



# engage

Community Planning in Ards and North Down #myvoicemyAND

October 2020

**Welcome** ....to the October edition of engage! Keeping you up to date with the Big Plan and Community Planning in Ards and North Down.

**In this edition...** we want to take this opportunity to tell you about the amazing work that has been going on behind the scenes and celebrate the community and voluntary sector organisations, who working alongside the public sector, have positively impacted residents of the borough during this very challenging time.

As we approach the winter months and the possibility of more restrictions and possible lockdowns, we have put together a short directory of services that you can contact if you need help or advice.

We also share with you information about The Big Conversation Panel - survey one is now live and we want to hear from you! How has COVID-19 affected you and your family to date?

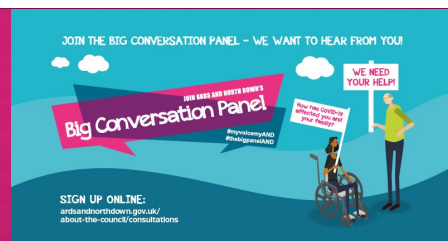
And finally... we want to tell you about the next steps we will be taking in Community Planning.



Supporting Communities P2-3



Businesses supporting communities P4



How has COVID-19 affected you? P 6-7

# Supporting Communities during COVID-19

**In March 2020**, just before we entered lockdown several partnerships were formed to help provide support to those most in need in our borough. These partnerships continue today and are made up of community, voluntary and public sector organisations.

During the first few months of lockdown, many people's situation changed over night. People who were shielding were unable to leave their home to do normal everyday things, to collect their prescription or do the weekly shop. People who were furloughed and out of work, found themselves, possibly for the first time, feeding their families or paying their bills more difficult than ever before.

A number of programmes were put in place to help relieve the pressures being experienced by our communities across the borough.

**Food:** The Department for Communities working in partnership with Invest NI, the Health Trusts, Advice NI, the Community and Voluntary sector and the 11 Councils provided emergency food parcels across Northern Ireland to people who were medically shielding or financially vulnerable as a direct result of COVID19. The scheme ran until 26 June and was extended until 31 July 2020 for those who had to shield for the additional month.

## In Ards and North Down:



**14,000** food parcels were delivered across the borough



**Over 1,000** households were provided with food

Many of our community and voluntary sector organisations mobilised their staff and volunteers to help people access food, create wellbeing packs and deliver medication. This was a lifeline for many people. Wellbeing packs which contained puzzles, colouring in books and jigsaws, helped with mental health and wellbeing. Pharmacy runs took place to ensure those who couldn't pick up their prescriptions, were receiving their medication on time.

With the cancellation of all social activities, the closure of community halls and leisure facilities, many people who enjoyed and relied on classes and groups throughout the week found themselves feeling socially isolated and lonely. Agenda's **Good Morning Call**, continued providing this vital service to the over 50's in Ards and North Down. Volunteers provided a friendly ear to listen to concerns and help sign post where possible.

# Supporting Communities during COVID-19

We know from previous Big Conversations that issues such as mental health, educational underachievement and poverty are key issues that need to be addressed. However, as a result of the pandemic issues such as domestic violence, children's mental health, digital and food poverty have been pushed to the forefront within our communities.

**North Down and Ards Women's Aid** continued to provide services to women and children/young people throughout lockdown. Refuge accommodation continued to be available to women and children fleeing domestic and sexual violence/abuse. Unfortunately, they have recently experienced an increase in support and information calls, as well as a slight increase of referrals into Floating Support, with Refuge accommodation seeing a significant increase in demand for emergency accommodation. Floating Support/Community staff continue to work remotely and provide telephone and/or video chat support and their Facebook page contains a number of informational postings regarding domestic violence/abuse and safety measures, as well as weekly positive affirmations for women.

**The South Eastern Family Support Hub** provides early intervention family support services to vulnerable families and children aged 0-18. The Hub is a multi-agency network of statutory, community and voluntary organisations. The Family Support Hub was dealing with an ongoing increase in children and young people being referred to the hub for anxiety prior to COVID-19. There has been a significant impact on families as a result of the pandemic and although referrals overall had decreased during lockdown, the Hub is starting to see an increase again. However, the evidence is anecdotal at this moment in time, the real impact will manifest over the coming months. The Family Support Hub have prepared for this and have received additional funding to provide therapeutic intervention for families where issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

During April 2020 **Trussell Trust Foodbanks** recorded a 142% increase on the number of people requiring emergency food parcels compared to the same period last year and an increase of 128% in the number of children receiving support in Northern Ireland.

**Bangor Foodbank**, during the same period recorded 304% and 311% increase respectively. June recorded the highest level of support provided with 231 households, 362 adults and 126 children receiving support. In addition to this, Bangor Foodbank also provided food in bulk to Bangor Alternatives, North Down YMCA, Portaferry Men's Shed and Portavogie Community Association.

**For more information on the types of support available in Ards and North Down, please see page 5.**



No one could have predicted how the pandemic was going to affect our society as a whole and how it may continue to affect us in the months to come. However, amongst the struggles we have faced as individuals, families, communities and organisations it has been wonderful to see so many businesses using their skills and knowledge to help support and keep communities safe when they have needed it the most.

Shnuggle, based in Newtownards and better known for their award winning baby products, started a crowdfunding campaign to produce and distribute face visors to front line workers, charities, food banks and NHS departments across Northern Ireland.

We spoke to the team at Shnuggle to find out more about their project.

**Can you tell us where the idea come from to make face visors and what was Shunggles role in the project?**

"Shnuggle was quiet at the start of lockdown and we were aware of the PPE shortages in NI and we wanted to do something to help. We saw lots of 3D printed face shields being made all over the world, but this process could only print 1-2 face shields per hour. Instead, we used our design team to develop an injection moulded face shield that could produce 100's per hour. Shnuggle founded the project "Heroshield". We did all the design and testing, and handled all the fundraising and financing."



**How has this made a difference in the fight against COVID-19**

"We were able to send out free face shields to all key workers in NI, and in the first 6-8 weeks, we distributed over 100,000 face shields. When the NHS supply caught up, we moved over to supplying charities and non-profit organisations to help them get running again after lockdown, and licensed the design to Denman and Crossen Engineering to enable them to sell to companies - with 5% of NET proceeds coming back to Heroshield."



**What's next for the project?**

"We still have face shields available to send free of charge to charities and non-profit organisations in NI. We also have a small fund available to provide grants to charities and non-profit organisations to help them make their workplaces, shops, etc. COVID-19 secure. Interested parties can email [hello@heroshield.net](mailto:hello@heroshield.net) for more details."

## 1. Food

### Bangor Foodbank

T: 078 2179 1674

W: [www.bangorni.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.bangorni.foodbank.org.uk)

E: [info@bangorni.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@bangorni.foodbank.org.uk)

### Emergency Food



### Storehouse

T: 075 2654 1168

W: [www.storehousenorthdown.com](http://www.storehousenorthdown.com)

E: [info@storehousenorthdown.com](mailto:info@storehousenorthdown.com)

### Newtownards Foodbank

T: 079 0293 3297

W: [www.newtownards.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.newtownards.foodbank.org.uk)

E: [info@newtownards.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@newtownards.foodbank.org.uk)

## 2. Fuel - Oil buying club

The more people that buy oil together the cheaper the cost for everyone involved. The NIHE oil buying club provides advice on oil costs and when best to buy heating oil, they also look after delivery. For more information:

T: (028) 95 98 2068 or (028) 95 98 3316      Text : 079 3984 3716

E: [oilbuyingclubs@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:oilbuyingclubs@nihe.gov.uk)

## 3. Debt advice, benefit advice, housing advice, legal advice and more...

### Community Advice Ards and North Down

Provides advice via telephone and email on all matters including COVID-19.

Advice line: 0300 123 9287

E: [bangor@caand.co.uk](mailto:bangor@caand.co.uk)

## 4. Family support

### North Down and Ards Women's Aid

T: 0808 802 1414 (24 hour domestic and sexual abuse helpline)

W: [www.ndawomensaid.org](http://www.ndawomensaid.org)

### Family Support Hub

Referrals can be made to the hub for families with children 0-17 years. Support includes: emotions, behaviour, teen issues etc. Referrals can be made by your GP, Health Visitor, Teacher, etc.

T: 028 9250 1357



COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on individuals and communities across Ards and North Down. At this point, we are unsure of when things will return to normal and what that new normal might look like. As we head into the winter months, we could be facing further lockdowns and restrictions to help protect the most vulnerable in our communities.

Along with our Community Planning Partners we have a responsibility of designing and delivering services that improve community, economic and the environmental wellbeing of everyone who lives in the borough.

Now more than ever before, it is important that we hear from you!

We want to know how COVID-19 has affected you and your family? This will help us to deliver services you need the most. To do this we have created the Big Conversation Panel.

### **What is the Big Conversation Panel:**

We are asking you to sign up to the Big Conversation Panel and as a panel member you will receive three surveys throughout the year (please see below for the dates). The first survey will focus on the impact of COVID-19.

[Survey one](#) – open 14 September 2020 – 31 October 2020

Survey two – open 1 February 2021 – 28 February 2021

Survey three – open 1 June 2021 – 30 June 2021

### **Why is completing the survey important?**

The answers to the survey questions will help us understand the impact of COVID-19 and the initiatives that are needed to help communities, families and people recover from the pandemic in our borough.

### **How can you complete the survey and join the Big Conversation Panel?**

**Online:** please click : [Survey one](#)

**Hard copy:** A hard copy of the survey can be posted to your home with a free post return envelope. **Telephone survey** and **virtual meetings** are also available on request. Please call **0300 013 333** for more information.

JOIN THE BIG CONVERSATION PANEL – WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

# JOIN ARDS AND NORTH DOWN'S Big Conversation Panel

#myvoicemyAND  
#thebigpanelAND

How has COVID-19 affected you and your family?

Survey One Open  
from 14 September –  
31 October 2020

WE NEED  
YOUR HELP!



## SIGN UP ONLINE:

 [ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/  
about-the-council/consultations](https://ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations)

OR BY:

 0300 013 3333

 [communityplanning@  
ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:communityplanning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

 @myvoicemyAND

  
Ards and North Down's  
Strategic Community  
Planning Partnership

  
Ards and  
North Down  
Borough Council



# JOIN ARDS AND NORTH DOWN'S Big Conversation

#myvoicemyAND

## Next steps...

Prior to COVID-19 we had identified 10 priority issues which Community Planning partners had agreed to focus on over the next few years. These priorities included: economic inequalities, valuing the environment, obesity and vulnerable people. Community Planning was going to solely focus on the work partners could undertake collaboratively to help address the priority issues. We would report back and inform you of our achievements and challenges each year. Since COVID-19 became apart of all our lives, three main priority areas have been heightened by the current situation. These are:

- Mental Health and wellbeing
- Poverty
- Social isolation

For now, we are going to focus on these three issues . We will not ignore the 10 priorities previously identified, but at this time, we need to address the issues most relevant to our citizens and design support services to help in anyway we can.

## Contacting us:

We are currently working from home. If you would like to get in touch, please email us:

[communityplanning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:communityplanning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Or Tweet us:

[@thebigplanAND](https://twitter.com/thebigplanAND)

And we will get back to you as soon as we can!

## Stay informed

Stay part of the conversation by signing up for [this newsletter](#) , following us on [twitter](#) or view the community planning section hosted on Ards and North Down Borough Council's [website](#).

## Please stay safe:

Keep 2 meters apart from others when you can

Wear a mask when necessary

Wash your hands well and often

Stay at home if you show any symptoms

Download the app — StopCOVID NI