

Appendix 9 – Here2Help Update (September 2021)

Here2Help is Worcestershire County Council's community action scheme which links with the broader children's early help agenda.

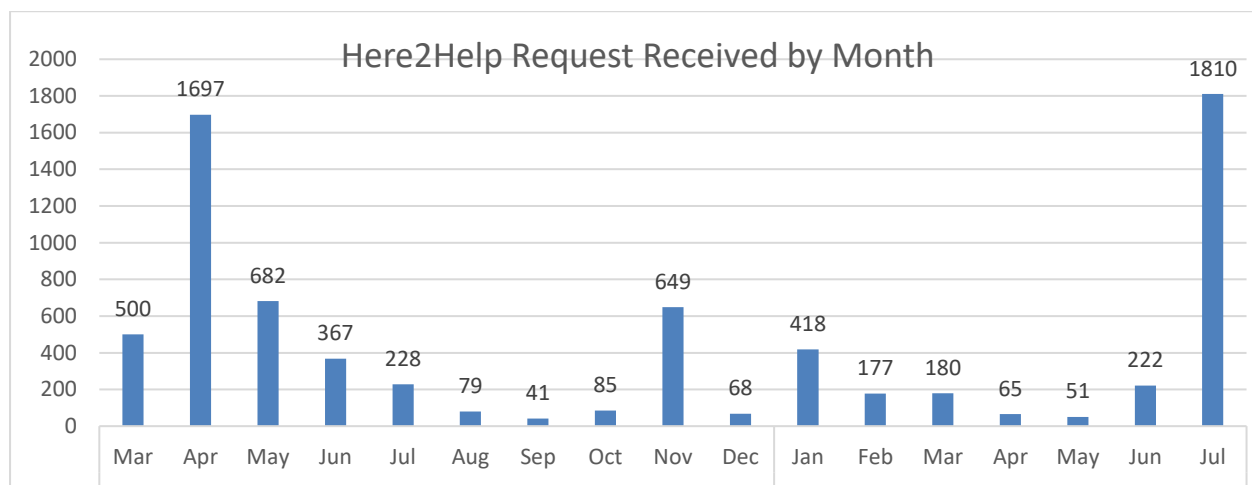
Background

1. Here2Help was originally launched in March 2020, as One Worcestershire's community action response with the sole aim of supporting residents through the COVID-19 pandemic. It has since provided a range of support to over 8000 individuals including emergency food parcels, medication collections, food collections and delivery. It has significantly grown the volunteering offer and strengthened relationships with districts, partners and the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS).
2. The Here2Help scheme was originally dedicated to helping those who needed support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service was designed to capture, and co-ordinate offers of help from individuals and companies to help meet the demand from those having to shield, self-isolate and/or who had additional needs as a result of the pandemic, which could not be met by family, friends or neighbours. Due to the success of the scheme, it is now being evolved to offer advice, support and help on a wide range of services across Worcestershire.
3. The following report has been structured in two parts. The first part relates to current performance of H2H, as the support for individuals (with a focus on families with children in the household) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic continues. The second part focuses on future developments and plans.

Part 1: The Here2Help Service: Performance (Requests for Help)

4. Here2Help continues to offer support for those requesting help in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From 1st April 2021, Here2Help began contacting those individuals who are self-isolating that have been identified by Test and Trace as requiring additional support. This has generated the most of amount of demand seen to date.
5. The number of requests for help from individuals' self-isolating and identified as requiring support by Test and Trace, has continued to increase over recent weeks to levels more than what was seen in March 2020. In response to this, additional staffing resource has been arranged to help with the increased workload associated with this.
6. 2859 people who were confirmed as positive cases or close contacts and in need of support have been registered on Here2Help up to 13th August (796 1st-18th August, 1794 in July, 205 in June, 30 in May and 34 in April). Of the requests for help that require support after contact has been made, the categories of 'Financial support' and 'Access to Food' remain the two areas of greatest need.
7. On Tuesday 17 August a new field was added to the data received from Test and Trace detailing whether individuals are exempt from isolation as a result of the change in isolation rules that came into effect on Monday 16 August. This additional information is being used to identify those who are required to self-isolate under the revised rules who are also in need of practical support.

8. The table below outlines the monthly demand seen by Here2Help since the start of the pandemic. Appendix 1 also contains information around the breakdown of requests, by District area (Worcester City has had the highest number of requests) and the categories of type of requests (food and supplies, followed by health and medication are the top two reasons people needed help).



9. Here2Help has supported individuals of all ages. The table below indicates the support offered to individuals or families where there is a child under 18 living in the household and where children’s social care is involved. **Please note:** For self-referral requests, household structure is collected at set up, but the information is not available for requests set up from Test and Trace self-isolation data or CEV data transferred from national systems until contact is made and is not always easy to confirm in the brief conversations between adviser and self-isolator when support is not needed.

Requests with Under 18s in the Household – by Month and Cumulative

Year	Month	Requests with Under 18s in Household				Total Requests	
		Monthly No	% of Monthly Requests	Cumulative Total	% of Cumulative Requests	Monthly No	Cumulative Total
2020	Mar*	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	500	500
	Apr	205	12.1%	212	9.6%	1697	2197
	May	87	12.8%	299	10.4%	682	2879
	Jun	41	11.2%	340	10.5%	367	3246
	Jul	21	9.2%	361	10.4%	228	3474
	Aug	18	22.8%	379	10.7%	79	3553
	Sep	8	19.5%	387	10.8%	41	3594
	Oct	41	48.2%	428	11.6%	85	3679
	Nov	81	12.5%	509	11.8%	649	4328
	Dec	23	33.8%	532	12.1%	68	4396
2021	Jan	57	13.6%	589	12.2%	418	4814
	Feb	31	17.5%	620	12.4%	177	4991
	Mar	18	10.0%	638	12.3%	180	5171
	Apr	19	29.2%	657	12.5%	65	5236
	May	9	17.6%	666	12.6%	51	5287
	Jun	43	19.4%	709	12.9%	222	5509
	Jul	250	13.8%	959	13.1%	1810	7319
Total		959	13.1%			7319	

* March 23rd to 30th 2020 only

Part 1: The Here2Help Service: Performance (COVID Local Support Grant /Winter Grant Scheme)

10. A significant element of Here2Help has been managing the distribution of the Covid Local Support Grant. The Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) launched a £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme (WGS) on 1st December 2020 initially to cover the period until the end of March 2021, but this was extended to 16th April 2021 with additional funding. After the 16th April, the scheme was renamed to the COVID Local Support Grant and further extended.

11. The purpose of this grant was to enable upper tier local authorities (UTLA) to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials. There was no restriction on how the support was provided but UTLAs were expected to work with district councils / VCS to ensure the money went to those in need of this support.

12. Worcestershire's grant allocation was made over four periods, as outlined below

	Amount	Period
Allocation 1	£1,607,260.87	1 st December 2020 to 31 st March 2021
Allocation 2	£558,760.00	1 st April 2021 to 16 th April 2021
Allocation 3	£378,179.00	17 th April 2021 to 20 th June 2021
Allocation 4	£1,512,716.00	21 st June 2021 to 30 th September 2021
Total Allocation	£4,056,915.87	

13. The full £2,166,020.87 allocation funded two phases of support reflecting the initial period of the scheme and the subsequent extension. A small underspend (£65k) from Allocation 1 was used to cover a slight overspend in the second phase (Allocation 2). The same approach to allocation was continued through the third and fourth phase, with most of the funding providing free meals to children throughout the holidays. The breakdown of funding is outlined below.

Project	Allocations			
	1	2	3	4
Voucher Scheme for Children (Free School Meals)	£633,136	£443,043	£220,000	£1,200,000
Act on Energy	£300,000	£40,000	£50,000	£100,000
Ready Steady Worcestershire	£50,000	£20,947.16		
Here2Help	£21,000	£96,183.71	£19,179	£62,716
Bromsgrove and Redditch Network	£147,317			
Worcestershire Community Foundation	£266,052			
Wyre Forest District Council	£123,892			
Administration costs (inc free school meals scheme)		£23,600	£34,000	£50,000
Volunteer Centres/Foodbanks (Via the Districts)		£850	£20,000	£100,000
Care Leavers			£35,000	

Total Funding Spend	£1,541,397	£624,623.87	£378,179.00	£1,512,716
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Note: An underspend of £65,863.87 was used to cover overspend in Phase 2

14. All of the funding allocated to Worcestershire has been committed in line with the grant conditions.

- The free school meals vouchers were allocated through schools and on average have supported 11,446 families throughout the school holidays.
- Act on Energy are a charitable company set up to help individuals and households to manage their household energy needs. This support can range from helping to pay fuel bills through to boiler servicing / replacements. From Feb – July 2021 there have been over 220 households supported. This number is expected to double as we enter the autumn and winter.
- Funding administered through Here2Help has focused on issuing emergency food parcels (c.116 parcels issued), covering additional staffing costs and free meal vouchers (190 Edenred Vouchers and 55 supermarket vouchers) for those households in need of food support.
- Grants have also been issued to foodbanks and volunteer centres to help manage stocks and supplies.

15. The Here2Help service has also helped collect and collate offers of help from individuals and organisations. The individual offers of help come from those wanting to volunteer. This complements a wide range of local volunteering opportunities co-ordinated by volunteer centres managed in Districts as well as the volunteering that happens within council services such as Libraries and Museums.

Part 2: Here2Help Future Developments

16. Here2Help has continued to adapt and respond to the changing needs and guidance required to provide appropriate support to residents throughout this time. Currently, while still responding to the current situation (e.g. proactively contacting those self-isolating and providing appropriate support), the service is now looking forward to how it can build on this experience and success to move into a wider preventative response for the council. The Here2Help service will transform into the Councils front door for residents and this work starts with the People and Communities services.

17. Underpinning all of the Here2Help transformation are the following 4 values;
- Empower and Enable People to make their own choices and find their own solutions
 - Connect People with their communities
 - Support Communities to be strong and resilient
 - Efficient and accessible offering a joined up and transparent experience across all areas of the council

18. These values are embedded throughout the service and its future transformation so that the service has a strong outcome focused and person-centred foundation to its model. Taking this strength-based community approach Here2Help will build on the connections and partnerships which have evolved throughout the response to COVID-19, and the ambition is to improve the customer journey in how they access information and services. The future ambition of Here2Help is to give individuals clear information to connect to their own community-based solutions and ensure there are clear pathways into other services when required either through self-referrals or Here2Help directly.

19. This will be done in three ways:

- **Digital:** Enhancing the system so that individuals can use it to access the information and support they need. This can include self-referrals, accessing self-help tools and information and online bookings for various community services. The development of a community directory will process residents' access to a range of local organisations and groups who have registered onto Here2Help. Here2Help ambassadors will help to keep this as up to date as accurate as possible.
- **Telephone contact:** The main contact for Here2Help will continue with increased staffing to providing more capacity to respond to the service as it develops. Pathways and processes will also be embedded between Here2Help and the Family Front Door.
- **Face to Face:** Providing the Here2Help community platform, initially using libraries as points where people can access here2help in person, making libraries a community asset for residents, community groups and partners. There is also an opportunity to build this support into Family Hubs and services specifically aimed at families with children.

20. In addition to the above, developing a Here2Help ambassador role (leads for organisations/services) as part of a community network will support partners to come together to be the eyes and ears of the Here2Help service, to share ideas, learning and innovation. The role will provide partners an opportunity to co-produce Here2Help developments and work together to find solutions in how to respond to the changing future demands and needs which we all face. This role will demonstrate the community partnership ethos of Here2Help providing challenge and will co-produce ongoing developments. There is a workstream, which involves various partners, is focused on helping to shape this role to ensure that the role provides benefits across the system.

21. As a preventative response Here2Help plays a critical role in contributing to the development of the Integrated Well-being Offer (IWO) in Worcestershire. An Integrated Wellbeing Offer empowers people to live well, by addressing the factors that influence their health and wellbeing and building their capability to be independent, resilient and maintain good wellbeing for themselves and those around them. Public Health are leading on the development of an IWO which will bring together key aspects of activity from a wide range of agencies to support Worcestershire residents to live well.

22. As Here2Help delivers an early intervention response that works with partners to connect people to their communities and appropriate support and services, therefore it will play a significant role in the future IWO. To ensure this, there is core representation from Here2Help on the IWO steering group to ensure that the experience and ongoing service development of Here2Help is embedded into this development as it moved forward.