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PRESS RELEASE

Extra support for elderly in Westminster

The Corona virus has meant that the charity has had to expand its' activities to provide more personal social contact and delivery services to needy older residents in Westminster than ever before.

We have over 400 known, isolated, older people who need support and the number is growing. An appeal for additional volunteers has resulted in us being able to double the usual number of these invaluable people.

We have extended the available times for our Information and Advice service from 10am to 4pm. Most calls now are related to food and medicine provision and other shopping.

Loneliness is always a problem but has been greatly amplified by the need for everyone to stay in their homes. We are providing regular telephone befriending calls to older residents and, like all our services, this is available to all Westminster residents over 55.

We have teamed up with St John's Church in Hyde Park Crescent, to act as a hub for receipt of large food donations which the charity will distribute to our known vulnerable clients. We would particularly like to thank Waitrose Edgware Road and Waitrose Victoria for their generosity.

Realising the need for older people to exercise when kept indoors, we are trying to produce short videos of chair-based exercises which we will post on social media. We will also be launching a Pen-pal/E-pal programme and virtual Tea and Chat sessions.

As you can imagine, providing these extra activities has involved considerable additional expenditure. We are most grateful to the companies and organisations who have already supported us but much more is needed if we are going to continue our present level of help.

The government funding announcement yesterday needs to be understood against this context of unprecedented and urgent local need. It's right that the first priority is to enable charities and community groups to keep delivering while the virus is such a current threat but, realistically, life is not going to return to normal, certainly for older people, for years to come. The huge demand for help from charities will continue, yet the extra funding announced by the Chancellor will only provide short-term relief.

It is probably best seen as a down-payment for the support of the charity sector. The country needs to avoid waking up in one or two years time to find that many of our best-loved charities have folded.

We are your local charity and want to be here to help you, so any donation Will be much appreciated.

ENDS

For more information, contact :

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Notes to editors:

- Age UK Westminster is an independent local charity that is part of the Age UK movement. The charity exists to promote the well-being of older people in the City of Westminster and help make life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience within their local community.