

## **Parish Report January 2021**

*Mark Howell: Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Bourn, Greater Cambourne, Little Gransden, Longstowe, Lower Cambourne and Upper Cambourne*

### **Fund helps Community work during pandemic**

A fund set up to help community groups and organisations in Cambridgeshire has seen a return of nearly £650,000 on its original investments.

Further ongoing projects funded by Cambridgeshire County Council's Innovate and Cultivate Fund (ICF) are expected to yield an additional return of over £1.2m.

The Council's Communities and Partnerships Committee heard that the grants had enabled organisations to provide high quality care and support to vulnerable groups, reduce loneliness and increase independence. They had also helped to ease pressure on the Council's social care services.

The committee, which met on January 21, agreed to continue the fund as a Cultivate-only fund and to ask the General Purposes Committee to inject into it a further £300,000, which was also agreed.

**The Cultivate element of the fund awards** grants of £2,000-£15,000 and is aimed at encouraging local networks where people help themselves and each other. It has a single stage application process, where the Communities and Partnership Committee consider the final recommendations of the panel before confirming the award.

Following feedback from applicants and groups assessing the applications, it was decided to discontinue the Innovate element of the fund – which made bigger awards but required a two-stage application process and a more detailed project plan.

All applicants have to show that their projects will reduce pressure on Council services and/or offer direct savings to the Council. Projects must either be new or build on an existing project in a new location or with new beneficiaries.

In November 2020, questionnaires were sent out to groups asking about the impact of the pandemic on their projects.

The most commonly anticipated needs and impacts in the next 6 to 18 months included:

Increasing financial uncertainty as reserves dwindle and income streams remain limited

- Maintaining some of the online offerings or changes to programmes
- Continued increases in need for services and for additional funding/staff/resources
- Continued rise in mental health issues and unemployment

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- Increasing reliance on grant funding as other income streams cease
- Continued uncertainty in service provision as government guidance changes
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72% of the responses indicated that the ICF grant increased their ability to respond to any new pandemic-related needs.

Many groups have been able to respond rapidly and effectively to the challenges presented by the pandemic by directly supporting residents. Timebanks, parish nursing, social prescribing and good neighbour schemes have been supporting their residents and communities during the crisis.

Hemingford Hub was 'highly commended' at the Hunts Forum Volunteer Awards 2020 for its efforts to mobilise over 140 volunteers to help residents with shopping, collecting medication, walking dogs, organising tea parties, delivering hot meals, minor repairs, and friendly phone and video calls.

Many organisations have seen demand rise on their services, with increased referrals reflecting greater needs among target groups and Cambridgeshire residents.

Since the beginning of the first lockdown, Huntingdon's Disease Association has experienced a 67% increase in the number of safeguarding referrals made to their advisory service. This is expected to become more acute the longer the pandemic lasts and continue to have lasting impact beyond the current crisis. Similarly, referral rates and self-referrals for projects relating to mental health have seen sharp rises and have placed pressure on staff resources.

## **Covid 19 Hubs and Libraries helping distribute emergency hygiene packs**

Residents struggling whether to afford either food or toiletries are able to contact their local hub to access emergency hygiene packs.

Helped by sixteen libraries across Cambridgeshire, the Hubs have distributed over 250 toiletry packs to those needing emergency supplies. The pack includes soap, toothpaste, laundry and cleaning products and sanitary supplies.

The Hub is managed by Red Cross volunteers who have helped purchase supplies as well as use donations to make up hygiene packs and distribute to libraries for use by individuals and families across the county.

Families and individuals experiencing immediate financial hardship with access to food or essential supplies can contact the Hub by calling 0345 045 5219 or completing the support form on the [Cambridgeshire](#) council website.

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## **Winter Grants Scheme for Children and Young People**

Households and individuals across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough facing challenges because of the pandemic have received help from their local authority.

More than 32,000 children and young people received support either individually or through their families as part of Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council's winter grants scheme.

Both councils have been working with other organisations such as District Councils and Citizens Advice to support people whose lives have become more difficult because of COVID-19.

The winter grants scheme supports families and individuals experiencing immediate financial hardship with access to food and essential supplies over the Christmas period and beyond.

This support is being offered in two ways – as a direct food voucher scheme or as extra support for vulnerable families and individuals.

- 306 households have been supported with emergency food
- 578 emergency fuel vouchers have been issued
- 133 families have been able to go to their local library to collect personal hygiene products
- 9 replacement household appliances have been provided for emergency situations or medical reasons

This is in addition to nearly 65,000 supermarket vouchers handed out to eligible families and children struggling in the run-up to Christmas.

Vouchers worth £15 per child per week were issued during the Christmas holiday to families meeting the low-income criteria, and the same families will automatically receive further vouchers in the February half term.

Information about free school meals and how to apply can be found here: [Free school meals](#).

## **Financial support to self-isolate**

Almost 800 people have received financial support to self-isolate totalling £395,500 from councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In addition, hundreds more who were not eligible for funding have received help in other ways via the network of support hubs run by the district and city councils. In this way, both councils are going further than the support provided nationally, which was highlighted by LGA Resources Board Chair Cllr Richard Watts on BBC Newsnight yesterday, available to view on [BBC iPlayer](#) until 12 February 2021.

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In further good news, the government has announced an extension to the scheme with local authorities due to learn shortly how much extra they will receive to support residents to self-isolate.

People who need to self-isolate are able to make a bid for funding from The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme which is run by Peterborough City Council and each of the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire. Those who don't meet the criteria are also able to apply for a discretionary payment of £500.

Since the financial support schemes were launched in October, 793 requests for support have been approved across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with many other people being offered help in other ways, for example by the network of support hubs.

In the first round, Cambridgeshire councils received £229,500 and Peterborough City Council received £105,000 as part of the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. They were also allocated £138,736 (Cams) and £63,018 (Peterborough) to award in discretionary payments and Peterborough council set aside additional funds on top of that to help people self-isolate.

So far £228,500 has been paid out by Peterborough City Council and £126,500 by councils across Cambridgeshire.

Across Cambridgeshire 2,041 people have asked us for help to self-isolate, and we have been able to help them in many ways, either financially or through the network of support hubs. With the extension of the scheme we can now help many more people, even those who may need to isolate more than once.

If there are barriers preventing you from self-isolating please come and talk to us, as we can help you to remove those barriers. We need to help you make sure that there is no reason not to."

Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council and the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire have a range of support available to help anyone to self-isolate.

This support includes:

- The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme which is run by Peterborough City Council and each of the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire, which entitles people who meet certain criteria to a one-off payment of £500 if they lose income as a result of not being able to work. This payment can be made available on multiple occasions if a person comes into contact with people who test positive a second or even third time.
- For anyone not eligible for the government support – a local discretionary fund which offers financial support to make sure people don't suffer financially.
- The network of support hubs run by the district and city councils which can support people with grocery shopping, medicine collection, dog walking, befriending services and in many other ways.
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To be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme people must meet all the following criteria:

- You have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you have tested positive for coronavirus or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- You are employed or self-employed.
- You cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- You are claiming at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credits, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit or Housing Benefit
- If you do not receive one of the above benefits you may still be eligible for a discretionary payment if you are going to suffer financial hardship by isolating.

NHS Test and Trace ID number, bank statement, and proof of employment or self-assessment returns will need to be provided. Details of both schemes are available at [www.peterborough.gov.uk](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk) and [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

People can also contact their local support hub via their local council or by calling 0345 045 5219.

## **Domestic Abuse and Covid 19**

This is a difficult and worrying time for everyone – but particularly so for adults and children living with domestic abuse, and the professionals working hard to support them.

During the current coronavirus 'stay at home' situation one of the concerns is that there will be a further increase in reports of domestic abuse.

Home is not likely to be a safe place for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and they will be increasingly isolated from sources of support.

The window of opportunity for anyone with an abusive partner to make a call and seek help is often very limited and that window is now likely to be even smaller.

During the first lockdown in the UK there were increases of over 50% in calls to the National Domestic Violence helpline, and locally in Cambridgeshire an 11% increase in high risk referrals, compared to 2019.

Anyone experiencing domestic abuse can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or contact local specialist services. Cambridge Women's Aid offers support to those living in Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire. Visit the [Cambridge Women's Aid website](#) or call 01223 361 214. Refuge support those living in Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough. Visit the [Refuge website](#) or call 07787 255 821.

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The Hestia charity also [launched a campaign](#) last year for victims of domestic abuse to access safe spaces at pharmacies across the UK to access specialist support and advice.

More information on these services and other support for those experiencing domestic abuse can be found on the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership website](#).

If you are worried about a friend, neighbour or friend please make sure they know where to access support and keep in telephone contact with them to make sure they are okay. In an emergency always contact the police on 999.

SafeLives, the UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, has some useful resources on domestic abuse and Covid-19 on its [website](#), which is regularly updated.

This includes:

- A guide for staying safe during Covid-19 for victims and survivors
- Advice for people experiencing domestic abuse with links to helplines and online support
- Resources for parents and children
- Tips from survivors of domestic abuse to support wellbeing
- Guidance for professionals

As always, if you or someone else is in immediate danger please call 999 and ask for the police.

## **Rapid testing for key workers to begin across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

29 January 2021

Rapid testing for key workers and all those who cannot work from home is set to launch across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from this weekend to help track cases of Coronavirus and drive down transmission rates.

A number of sites are being set up across the county offering rapid tests to people aged 18 and over who have no symptoms of Coronavirus. It follows a commitment from the Government to test as many people who are key workers and/or cannot work from home as possible.

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have been allocated 100,000 tests in the next six weeks, with the potential for the pilot to be extended.

Around one in three people who are infected with Covid-19 have no symptoms and could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify key workers showing

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no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly, which helps break chains of transmission.

Initially there will be six sites across the county, with the potential to set up pop-up sites in areas of high need if required. Tests will be offered at no cost to the public.

Tests will be available in the following locations:

- The Hub, High Street, Cambourne, South Cambridgeshire, CB23 6GW – launches Wednesday 3 February.
- Queen Mary Centre, Queen’s Road, Wisbech, Fenland, PE13 2PE – launches Thursday 4 February
- Soham Town Rangers Football Club, Julius Martin Lane, Soham, Ely, East Cambridgeshire, CB7 5EQ – launches Friday 5 February.
- Huntingdon, The Coneygear Centre, Butts Grove Way, Huntingdon, PE29 1PE – launches Thursday 11 February.
- Cambridge, The Meadows Community Centre, 1 St Catherine’s Rd, Arbury, Cambridge, CB4 3XJ – launches Friday 12 February.
- St Mark’s Church, Lincoln Road, Peterborough, PE1 2SN – already operating.

Each site will be open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Saturday, apart from the Peterborough site which is open every day from 9am to 2pm and 4pm to 7pm.

To book a test, people need to visit [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting) or [www.peterborough.gov.uk/rapidtesting](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/rapidtesting)

Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, said: “With around a third of people infected not showing any signs of the virus, it’s important that we ramp up our testing of people who are symptom-free to break the chains of transmission.

“Most people should be staying at home at the moment and limiting all contact with anyone they don’t live with, but we know there are large numbers of people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who have to leave home to go to work and they are the people we want to target with this testing.

“By testing these people on a regular basis - twice a week for at least six weeks - we can reduce the number of cases of Covid-19 across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, limit the

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number of people who might die or become very ill as a result of the virus and protect our NHS.

“However, it is not the testing itself that will reduce rates of transmission, but what people who are tested then go on to do. If people don’t isolate after a positive result, then we won’t reduce the spread of the virus. This is now a legal requirement. Equally, if people regard a negative result as a ‘free pass’ and ignore national guidance it will do more harm than good. While these rapid tests identify many people who are infectious with the virus, some people who are infectious may still get a negative test result. This is why it is so important people with a negative test result continue to socially distance and follow the lock-down rules, and to regularly access two tests a week if they are able to.”

Lateral flow tests are a new kind of technology that can be used to test a higher proportion of asymptomatic people and do not require a laboratory to process the test.

The process of taking a test takes on average 15 minutes from arrival to departure.

Extensive clinical evaluation from Public Health England and the University of Oxford shows lateral flow tests do not detect all positive cases, but they can be helpful as part of a targeted testing programme to identify asymptomatic people quickly.

Everyone who takes a test, even if it is returned negative, must continue to follow the rules which includes leaving home only for essential reasons, limiting contact with people they do not live with and ensuring good practices where contact has to be made, such as social distancing, wearing a mask or PPE and hand washing.

Councillor Steve Count, leader of Cambridgeshire Council, said: “Offering rapid testing to people who cannot work from home is just one of number of ways we are working to reduce rates of Covid-19 in Cambridgeshire. For it to be a success, we need people to self-isolate if they test positive and to work with the national NHS Test and Trace team to identify their close contacts.

“If you are reluctant to self-isolate because you cannot afford to, or because of other factors, please get in touch and we can support you. We can break down any barrier that is preventing you from self-isolating.

“Regardless of your test result, please continue to follow the national guidance. You may test negative on a Monday, but by Tuesday you could be infected and passing the virus on to the ones you love.”

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Councillor John Holdich, leader of Peterborough City Council, said: “I urge everyone in our city who cannot work from home to access this testing and play their part in reducing rates of Covid-19 in Peterborough.

“We know it will require a commitment on your part to access a test twice a week, but by doing so you will be helping us to track cases and break the train of transmission.

“Please remember, if you get a positive test, we can support you to self-isolate. If you’ll struggle to pay your bills we can help with a one-off grant and our support hub can assist in many other ways too.

“Above all else, we need you to continue following the national guidance, regardless of whether you’ve had a test recently or not. The rapid test identifies many people who are infectious, but not all of them, and you could develop symptoms within hours of taking it. So please, stay at home as much as possible and avoid all non-essential contact with those outside of your household.”

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said: “NHS Test and Trace continues to play a leading role in the fight against Covid-19. Increased community testing is a vital additional tool at our disposal to help identify those who are infected and infectious, but unaware that they might be spreading the disease.

“The work of Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council will be essential in driving down transmission rates. I urge all those living in areas where community testing is offered to come forward and get tested.”

As part of the pilot, both councils will also be offering workforce testing where many staff are based on site and in key sectors such as food production. Groups who may be more vulnerable and therefore more likely to catch the virus will also be offered rapid testing.

Testing involving care home staff will continue to take place separately to the pilot.

People with symptoms will not be tested at the rapid testing sites. Anyone with one or more of these Coronavirus symptoms – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – should book a test at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119.

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