



Dear friends, supporters, volunteers and stakeholders

As you can appreciate the last few days has been extremely busy in terms of attempting, in light of the current coronavirus outbreak, to realign our services to ensure that all the residents have a robust support network for the coming weeks and months ahead.

However, it is equally important that all our friends are kept as up-to-date as possible with important information relating to, not only our services, but the broader implications for our community in terms of volunteering and ensuring that older and vulnerable residents remain safe.

We would like to personally thank our cohort of volunteers without who we would not be able to function. We are asking our volunteers who befriend to continue to do this but at arms-length either via the telephone or the electronic means available to them.

However, we have a much broader volunteer basis and, over the coming days, we will be getting in touch to ask if you can engage in meaningful, safe and secure ways of volunteering that help the elderly and the vulnerable living in Wetherby and the surrounding area.

Here in the office the team are actively working up an understanding of the challenge ahead which, for us, will mean keeping in touch with the friends we support to ensure the avoidance of social isolation.

This will be done through a myriad of processes involving activities and engagement that our friends can do at home but, also, it will provide that vital lifeline for our friends to speak to somebody which could, simply, be a chat but also to express concerns or needs going forward through the next few weeks and months that we will signpost to ensure the correct level of support is given.

***Simply put, we WILL be in touch.***

Wetherby in Support of the Elderly (WiSE) is not going away but in these rapidly changing times we must simply adjust to the new reality of the coming weeks and months and adjust our services accordingly. Our phone lines are still open on 01937 588994 and you could also contact us at [info@w-ise.org.uk](mailto:info@w-ise.org.uk) where we will be more than happy to pick up your queries, issues, concerns or simply have a chat.

We would add, however, that with the lines being extremely busy if you cannot get through immediately do leave a message and we will get back to you.

Many of you have got in touch and expressed an interest in volunteering. We are hoping our current volunteer cohort will stay with us and work with us to support our friends but there are also mechanisms in place for new volunteers who want to support the community to do so.

Leeds City Council, working in conjunction with Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) have created a platform for volunteers to be deployed into communities. This will ensure the volunteer in a safe, secure,

deliverable and measured way to maximise the benefits for the people needing support and to keep the volunteers safe from harm.

Anyone wishing to help in this way is asked to contact VAL at 'Doing Good' in Leeds by emailing [volunteering@val.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@val.org.uk) or calling 0113 297 7920. Training will be provided so volunteers meet safeguarding standards. Community groups forming with the aim of providing help are also asked to contact VAL so a volunteer manager can be involved in the process.

Our current events programme is, of course, suspended at present and the WiSE Owl Cafe at Boston Spa will remain closed until further notice.

To conclude, clearly this is an ever-changing picture and information and advice is changing on a daily basis. therefore we will keep in touch with you all and as ideas and mechanisms to support all the residents are fleshed out in the coming days we will continue to include you in our plans and, obviously, seek the support that you are always so generous in giving.

Finally, please make sure you follow all sensible advice regarding large gatherings, hygiene and avoiding the unnecessary spread of the virus.

From all of us here at WiSE, stay safe and well.

With Best wishes.

*Mark*

Mark Dobson  
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Wetherby in Support of the Elderly.