

# RED POST SPECIAL

# SOLIDARITY ISSUE

Community response to Covid-19 in Totnes and South Devon

## Get involved

If you don't have a local (street level) volunteer group, why not set one up yourself? Commit to calling friends and contacts who are on their own - isolation is the biggest issue for many people. Here are some other ways you can give or get support:

**Dartmouth Community Chest,**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/435787023570130/>.

**Totnes Covid-19 Help Hub**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2687973224757857/>

**Donate:** Text CARING to 70191 to donate £10 to Totnes Caring

[www.justgiving.com/campaign/DartmouthCommunityChest](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/DartmouthCommunityChest).

### If you need support:

Totnes Caring 01893 865604  
 Totnes Connection Hub and Food Bank: 01803 840354  
 Kingsbridge Food Bank: 07593 881633  
 Kings Ash Crafty Fox Cafe: 01803 669005  
 Path Torbay: 07763 398238  
 Brixham Does Care helpline: 01803 857727.  
 Paignton Community Larder: 01803 551866.  
 Torbay Community Helpline: 01803 446022.  
 Totnes Town Council helpline: 07961 898244.

## Solidarity is our response!

It seems there is such a thing as society after all. The NHS, after a decade of punishing cuts, is still the only thing between our loved ones and a lonely death. Health workers put their lives and families at risk to save others, while the lowest-paid - carers, drivers, waste collectors and shop workers - are keeping society from collapse. In this crisis, Labour members have joined with community groups and cross-party organisations to build new forms of solidarity.



## Dartmouth response

Dartmouth Community Chest is cooking and delivering around 185 free meals and 70 food parcels every day of the week along with benefit support and befriending, all from the hub at Townstal Community Centre. Local businesses and supermarkets are donating food, while a facebook site and a Just Giving account have raised over £5k. The food bank and Dartmouth Caring are providing for a growing number of people in need, and offering friendship to those in isolation. Dartmouth Town Council and surrounding villages organised local responses within days of the lockdown, contacting every resident and providing an army of volunteers. Contact and emergency details have been shared, and a buddy system is in place to check on the most vulnerable.

## Around the region

**Hospitals** in Devon and Cornwall are planning to increase their critical care capacity up to 500 beds. A new NHS Nightingale Hospital at Exeter's Westpoint Centre is expected to be ready for the first patients by early May.

Figures for the number of **people testing positive** for Covid-19 in Devon were 460 as we were distributing Red Post. However, data from the Covid Symptom Tracker app (created by Kings College London) suggests 2-3% of our constituency may have Covid-19 with symptoms. Our region has the lowest level of hospitalisation and death in the UK, with just 84 deaths in Devon's hospitals, though this does not count the toll in care homes.

Three Devon County Councillors including Hilary Ackland (Labour) have supported Dr Bharat Pankhania, Exeter University's public health expert, in calling for a **regional approach to containing the epidemic**. The SW seems to be doing well but could move out of lockdown faster and more safely with intensive testing, tracing and quarantining.

Our constituency has **special challenges** with many elderly residents, and with Tory-run County and District Councils that have done nothing to protect our services from a decade of cuts. Thankfully, second home owners and holiday makers seem to have stayed away. And we have amazing local volunteer groups that are stepping up in this crisis.

## Totnes (constituency) Covid-19 Hub

Lauren Davison, who with other Labour members set up the constituency facebook Help Hub, says the response has been amazing. *'It's been incredibly heartening to see the support and generosity of residents looking out for one another, ensuring no one falls through the cracks. We have raised over £2000 for Totnes Caring, who do such amazing work to ensure vulnerable people and their families are looked after. We have connected people in self-isolation to ways of receiving their prescriptions, shopping and food, and helped local businesses keep afloat by advertising their delivery services. We've also been key to helping Totnes Town Council keep residents informed about what's going on, and how they can access help.'*

Totnes Hub food bank, Totnes Town Council, Totnes Caring and Totnes-based Food in Community are all stepping up their activities. TC has taken on 150 new volunteers, while FiC is producing 50% more food and recipe boxes. Beyond Totnes, food has been delivered to banks in Torbay, a hotline set up for residents in Brixham, and support given to groups in Paignton.

Lauren admits that *'when we know how badly the government is dealing with the crisis, it can be hard to keep politics out of things.'* But she says that *'cross-party work has been crucial to running the Hub and keeping people focused. It's been great to work with people from different political backgrounds in a spirited and comradely way.'* Labour members know the importance of community and solidarity. We will be needing both in the months ahead.

### Coronavirus crisis: we support the demands from NHS Staff Tackling the Coronavirus

COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) must be available for all NHS and social care staff now

Those relying on social care (or 'Direct Payments') must be given immediate support if carers go sick

NHS support staff (including those outsourced) must receive at least living wage, paid sick leave for illness or self-isolation  
Bring private health resources into public service without compensation to fight COVID-19 and aid NHS response

Make all information that the Government is basing its strategy on wholly available for public scrutiny

An immediate end to legislation enforcing eligibility checks and charging, allowing all patients to use the NHS without fear.

Join us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2687973224757857/>