

Riverside COVID-19 Volunteering Response

Introduction

As a result of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, Riverside have recruited an 'army of colleagues' from different departments across the business to support services and schemes where usual staff have had to self-isolate or there is additional demand. In the first two weeks of offices being closed, more than 175 people volunteered to help outside of their normal roles, and at least 80 staff have been called on to support in various roles. As with the national surge of support for the NHS, our own internal volunteers have played a central part in ensuring Riverside are able to continue supporting all of our customers, particularly in our Care and Support services where many have additional needs.

Recruiting Volunteers

The primary focus of Riverside's volunteering programme was redeploying staff from Evolve and Riverside Direct maintenance services. In the early stages, operatives with transport who would normally be completing non-essential repairs on Riverside assets (including social housing) were redirected into supporting the COVID-19 response. This immediately made available a contingent of staff to support local efforts within a pre-existing team structure.

Recruitment of volunteers involved a multi-stage communications campaign:



Offers of support were then channelled through the following steps:

- 1) Enquiries directed to a central location
- 2) Contacts shared out for follow up amongst the Care and Support Business Development team alongside colleagues in People Services.
- 3) Call to volunteer to confirm location, times able to volunteer and what skills/experience they could offer.

- 4) Information logged in central 'workforce pool' (Appendix A)
- 5) Tasks allocated as below directly to volunteers or Area/Scheme Managers for local contact

Allocating Volunteers

The pool of volunteers to step forward have been allocated into the following key roles:

Evolve/Riverside Direct Transport and Logistics Support

- Collecting PPE and other essential equipment ordered by the Procurement Team and deliver to schemes in need
- Install new equipment or adaptations to schemes that are required during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Transporting items donated by community groups to projects which need them within and outside of Riverside
- Collecting groceries, prescriptions and other shopping for schemes and customers who are self-isolating and can't do so themselves

Co-ordination of Evolve and Riverside Direct staff has been facilitated by the existing team structures, with team managers able to pool requests from frontline colleagues and allocate to team members broken down into new 'sub-regions'. Work is logged on a master sheet to see what tasks have been done by whom and when (see Appendix B). In the first 12 days of operation, 644 individual tasks were completed and have only increased since as more operatives come online.

Completing self-isolation plans with vulnerable customers

- Contacting Care & Support customers by phone according to a prioritised list of those most likely to be vulnerable.
- Completing a 'self-isolation plan' to identify what support the customer has in place or needs they might have in the event they need to self-isolate.
- Sharing any tips, ideas or methods for the individual to get the items and support they needed for any gaps identified (e.g. making use of special shopping hours at local supermarkets for people in Retirement Living properties).
- Passing on any additional needs or gaps in support identified to local teams so these can be met by the staff in services.
- Providing reassurance and comfort to vulnerable customers anxious about the pandemic, and clarify public health guidance.

Volunteers for this role were allocated to a certain number of customers in Care and Support services, starting with those aged over 70. They were provided with a script, including Frequently Asked Questions and suggestions of activities for customers (see Appendix C). This enabled Riverside to make contact with 99.5% of Retirement Living customers by 3rd April, 2 working weeks after lockdown began in earnest.

Social support volunteers

- Making regular support calls to customers with additional needs daily, every few days or once a week depending on need.
- Offering an outlet for social interaction for people who don't have anyone else to speak to.
- Reinforcing messages around social distancing for those with memory, behaviour or cognitive challenges.
- Providing re-assurance and comfort for anyone feeling anxious.
- Clarifying any new guidance or recommendations around keeping safe.
- Identifying and escalating any issues which local staff need to be aware of.

Many of the volunteers who made the initial support calls continued the support with the people they contacted originally. As well as providing an outlet for social interaction for people who may otherwise be deprived of social contact, this has proved a great boost for staff who are themselves isolated while working from home.

Case study: Joe and Mike

Joe, a volunteer from the Business Development team based at Riverside's Head Office in Liverpool, was matched with Mike, a customer at Redwood Glades extra care scheme in Hull.

Mike has an interest in fish and is using this spare time to think about a new project for his aquarium. Joe found out that Mike doesn't have access to the internet and would normally go to the library, but has been unable to during lockdown.

Joe dug deeper and found out Mike was particularly interested in parrotfish so Joe used his own internet connection to find some photos and bits of information. He forwarded these to the scheme staff to see if anyone could print off and post through Mike's door. They did so and Mike was able to keep himself busy without leaving his apartment and risking his or others' health.

Project relief cover

- Covering shifts at local supported housing services where there are staff shortages.
- Completing welfare checks with vulnerable customers.
- Addressing any problems customers have with their housing.
- Engaging customers in positive activities and encourage social distancing.
- Co-ordinating with external agencies supporting with other needs, from mental health workers through to charities providing hot food.
- Keeping public areas clean to reduce risk of infection for customers and staff.

Volunteers who indicated they would be willing to support in person at schemes where there were staff shortages were connected to local Service and Area Managers. Local service staff could then arrange for relief cover and support for any gaps that emerged in their rotas, or when cover was

needed at short notice to safely staff services. Thanks to the commitment and dedication of regular staff, many of the hundreds who put themselves forward were not needed, but those that picked up shifts ensured schemes could remain open and support available for vulnerable people.

Supporting Volunteers

Riverside have a long-running volunteer programme, the structures for which have been able to switch over to new volunteers to come through during COVID-19. These include:

- All volunteers are given a named contact who will ensure that they have everything they need to be able to carry out their role. This contact will be available to them whenever they are volunteering to provide support and advice where required.
- All volunteer activity is also subject to comprehensive Risk Assessments to ensure that risks are identified and mitigated.
- Volunteers are provided with appropriate training before they take up their duties to ensure that they have all the information they need to carry out their role to the best of their abilities.

Due to the rapidly developing situation, not all volunteers have been called on to support in the role they were allocated, or when contacted were no longer able to provide support in the way they had hoped. HR colleagues, the Volunteering Manager at Riverside and other specialist staff have been in regular contact to keep up to date on the evolving environment and where volunteers are or aren't required/appropriate as a result. Sharing the great support volunteers are providing and thanking them for it has also been a key priority for Riverside during the pandemic, including internally, through our social media channels and in the local and national media.

The effort across Riverside has been and continues to be tremendous, and we would like to thank everyone who has volunteered during the COVID-19 response for all your wonderful efforts.

Appendix A: C&S Volunteer Workforce Pool

Region	Region 5	Region 5	Region 5	Region 3
Area	A	B	C	A
Locations				
RD Supervisor				
Email				
Contact				
Riverside Support				
Email				
Contact				
Operatives	PG	CW	BG	AY
	PC	PJ		BF
		HV		AJ
		JM		MK
		LT		
		MC		
		GS		

Appendix B: Worklog Template

Date	Scheme	Client Contact	Task	Operative	Completed	Time	Comments	Region	Area	Manager	Contact Number	Admin	Contact No
09/04/2020			Collect prescription	JJ	Yes			Region 1 – Area 2	Newcastle & Carlisle	KW		CB	
02/04/2020			PPE drop off 03/04/20	LO	Yes	08:00	N/A	Region 1 – Area 1	Hull & Doncaster	LO		GW	
07/04/2020			Tidy communal garden for children	LPH	Ongoing	08:00		Region 1 – Area 1	Hull & Doncaster	LO		GW	
01/04/2020			DELIVERY OF GOODS	BM	Yes	03:00		Region 2 – Area 1	Manchester	SN		CB	
04/04/2020			measure up for new reactive door	JK	Yes	02:30		Region 6 – Area 3	Knowsley	MD		CR	

Appendix C: VOLUNTEERING GUIDANCE & SCRIPTS (During COVID-19 Pandemic)

To support volunteers making calls to vulnerable and isolated people, we have introduced a Temporary Volunteering Script across Care and Support.

The overall aim is to offer a telephone based befriending service to comfort and assist our most vulnerable customers through the coronavirus pandemic. This is not a counselling service, we aim to offer a friendly ear, assistance, signposting and reassurance to those customers who most need it.

This procedure relates to Retirement Living and supported housing services.

It will be in place until further notice, and only during the COVID-19 crisis period.

Data Protection & Confidentiality

Let's start with some key information that will help protect you and the people you are supporting.

During your volunteering you will come across personal and sensitive information about individuals as part of the support you will offer. We want to make sure that all information stays safe and confidential in line with the **Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR Regulations 2018**.

We want you to treat other people's personal information in the same way you would want yours to be treated. If you do acquire information about an individual you may be supporting (for example, names, addresses and possible medical information).

DO	DON'T
Keep any data secure and treat other people's information in the same way you would want yours to be treated.	Discuss any information or data with anyone outside of Riverside or with anyone who doesn't need to know.
If you think there has been a mistake or breach of data protection inform a senior manager in Riverside about it so we can manage this.	Leave any messages on answerphones with any personal information if you are not sure who is going to be able to hear them.

Withholding your Phone Number

We recommend that you call the isolated person from a withheld number. To withhold your number on individual calls just dial 141 before the telephone number you want to call.

Equality

As part of your volunteering duties, you will be required to support a diverse range of individuals in diverse communities and we ask that you respect every individual's beliefs. If you witness any behaviours where you feel someone is being treated less favourably or excluded, then you must inform your Line Manager of this immediately so we can tackle this and take appropriate action.

Safeguarding

At Riverside safeguarding and well-being of volunteers, employees and people we support is our number one priority. As part of your role as a volunteer you will come across vulnerable adults who could be at risk of harm and they should never experience abuse of any kind. We want you to be alert to any signs or patterns of abuse or anything that may concern you and always raise your suspicions.

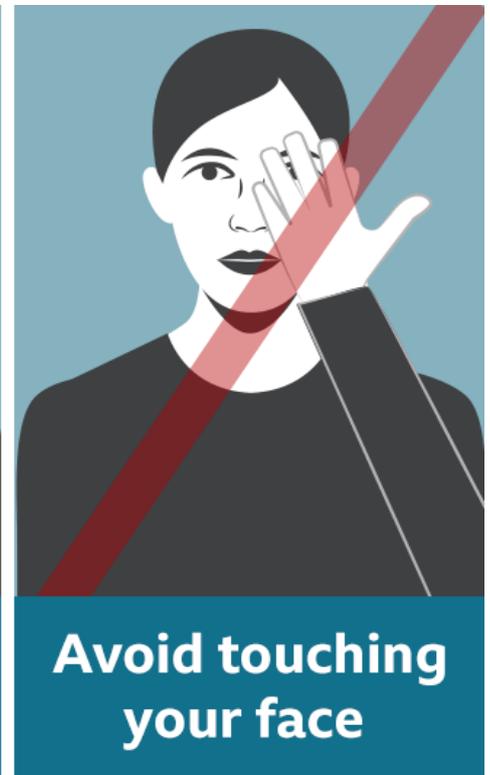
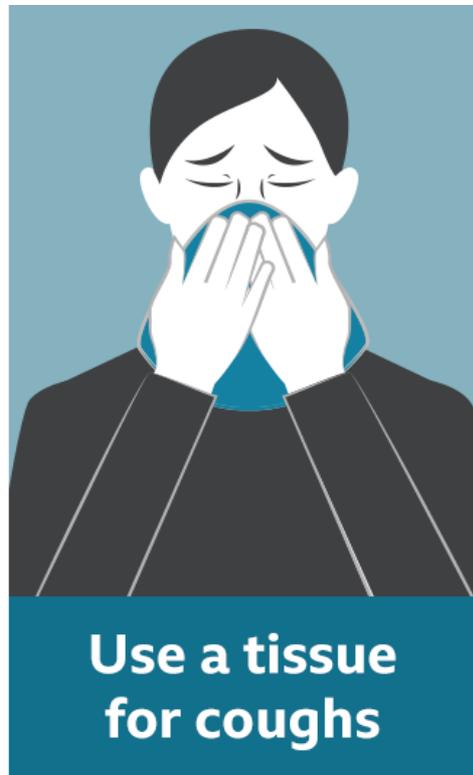
Be assured you will always be supported by The Riverside Group and not raising your concerns will be more harmful than raising a suspicion that is incorrect. If anyone tells you of any type of abuse then remain calm, listen and reassure them that it will be taken seriously. Don't promise confidentiality as you will need to speak to a limited number of people once you have this information and we ask that you ALWAYS report this to your line manager.

Keeping you Safe

The support you offer customers will predominantly be telephone support however, you may also be requested to go out in the community supporting the most vulnerable as we come together to support the needs of the vulnerable and help people to live well through the COVID-19 virus outbreak. We are committed to keeping you safe and below we have outlined some guidance to support you whilst supporting people.

How to protect yourself – General Guidance

- ✓ Wash your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water at regular intervals throughout the day.
- ✓ If running water and soap is not available then ensure you have alcohol-based hand wipes or sanitiser to kill viruses that may be on your hands.
- ✓ Avoid touching your face and keep hands away from eyes, mouth and nose to avoid spread of any virus.
- ✓ If you cough, use a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately. If the cough becomes persistent then you should follow government self-isolation precautions. If no tissue is available, cough into your arm.
- ✓ Please ensure you comply with the Government guidelines around social distancing by maintaining at least 2 metres distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- ✓ If you feel unwell and have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and follow NHS guidance whilst avoiding any contact with people.



What should I do if I think I have COVID-19 Symptoms?

If you are concerned about your health in relation to Coronavirus and believe you have symptoms then you need to pause your voluntary service and self-isolate for the required period of time. Please check out the [Public Health Guidance](#) to identify how long you need to isolate for and follow Riverside absence procedure and inform your Line Manager.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

TELEPHONE SUPPORT (During COVID-19 Pandemic) – Helpful Tips

DO	DON'T
Find a quiet place to make phone calls that is conducive to having telephone conversations	Do not give your personal contact details to customers
Ring the customer several times if they do not answer – this will give the older person plenty of time to come to phone	Do not enforce your own political or religious opinions to customers
Make efforts to speak clearly and at an appropriate pace so customers can understand what you're saying without any difficulty	Do not make promises you are unable to keep or that contravene the confidentiality policy

Actively listen to the customer and try and determine their needs are being met or they require assistance	Do not rush the customer – remember you may be the first person they have spoken to in a few days
Use a combination of open & closed-ended questions and avoid leading questions e.g. Open Question – How are you feeling this morning? Closed question – Would you like me to pick some bread up from the shop for you? (Usually a ‘yes’/‘no’ answer)	
Observe confidentiality and professional codes of conduct at all times	
Agree a regular contact call time and confirm the next phone call before you end each call	

VOLUNTEERING DAILY CALLS PROCEDURE (During COVID-19 Pandemic)

Step 1

Retirement Living Service Managers to allocate a designated area / patch to a volunteer, providing tenant contact details or arranging access to Open Housing.

Step 2

Retirement Living Service Managers to provide a copy of the Volunteering Guidance & Scripts documents to volunteers. Please ensure these are read and understood by volunteers.

Step 3

Once volunteer has been provided with guidance documents, case load and contact details, volunteer to contact customer working through **Telephone Script (No1)** which can be found following this procedure ensuring the questions are asked and responded to. This will establish the level of need and potential intervention.

Step 4

If further assistance is required by customer i.e. shopping, please can the volunteer escalate directly to the relevant Service Manager to action.

Step 5

If the customer does not require any further assistance, nothing further is required other than to confirm next call.

Step 6

Please check that the customer is happy with the frequency of your call i.e. daily or twice weekly. If a reduction from a daily call is requested, please find out how often the customer would like to be contacted and escalate this to the Service Manager so that they can arrange a 'waiver letter' to be sent out to the customer confirming the number of calls they have requested, ensuring the Service Manager keeps a copy on the house file.

TELEPHONE SCRIPT (No1)

1.	Greet the customer and introduce yourself and your role
2.	PASSWORD – If a customer requests a password from you it is:
3.	My name is I work for Riverside and I have volunteered to support the service at this challenging time, by offering help where possible. Do you mind me asking how long you have been self- isolating?
4.	Ask if it is a convenient time to talk - If 'no' please arrange a mutually convenient time/date to call them back.
5.	Ask how they are feeling i.e. What kind of things have you been doing to keep yourself occupied since you've been self-isolating?
6.	Briefly discuss confidentiality - It's important I explain with you anything we talk about will be confidential between you and I. However, the exception to this - if you share something with me which causes me concern; I would be obliged to share this with my line manager to ensure we can keep you safe, is that ok?
7.	Identify any immediate support needs - Do you need any help with anything i.e. grocery shopping, repeat prescriptions etc.
8.	Can ask if there is anything you have been struggling with?
9.	Are you managing to get around the house ok?
10.	Do you have any medical conditions, or have recently been to see your doctor?
11.	How are you feeling today physically, are you worried about anything?
12.	Have you managed to speak to any of your friends or family?
13.	Do you feel updated and confident you know what to do to keep safe during this unsettling period?

14.	Can I give you any advice i.e. hand washing / social distancing / why it is important to stay in?
15.	Are you managing to prepare your meals ok?
16.	Do you have all the medication you need?
17.	Do you have access to money to buy groceries?
18.	Are you able to get out to the garden for some fresh air?
19.	Before you end the call, agree time for your next phone call ACTION: please make a note in your Calendar / Contact Diary and escalate any further assistance required to Service Manager.

FOLLOW UP SCRIPT (No 2)

1	Greet the customer and introduce yourself
2	Establish password
3	Ask if it is a convenient time to talk?
4	Ask how they are feeling?
5	Identify any immediate support needs since the last call? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any new medical conditions • Sufficient food • Adequate money
6	Ask if the customer is worried about anything?
7	Suggestions for general chit chat – see suggested list below for things to do.
8	So what kind of things have you been doing to keep yourself occupied since you've been self-isolating? What are your interests & hobbies? Cooking / favourite food(s) Achievements / what are they most proud of?

	<p>What 'Words of Wisdom' would they give to today's young people?</p> <p>Best memories / important milestones</p> <p>Weather – us brits love talking about the weather</p> <p>Have you been chatting to neighbours/family/Friends?</p>
9	Confirm the date & time of the next telephone call

SUGGESTED THINGS TO DO AT HOME / CONVERSATION TOPICS WHILE SELF ISOLATING WITH NO INTERNET ACCESS

Daily phone calls to family and friends – Stay in touch, so they know you are well and vice versa. This will reduce anxiety, give human interaction verbally, so you don't get low in mood and give you all something to look forward to. If the person has no family or friends, then direct tenants to the befriending helplines in the directory.

Spring clean (if able and safe to do so) A great way to stay active in body and mind and keep the house free from germs.

Read a book - just sit back and relax with a good book, for a few hours and immerse yourself in a world of adventure/ make believe or swoon over a romance or turn detective for a good 'who done it'.

Take some time to do puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku etc. This will keep your brain stimulated and help keep boredom at bay, may be even call a friend or family member and do it with them over the phone.

Countries of the world – Go through the alphabet and see how many countries you can name starting with each letter, again do this with family and friends over the phone, if they have internet access maybe they can see how many you got right and how many more begin with that letter. When out of isolation research your answers and see how you did.

Baking/cooking- maybe you haven't done it in a while, due to our busy daily lives and now have the time to give it ago and see what you can create in the kitchen.

Make a photo album or rearrange an existing one – This will help you to reminisce and keep your mind active, if you have photos on your phone back these up and delete the ones you don't need to make room for new ones when the isolation is lifted.

Writing – Maybe write a letter to family and friends/ do a diary of your time in self isolation or a to do list when you are finally given the all clear to leave your home. Give a short story ago or poetry.

Put a movie on or watch your favourite TV show - relive some of the classics or give something new ago.

Music – Sit back relax and listen to your favourite radio station, or put on your favourite songs and just sing away those blues.

Stay active – even if it is only a little walk around your home for a few mins every few hours or standing up then sit down for a few minutes, keep those joints moving and don't stay seated or lay down for long periods during the day .If your normally active then maybe do some dancing to your fav music / or create a little daily light exercise routine.

Drawing – give it ago you never know what you could come up with, even if you have never done it before , you just need a pencil/pen and paper or if you have all the equipment and re a regular at those drawing classes, draw something each day to document visually your day to day time in self-isolation

Board games – Play over the phone with friends and family e.g. scrabble, draughts, chess, for a set time each day and pick up the game from where you left