

For Immediate Release
15th March 2020

Over 200 community support groups spring up as neighbours offer support during Coronavirus outbreak

- **249 groups set up as of 1.15pm on Sunday 15th March**

Over 200 'mutual aid' groups have sprung up across the country to support those suffering from the effects and threat of the Coronavirus outbreak[1]. 208 groups have been set up online, with volunteers coordinating via WhatsApp and Facebook groups and offering people in self-isolation help with shopping, dog walking and picking up prescriptions.

The groups, which are being coordinated nationally by 'Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK', have organised online meetings today, as well as taking to the streets to give people flyers describing the kind of support they are offering.[2] As well as practical support the groups are offering telephone calls with people who are self-isolating due to infection or increased vulnerability.

Anna Vickerstaff, one of the coordinators of the national network, said:

"No matter what we look like, where we live, or how much money we have, getting sick reminds us that at our core we're all just human. And in every country it's the old, the sick and those already struggling who will be affected worse. That's why we set this network up - because we want to make sure that no one in our communities is being left to face this crisis alone, and because we want to try and redress some of the serious inequalities this outbreak will expose.

"Groups are being set up and run entirely by volunteers - and our hope is that they can help to make sure people who need support get it. With the NHS and public services having been so ruthlessly underfunded in the last decade, we really just want to make sure that people don't end up suffering alone, or without the basics and support that they need from the outside world.

"There's some pretty big questions about whether or not the government's response to this crisis has been fit for purpose. So it's even more important that so many ordinary people across the country are keen to offer solidarity to each other in a moment of need. We'd love to see even more communities get involved too - and we're developing resources to help people take action in their neighbourhoods."

Emma Wood, who has been offering community support in Lewes, Sussex, said:

"I spent Saturday walking around Lewes putting postcards through letterboxes and leaflets in our library and a few cafes and shops. Some lovely people have phoned to say how much they appreciate knowing there is help around and letting me know who is unwell in their family. People are starting to join the Lewes Covid19 WhatsApp group, such as the chair of a local Community garden group - they want to help out any way they can."

Hope Winter-Hall, a resident of Islington, London said:

I am a disabled person with a care package. I am self isolating with my 92 year old mother. We already know that social services and the NHS were overwhelmed before this virus hit. I am very well prepared for months of isolation but I will be needing help before it is over. Finding the Islington Mutual Aid group lifted our spirits and changed our view of the future.

ENDS

For media enquiries contact Kevin Smith on kevin@neweconomyorganisers.org

For all other enquiries contact covidmutualaiduk@gmail.com

Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK social media channels: [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

[1] A full list of groups is here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18P898HWbdR5ouW61sAxW_iBl3yiZlgJu0nSmepn6NwM/edit#gid=1451634215

[2] An example of the flyers is here:

HELLO! If you are self-isolating, I can help.

My name is
.....

I live locally at
.....

My phone number is
.....

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19 I can help with:

<input type="checkbox"/> Picking up shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> Posting mail
<input type="checkbox"/> A friendly phone call	<input type="checkbox"/> Urgent supplies

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep. **#ViralKindness**