Community organising during the Covid-19 outbreak

Unofficial how to guide

Please always download the latest version at:
https://tinyurl.com/CommunityCovidUnofficialGuide

How I organised my street into a tighter community for Covid 19

My name's Leo and this is what we did on my road in Bristol. I've checked the process with some doctors. Hopefully it's useful to others. I'm not an expert, please always be **at least** as cautious as the offical NHS advice.

We've got two aims that we're trying to balance:
- Making sure everyone (**especially the most vulnerable**) are supported in their community, and that **support carries on throughout the outbreak**.
- Trying to **minimise contact to minimise the risk of spreading the virus** while we're supporting each other. There's evidence showing that a lot of people don't have symptoms but can still be carriers of it, so even if you feel fine, play it safe.

1. Map your Street
Walk around your street and write down what the house and flat numbers are. Be thorough and check side roads that you might not have been down before, we don't want to miss people.

2. Start building a team
Contact some neighbours. If you know some already, call them and ask them to get involved.

Create a WhatsApp group and add them to it. If you don't know any yet you can still do the next steps on your own.

A lot of people won't have WhatsApp but we'll use this for group organising and make sure people without the app have a buddy in the groups that can chat to them on the landline.

3. Make a plan

Have a meeting (online video is safest to not spread infection, I used zoom.us because it's free) and decide who's going contact each household. Also think about what you need to know and what you can offer each house/flat. Don't worry too much about being perfect this can be updated over time.
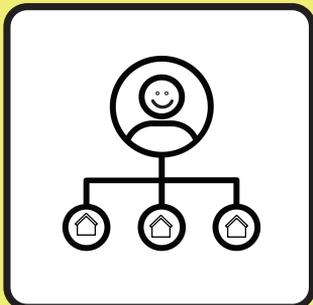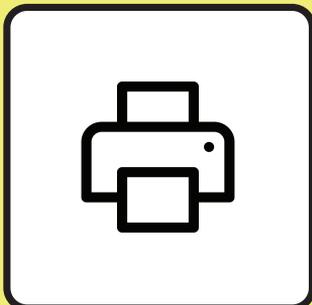
Who's going to contact each household?

What do you need to know? (Whether they might need to self isolate (age, health condition), do they have kids or pets that might need looking after)

What you can offer? (going to the shops, picking up prescriptions, friendly phone calls etc)

Who's going to design and print the flyers? Template: https://tinyurl.com/LeoCovid19Flyer

How will you keep track of all the information? Template: https://tinyurl.com/Covid19StreetTracker

4. Contact as many people as you can over the phone

With your team you'll hopefully have some more numbers to call. Phones are great because you can't pass infection with a phone call. Introduce yourself as a neighbour, be really friendly and explain you're just here to help and ask them the questions on your questionnaire. **And ask if they have any of their other neighbours numbers so you can call them too!**

5. Fill in the gaps by flyering door to door

You need one sheet of paper with details they'll need to know (e.g. your name and number and a join link for the WhatsApp group) and another sheet that can be a questionnaire for them to hand back. There are different ways to get in touch with your neighbours:
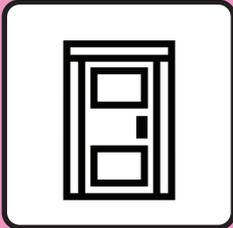
Flyer through their letter box.
- Low risk of spreading disease
- A lot of people might just think it's junk mail and not engage

Knock on their door.
- This is higher risk so try to maintain a 2 metre distance and keep the conversation short.
- People are much more engaged and you can get their info then.
You could also just get their phone number and then ask for details later.

Flyering Safely - To reduce the risk of spreading the virus
- Do not leaflet if you are unwell at all, even if you're only experiencing mild symptoms.
- Listen to social distancing guidelines and don't leaflet in large groups. When leafleting in small groups, avoid physical contacts or exchanging resources.
- Make sure to wash your hands well before starting leafleting and use hand sanitiser if you are able to at regular intervals.
- Make sure to wash your hands after you are finished.

5. Add people's information to the sheet and add them to the WhatsApp group.

Your WhatAapp group should start filling up, and people will start getting to know each other!
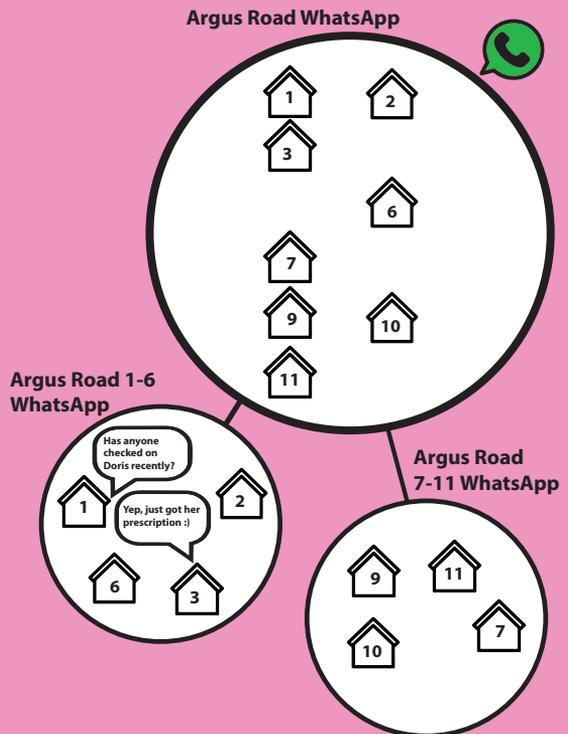
Argus Road Whatsapp
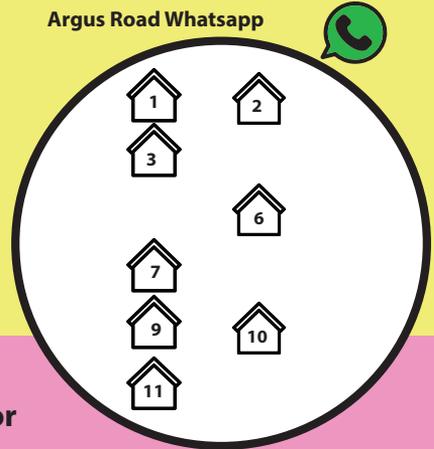
6. Split your street into small groups for better connection.

Now you know people's numbers and addresses split people into small groups of 5-6 households. This should include the households that haven't joined yet.

We want to make the groups of people interacting as small as possible to slow the spread of the virus.

It's also easier to take responsibility for a smaller number of people and this will stop the main WhatsApp chat getting too busy. If one of the small groups needs help, they can always ask the main group.

Important: Make sure there aren't groups that have only vulnerable/self isolating people in, as we need people to support each other.

Argus Road WhatsApp

Argus Road 1-6 WhatsApp

Has anyone checked on Doris recently?

Yep, just got her prescription :)

Argus Road 7-11 WhatsApp

7. Ask people to find the missing people in their small groups

The people who don't jump in to the WhatsApp group straight away could be the people who are most in need. Ask the small groups to try to get in touch with the households that aren't in contact with anyone. If they don't want help don't force them though, just politely let them know you're there if they ever need help.

8. Check that everyone's OK and remind them to check on the people who aren't on WhatsApp.

Post on the main WhatsApp chat asking if anyone needs help every few days (some people might be shy) and it's also a good reminder if people have forgotten!

Don't forget about the people that just have landlines, they're likely to be older people who might need help.

And have fun, enjoy your new closer community! (if only digitally close for now)

Don't get this close

Useful links:

Links to local mutual aid groups & advice: https://covidmutualaid.org
Safety advice: https://queercare.network/our-work/resources/covid-19/
NHS: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/
TinyUrl - for making WhatsApp join links: tinyurl.com
Volunteering: Look for community food banks and other groups to help.