

Darlington Community Support Hub

In response to Covid-19

Date: 1 July 2020

Version Control

Version	Date	Amendments	Lead
V0.1	17/5/20	First draft to IT for comment/direction	PN
V0.2	19/5/20	Inclusions in timeline for National Shielding Programme submission of data Inclusion of supporting guidance	PN PN
V0.3	25/5/20	Draft version circulated to all Steering Group for comments and agreement	PN
V0.4	8/6/20	Comments from GH and CGQ Inclusion of support from local businesses Inclusion of financial information Inclusion of national guidance The Bread and Butter Thing Communication milestones Version submitted to IT 8 June 2020	PN
V0.5	9/6/20	Additional shielding guidance (“I”) circulated to LAs Executive summary inclusion Staffing figures Revised Financial Figures Public Health role	PN
Final	25/6/20	Following all comments	PN
Final (2)	1/7/20	To include data up to 30 June	PN

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1. Executive Summary

In response to the covid-19 pandemic of 2020, Government issued guidance to all Local Authorities, in partnership with Local Resilience Forums, on 20th March 2020. This guidance detailed that each Local Authority Area must establish a hub to support those at risk of severe illness as a result of covid-19, across communities.

The guidance stated the areas of support that must be offered across Local Authority areas to those residents at greatest risk but with no available support network. These being:

- Food: to deliver basic food parcels directly to the doorsteps of the at-risk residents, and over time will look at other ways to help
- Medicines: community pharmacies will supply and organise delivery
- Social contact: local authorities, working with the voluntary and community sector, are asked to continue to care for those who might be feeling very isolated.

In response to this, the Darlington Community Support Hub (“the hub”) was established to support residents in the borough who are at the highest risk of severe illness (‘the clinically extremely vulnerable’) if they contracted COVID-19 and therefore were advised to isolate themselves (“shielding”) for a period of at least 12 weeks. In addition, there were a number of residents of the borough, who do not have conditions as defined in the Governments “shielded guidance”, who have to self-isolate, meaning they too required the support of the hub.

The hub was a partnership across the Local Authority, Local Resilience Forum Partners and the Community and Voluntary Sector ensuring the right level of support was provided to identified vulnerable residents. The hub became operational on 24th March 2020, immediately following the Governments lockdown announcement, with a dedicated telephone line offering a 7-day service.

From the time period of 23rd March until 30th June 2020, the following were key deliverables:

- Total number of calls received from shielded and vulnerable: 7,564
- Total number food packages delivered: 697
- Total medicine packages delivered: 258

2. High Level Timeline

Date	Milestone
18 March 2020	Work commences on establishing a Support Hub.
19 March 2020	Daily Steering Hub Groups commence. Daily Monday-Friday
20 March 2020	Government guidance on establishing a HUB announced.

23 March 2020	Lockdown Announced. Hub guidance received.	
24 March 2020	Hub call centre opens for calls (day 1 from 11:30am; 4 call handlers trained).	
25 March 2020	Hub call centre opens 08:30-5pm Monday-Friday; 9:00-1:00 weekends and bank holidays	
27 March 2020	Agreement with Coronavirus Support for Vulnerable Darlington to work together	
29 March 2020	Initial shielding numbers of 2020 residents received	
30 March 2020	First daily list of self-registered residents requesting support received from Government	
30 March 2020	Council decides to establish own volunteer vetting system as numbers are so low and slow and obtains agreement from CSfVD to use this system.	
1 April 2020	Volunteer vetting and induction system established including agreement with Police to do police checks on volunteers without a valid DBS, online induction covering H&S, E&D, Safeguarding and Keeping Safe, volunteer agreement, Key Volunteer letters and volunteering guide.	
3 April 2020	Additional shielding list provided following cleansing of deceased residents which amended the total to 1995 .	
3 April 2020	5,000 leaflets, 200 A4 posters, 200 A3 posters printed	
6 April 2020	Additional 10,000 leaflets, 500 A4 and 500 A3 posters printed	
7 April 2020	Leaflet distribution commenced to all residents on the shielded list	
7 April 2020	The Bread and Butter Thing commences from Dolphin Centre	
9 April 2020	Additional shielding list provided following further identification of vulnerable residents by GP's which amended the total to 2678.	
16 April 2020	ICT support provided to CSfVD, including offer to host Darlington Support website. Offer to pay for relevant insurance made. Initial draft guidance for volunteer tasks sent.	
17 April 2020	Information Sharing Agreement drawn up and signed by both parties and "approved" volunteers passed to CSfVD.	
	Date 17 April	Numbers 180

20 th April 2020	Hub Steering Groups reduce to 3 times per week (Mon; Wed; Friday)
20 th April 2020	Additional shielding list received (2,000+)
24 April 2020	Draft guidance, along with associated risk assessments, and the initial draft joint working agreement sent to CSfVD to consider.
27 th April 2020	500 leaflets printed in different languages
28 th April 2020	Data received from Government of Darlington residents not contacted through central hub
29 April 2020	Joint Working Agreement signed by both parties.
29 April 2020	Analysis of numbers vetted and rejected to date. * 504 signed up via online form * 286 fully vetted, approved and sent to CSfVD * 19 rejected
29 th April 2020	Bespoke food packages meeting dietary and religious needs provided to shielded families facing financial difficulty during Ramadan
30 April 2020	Council commences allocating requests to CSfVD.
1 st May 2020	Hub outreach team revert to substantive posts
1 st May 2020	Dolphin centre operationally responsible for call centre actions
2 nd May 2020	One Darlington Magazine distributed (inc hub leaflet info)
12 th May 2020	Steering Group meetings revert to twice weekly (Tues; Thursday)
19 th May 2020	National Shielding Programme data collection guidance released
20 th May 2020	NSP soft launch commences
21 st May 2020	Further 5,000 leaflets printed
31 st May 2020	Revised shielded guidance received
2 nd June 2020	The Bread and Butter Thing commences in community setting
5 th June 2020	FAQs Shielding Guidance received
23 rd June 2020	Updated shielded guidance (following announcement of shielding ceasing 1 st August)
27 th /28 th June	Hub weekend opening cease

1st July	Darlington pharmacies informed of hub no longer providing medicine deliveries from 1 st August
6 th July	Letter of ongoing support available sent to all shielded residents
6 th July	Hub handover to Adult Social Care

3. Implementation Stage

At the request of the Chief Officers Executive Team, the Assistant Director for Adults Services, was identified as the lead officer in developing and implementing a local hub, in response to the emerging covid-19 pandemic and guidance available. This request came on 17th March 2020.

A Task and Finish Group, with representatives from service areas across the council, was established on 18th March, with the objective of establishing a call centre, dedicated to providing support in relation to covid-19 to residents across the Borough, as a matter of urgency.

At this point in time, Government Guidance in relation to covid-19 support requirements for Local Authorities was not available. As a result, the task and finish group identified the following urgent priorities:

- Hub structure
The agreed structure was two-fold. A call centre, for answering all calls was to be set up within the existing contact centre in the town hall. Where a callers query could not be addressed over the telephone, these were to be addressed by the outreach section of the hub, initially situated in room 407 of the town hall.
- Staffing
Resource had to be identified to staff the call centre and the outreach hub. The roles identified within call centre were to be filled by staff from the Dolphin Centre and the Hippodrome, primarily as a result of these having to close due to the pandemic, but also due to the customer service elements of the role. Due to the reduction in demand across other departments, existing customer service staff also resourced the hub. Staff from the community safety teams were identified to lead on filling the roles within the outreach team. Housing and lifeline staff were involved in leaflet delivery as well as the Dolphin Centre staff being involved in the dispatch of items and collection of medications.
- Infrastructure
To support both the staff and residents, all of the necessary ICT and communication requirements had to be set up. The Local Authorities Customer Relationship Management system (Iagan) was configured alongside the telephone software to ensure all calls could be answered,

supported by a script, recorded and through the development of workflows, create “jobs” for the outreach team.

- Telephone Number

A dedicated telephone number, to be used for covid-19 queries from residents of the Borough was identified and configured to the call centre and outreach systems. This dedicated number being 01325 40500. In addition, a dedicated email was also set-up hub@darlington.gov.uk

- Communication plan

A communication plan was developed to ensure the role, purpose and contact details of the hub were made available across the Borough in providing support to residents. The key priority was to publicise the telephone number initially, with more detailed communication being developed following the release of the guidance from the government.

- Darlington Community Response Hub Partnership

Community response to COVID-19 required the input from a range of partners. The Director of Public Health established a regular meeting (teleconference) of key partners to share information, share local intelligence, problem solve and stay connected. The DPH established the informal network as one of the means of communicating between the Council, other public sector partners and key community organisations relevant to supporting people at higher risk of COVID-19. The first meeting took place on 23rd March 2020 and met every fortnight thereafter.

In addition to members from a range of Council services external partners included, NHS Foundation Trusts, the Primary Care Network, NHS CCG, Local Pharmaceutical Committee, local community Pharmacist, Police, Fire and Rescue, Healthwatch and Age UK Darlington.

- Community and Voluntary Offer

A mapping exercise was to be completed to identify and understand the existing support offer available across the borough from the Community and Voluntary Sector. Whilst this was relatively well known, it was essential to complete the exercise to ensure the *current* position across the sector was known, specifically in understanding the impact covid-19 had across these organisations.

Government guidance for Local Authority hubs was received on 20th March. This identified that as a minimum all Local Authorities were to establish a “contact hub” to support communities in need of support during the covid-19 pandemic. The initial structure put in place by the task and finish group, addressed all of the requirements of this guidance.

Following the announcement of a national lockdown on 23rd March 2020, the Darlington Community support hub went live on 24th March 2020.

Following the implementation of the hub to an operational stage, the lead officer for the hub transferred to the Assistant Director of Community Services.

4. Operational Stage

To support the emerging and on-going development, guidance and needs of residents, a Steering Group was established to manage and monitor the operational arrangements of the hub. The group, met on a daily basis, and the following were agreed as the aims and objectives:

Aim

To provide a Darlington based multi-agency response providing targeted support for those people at higher risk of illness from COVID-19 and the more vulnerable within Darlington community.

Objectives

- *To ensure that Darlington residents are safe and cared for.*
- *To provide a coordinated approach for support to those individuals who most need it.*
- *To oversee and provide direction for the community response hub.*
- *To ensure there are clear lines of communication between all agencies and the wider public.*
- *To identify additional resources as and when required to support the delivery of the hub.*

The structure and governance of the Steering Group was established in such a way, that daily information received from the Local Resilience Forum was discussed by Steering Group members (with key actions agreed and allocated owners) and any issues/risk for escalation were reported to Chief Officers Executive, again on a daily basis. The rationale to this structure was to ensure the emerging and changing guidance received regionally and nationally was acted on immediately.

Membership of the Steering Group was structured with the right people from the right services across the Council who could make decisions immediately where required as well as escalate any urgent issues. Membership covered the following areas:

- Systems, Processes and ICT
- Data
- Volunteer & Hardship Fund
- Contact Centre
- Finance, Health & Safety
- Human Resources
- Communications
- Insight
- Adult Social Care
- Hub Logistics and Management

- Public Health

A number of critical actions and subsequent plan for delivery were discussed and agreed by the Steering Group. These included;

Shielded, self-isolating and self-registered residents

Information from NHS England was received on a daily basis, and this ever changing data included shielded residents as identified by the NHS; residents told to shield by GPs and those residents, although not instructed to shield have decided to self-isolate. In addition, daily information was received from Government for those residents who had registered on the government website as needing supporting.

All of this data was analysed on a daily basis, with action taken to identify those residents, who were on either of the lists above, who had no existing support mechanism available. These residents were prioritised as needing support. Of all of these residents, these were cross referenced against internal systems to understand if they were already in receipt of a package of support prior to covid-19. Where they were, these residents and their needs were addressed directly by the service. Those residents not receiving any support from the Authority were supported by the hub. This was in any of the areas below:

- Urgent food deliveries
- Urgent pharmacy requests
- Wellbeing support

Furthermore, Government guidance was received on 19th May, outlining requirements on Local Authorities to provide data centrally as part of the National Shielding Programme. Submission of this data commenced on 20th May and included food and basic care requirements as well as the outcomes of shielded residents who the national team were unable to contact.

Hub operational requirements

Following implementation, both further guidance from Government and the emerging needs of residents, further enhancements of the hub operational requirements were needed. The purpose of these revisions was to ensure all residents needs could be supported directly or through the community and voluntary support offer, whilst ensuring all operational practices were compliant with existing and new regulations. These improvements included:

- Development of telephone scripting to ensuring all calls were addressed and recorded in a consistent manner (detailed in Appendix 3)
- Configuration of system workflows allowing all jobs to be created, managed and completed by the outreach team and the community voluntary sector
- Development of a single view of customer process, meaning a full history of all callers was available to call handlers

- Agree key performance data required at local, regional and national level to allow automation of reporting
- Agree the key performance indicators to measure and monitor the performance of the end to end hub

Staff within the hub completed the following tasks in supporting residents:

- Telephone calls to all households registering on the NHS website
- Telephone calls made to all residents on the shielded list that had not registered on the NHS website
- Home visits made by the dispatch team where no response was received from the telephone calls
- Referrals made to NHS responders for medication requests

Operating Protocol, Procedures and Operating Model

As a result of the significant changes required to systems, process and operating procedures as a result of covid-19, a "Covid-19 Darlington Community Support Hub protocol, procedures and operating model" was developed. This ensure compliance with:

- The Health Protection (coronavirus) Regulations 2020
- Bio-security Act 2015
- Health & Safety at work Act 1974
- Coronavirus Act 2020

This operating model detailed the management arrangements across all sections of the hub, structures and roles and responsibilities applicable during the pandemic period.

The outreach hub completed a number of urgent and emergency support offers across the borough. These included, but were not limited to

- Urgent food deliveries
- Urgent pharmacy requests
- Care home urgent deliveries
- Distribution of PPE stock as identified
- Co-ordination of deliveries of That Bread and Butter Thing initiative
- Co-ordination of the emergency food supply, including donations from local retailers

Workforce Resilience

As well as establishing a support hub, it was also critical to ensure there was workforce resilience to support the continued operational requirements of the hub. This was of particular importance as a result in the reduction in staff resource as a result of covid-19.

Nationwide, Local Authorities across England had introduced a working from home approach, where this was possible. For Darlington, this meant a

number of staff were working from home or had been redeployed to other key services.

Therefore, using the operating model for the hub, a skills matrix was completed for requirements of hub roles against those staff that could be redeployed to parts of the hub as and when required. This exercise provided continual resilience was applied to the hub

Volunteer programme

In delivering support for residents, it was essential to work in partnership with established community and voluntary sectors. There were a number of existing and, following the covid outbreak, new support offers available to the residents of the borough. In co-ordinating this offer (more detail in section 5) to remove duplication and deliver support to both residents and ward areas in particular need, a volunteer programme was agreed with partners. On 30th March 2020, the Council decided to establish their own volunteer vetting system. An induction system was established including agreement with the police to undertake checks on volunteer applications without a valid DBS.

Communication programme

It was agreed by the Steering Group, that it was critical that there was a clear and consistent message in place covering what the hub is there deliver, and equally important, what it was NOT to do. This approach ensured the limited hub resource was focussed on residents most in need.

A communication plan was developed and implemented with a number of key milestones:

- Design and print of Hub leaflets and posters
- Design and print of hub in 5 different languages
- Website promotion
- Social media campaigns
- Development of hub video
- Promotion in May 2020 edition of the One Darlington magazine

5. Darlington Community and Voluntary Sector

Significant work was undertaken to ensure the Darlington Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) offer was incorporated into the Hub, including:

- A comprehensive mapping exercise to understand which VCS services were continuing to operate, and what new offers were available and eligibility criteria
- A daily update of the LivingWell directory and DBC website pages to ensure this information was accessible to Hub call handlers, along with other support services and residents
- Regular reviews of the Hub script and form to incorporate local VCS services to ensure residents needs were met by the most appropriate organisation and support offer

Regular updates were also sent to the VCS sector to make them aware of the Hub's offer and how to signpost service users in need to the Council.

Specific work was undertaken with Darlington Citizen's Advice Bureau (DCAB) to align their offer with the Hub, including building DCAB's established financial assessment process into the Hub's triage process. Mutual referral pathways were also put in place to ensure residents could be seamlessly signposted between both organisations.

Darlington Support

In line with many other areas across the country, residents and communities in Darlington were quick to start mobilising and supporting people in need. In particular, a Facebook group, 'Coronavirus Support for Vulnerable Darlington' (Darlington Support) was set up in March and quickly attracted thousands of members.

Officers met with representatives of the group at the end of March to discuss how the Council could provide support and ensure the group's activities were aligned with both the Hub and broader VCS offer. It was agreed that the Council would undertake vetting of volunteers on behalf of the group, using existing processes with additional support from the police to undertake checks where volunteers did not have a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate. The Council also developed and put into place an online induction process incorporating health and safety, equality and diversity, safeguarding and keeping safe modules, along with an agreement for volunteers to sign and a volunteering guide. Once volunteers had been successfully vetted and undertaken their induction, they were given a Key Volunteer letter.

An Information Sharing Agreement was signed by both parties on the 17th of April, allowing the Council to send Darlington Support details of vetted volunteers. As of mid-May, more than 300 volunteers had been successfully vetted and passed to Darlington Support to coordinate.

Finally, a Joint Working Agreement was signed by both parties on the 29th of April, reflecting work undertaken to develop effective referral pathways between the Hub and Darlington Support and put in place a shared set of guidance for volunteer tasks which was developed and risk assessed by Council officers. Since this date, all volunteer support requests received via the Hub have been passed to Darlington Support to action.

6. Support from local business

Throughout the covid-19 pandemic local businesses across the Borough provided invaluable help in supporting the most vulnerable residents.

Businesses across the town provided food and other vital supplies to the Community Support HUB, which has distributed them to those most in need. This ensured the essential needs of the most vulnerable residents was met.

Those business who supported the work of the Community Support Hub being:

- Rider Industrial
- Morrisons
- Morrisons
- Bread & Butter Thing
- Aldi
- Sainsburys
- CEPAC Ltd
- Acorn Dairies Ltd
- Prest & Villiers Ltd
- The Mayor, Tees Valley Corp
- JJ Blair & Sons
- Darlington Lions Club
- East West Retail Ltd

The Bread and Butter Thing

Darlington Council, in partnership with Darlington Building Society and Cummins brought “The Bread and Butter” scheme to the borough to support residents during the coronavirus crisis.

The scheme offered residents of the borough the opportunity to buy surplus fresh food and groceries at a hugely discounted price. This mostly included fresh food and packaged food.

The scheme was co-ordinated by the Darlington Community Support Hub, which included an ordering and payment system as well storage and delivery logistics.

7. Exit Strategy

Following further guidance from Government (week commencing 15th June) an exit strategy was developed for the future structure of the work of the hub in supporting residents on an ongoing basis.

Due to the low volume of calls received on a weekend, it was agreed that the final weekend of operating hours for the Hub would be the Weekend of 27th of June.

From the week commencing 6th July, it was agreed that the work of the Hub would move to Adult Social Care where required, with continued signposting to the volunteer offer. To facilitate this, the scripting within the CRM system was revised to direct all callers either to the volunteer offer across Darlington, or Adult Social Care First Point of Contact. Business continuity was assured as all calls continue to be captured and reportable.

Following this transition, all residents of the borough on the shielded list received a letter from the Council, outlining the continued support available following the

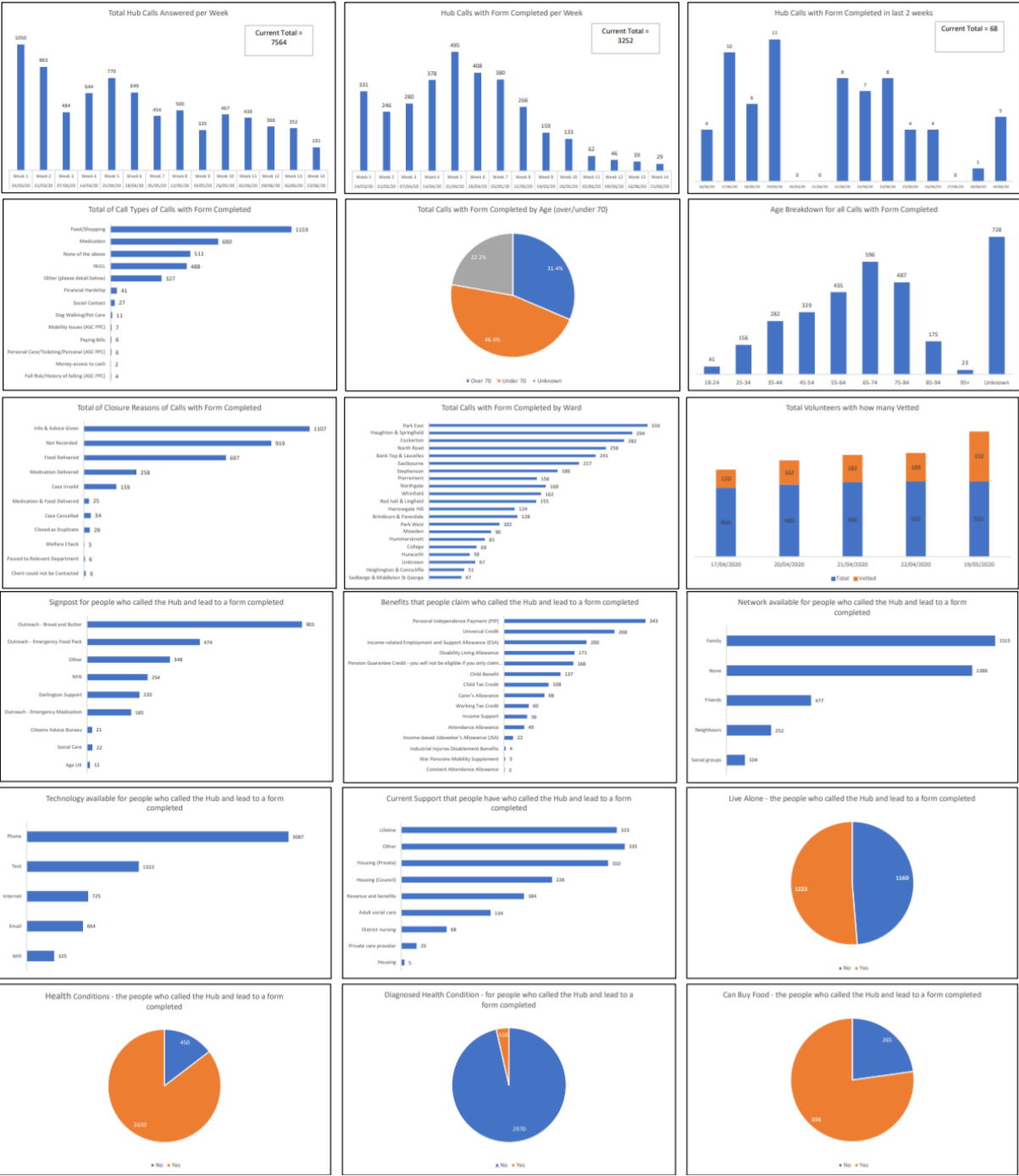
changes to lockdown rules. This is included as supporting information in Appendix 6, but to summarise:

- Priority delivery slots were made available to the vulnerable at local supermarkets
- Contact details of the continued food support from The Bread and Butter Thing and the Darlington Support Group
- Availability of local food banks
- Ongoing financial support through the Citizens Advice Bureau

Due to the ending of medicine deliveries by the Council from the end of July, all local pharmacies were made informed, by the Chief Officer of Durham and Darlington LPC, to no longer sign-post residents to the hub for this service.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Performance Data as at 30th June 2020



Note: a number of “nulls” appear in the data as information was not required or requested at the time and therefore not captured in the systems. This was due to the evolving data requests from across Government and Local Resilience Forums.

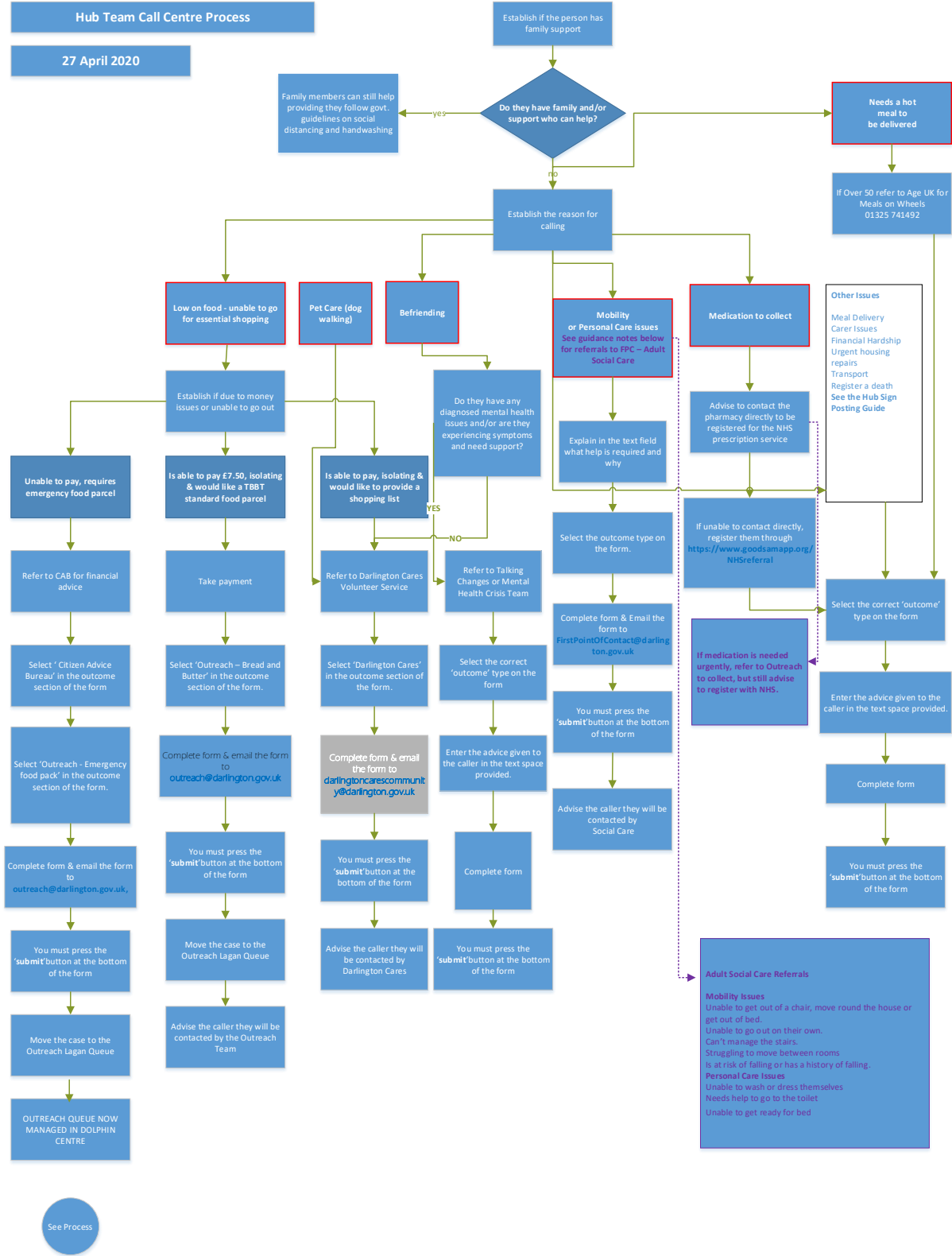
Appendix 2: Key Performance Indicators

Daily KPI reported to Steering Group	Description
Clinically vulnerable people identified	Amount of people on the shield list
Clinically vulnerable people registered on Gov Website	Amount of people on the NHS self register
Clinically vulnerable registered on Gov Website requested support TOTAL	Total amount of people on NHS register requesting support
Clinically vulnerable registered with the Gov Website Not requesting support	Total amount of people on NHS register confirming they do not need support
Clinically vulnerable people who have requested support with JUST essential supplies	Amount of people who have said no to having essential supplies on the NHS self register
Clinically vulnerable people who have requested support with JUST basic care	Amount of people who have said no to having basic care met on the NHS self register
Clinically vulnerable people who have requested support with BOTH essential needs & basic care	Amount of people who have said no to having both essential needs & basic care met on the NHS self register. These are additional to the residents requesting just food and just basic care
Clinically vulnerable who have requested support who have had Gov food deliveries	Amount of people who are on the food parcel list and also on the NHS self register
Clinically vulnerable that the local community hub have been in contact with	Amount of people on the NHS shielded list that have either called the hub, been called by the hub or received a leaflet
Clinically vulnerable that the local community hub that have been supported with food	Number of the people on the shield list, who have had food delivered by the outreach team
Clinically vulnerable that the local community hub that have been supported with medicine	Number of the people on the shield list, who have had medicine delivered by the outreach team
Clinically vulnerable that the local community hub that have been supported with medicine and food	Number of the people on the shield list, who have had food & medicine delivered by the outreach team
Clinically vulnerable that the local community hub that have been supported with basic care	Number of the people on the shield list, who have had basic care delivered
Clinically vulnerable that the local community hub that have been signposted	Number of the people on the shield list, who have been signposted to other support by the Community Hub
Non Shielded that the local community hub have been in contact with	Amount of people who have been in contact with the Hub but are not on the shield list

Non Shielded that the local community hub that have supported with food	Number of the people NOT on the shield list, who have had food delivered by the outreach team
Non Shielded that the local community hub that have supported with medication	Number of the people NOT on the shield list, who have had medicine delivered by the outreach team
Non Shielded that the local community hub that have supported with food and medication	Number of the people NOT on the shield list, who have had food & medicine delivered by the outreach team
Non Shielded that the local community hub that have supported with basic care	Number of the people NOT on the shield list, who have had basic care delivered
Non Shielded that the local community hub that have signposted (and where)	Number of the people NOT on the shield list, who have been signposted to other support by the Community Hub

Please refer to appendix 6 guidance (p) for the final weekly numbers up to 30th June 2020.

Appendix 3: Hub call workflow



Appendix 4: Financial and staffing Information

Staff deployed across hub:

Role	Number
Contact Centre supervisor/co-ordinator	2
Contact Centre Call Handler	32
Command Centre	12 (until May when stood down)
Control Room	9
Dispatch supervisor	2
Outreach driver	15 (March) 6 (June)
Food packers	26 (March) 10 (June)

For the 10 week period 23rd March to 31st May, the estimated costs of the hub are:

Staffing*	£151,587
Food Supplies	£23,032
Transport	£11,896
	£186,515

* Note, most of the staffing costs came from redeployment

Appendix 5: Visual Timeline

Please note, the visual storyline is currently being designed and will be available upon request.

Appendix 6: Supporting Guidance

	Guidance	Date issued
a.	Local Authority & Local Resilience Forum system to support those who are clinically extremely vulnerable	24 th March 2020
b.	Local Authority Shielding FAQs	31 st March 2020
c.	National Shielding Helpline	15 th April 2020
d.	Shielding Guidance & FAQs combined	24 th April 2020
e.	Outcome Guidance	18 th May 2020
f.	National Shielding Centre operating hours	19 th May 2020
g.	Advice to Local Authorities on offboarding	21 st May 2020
h.	Revised Shielding Guidance https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19	31 st May 2020
i.	Shielding Announcement FAQs	31 st May 2020
j.	Shielding Guidance & FAQs	5 th June 2020
k.	FAQs for clinically Extremely Vulnerable	5 th June 2020
l.	Example letter removing residents from shielding list	9 th June 2020
m.	Proposals for feedback of Local Shielding Outcomes	11 th June 2020
n.	Shielding toolkit for Local Authorities	23 rd June 2020
o.	Letter of support to shielded residents	6 th July
p.	Final KPIs up to 30 th June	

A full catalogue of all guidance is available here:

[\\dbcth-fs-03\HUB Outreach\23. Steering Group report\Supporting documentation referenced in report](#)