

Press release - Cromer Cares to continue work supporting most vulnerable residents in Cromer and surrounding area following grant funding success.

Cromer Cares was set up in the middle of March by Cromer Councillor, Tim Adams. The organisation was created to help residents during the Coronavirus pandemic, and has undertaken the supply and delivery of food and essentials, prescriptions, and has also offered a telephone befriending service, and given various other support, advocacy and signposting to other services.

The organisation was soon adopted by the Town Council whilst they closed, who supported it by helping both financially and in coordinating efforts.

It has now been revealed that Cromer Cares will be continuing to support residents following the Coronavirus outbreak, with its primary focus being on the most vulnerable and those in a crisis. The volunteers now intend to act as a charity, and have already been successful in securing in excess of £11500 of grant funding, thanks to Norfolk Community Foundation and Tesco - Bags For Life.

It continues to pursue further funding to carry on its support to the most vulnerable residents. Cromer cares has also very gratefully received some generous cash donations from members of the public.

Tim Adams said “we are extremely grateful to those who have supported us with grants during this crisis, and to groups such as Cromer Poor Lands Trust, who have also helped us meet the costs of support to residents. Without the level of commitment we have seen by our many volunteers from across the community, the Town Council and it’s staff, and some successful partnerships with businesses, statutory bodies and other charities, it is hard to see that residents here would have benefitted from nearly as much support.

The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that we have a great deal more to do to help residents in Cromer and the surrounding area after the end of the current crisis. Many of the residents we have been assisting have been facing crises that may have existed without the coronavirus, so it is therefore our intention to carry on at a lower level following the end of the pandemic. We have assisted people with social care needs, addictions, housing needs, mental and physical health problems, those escaping or experiencing abuse, and most frequently, financial hardship.

We expect we will be supporting between 20-30 households at any one time with either long-term or short-term challenges following the end of the current pandemic”.

Cromer Cares revealed that it has supported around 740 households in the last month, down from a peak of over 1200 in previous months.

These households are in Cromer, and 17 surrounding communities. These are Aylmerton, East Runton, Felbrigg, Gresham, Hanworth, Mundesley, Northrepps, Overstrand, Sheringham,

Sidestrand, Southrepps, Suffield, Sustead, Thorpe Market, Trimingham, Roughton and West Runton.

This made Cromer Cares one of the largest voluntary groups set up in Norfolk to help during the Coronavirus outbreak.

The group does not anticipate the Covid-19 related demand will cease immediately, and is expecting to continue this support to residents for some time.

Coordinator and Town Clerk, Julie Chance, said "Most demand is still upon our food and essentials delivery service, and prescriptions collections from Cromer Group Practice Pharmacy. We have seen a significant reduction in demand for prescription collections from other pharmacies, who we have also been pleased to support in recent months.

We now expect to see a gradual decline in demand for assistance generally.

Many residents are still being advised to shield due to health problems, beyond August 1st, and others are extremely anxious and some are too frightened to go out in what is now a very busy Town again.

We are happy to continue to support those residents whilst they need our help.

We are also prepared to rebuild Cromer Cares to its previous capacity to support residents if we see any increase in levels of infection".

Cromer Cares has also coordinated a successful telephone befriending service to help isolated residents during the lockdown. Coordinator and volunteer Jenna Bedwell, said "we are currently supporting 19 people with individual volunteers who stay in touch with them regularly over the phone.

The volunteers have done a wonderful job, and there has been good feedback from both service users and other organisations who have referred them to us.

The volunteers have also been able to ensure those residents are getting additional support when they need it, or welfare checks when something is wrong.

I have been very impressed with the intuition of our volunteers which has enabled us to respond to people in crisis situations swiftly. We hope to build upon these successes following the Coronavirus".

The support Cromer Cares has given to some of the residents has varied significantly according to need. Coordinator and Deputy Town Clerk, Janet Warner said "our approach has been entirely person centered and based upon people's needs, aspirations and ability. We have had to build processes to ensure we can get food and essentials to households who both could and could not afford it, but also provide items like fridges and cookers to those who needed them and had no means. We managed to secure donations of clothes and toys for children, and mobile phones for those facing abuse. Many others just need support and encouragement through a crisis, or perhaps signposting to another organisation, statutory or Council service".

Mayor of Cromer, Richard Leeds, praised the efforts of volunteers, businesses, charities and statutory services who have supported the community throughout the crisis.

“The dedication of all of those involved has been tremendous, and they have done their community proud.

Cromer Cares managed to recruit 207 volunteers in a very short space of time, which says a lot about our community. Thankfully, they only needed about a third of them, whilst around 30 continue to volunteer.

Businesses of all sizes worked tirelessly throughout the lockdown to provide continuity services and essentials to residents, many of them also supporting the work of Cromer Cares directly. The Foodbank has also worked hard throughout the pandemic, in partnership with various other charities, including Cromer Cares.

I know Cromer Cares has also worked variously with the DWP Job Centre, North Norfolk District Council’s Coordination Centre, NNDC Housing and Revenue sections, NHS District Nurses, Norfolk County Council’s Social Care department and Social workers, and drug rehabilitation service ‘Change, Grow, Live’. Norfolk Constabulary have also supported various welfare checks where there were concerns for residents. All of the staff members at these bodies deserve our gratitude for their dedication during some very unique and challenging times, and I thank them. They did and continue to do a great job supporting residents during the Covid outbreak”.

Cromer Cares plans to make an announcement in the coming weeks when it has transitioned to a charity. They can be contacted for support on 01263 512254 or 07789625033 (also for message and WhatsApp). Their email is community@cromer-tc.gov.uk