

Performance Scrutiny Committee 9 July 2020

Operation Shield – Customer Service Centre Update

Report by Director Customer and Culture for OCC and CDC.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the work undertaken to support clinically extremely vulnerable residents (CEV) as identified by the NHS.

Executive Summary

2. This paper outlines the Oxfordshire County Council response to protecting Shielded residents in Oxfordshire during the pandemic. It reflects the work undertaken by the Oxfordshire County Council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) team.
3. On 23 March 2020 the Government announced that if a resident was identified to be 'clinically extremely vulnerable', that they were strongly advised to stay at home, to protect their health and shield from the coronavirus. This includes organ transplant recipients, people living with cancer (or waiting for treatment) and people with severe respiratory conditions among others.
4. The aim of the shielding programme was to strictly avoid any face-to-face contact with others, avoid someone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms and group gatherings for 12 weeks.
5. More than 20,702 vulnerable people in Oxfordshire received a letter generated by GP surgeries, NHS records and health sources to identify them as high risk, advising them to stay home.
6. The Customer Service Centre was requested to provide a contact handling service (via the telephone and email) to provide support to the residents identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) ie the shielded residents.

Introduction

7. When the pandemic began it was clear our CEV residents would require support with immediate needs including social care, safety concerns, urgent food requests and help with collecting medication. Within 3 days of the government announcement, the Customer Service Centre had set up a dedicated shielded phone line and email service so inbound contacts could be received by the Social and Health Care Customer Service team to answer questions from Oxfordshire CEV residents and respond to urgent support needs.

Customer Service Centre Response to Operation Shield

8. The dedicated service was set up to support our CEV residents 7 days a week, including extended hours during the evening and over the weekend too.
9. The team have been receiving between 50 and a 100 calls a day and have made over 12,000 pro-active outbound contacts to date.
10. Welfare calls have been arranged with our most vulnerable CEV residents to make sure people are safe and well and have everything they need. The inbound and outbound pro-active calls to people on the shielded list were made by a group of 15-20 Customer Service Advisers in the Customer Service Centre, supported by a group of trained library colleagues.
11. In some circumstances the team have responded to support needs from other teams including hospitals, GPs, adult and children's social care teams to ensure we contact everyone on the shielded list. This ensured the most vulnerable people in our county have had any urgent needs identified and resolved as quickly as possible.
12. Contacts from residents for shielding related matters have now reduced significantly with daily contacts now often in single figures. The operating hours of the service have now changed with support available Monday to Friday 09:00 to 18:00 and Saturday mornings.
13. The number of Shielded residents in Oxfordshire has also decreased with 12,360 Oxfordshire residents identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. At a district level this includes 2,799 in Cherwell, 1996 in Oxford, 2793 in South Oxfordshire, 2464 in Vale of White Horse and 2,308 in West Oxfordshire.
14. The CSC team have worked very closely with City and District colleagues, all of whom undertook their local version of providing support to the CEV residents. The close working with the voluntary sector played a vital role in ensuring the service was a full end to end in terms of service delivery. The CSC ensured a smooth transfer of any residents concerns to the City and Districts where appropriate. The CSC dealt with any Cherwell District Council enquiries as part of the joint working operation.
15. The Customer Service Centre shield service has maintained a flexible approach during the lockdown, responding to the challenge of adapting the service, sometimes daily, to national changes, guidance and reporting requirements of government.
16. The Customer Service Centre team have also continued to deliver the councils Social and Healthcare front door, providing information, advice, signposting and assessment for non-shielded vulnerable adults and families in Oxfordshire.
17. A key element to the success of the programme has been the transfer of data from central government to the Council and the creation of daily management information which has tracked the customer contact with the CEV residents.

Financial and Staff Implications

18. The Shield service for Oxfordshire residents has been staffed using a combination of CSC officers during normal business hours, CSC officers' evenings and weekends working overtime and Libraries staffing normal contracted hours. All overtime charges have been charged to the COVID-19 Cost Centre.

Next Steps

19. **Second Wave / outbreak** – CSC is developing resource and demand management plans to respond to a second wave of COVID to ensure we can support our residents with information, advice and support while maintaining business as usual for all services delivered by the Customer Service Centre
20. **Test, Track and Trace** – As part of the Health Protection Board, the CSC is developing resource and demand management plans to respond to test, track and trace to ensure we can support our residents with information, advice and support including food provision if they are advised to isolate immediately. This activity includes support for non-clinically vulnerable residents who may have urgent food, medication or welfare needs
21. **Local outbreaks** – CSC is developing resource and demand management plans to respond to local outbreaks to ensure, working with districts, we can support our residents with information, advice and support in the event of a local outbreak
22. **Changes to Shielding Guidance** – CSC team is monitoring changes to national Shielding guidance from government to ensure appropriate resource and response to changes in service demand and the needs of our residents.
23. **Winter Pressures and Demand Increase** – CSC Team is planning response to increased demand on business as usual service while having the flexibility in resource to respond to COVID related demand spikes and the support needs of our residents.

Equalities Implications

24. None – All Oxfordshire CEV residents in all areas of the county who are shielding have been contacted by the county council or their district council.

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Background papers: None

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