

Hermitage Support Group

HermitageSpGp@gmail.com

We're still here. Update – January 2021

Dear Hermitage Resident,

Hello again (and if you are new to the Village) then welcome!

We are a support group that was set up in March 2020 as a local initiative to respond to the impact of COVID and in light of the recent news we felt it important to let you all know we are still here. For those of you who haven't heard of us, we are set up to help any residents who might be shielding or with specific needs as well as those who are enduring hardship. We have access to outside help from West Berkshire Council via their "Community Support Hub".

<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/supporthub>

Volunteers

If you are resident in the village, there will be a network of existing local volunteers that cover your street or estate. If you need help for you, elderly residents or those shielding then please get in touch.

Email: Hermitagespgp@gmail.com

Prescription Delivery Service – Important Update

We have just heard from the Downland Practice that only patients who have been identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) should isolate this time. CEV patients must not visit the surgery to collect their medication. The surgery should be contacting them this week (11th Jan) to inform them that they are CEV and will arrange with us for collection and delivery.

This time around the surgery will not automatically put a prescription on repeat – there will be instructions within the medication as to how to re-order.

If, however a patient is not on the CEV list and are unhappy about going to the surgery to collect their medicines, we will collect them on your behalf – please email me (Carolyn) at the above address, or alternatively phone me on 07717 495154 to arrange this.

The first delivery for Hermitage will be Friday 15th January, thereafter our delivery day will be Wednesday.

Hardship Fund

The Hardship Fund provide from generous donations from residents as well as local businesses is there to provide a free payment to any resident who encounters an unexpected bill or is in real financial difficulty. There is no expectation that the recipient will be required to pay it back, we simply ask that you write to us at HermitageSpGp@gmail.com and tell us of your circumstances. We do not judge or carry out a means test but are relying on your absolute honesty and integrity when applying. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Alternatively, if you would like to make donation then please get in touch too, since March we have raised nearly £5000. We have also received generous donations from Hermitage Parish Council and West Berkshire Covid recovery plan.

Food Bank

The Food Bank continues to operate from the Village Hall on a Wednesday from 4-6pm. All donations are gratefully received at this time (except Baked Beans)! We are particularly in need of rice, coffee, tinned meat and veg, tuna, tinned fruit, milk puddings, tomato ketchup as well as toiletries -such as toothpaste and soaps; toilet roll and cleaners.

We have been overwhelmed by the amazing community spirit and willingness to help particularly just before Christmas, when the donations for Christmas gifts and food items was incredible. Thank you so much. The food bank continues to support families from around the Downland villages. We are incredibly grateful to the following local companies for their support too: Fishers of Newbury, Beechwood Free Range eggs as well as generous local donors.

If you are struggling and need a helping hand, or if you know of a family who is struggling, please get in touch with us via HermitageSpGp@gmail.com our local volunteer team will then pack a food parcel based on the size and make-up of the household (names and addresses are treated in confidence). These can then be delivered early on each Wednesday evening by one of the team. It is worth noting our food parcels aren't aimed at replacing a weekly shop but providing a box of staple items to help out. If you are struggling with finances please visit the WBC Community Support Hub Webpage, please don't struggle alone. Our resident chef continues to make our ready meals – we would like to extend these lovely meals to our key workers – if you know anyone who is a key worker and would like a ready meal in appreciation of their work -please get in touch with us and we will deliver one to them.

More details can be found on the Hermitage Community Facebook page or drop by the village hall between 4-6pm on Wednesday talk with the volunteer team.

We know that we are potentially going to see more hardship in the coming months with the recent news and want to be in a position to help our community. Above all, we would like to thank WBC, the District Council and Parish Council for their engagement and all of our Volunteers for their ongoing support without which these small steps would not have been possible.

Hot off the Press

We are pleased to be able to tell you that West Berkshire Council have recognised the fantastic work done by the Hermitage Support Group Volunteers:

The Support Group was nominated by Hermitage Parish Council and an independent resident and was highly commended in the category Covid response Community Group of the Year. The panel felt that the way the community had pulled together was fantastic and ensured that the village was in a good position to move forward with new volunteers. We would like to echo their sentiments, because without you **all** we would have had a very difficult job.

Two people were nominated in the 'Big Thank you' and were also successful in achieving an award – Andy Murray and Sara Disson. Well done to them and Thank you.

Sara Disson was also highly commended in the Covid Response Volunteer category – there were a substantial number of volunteers put forward and the panel said that it was 'strongly evident how much goodwill and resilience there is in the community'. They were very impressed in how Sara has unfailingly volunteered each week to help with the food bank deliveries, as well as supporting individual residents.

Finally:

We would like to thank each and every one of you in the community – particularly those people that have volunteered to help, but their services have not been called upon. We have appreciated your offers; we still have your names and we may need you in the future.

Thank you once again

Carolyn Purchase
Andy Murray
Jon Turner

P.S.

Please do not throw this newsletter away – the volunteers will continue to be here until the pandemic is at a stage when we can return to some sort of semblance of normality. Please get in touch if you need our help – we monitor emails regularly.