

Coronavirus – latest report from The Archdeacon of Sherborne

The Ven Penny Sayer

Throughout the Coronavirus epidemic Dorset County Council has worked in partnership with other local and national agencies and with the volunteer sector to ensure that all vulnerable people, are kept safe. An early slip of the tongue transformed ‘vulnerable residents’ to ‘valuable residents’: a constant reminder that all in the community are valued.

Among the volunteer organisations who are partners in this work are The Dorset Volunteer Centre, Age UK Dorset, Citizen’s Advice, the Help and Kindness web-site and many local voluntary groups who run food banks, and have set up local organisations to make sure that shielded people can have food and medicine delivered. Christian folk are involved at all levels.

Several key principles have underpinned this work:

- don’t reinvent the wheel: if a local organisation is already delivering help, partner with them, don’t take over
- joined up thinking: learn from each other’s good practice, help each other out, keep communicating
- don’t duplicate: if more than one group starts work in a certain area decide which one is going to take it forward
- build in self-sufficiency: make sure that vulnerable/valuable residents can access on-line and other local food offerings so they don’t have to rely on council services
- support food banks: by good advice and guidance and by grants

It has been a real privilege to serve on Community Shield Groups. I will be involved in a community webinar later in the month. The volunteer group has already started work on how we can build on the new partnerships going forward, and the mental health group are working on resources which will continue to help during this crisis and in the longer term. No one is in any doubt about the difficult long term consequences both socially and economically, but there is a determination to build on all the good things which have emerged during this time. The work continues to support the valuable residents of Dorset.

AD Penny

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