

Caritas Plymouth – COVID-19 Guidance and Support for Parishes

The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity (caritas).

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"let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18)

Although this document will be updated regularly, please check <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for the latest guidance before considering any parish action

Covid-19 – Supporting those in need

Inspired by Catholic faith, Caritas is the helping hand of the Church – reaching out to the poor, vulnerable and excluded, regardless of race or religion, to build a world based on justice and fraternal love. We support the network of social action charities, schools and parishes within the Diocese of Plymouth, working in partnership with them to help poor, vulnerable and marginalised people.

Vulnerable people are more likely to be at risk from COVID 19 because they have underlying health problems and limited access to good welfare facilities. Vulnerable people can include the homeless, older people and those living with long term conditions. Many parishes and individuals are looking for ways to support the most vulnerable.

This short guide is intended to provide some useful guidance to parishes and is a living document which will be updated. Feedback would be most welcome. We will also be updating our page on the Plymouth Diocese website <https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/caritas/>.

If you think of any ways in which Caritas Plymouth can support you at this time please call me or the Caritas Manager, Deborah Fisher, on 01364 645421 or email caritas@prcdtr.org.uk

Canon John Deeny

What can we do to help in the Diocese of Plymouth?

As we live through a period of disruption and increased risk for the vulnerable in our society, our parishes and communities across the Diocese are considering how best how they can help those in need. There are already some great examples of action already underway:

- Provide spiritual support and encouragement – some parishes are phoning vulnerable parishioners to offer prayer and practical support, others (including the [Cathedral](#)) are live streaming masses or putting services on You Tube
- Encourage people to reduce the risk to themselves and others – follow government guidance on self-isolation and reducing the risk of infection.
- Donate items to your local foodbank – following local guidance shows how to do this safely <https://www.trusselltrust.org/coronavirus-food-banks/>
- Consider how to support people living alone who are self-isolating in your community – check on friends and neighbours via phone or email.
- Some parishioners are creating buddy networks of people who will keep in touch via phone or email. This is entirely voluntary. [People should only share contact details with people already well known to them and as part of a network].
- If people are well, consider volunteering for local organisations which are offering food deliveries such as SVP or other support in your community. You [could start an SVP group](#) if there isn't one. If you don't have a particular charity or SVP you want to support in your local area, contact your [local Volunteer Centre](#) , [CVS](#) or visit the [Do-it website](#). They can help you find out where your help is most urgently needed. Sign up to [NHS Volunteer Responders](#) who are supporting the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.
- Share Pope Francis's [prayer](#) to Virgin Mary for protection

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.

*At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.*

You..... know what we need.

*We are certain that you will provide, so that,
as you did at Cana of Galilee,*

joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.

*Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us:*

*He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.*

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.

*Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious
and blessed Virgin.*

Don't forget

It is important to consider safeguarding when supporting people who may be vulnerable. Care must be taken to ensure that activities are organised so as to reduce the risk of harm to all participants. Within a parish, the Parish Priest, in conjunction with the Diocesan Safeguarding Commission, has responsibility for the pastoral care of the community with special regard for those most vulnerable. Each parish should have a Safeguarding Representative who should be consulted about any activities which are being organised that involve children or vulnerable adults. From the outset, please make sure you involve them in your plans.

How to Volunteer and Help Safely

Many parishioners are volunteering to offer practical, emotional and social support to other parishioners, neighbours and their local community – but we need to ensure that everyone stays safe. The Government has published some guidance on helping people to stay safe – both those volunteering and those accepting help. Here are some key details:

How to stay safe when accepting help from others

Please refer to [guidance on staying at home](#) Here are some top tips to pass on to people received support:

If you are receiving voluntary help do not share financial details like credit/debit card numbers or personal information.

If someone you don't know calls at your home, always ask for ID and always ensure you are comfortable sharing details like your phone number or address. (If you know the name of a parish volunteer who is calling but have never met them, you can ask to see their driving license or other ID) Only provide information on a need to know basis and if you have seen ID. Do not feel pressured into providing information. If you have doubts about those who are approaching you, and are concerned, it is advised that you don't engage, and report serious suspicious behaviour to the police.

Remember that genuine volunteers have been instructed not to enter your home.

Volunteering

Volunteering that requires going out of the house is now only permitted in certain circumstances. If you are well and are not at risk from coronavirus you can undertake essential activities including:

- Delivering food
- Helping people with their medical needs, such as picking up prescriptions
- Providing essential care or to help a vulnerable person or person(s), including through essential public and voluntary services, such as food banks, homeless services, and blood donation sessions

For more information on what sort of help is most needed and how to help safely please see the [guidance](#) from the Government.

Safeguarding Factsheet

The Government has issued a new factsheet for community volunteering during the [Covid-19 outbreak](#)

Where people require support the first option should always be to rely on friends, family, or neighbours who already know one another. If this is not possible, there are some very simple steps that can be taken to make arrangements with community volunteers as safe as possible. Particular

care must be taken where children or vulnerable adults, such as those with dementia or other medical needs, are helped.

The factsheet (and accompanying FAQ document) is designed to address specific concerns that people involved in supporting their community may have at this time.

The only people who are legally prevented from volunteering with children and vulnerable adults are those who have been barred from doing so by DBS. If you have been barred from certain types of work, then you would be committing an offence by trying to do that work.

Community Groups should ask their volunteers if they have been barred. If they have been barred, then you should not allow them to work closely with children or vulnerable adults. For further information see DBS guidance on barring.

Safeguarding Contacts

Should anyone require additional advice on any aspect of safeguarding including Disclosure and Barring Service checks, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team are available to assist on the following numbers and email addresses.

Robert Brown 01364 645431 email robert.brown@prcdtr.org.uk

Annette Moody-Burkinshaw 01364 645432 email Annette.moody-burkinshaw@prcdtr.org.uk

Robert Kingdon 01364 645434 email robert.kingdon@prcdtr.org.uk

COVID 19 and Data Protection

Whilst we are in a time of crisis, we still need to comply with Data Protection legislation. However, such legislation is not a bar to helping those in need. A key purpose of the Diocese is to support people and as such it is in the legitimate interests of our church community to help those in need. As such it is lawful to use data that we hold for the purpose of helping those in need at this time of national emergency. What we must do is ensure we manage such data appropriately and only for the purpose of helping those who need our support.

Scam Phone Calls emails and texts

Regrettably even in these difficult times there are those who would seek to prey on the sick and vulnerable. We are aware of a number of scams and that fraud cases linked to Covid-19 are increasing dramatically. Further advice on such crimes is available on the Action Fraud website <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>.



MESSAGE FROM CSAN AND SVP

19th March 2020

Dear friends

Re the Coronavirus pandemic

Our world and this country face difficult times. The government has asked people aged over seventy years old and those with chronic health conditions to self-isolate, and the rest of the population to practise careful hygiene and social distancing. The most vulnerable in our society and those who are often already socially isolated will be at risk during the pandemic.

Pope Francis has said, "I unite myself to my brothers Bishops in encouraging the faithful to live this difficult moment with the strength of the faith, the certainty of hope and the ardour of charity". Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop McMahon have asked us to be attentive to the needs of our neighbours, "especially the elderly and vulnerable; contributing to our local food banks; volunteering for charitable initiatives and organisations; simply keeping in touch by all the means open to us."

Catholics in England & Wales, and particularly the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, have a long history of outreach to those in need and isolation. Many parishioners and members of the Society want to do so now. The question we face is how best to do this under these difficult circumstances.

In order to help parishes and conferences discern this we attach a simple template which can be used to plan a practical local response. It can be adapted to meet your local needs and way of working. We hope it is of use. Please feel free to adapt it to meet your needs. Any planned actions should be in line with national guidance to ensure they are safe and effective. The guidance can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid19/>. Any plans should also be approved by your safeguarding representative. If you would like any assistance in creating these responses then you will see that the proforma ends with some useful resources.

Please pray for those suffering from the virus, for those caring for people affected, and for the bereaved. Please be assured of our prayers and support at this time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Palmer".

Elizabeth Palmer, Chief Executive of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (England & Wales)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil McCarthy".

Phil McCarthy, Chief Executive of Caritas Social Action Network

4/2/2020

Parish or SVP conference action template

Although this document will be updated regularly, please check <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for the latest guidance before considering any parish action.

The following template is designed by SVP to help parishes think through their local response:

1. The tools at our disposal: which resources do we have in the parish or conference that we could contribute?

These may be volunteers, existing partnerships with local charities, financial and material resources. Volunteers who are themselves needing to socially distance might be willing to spend an afternoon on the phone with others.

Generous people may wish to respond to a need but may not know how to do so safely and in an effective way. Can you help by addressing any barriers to volunteering?

Which technologies are at your disposal? Can you find other ways to meet face-to-face without being in person? [Have you ever tried using Zoom <https://zoom.us/> or Microsoft Teams?]

2. How might the pandemic further affect those in need?

At this time of great uncertainty, we are expecting to see a rise in material poverty, financial poverty, the poverty of isolation and indeed the poverty of hope. What are the greatest needs in your local community and what support might you be able to contribute? [You must not visit people unless working with a recognised charity which has infection control measures in place]

3. How can we care for isolated members of our own community but respecting Government guidance on staying at home?

Are there people you are already aware of?

Does your parish priest, or other clergy or religious need help?

How will you coordinate your responses? Which means of communication will you use? Is there merit to having a designated phone number?

4. How can we make this support effective and lasting?

It looks as if the pandemic will last for some months. The needs will change, so how will you review your plans?

Have you considered safeguarding and GDPR considerations to ensure that people are protected?

5. More resources can be found at:

www.csan.org.uk/policy/coronavirus
<https://www.svp.org.uk/svps-response-covid-19>

Signposting

The current restrictions on movement make it more difficult for people to respond directly through community action. The following sites may be help parishes in responding to any requests from parishioners or their local community

Food insecurity	<p>Contact the SVP group or your Parish Priest to see what is happening locally.</p> <p>The Trussell Trust website has a page offering guidance to those who need food or who wish to donate to enable people to find a local donation point https://www.trusselltrust.org/coronavirus-food-banks/</p>
Financial issues	<p>The government website can give advice to people about claiming Statutory Sick Pay as well as guidance for people who are self employed https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19</p> <p>There is a new scheme for the self-employed or members of a partnership and have lost income due to coronavirus. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme</p> <p>CAB has guidance for people who may be struggling to pay bills. It's important people don't ignore bills. Speak to the organisation they owe money to - they might be able to help by letting people pay smaller amounts or take a break. It's also worth checking with a bank or building society - they might be able to help with your debts or delay loan or credit card repayments. There is also some useful guidance for people who cannot pay rent and other situations https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/if-you-cant-pay-your-bills-because-of-coronavirus/</p> <p>The Child Poverty Action Group has brought together useful information on benefits and coronavirus: https://askcpag.org.uk/?id=-216847</p> <p>Be Scam Aware! Action Fraud has some examples as well as ways to avoid getting caught out. https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/alert/coronavirus-scam-costs-victims-over-800k-in-one-month</p> <p>Online experts have put together some top tips about how to protect yourself, your loved ones, finances and devices from the scams that are currently circulating. As well as advice about keeping yourself and your organisation protected whilst working from home. To see more about online safety during this uncertain time visit www.getsafeonline.org/coronavirus</p>
Guidance for older people	<p>The Silverline is a 24/7 free, confidential helpline for older people https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/</p> <p>Age UK has produced some helpful guidance on its website https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/coronavirus/coronavirus/</p>
Guidance for Carers	<p>Devon Carers recognises that Carers may be particularly isolated as their usual support services may have stopped during the pandemic:</p> <p>https://devoncarers.org.uk/help-during-coronavirus-covid-19/</p>
Council Services	<p>Councils are producing advice for people about how services might be affected during the current disruption.</p>

	<p>Cornwall: https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health-cornwall/information-about-coronavirus-covid-19/</p> <p>Devon https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/</p> <p>Dorset https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/emergencies-severe-weather/emergencies/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-advice.aspx</p> <p>Torbay https://www.torbay.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/coronavirus/</p> <p>Plymouth https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/newsroom/mainstories/latestinformationaboutcovid19</p> <p>Poole and Bournemouth https://www.bpcouncil.gov.uk/News/News-Features/COVID19/Coronavirus-Covid-19.aspx</p>
Homeless-ness	<p>Groundswell have produced Coronavirus advice and planning guidance for people experiencing homelessness https://groundswell.org.uk/coronavirus/</p> <p>St Petroc’s continues to offer some services and is also seeking support with supplies – updates can be found at https://stpetrocs.org.uk/news/st-petrocs-update/</p>
People whose first language is not English	<p>Doctors of the World have produced Coronavirus guidance in 26 languages https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/#</p>

Resources to use with children at home

Here are some Christian-focused sites which have resources and ideas that families can use at home.

CAFOD

CAFOD have some [excellent resources](#) for both schools and children’s liturgy. It has a page with resources to use at home during [school closure](#) The primary activities are probably more aimed at KS1, they include a colouring sheet and a short power point about the Romero cross. It’s a good starting point to use to expand into creative activities, such as designing and making a cross of your own or one for the family. For KS2 and above, it’s worth looking at the secondary school section. There are some great resources including a video clip on Saint Oscar Romero. There are a few video clips that you could use to discuss things or as a starting point for a project.

Messy Church

The messy church website has a wide range of activities that are used at messy church events, but you could use them in the home. It is particularly worth exploring the resources section. There is a subsection in the resources called [‘ideas and advice’](#) What is nice is that you can focus on areas such as scientific although most activities have a creative focus. It gives some ideas of things to do and links to other resources.

Christian Education

This is a more formal site that offers [home education materials](#). They charge for their resources.

Tear fund



There are a few projects that give information about how some people live and the challenges they face. [One Big Mountain](#) has all the resources online, so you can easily access them.

Bible Reading Fellowship

The [BRF site](#) has links to support families and young people's learning. There is a link to scripture and prayer.

If you are unable to access these resources or have ideas of your own to contribute, please contact the Youth Events Worker directly at: youth@prcdtr.org.uk

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