



# C19 National Foresight Group: Intelligence Briefing Paper 6

## Data Trends, Housing, food and fuel inequalities and EVP befriending

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Paper prepared by Dr Sally Andrews, Rich Pickford, Stacey Stewart, Stephanie Blanco and Adam Potter, edited and synthesised by Dr Rowena Hill

This briefing synthesizes data with systematic findings from across academic subjects. This evidence of empirical data and academic insight contributes to our existing knowledge on who is most likely to be experiencing adversity in our communities. To start to build a (provisional) picture about who is likely to be most affected by Covid-19 and the impacts from NPIs.

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## Context

A data review is undertaken by academics at Nottingham Trent University every week to inform the C19 National Foresight Group. Evidence related to Covid – 19 psychological, social and economic trends are reviewed to inform, frame and prioritise discussions at national and local strategic decision-making level (LRFs). The C19 National Foresight Group synthesise data trends and academic findings across disciplines, with evidence of existing vulnerabilities and inequalities to start to build existing and emerging risk or adversity profiles of impacts from Covid-19.

Who is this for?

This is most useful for national thought leaders, local strategic decision-makers, intel cells and those involved in populating the MAIC.

**Request from us:** Please could you email [C19foresight@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:C19foresight@ntu.ac.uk) and tell us:

- 1) How are these documents being shared in your local partnerships?
- 2) How are these documents being used in your local partnerships?



**Focussed theme this week:** This week we are focussing on the foresight on the capacity and provision of support and volunteering for the vulnerable in communities.

Data trends:

We first explore relevant data to establish what the capacity of volunteering might be over the medium term. We explore where those volunteers might come from and what the projected attrition rates are.

We then consider the mutual aid groups established during Covid-19 and where these are placed. We then consider social cohesion to see where the regional distributions of lower social cohesion might warrant more volunteers.

Our weekly mood tracker is included with observations of the mood data.

Academic Insights:

- 1) We are providing a summary of the work we will be sharing in the coming week relating to food bank use and economic fragility.
- 2) Our last focus assumes that volunteering may need to be extended to cover emerging economic and social need. This includes a summary of how to approach individuals and establish a volunteering service with a particular focus on social need.

## Data Trend Analysis

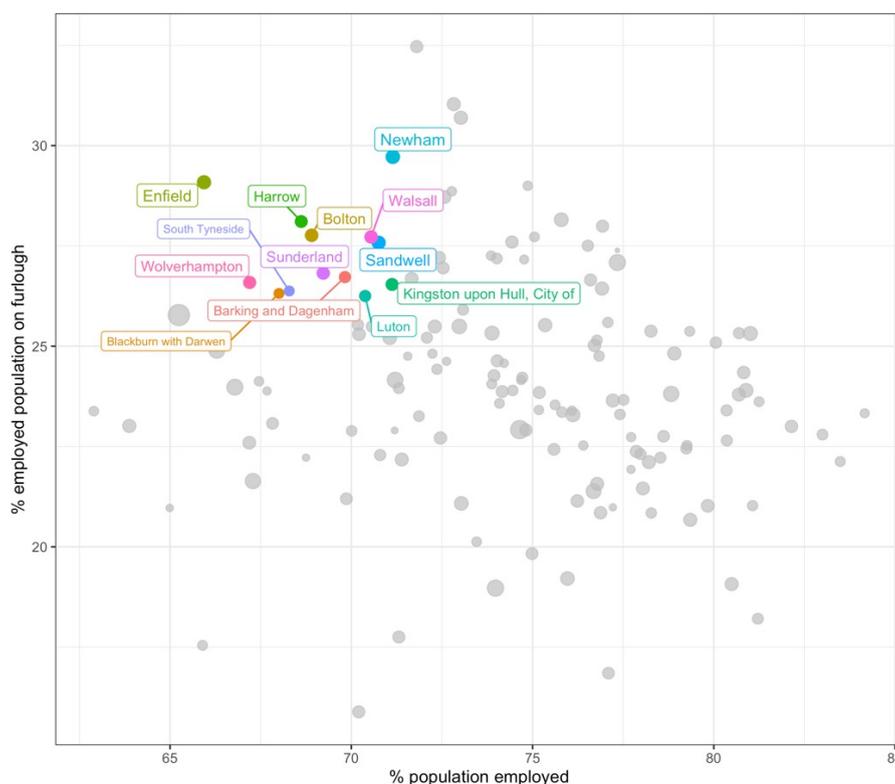
### Impact of furlough

Figure 1 shows the relationship between rate of employment and rate of furlough for each local authority. Those in the top left have highest proportion of employed people furloughed and lowest rate of employment (most risk). Those in the bottom right have the lowest proportion of employed people furloughed, and the highest rate of employment (low risk).

Highlighted are those at highest risk (top 25% proportion of the employed population on furlough, and bottom 25% proportion of the population employed).

Given the upcoming changes to the furlough scheme, and the potential of unemployment to those currently furloughed, it is possible that these local authorities have more communities who are more vulnerable socio-economically once the furlough scheme ends.

Figure 1: Rate of employment and rate of furlough for each local authority



## Volunteering

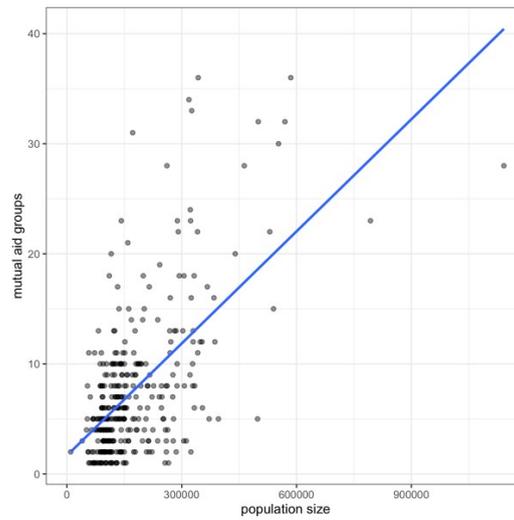
Volunteers have been a core aspect of response activity, and there is some concern over the availability of volunteers beyond the initial stages of the pandemic. The following data are taken from [NVCO analyses](https://nvco.org) and Covid Mutual Aid database (<https://covidmutualaid.org>).

### Covid-19 Mutual Aid groups

Approximately one million people signed up to volunteer with the Good Sams App, however it is currently unknown what the status of these volunteers is, or how many may be available in the coming months. The following analysis aims to provide some insight into the nature and prevalence of volunteers to understand availability of volunteer support, moving forward.

Over the course of the pandemic, 2671 mutual aid groups have been set up specifically for Covid-19. As expected, larger populations have more mutual aid groups. The majority of local authorities have between 1 and 10 mutual aid groups, with some with as many as 36.

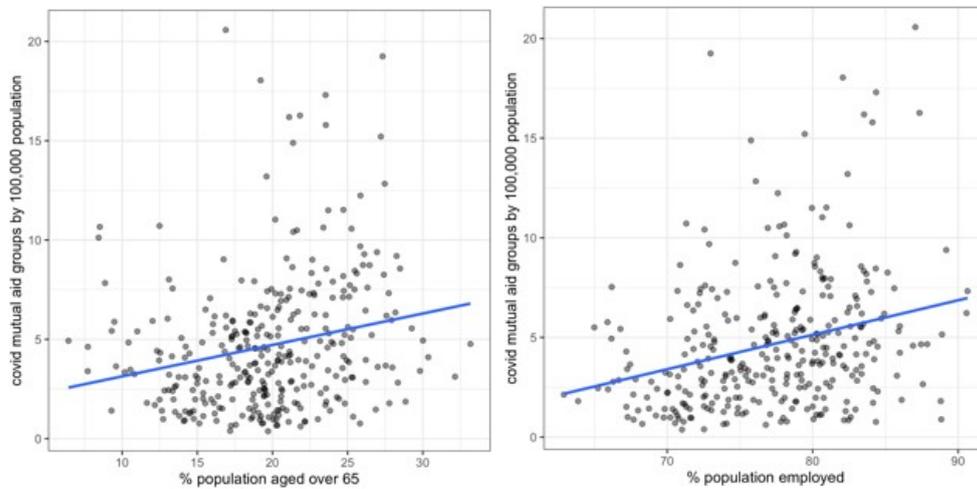
Figure 2: Mutual aid group by population size

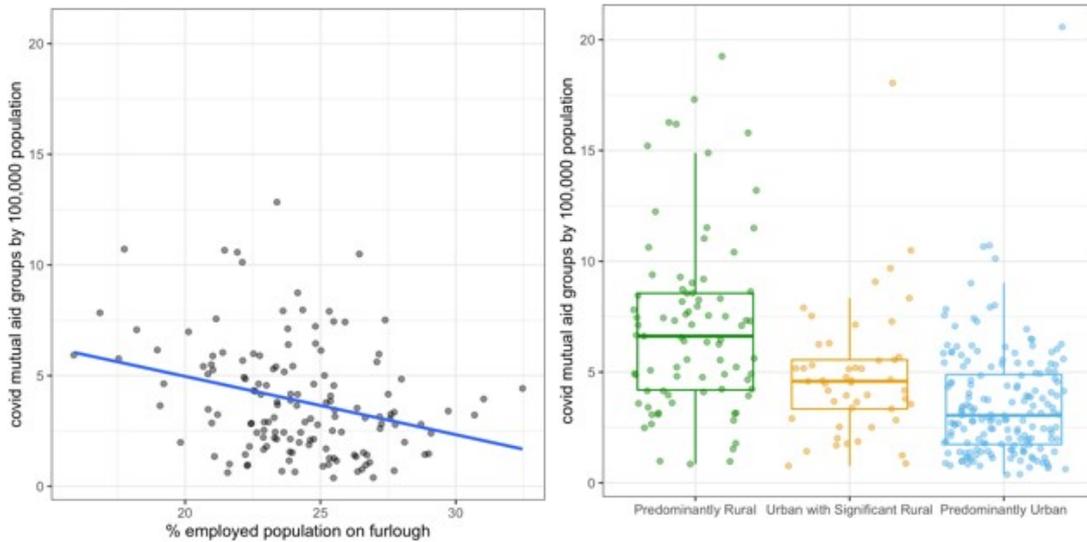


After controlling for population size there are:

- *more* mutual aid groups in local authorities with a higher proportion of over 65s
- *more* mutual aid groups in local authorities where a higher proportion of the population are employed
- *fewer* mutual aid groups in local authorities where more people are furloughing

Figures 3-6: Mutual aid by age, employed, furloughed and rurality

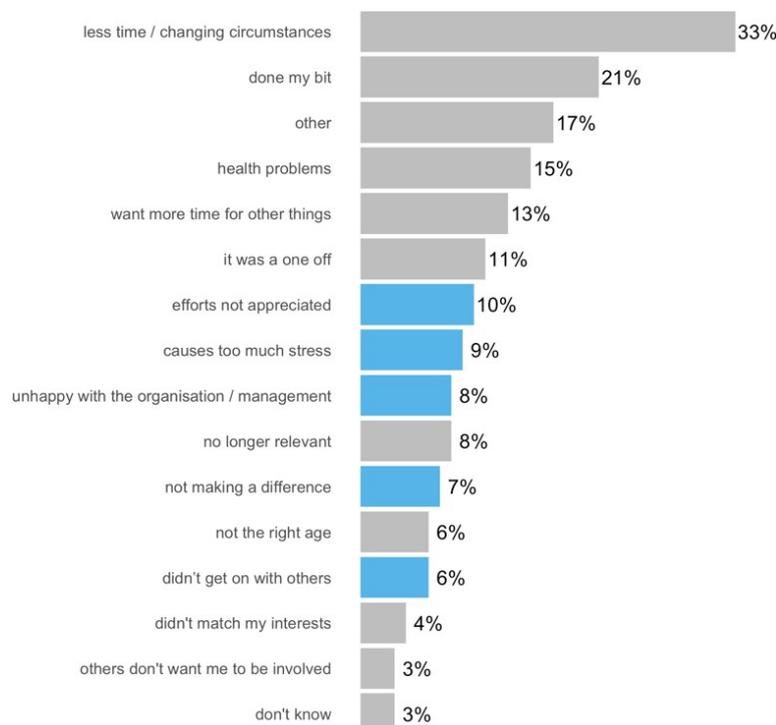




The organic creation of these groups provides insight into the availability of volunteer efforts specifically for the purpose of Covid-19. While the number of formal and informal volunteers providing support across the UK is unknown, these groups may provide a support to work with LRFs and local authorities over the coming months. The data also suggest that there are a greater proportion of groups in the places in most need; e.g. those with more over 65s and rural populations.

One concern might be that voluntary action has been taken by those who have been furloughed during the pandemic, as these may be less able to volunteer time once starting to return to work. However, this does not seem to be the case, with fewer mutual aid groups in areas where more of the working population are furloughed. This may give *some* indication of the sustainability of these groups.

Figure 7: Reasons stopped volunteering (reproduced using data from [NCVO Time Well Spent, 2017](#))

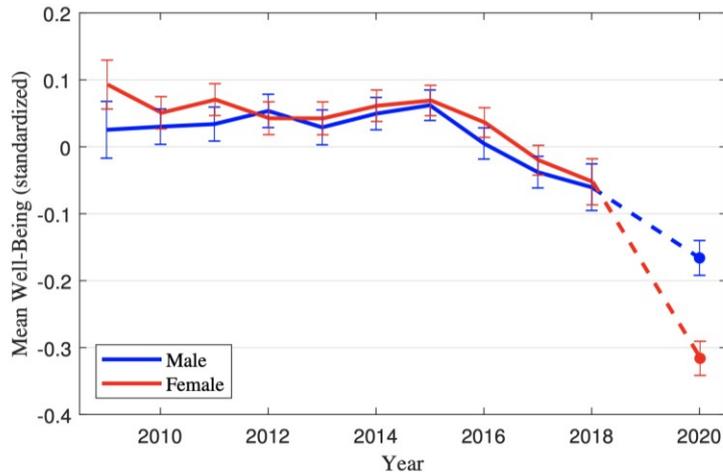


Shows the reasons that people stop volunteering generally; which includes factors that can be controlled by the volunteer organisation

## Social Cohesion

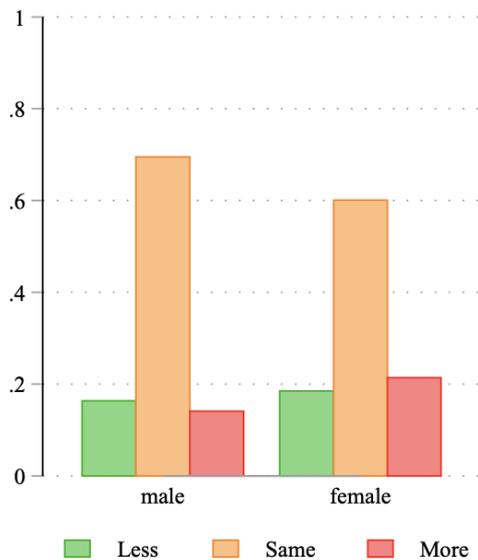
A recent report using data from the UK Household Survey suggests that wellbeing has reduced substantially since the last survey; most notably with females.

Figure 8: Mental wellbeing before and during the pandemic



Reproduced with permission from [Etheredge & Spantig \(2020\)](#)

Figure 9: Change in Loneliness



The majority of people report no change in loneliness, with some reporting being less lonely. There is however a difference between males and females with females more likely to report being lonelier. This appears to relate to the strength of social network before the pandemic, such that those who have experienced the most impact to their networks experience greater loneliness during the lockdown.

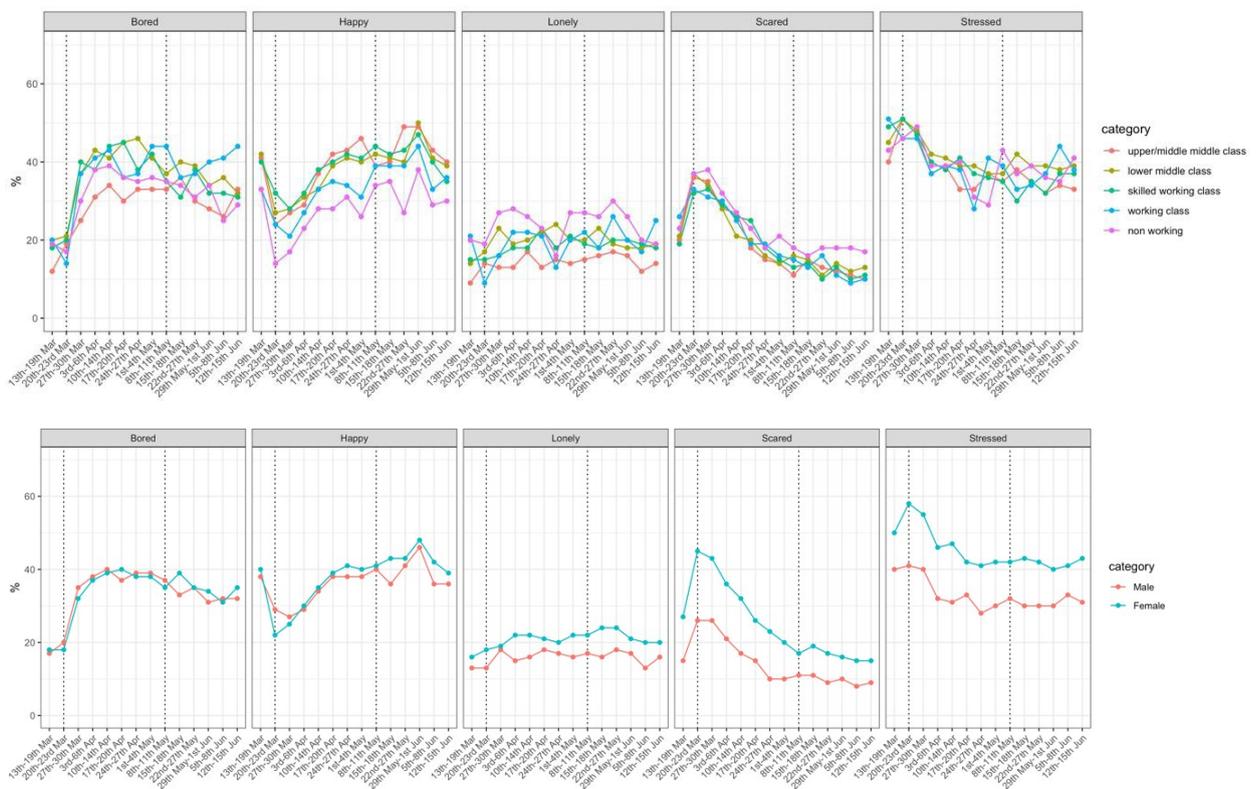
## YouGov Mood

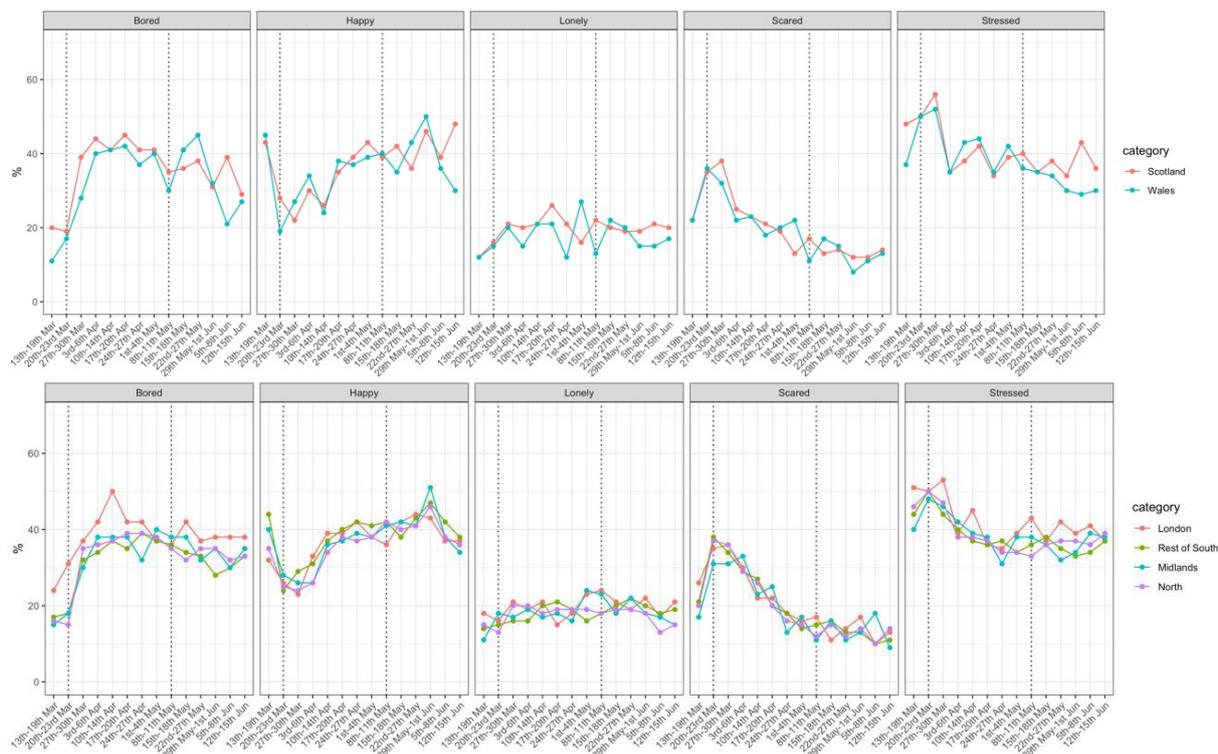
Most recent data from 12-15<sup>th</sup> June, which means that most responses (excluding those on 12<sup>th</sup> June) would follow the recent relaxation of lockdown to allow social bubbles for those living in single adult households.

Happiness has decreased for the 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive week (for females, middle and skilled working class, in all English regions, for all age groups except 50-64 year olds). It is not clear what is driving this, but we will monitor in the coming weeks.

Working class are on their fifth consecutive week where more people are reporting being bored.

Fear, stress, and loneliness appears to be plateauing for most, however younger adults (18-49) are continuing with a gradual trend of fewer people reporting being bored, while more older adults (50+) are reporting being bored this week. This 50+ group are also more stressed this week (for a second consecutive week – though they remain the least stressed of all age groups generally).





## A review of the literature to inform of socio-economic vulnerabilities and disparities of need in the COVID-19 crisis: impacts on housing, food and fuel inequalities, just managing families and geographical need amongst other factors, income and other factors.

### Narrative of the review

The initial goal of this review was to address socio-economic insecurities within the UK looking more specifically at food insecurity and an increased demand for food aid. After extensive literature reviews, themes derived from the literature are general considerations (included in the introduction), housing, food and fuel insecurities, family specific concerns (with a focus on low-to-middle or just managing families), gender, younger adults and geography of need. In each case, evidence is sought of the status prior to the COVID-19 crisis and discussions, projections, barriers to accessing support and protective factors are elaborated upon within the context of the current crisis; at risk or vulnerable groups are highlighted where possible. Whilst further work is needed to understand the geographical scope of socio-economic needs, the review suggests that a geographical framework and the intersections between social and geographical need should be considered in the aiding and targeting of support.

The review currently covers:

- Introduction/background Housing
- Food poverty Fuel poverty
- Family specific concerns Gender
- Young people concern Geography of needs



## Limitations of the review

Some areas which were considered but go beyond the scope of the review have not been discussed in their entirety. Migrant workers for example may be a population likely to suffer from overcrowding and poor housing conditions (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020) as well as being economically vulnerable. This social group are highly susceptible to a disproportionate loss of income in the COVID-19 crisis as well as food poverty, poor housing conditions (and overcrowding), barriers which prevent them from seeking support to healthcare, increased asylum detentions and limited access to participating in the asylum decision process (see Freedom From Torture). Further, there are fears that they will be less likely to access education or, if non-English speaking, unable to support children with home schooling (see Freedom from Torture). Such a wide range of severe impacts warrants a future review where these issues can be explored sensitively and in greater depth.

There was also a sparsity in the information available around those with disabilities, a group which might also be particularly vulnerable within the current COVID-19 crisis. In those who are considered to be part of the extremely vulnerable population, a recent report by Citizens Advice (2020) On protection schemes end and transition packages suggest that EVPs are considerably more likely to have reported a reduction in their income since the coronavirus outbreak began - 48% have reported a drop vs 27% in the overall population. 46% report that they have already or expect to fall behind on rent (compared to 26% in the overall population). 25% of this group are already behind on one or more other household bills. Not only are this group often more reliant on welfare assistance, but they are also more likely to suffer from housing issues, fuel poverty and food poverty. The current crisis adds additional complications in accessing food, healthcare, treatment, services and support. Again, with such a wide range of potential issues further reviews are needed to establish the extent of impact on those who have disabilities. Similarly, there is not a wealth of information given about the direct impacts on elderly people within this report as these groups were not common themes within the review of the literature but such groups should be considered in the implementation of policy and practice and further evidence is needed to identify the needs of such groups.

Whilst debt was touched upon within this report, it is felt that the evidence presented here is sparse and that there may be many statistics being published which explore the direct impact and buildup of debt for households within the UK. This is something which should be considered when more evidence becomes available. Finally, further considerations need to be given to the geographic disparities in socio-economic insecurity in the current crisis; continued monitoring and incorporation of considerations of the intersections between vulnerabilities and geography are advised.

## Rapid literature review and recommendations for initial contact for a social call/befriending service for EVPs During COVID-19 measures

Befriending is the most common method of social intervention often used in situations of social exclusion (most typically older adults) but has been used in health settings, emergency crisis and disasters. Whilst the effectiveness of such schemes is well documented, recommendations for the initial contact and introduction of the service, presented here, are from a variety of sectors. The following rapid review focus' upon best practices and recommendations, in establishing initial contact and introducing a befriending or social call to Extremely Vulnerable Populations (EVPs) during the Covid-19 social distancing measures.

### Summary of recommendations:

- Community – localisation of services for specific needs of the geographical area.
- Terminology – careful consideration given to the terminology used.
- Establishing trust and relationships – the role of the facilitator
- Matching – volunteers and service users similar to facilitate mutual, collaborative relationship
- Methods of referral – facilitating patient led approach



## Community based

Locality can lead to different social and psychological challenges and social support schemes have shown greater success when they are able to respond to the multi-faceted difficulties within a local community. Throughout the literature, cultural issues are reinforced and it recommends that volunteers (or befrienders/facilitators) should also be based within the same geographical location that they are supporting in. Disengagement with service is likely to happen if the service fails to be adaptable and accommodate for cultural variations/awareness the easiest way to accommodate this is through ensuring that volunteers understand the needs of those whom they are working with.

## Terminology

Types of service often lend to particular terminology being used, some of which has been highlighted as problematic and impacting upon perceptions of programs and their effectiveness. 'Befriending' was the term most commonly used, however relationships in this context do not encapsulate the genuine aspects of a real friendship and it is suggested such terminology has emotional implications. Furthermore, service users also highlight that they want to be a friend rather than be befriended; choice of words can lead to over estimation of someone's vulnerability or perceptions that they are being supported rather than facilitated. There is also a risk issue in terminology, that the name given to the service, the service user and the volunteer, might blur the boundaries and regulations needed for safe and effective issuing of the service. More recent social interventions use terms like "wellbeing facilitator/coordinator/advocate" enabling focus on wellbeing and reducing stigma.

## Establishing trust and relationships

The role of a befriender should be somewhere between that of a friend and a professional; an element of friendship is needed for trust but some formality helps to facilitate a structured peer-support relationship. Negotiation of boundaries, power and agency within 'social support' is important to highlight owing to the risks this might pose. To facilitate relationships and maintain trust, at the onset of the service, clear statements are needed about the structure of the service including timing and frequency of contact, overall length of the service provision, the nature of the relationship and the degree of reciprocity. Leaving information leaflets/booklets is beneficial in establishing trust and sense of reliability in the service, but also serves as a guide on what to expect.

Other projects within social care settings also aim to establish trust through the leaving of literature or small gifts which help to facilitate the relationship early on. For example, family support workers often leave activity packs for children, Health workers might leave information on specific topics or books for young children. A small token, such as a mindfulness tool, breathing techniques or adult coloring etc. will help to give further reputability and install the notion of a wellbeing intervention.

## Matching

Successful 'befriending' schemes often employ 'matching' whereby service users and volunteers have similar sociodemographic characteristics to aid understanding of the social world in which both parties operate and to form more trusting relationships. In addition, power, status and authority influence the way in which the services are perceived and these are conveyed in cultural messages from choice of words to dress, etiquette, scripts and routines. Literature recommends the recruitment of local community volunteers whom are better perceived by service users (as opposed to paid staff) as being actively engaging in the relationship and that the personalized peer support helps to build a feeling of active connection of a shared experience. Similarly, those in befriending roles who perform the task as part of an authoritative role (such as police based interventions) struggle more in the building of a reciprocal relationship. Further, local volunteers are more aware of the views,



problems and difficulties encountered in the local vicinity, in a way that someone outside of the culture or area might not be so well acquainted. Matching on other qualities can be timely and is not always achievable furthermore items of relatedness may sometimes fall outside of the expected parameters. Therefore, encouragement of a reciprocal relationship in which there are benefits to volunteers and service users, within a community (or local context) is an additional way to facilitate an effective service.

## Methods of referral

Referrals to services are often undertaken by health-workers and family though rarely self-referral by the service user. This might represent a literature bias as befriending schemes are most common in elderly populations. However, in incorporating guidance on a patient centered approach and to mitigate a further issue (of identification of EVPs as a 'vulnerable or hard to reach group' as those with health conditions. A further recommendation is to include a self-referral option; multiple modes of referral reduces stigma, and promotes a user centered approach as opposed to service users being passive recipients of a service.

Different forms of access (phone, email, face-to-face) have all been shown to reduce mental health and social isolation in many populations but only when service users were able to reliably access one 'befriender'/'supporter'. Enabling some choice in either the mode of delivery or choosing their facilitator and helping to develop their goals and wellbeing plans can help to facilitate a patient-centred service from the onset. Significant emphasis should be placed on the service user as the 'agent of change' enabling incorporation of their prior experience, coping strategies and expectations.

## What we do in this analysis, how and why (caution when interpreting)

A data review is undertaken by academics at Nottingham Trent University every week to inform the C19 National Foresight Group. Data related to Covid - 19 UK social and economic trends is reviewed to inform, guide and help prioritise discussions at national and local decision-making level (LRFs). The C19 National Foresight Group are keen to ensure that the data included has been ethically governed and structured to adhere to open access, data protection and GDPR regulations and principles.

For example, the data is to be manipulated in an ethical manner, and the content and context is to be fit for purpose in terms of the audience and decision timeframe in question.

### Activity Completed

The following findings are based on a review of multiple data sources exploring Social, Economic, Psychological, Community aspects of Covid 19 in the UK. These could include:

- ONS: covers wellbeing, perceived financial precarity, objective indicators of UK economy, household financial pressures, perceived impact on work life
- OfCom: Public perceptions of information to help manage Covid 19, perceptions of preparedness and action
- ONS: Deaths from Covid - 19
- Gov UK: Relevant contextual information
- Census and geographical data: Geographical/location specifics
- IMD: Socio economic trends associated with spread or primary/secondary impacts
- LG Inform: Population, social, demographic, lifestyle and health data
- You Gov: Public mood
- NTU's own analysis of open source data (lead by Dr. Sally Andrews)
- Other academic survey work published within the last week

### Limitations for Consideration

The National Foresight Group have been keen to quality assure the data assumptions, including the equity and representation of participants.

### Internet use data indicates representational issues in older adults

Almost all of the data sets draw from online surveys. With this in mind the statistics behind online access were explored. The following is to be considered in the assumptions taken from the data sets.

The table below shows the estimated number of people who have never used the internet. The data are drawn from ONS 2019 Internet users:

**Table 1: estimated number of people who have never used the internet**



Age	Estimated number of people who have never used internet	Age	Estimated number of people who have never used internet
16-24	20,000	55-64	389,000
25-34	28,000	65-74	869,000
35-44	46,000	75+	2,482,000
45-54	158,000	Equality Act Disabled	2,336,000
		Not Equality Act Disabled	1,657,000

Table 1 shows that caution should be applied when considering the inferences made in the rest of the document as older adults could be underrepresented in the samples. The estimated numbers of those that have never used the internet begins to increase around age group category 35-44, the subsequent age categories increase by approximately twice as many non-users as the age category that precedes it. The numbers of 'over 75s' (2,482,000) for example not using the internet equates to almost a million more than the total of the other age group categories (1,510,000).

The interpretation of data should also consider the proportion of people known to be disabled by government agencies who do and do not meet the Act's criteria. These numbers make up 3,993,000 of the population, so this should be considered in the representativeness of the data.

END.

**Contact us:** If you have any questions about this output please email: [c19foresight@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:c19foresight@ntu.ac.uk)  
Corresponding editing author Dr Rowena Hill is seconded full time to provide academic representation on the C19 National Foresight Group, and works at Nottingham Trent University.