

Weekly update from Cllr Stephen Cowan



Leader of Hammersmith & Fulham Council



H&F CAN launched to protect vulnerable residents

We may be living in harrowing times but the power of a community's resilience and the willingness of people to come together is something to truly behold.

Yesterday we launched H&F CAN, our community aid network, with a central phone line and email hub. It is staffed by redeployed council officers and supported by more than 1,300 volunteers who have signed up to help.

The freephone 0800 145 6095 and email can@lbhf.gov.uk will be open from 9am to 7pm, offering urgent food deliveries and support for those suffering from loneliness or isolation. Residents who need urgent help – and friends, family or relatives of those who need help – are encouraged to call or email for assistance.

H&F staff will then advise callers of support, including arranging for volunteers to do food deliveries and refer on to support groups and ward mutual aid networks, or simply arrange a 'buddy' phone call to those suffering from loneliness.

As my colleague Deputy Leader, Cllr Sue Fennimore, says: "This is the biggest operation in the history of H&F Council and is a remarkable example of the council and the community working hand-in-hand to support our most vulnerable residents. Together we are determined to support those most in need at the time of their greatest need."

It was wonderful to see images at the weekend of the first CAN volunteers at work sorting and packing food parcels. They were helping with a second operation NHS Shield which is currently supporting 200 of the borough's most vulnerable people to COVID-19. Residents in this Shielded programme have been instructed by the NHS to self-isolate for 12 weeks because they have certain underlying health conditions, or who are immunosuppressed – for example, because they are on a course of chemotherapy.

So I want to say a special thank you to everyone who has stepped up across the borough to check on neighbours, call up self-isolating friends, or volunteer to join one of the many organisations doing such wonderful deeds at this time.

And to those who are on their own at this time, and worried for their own welfare, I want you to know that – thanks to the great humanity of our community – there is a network of people wanting to help. You are not alone.