

# Beyond crisis management

## Innovating to improve lives in a post-Covid world



Our delivery partners work closely with a number of groups who are particularly vulnerable to the impact of Covid-19 – including disadvantaged families, the homeless and those with chronic health conditions. In many cases, this crisis has not only exacerbated existing challenges, but also created significant new ones.

All the projects that our partnerships deliver for Government share a few key features: continuous, data-driven learning; a flexible delivery model that can be adjusted as we learn; a collaborative partnership with commissioners; and shared accountability for improving people's lives.

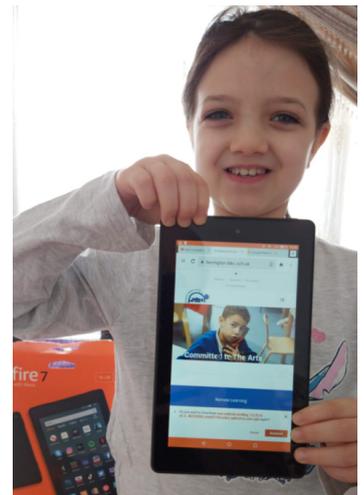
This approach has enabled a swift and effective response to the current crisis. Our delivery partners have been working incredibly hard to find innovative new ways to engage – empowering front-line staff not only to protect these individuals and families, but also, where possible, to continue driving positive change in their lives.

Below, we've outlined just a few examples of how these teams have been adapting their services to meet the demands of the post-Covid world.



## Providing additional services beyond their usual remit in order to provide extra support for vulnerable people

- **West London Zone (WLZ)**, which works with struggling schoolchildren in the area around the Harrow Road, quickly realised that many of the children didn't have the IT or other resources at home required for online learning; some didn't even have enough to eat. So WLZ launched a charitable appeal called #bridgingthegap, which has raised £35,000 to provide extra support to these families – from buying food and household essentials, to supplying IT and creative resources for home learning, to language support.
- The team at **Thrive NEL**, which supports people with long-term health conditions in North East Lincolnshire via social prescribing, has been running a number of virtual social activities to help the programme's participants combat isolation during lockdown – from virtual quizzes to a cake-baking competition.
- **Westbank**, our delivery partner for the Diabetes Prevention Programme in Devon, has developed a range of digital support materials for participants to use during lockdown, including a daily journal, fitness videos, meal and recipe ideas, and coaching videos. It has assessed all participants to ensure their basic needs are met (food, medicine, etc.) and is providing a 1:1 service where necessary, with sign-posting to local support agencies.
- For the **GM Homes Partnership** project, which works to help people who sleep rough in Greater Manchester, our three main delivery partners – Shelter, Great Places and The Brick – quickly made sure participants had the necessary access to food, household essentials and prescribed medication; that they had a comfortable place to live (including power, white goods and soft furnishings); and that they had access to all the necessary support services (drugs, alcohol, mental health etc.)
- The **Reboot West** and **iAspire** projects, which support care leavers in the West of England and SE London respectively, are now providing multiple resources to support the mental health of their young people during lockdown, including wellbeing packs, mindfulness sessions and reflection sessions. One coach has started a WhatsApp group for young people who don't know each other, so they can build more social connections.



## Extending services to help more vulnerable people

- The Government freeze on evictions reduced the number of people under immediate threat of homelessness, so the **Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS)** team in London has taken the opportunity to work with those who have been placed in emergency temporary accommodation during lockdown. As well as offering general wellbeing support, SHPS has also been helping these vulnerable individuals plan a move into permanent accommodation once lockdown is fully complete.
- **Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership** has launched a dedicated Covid-19 remote help centre, doubling the number of vulnerable people the service is able to support. Project teams have also been delivering food and medicines where necessary, while also actively referring safeguarding and wellbeing cases to relevant support services where appropriate. For instance, the team recently received a call from a woman who was a victim of domestic abuse: the team were able to connect with a specialist domestic abuse service within their network and get her the support she needed quickly.
- In Newcastle, **Ways to Wellness** is helping to tackle the unmet needs of vulnerable or shielding patients across the city, beyond its existing participants. It is also providing additional support to existing Ways to Wellness participants, including emotional support during lockdown, crisis response services (e.g. for self-harming or domestic violence), access to essential provisions (e.g. food, medication), help with official guidelines, and more.

**Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership**  
**KBOP Emergency Advice Support and Guidance Helpline**

Offering immediate help and information to anyone in Kirklees about benefits, housing, food provision and accessing medication queries.  
Please contact us if you are concerned about your wellbeing, feeling socially isolated or at risk of Domestic Abuse.

**Call us on 07562252940 - 7 days a week, 8am-8pm**

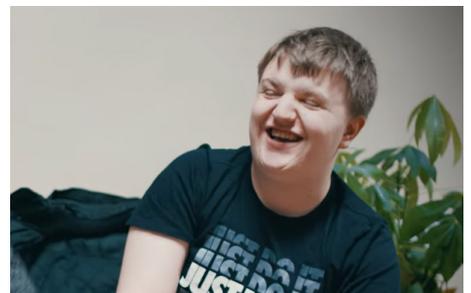
## New delivery models for existing services

- **Positive Families Partnerships** and **Stronger Families**, which provide therapy designed to help vulnerable families stay together, both switched quickly to virtual delivery of sessions, providing families with the necessary IT equipment (webcams etc) if required. In some cases, this has actually led to increased engagement, with families more willing to open up remotely than they had been in person.
- Our **GM Homes Partnership** delivery partners adapted their services rapidly to minimise face-to-face contact, in line with Government guidelines. To facilitate this, they made sure within a few days that every participant on the programme had access to a mobile phone and credit so they could be contacted as regularly as necessary.
- **WLZ** moved quickly to a remote support model, with Link Workers primarily supporting young people through phone/video calls (though some have still been in schools with the children of key workers).
- **Pause**, which works with vulnerable women in Plymouth and Derbyshire, has also switched to socially-distanced support – but without losing the personal touch that the women have become used to. So as well as ensuring that the women have access to communication devices (plus essential supplies), Pause practitioners have been going to great lengths to keep in touch – even to the extent of driving round to participants' houses so they can call from outside their window where they can be seen. This means they can see the women are safe, and the women have a way to alert them confidentially if there's any problem.
- **Mayday's** Personal Transitions Service is very much led by the individuals it works with – many of whom had already chosen to connect with their Coaches virtually. So the culture and technology was already in place, which meant that even on the very first day of lockdown, participants were already attending virtual coffee mornings and taking part in online activities or courses.



## Changing the way they interact with participants to promote closer engagement

- The **Reboot West** team realised that typical conversation-openers like 'how are you?' or 'what are you up to?' were coming across as too loaded during lockdown. So – after consultation with the young people – they have switched to asking 'How's your head? How's your heart? How's your body?'. This has helped to drive richer conversations and better engagement with many of those on the programme.
- **Reboot West** is also having great success engaging their young people in remote education and training. For many, stepping into a classroom can be the biggest barrier to further learning – sometimes even more so than the course itself. However, remote learning is enabling these young people to overcome this stigma and engage in education 'normally'; this should contribute towards better education and employment outcomes for them in the long term.
- Our **family therapy programmes** (like Positive Families Partnership and Stronger Families) are utilising the additional time freed up by not having to travel to appointments to provide additional hours of virtual support, including booster sessions for families that have completed the programme to help them navigate the change in circumstances. All told, these projects have increased the number of contacts and sessions they're delivering by more than 10% since lockdown began.
- **WLZ** has also increased the intensity of its interactions with the young people it supports: around 90% are now being contacted every week, with an average of four interactions per child per week (it was previously one or two interactions per week).
- In Bristol, the **Reboot West** team is helping a number of its young people access informal volunteering opportunities related to the current crisis – so as well as keeping busy, building networks and learning new skills, they are also contributing to their communities and helping to improve other people's lives.

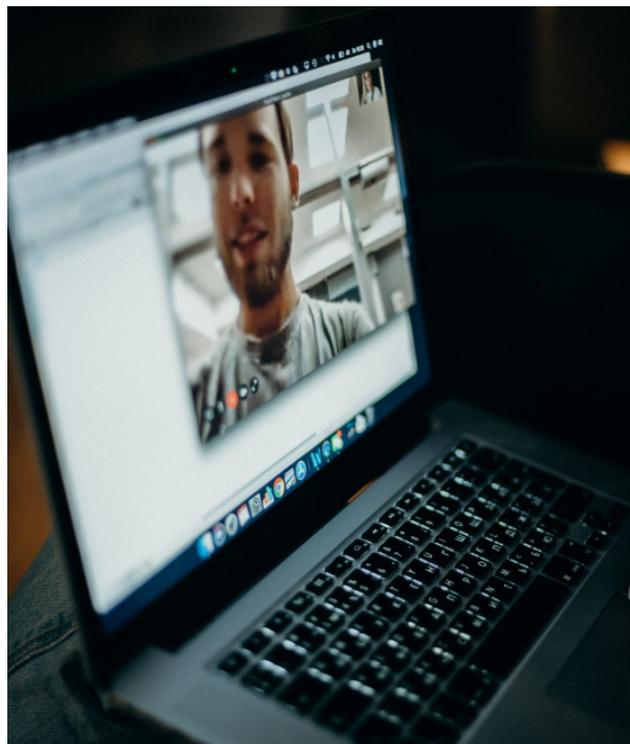




As these examples show, our partners have been going to remarkable lengths during this crisis to extend and improve the services they deliver, so they can help those they work with not only to overcome the current challenges, but also to continue improving their lives.

This is primarily due to the commitment, hard work and values-driven approach of the teams. But it's also a function of how these projects work. Flexible, learning-focused delivery models make it easier to identify pressure points and make decisive, rapid changes. Collaborative relationships with commissioners make it easier to solve problems jointly (or adjust contracts if necessary). And having accountability for improving people's lives (rather than accountability for delivering a pre-defined service specification) completely revolutionises how all the parties involved respond to changing circumstances.

These benefits are particularly apparent in a crisis. But there are lessons we can learn for the post-Covid world, too.



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