

## **A short report on the Residents Covid Support Network**

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Early in March 2020 we realised that the UK might be on the brink of a serious outbreak of COVID-19 and, if so, Bealings residents might need to restrict their movements. Whether that would be voluntarily, due to vulnerability and fear of infection, or as a consequence of government constraints wasn't the issue. Either way, some sort of support network might prove useful, and better to set it up before it was needed. If it turned out to be unnecessary, so much the better .

Leaflets went through every door in Little Bealings north of the railway line before the first lockdown was contemplated, and generated a response from over 40 residents. So when the lockdown occurred we were well able to respond to the requests for help with shopping and prescription collection that arose. And we were able to pick up a few referrals to us, from the Council or local GPs, for residents elsewhere in Bealings.

The network has continued to exist throughout the year of Covid - and is still there if needed. But other systems and arrangements have evolved to make it easier and safer for people to shop and get medication. It's been a good while since we've been called upon to help.

There was considerable enthusiasm for the fact that the community was organising to look out for its members in uncharted times. And the network generated some unanticipated offers such as Jenny's 'lockdown birthday bunting', Francis's sharing of spare plants and seedlings, and the garnering of plastic bags and donations for food banks.

Whether the network has a role to play as we move through this year remains to be seen. I suspect not, as the community has a number of long-standing mechanisms for supporting and connecting people in various ways - for example the Christmas hamper initiative, and the pop-up pubs (maybe.... !)

But in creating it we have created new links amongst ourselves, and hopefully these will contribute to the sense of 'being a community' that helps make Bealings a lovely place to live.

Jane Mardell on behalf of the coordinating group ( Jane Mardell, Anthony Meehan, Toni Cornish, Chris Dowrick, and Colin Hopkins)