**Compassion: Ways to connect and support your communities**

There are still many ways in which we can support our communities during lockdown and whilst we are sure you are aware of many ways to help we wanted to compile a few ideas.

**Food Banks**

Food banks provide are there to provide emergency food for those in desperate need. They use food vouchers which can be exchanged at local food banks for a minimum of 3 days’ worth of nutritionally balanced meals. You can help by donating some time to support your local food banks (if it is safe for you to do so) or fundraising for them. Also you can donate food to some supermarkets or directly to the food banks, some places will even list items they specifically need.

**Trussell Trust:**

Trussell Trust is a charity founded on Christian principles who work with people of all faiths and those with none. They support over 1,200 food banks in the UK. They have many ways you can support on a national and local level, you can find out more here: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/>. You can also find your local food banks here: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/donate-food/>

**FoodShare:**

FareShare is the UK’s national network of charitable food redistributors. They deliver food to 11,000 frontline charities and community groups. Every week they provide enough food to create almost a million meals for vulnerable people. You can find ways to get involved here: <https://fareshare.org.uk/get-involved/>

**Women’s Refuges**

Women’s refuges are extremely important at the moment due the pandemic, due to services not being as accessible as before. In addition, Women’s Aid’s direct services have reported escalating abuse, especially as women are having to live in lockdown with an abuser. You can help by contacting your local women’s refuge to see if they need any specific items, including if they need supplies for those moving on from refuges. You can also participate in campaigning activities, which can be as simple as writing to your local MP, or you could fundraise locally or nationally for women’s refuges.

**Women’s Aid:**

Women’s Aid have been at the forefront of shaping and coordinating responses to domestic violence and abuse over 45 years. They work with women and children by listening and responding to their needs. Women’s Aid have a variety of ways to support on a national and local level, you can find more information here: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/get-involved/>.

You can also find local domestic support services here: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/>

**Supporting vulnerable people**

You may know of some vulnerable members in your local branch, diocese or local area who may benefit with a bit of extra support during this difficult time.

**Phone circles:**

A phone circle is where you choose to call someone you know for a catch up and perhaps to share some prayers. The person you contact will then contact another person in your group and so on. It is also a nice idea to agree a day and time to contact each other, so you know they aren’t busy when you are calling and because it is something to look forward to. You may do this already within your local branch or diocese but perhaps you could also extend this to your neighbours and friends.

**Letters and cards:**

Another simple way to reach out to vulnerable people, especially if they aren’t proficient in using computers and the internet, is to send a letter or a card.

**Food parcels:**

You could show your support by making an extra portion of your delicious meal or by baking some sweet treats to share with those self-isolating. To note, it might be an idea for the recipient to store the food for a day or two before consuming, to be on the safe side.

**Hospitals**

It is a difficult time for those working in hospitals at the moment, so it can be a bit trickier to support our local hospitals as we have done in the past. That being said you can always reach out to your local hospitals to see if they need items or specific support.

**NHS support:**

The NHS have a multitude of ways to volunteer at the moment, both providing in-person support and supporting from home.

NHS volunteer responder information: <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/i-want-to-volunteer>

NHS volunteer responder roles: <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/i-want-to-volunteer/volunteer-roles>

**Care homes**

You can reach out to care homes in your local community to see if they need any items. Loneliness is also a serious issue for those staying in care homes, as they are unable to see their friends and family.

**Only Collect pen pals:**

A project has been set up by Arts in Care Homes called Only Collect. The project sees that you are connected with a care home resident to be their pen pal. You then be will be able to write, email send artwork or postcards to them, to make their day. You can find more information here: <https://artsincarehomes.org.uk/only-connect-pen-pals/>

**Prisons**

Mothers’ Union has many activities and connections to prisons across the UK, so this may be as easy as a phone call to see if they need anything in particular or sending cards to inmates. For others who have not made connections with their prisons, you may want to reach out to see how you can best provide support. Please follow the link for more ideas on how Mothers’ Union members are helping those in prison:[**https://www.mothersunion.org/projects/prison-work**](https://www.mothersunion.org/projects/prison-work)

If you are aware some amazing ongoing projects which haven’t been included, please contact Georgina Anstee at membership@mothersunion.org and we will endeavour to add your suggestions.