

People helping people

Cheshire East Council

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, key staff at Cheshire East Council were considering how they could unlock the skills and people power in their communities to support the adult social care market in Cheshire. The council wanted to explore how they could harness volunteers to provide a step-down domiciliary care support service, which meant that there was a less comprehensive option for regular support when appropriate, preventing the need for more time intensive support and lessening the demand on council services.



“When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, we had an increased demand for support services and needed additional resource. Our ‘People Helping People’ initiative allowed us to mobilise and organise volunteers to provide vital support for the sector.”

Dan Coyne
Community Development Manager, Cheshire East Council

Cheshire East began by mapping out what community-based activity there was in the area and provided funding to support existing organisations to fulfil these services under the differing conditions of the pandemic. For example, a community food service was transformed to a ‘meals on wheels’ service.

An online landing page was created to provide a front door for those who needed support due to isolating or shielding and provide volunteers a place to register to join the ‘People Helping People’ initiative. Cheshire East were then able to provide any necessary training or DBS checks before linking volunteers with opportunities nearby. These volunteers were able to help with small tasks needed by vulnerable, shielding or less able members of the community including support for shopping, taking medicines, social visits or welfare checks. The initiative matches a volunteer with an individual or household to ensure their continued needs are met, and support is not just provided on a one-off basis. This also means that volunteers can be flexible to provide other appropriate, mostly task-based support when needed. Helpfully, this initiative also resulted in a decrease in social isolation, as the volunteer formed a positive relationship with those who they supported. The People Helping People service meant that people were less reliant on the councils support and the volunteer workforce were able to absorb some of the increased demand on the care sector.



Cheshire East People Helping People

If you are looking for help and support with Self-Isolation payments relating to COVID-19, refer to the [COVID-19 and financial support page](#).

We recognise this is still a challenging time for everyone, so we want to continue to help local people to support one another by harnessing and supporting the fantastic work already being done in communities across the borough.

We are working collaboratively with our partners and local volunteers to channel community-based support to meet the needs of our residents who find themselves isolated without family, friends or a support network. Our service is delivered for the local community, by the local community, with options including:

- Telephone support, advice and reassurance
- Signposting to local and national services equipped to meet specific support needs
- Access to essential food and medical supplies
- Access to priority online shopping slots

This service was helpful in preventing those from accessing full support before they needed it, but most importantly meant that people who would normally wait till they needed more intensive care services were able to reach out to receive a lower level of support which served as a preventative measure.

Cheshire East Council's People Helping People service recruited around 2,000 volunteers in 14 weeks and around 4,000 people accessed the service. The pandemic created the ideal conditions to create, implement and refine the service and the goal is to embed it into the council's workplan so it can continue to provide support to those who need it.

Top tips for replicating People Helping People



Ensure all necessary stakeholders are involved

Utilise pre-existing support networks and feed into organisations and frameworks that already exist. This can include care providers, interest or support groups and the general public. Bringing people on the journey with you, increases the likelihood that they will provide support long term and buy in to the service.



Evolve the service model to meet the current need

People Helping People originally started as a task-based service but evolved when Cheshire Council found that those who needed support for a single task would regularly need that support on an ongoing basis. The flexibility of the service to the changing demand in the community is important for a successful volunteer campaign.



Have the right systems in place

Good data processing and information systems are extremely helpful to get the most out of a service which relies on large volumes of data from a number of different sources. Think through what data you might want to capture at the start and test any systems before they are implemented if you can.

To find out more contact Dan Coyne, Community Development Manager at Cheshire East Council on Daniel.Coyne@cheshireeast.gov.uk.