspired by our staff and the community by how quickly, and with how much energy, we can respond.

MOVE TO ONLINE SUPPORT

Hertfordshire volunteers and carers have been given free access to a Corona Anxiety Support Programme along with NHS and Keyworkers thanks to a partnership between #TeamHerts Volunteering and Howard Cooper, one of the UK's Leading Rapid Change Consultants and Anxiety Specialists who is based in Hertfordshire.

The free sessions cover a wide range of topics including:

- Feeling overwhelmed and anxious.
- Procrastinating because your focus is taken up by intrusive thoughts about the virus.
- Feeling under pressure to home school children to a certain standard whilst juggling your 'working from home' tasks.
- Having health anxieties and constantly asking yourself, 'do I have the virus?' or 'could I putting others at risk?'
- Concerns about the economy, finances or future job/work prospects.

A new course will be starting on the 18th May and registration details will be circulated by HCS members in due course.

'Thank you so much for opening the course up to Hertfordshire volunteers. I am enjoying gaining knowledge about techniques that we can apply and use to help others, as well as apply on ourselves. At present I am experiencing some anxieties that have been brought by the struggling economic situation and this course is really helping.' Kath, Hertfordshire volunteer

HCS partners have adapted their services to provide more online resources and help during the current pandemic. Community organisations are struggling with key issues such as moving their activities online, if possible, and the transition from office working to home working and the costs associated with this. Information sharing across community settings is also challenging with organisations worrying about GDPR. They have created a special page with resources at <https://www.mywellbeing.community/>.

They are also arranging twice weekly themed online forums to share knowledge and information. VCSE organisations need Zoom to join in and invites are sent out from cvs@w3rt.org. The latest online forum was one for faith organisations where discussions took place on a wide variety of issues. Ian Curry from Coronavirus Community Help for Northwood, Northwood Hills, Oxhey, Ruislip and Pinner was able to get help around public liability insurance to share at his next steering group meeting.

All HCS partners were able to quickly adapt their training content to move online. For example 'Safety for Volunteers' webinars via Zoom, using the most up to date webinar technology to engage attendees, such as online interactive polls, quiz, Q&A and chat functions. They are also holding active learning groups online and continuing to offer advice & guidance remotely to organisations in need of support.

ONLINE TRAINING FORUMS

In partnership with colleagues at the University of Hertfordshire, the Herts Sports and Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) has adopted CoachAi - a virtual companion that interacts with individuals via smartphones - to help residents of Hertfordshire make exercise a regular part of their weekly routine.

CoachAi uses proven behavioural science to accompany people throughout their journey offering much needed support, to become and stay active within the confines of their own home. HSP is committed to helping Hertfordshire's residents stay active and healthy through the Covid-19 pandemic

Working with CoachAi and taking advantage of smart technology and artificial intelligence, HSP has launched the **CoachAi at Home** programme, which offers users their very own personal virtual coach who will chat with them and give them the motivation, guidance and structure needed to access suitable exercise routines, and to maintain activity levels until daily life returns to something nearer normal. Plus, it's fun, **FREE** and has been proven to help people succeed in getting involved and stay involved in an active lifestyle.

HSP's own **WorkOut From Home** package supports Sport England's **Join the Movement** campaign, and offers some fantastic online opportunities for people to kick start their daily exercise routines.

CoachAi at Home complements this as an innovative, evidence-based, support programme and provides that extra motivation and guidance that our residents need to stay active at home, during such challenging times.

It takes less than a minute to get started and can be assessed at <https://sportinherts.org.uk/coachai/>

HCS partners receive funding from Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS) to deliver a range of training courses which include Digital Skills, How to Live and Eat Well and Customer Care.

BC, a 34-year-old male with a Learning Difficulty, had been attending the Digital Skills course to build his wellbeing and confidence. He had found the course useful as it was at the right pace and he was offered encouragement and help if he found any task difficult. Unfortunately, since COVID-19, BC has had to self-isolate due to health issues and this has affected his wellbeing.

To motivate BC and help him practice the skills he has learnt, BBO mentors have set him tasks during the lockdown. This extra help means that he can now do the basics on this computer and feels confident to apply for volunteering roles. BC has now signed up to the level 2 course as he is keen to add additional skills to his CV.

They have now adapted some of their courses to an online format and added additional resources at <http://www.cvsbeh.org.uk/community-learning/> to allow BBO participants and other learners to carry on learning.

PERSONAL SHOPPING/BEFRIENDING SERVICES

Many of the HCS partners have set up services, for example the Store to Door service. We have hundreds of registered users now spread across the County, mostly in areas where there are fewer mutual aid groups, which suggests the sector is working together well on that. Deliveries have gone out to people throughout the week and for those who are using the service for the first time and the feedback has been wonderful:

"Just wanted to feedback from a client of mine who says that his volunteer was brilliant. He had his shopping sorted and delivered (mentioned the team by name too). Pat on the back for you."

CONNECTING WITH MUTUAL AID GROUPS

All the HCS partners have also spent time working with the mutual aid groups which popped up in our neighbourhoods to help them directly work with their communities in ways that are both safe and empowering. In all cases we have been able to supply online support and information.

A number of practical issues were raised by these groups, from volunteers being fined for parking at supermarkets whilst doing multiple shops, to difficulties in delivering scripts from pharmacies. By working together, we have been able to identify key issues that are blocking their work and refer those on to the various Boroughs and County for further action. In some cases, such referrals are helping build up a holistic picture of the massive positive effort volunteers are making across Hertfordshire. We are also able to pass on some useful information to Herts Help who can then identify areas where people have particular needs that are being missed by local support groups.

This newsletter is being compiled by Community Action Dacorum on behalf of all the partners.

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