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Media Release

For Immediate Release

Helping those who need it most in your community

Vulnerable people forced to self-isolate due to the coronavirus pandemic will be offered a helping hand, thanks to a new voluntary initiative in Swindon.

Swindon Borough Council has teamed up with Voluntary Action Swindon and the Volunteer Centre Swindon to help pair volunteers with those who have no one to help them during the current public health emergency.

Members of the community who want to help those who are self-isolating, who do not have their own support networks, can now log their offers of support with Voluntary Action Swindon, who will work with the Council to pair them up with those most in need. This could involve speaking to someone over the phone to offer some companionship or collecting shopping for those who are staying at home.

Pam Webb, CEO of Voluntary Action Swindon, said: "If you are someone who is self-isolating or in need of non-medical assistance as a result of coronavirus, we would recommend in the first instance that you reach out to family members, neighbours and friends that you know personally. But we are very aware that there will be people in our local community for whom this is not possible.

"These are the people we hope to help through our 'Compassionate Swindon' initiative. We also want to try and help the many charities and care services continue to thrive who are also experiencing staff and volunteer shortages due to current containment protocols.

"As usual in difficult times the community spirit shines through and all three of the organisations in this partnership have been contacted by people wanting to volunteer. We want to make sure that this fantastic community spirit is harnessed in the best way to keep both volunteers and those being helped safe."

People who wish to support others should visit www.vas-swindon.org to complete a simple online form indicating how they are willing to help. The team at the Council's Live Well hub will be helping to match all volunteers with those in need.

Councillor David Renard, Leader of Swindon Borough Council, said: "The Live Well Hub in Swindon works all year round handling referrals and giving people access to opportunities and services which can help improve their health and wellbeing.

"We are therefore very well placed to step up our current service in these difficult times to help people in our local community who are feeling more vulnerable. We are delighted to be working in partnership with Voluntary Action Swindon and the Volunteer Centre Swindon to harness the goodwill of the people of Swindon to provide help where it is needed.

"Anyone in the Swindon community needing some non-medical help can call the Council's team on 01793 465513 or email livewell@swindon.gov.uk so they can be put in touch with residents willing to help."

Sarah Troughton, HM Lord- Lieutenant of Wiltshire, said: "I am very pleased to back this initiative from Swindon Borough Council and Voluntary Action Swindon. It is a sensible and practical way of helping each other at this tricky time in different ways. We are only at the start of the three or four-month

period of isolation and patience and goodwill is going to be required as much as anything. The Swindon community will be trailblazers.”

Sue Dunmore, CEO of the Volunteer Centre Swindon states: “The Volunteer Centre Swindon works hard to match people interested in volunteering with suitable opportunities and to ensure volunteering best practice is applied. We are delighted to be part of this partnership.”

ENDS

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For more information on Voluntary Action Swindon go to www.vas-swindon.org

For more information on the Volunteer Centre Swindon go to www.swindonvolunteers.org.uk

For more information on the Live Well Hub go to:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20139/live_well_swindon_hub/924/contact_the_live_well_swindon_hub

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