



# Age Concern Auckland

*Serving the needs of older people*

## Age Concern Auckland Update

### 8 April 2020

#### What We're Doing

All our staff are now working from home ensuring that older people in our community continue to get the services and support they require.

##### Visiting Service

All clients are receiving regular phone calls from their volunteers to maintain social contact during the period of home isolation. Many of our Visiting Service volunteers have also been providing additional assistance during the lockdown including doing grocery shopping and collecting prearranged prescriptions.

##### Elder Abuse Response Team

The team is supporting their clients over the phone and responding to referrals. We are monitoring the occurrences of elder abuse currently because of concerns over lock down placing additional strain on family situations and the added vulnerability of older people being isolated from their normal support networks and the opportunity for elder abuse to occur.

##### Asian Services

Our specialised Asian (Chinese) Services team have been reaching out to the older Chinese people they work with, to ensure that they remain connected and receive the support they need. This has included working with social service agencies to organise emergency food parcels for clients who need them and arranging for these to be delivered. We have also been contacting all the people who normally attend our Positive Ageing Centre to set them up, when possible, in an online weekly activity group to ensure they stay connected and active.

#### You are amazing

**Thank you to everyone who has put their hand up to help us support older people during this time.**

**We couldn't do this without you.**

#### Age Concern Auckland is here to help

We have volunteers ready to help

To contact your local office:

Central and West - 09 820 0184  
[ageconcern@ageconak.org.nz](mailto:ageconcern@ageconak.org.nz)

Counties Manukau 09 279 4331  
[admin@accm.org.nz](mailto:admin@accm.org.nz)

North Shore - 09 489 4975  
[ageconns@acns.co.nz](mailto:ageconns@acns.co.nz)

#### Find us at:

[ageconcernauckland.org.nz](http://ageconcernauckland.org.nz)  
or  
<https://www.facebook.com/ageconcernauck/>

**Donate now to support our work**

## Covid-19 Response

We are coordinating practical assistance and welfare calls for older people in the community who need this support. As of now, we have:

- **actively coordinated 102 older people to receive groceries they needed**
- **identified a further 44 lonely older people in need of a weekly phone call**
- **assisted 12 older people to get their prescription medication**

Our work in this area will grow as the lockdown continues and older people run out of the food and medication they have at home. To enable us to do this we have mobilised our network of 900 volunteers across Auckland and recruited an additional 200 volunteers who are willing to assist. We have been overwhelmed by the community response to supporting the older members of our community and thank everyone that has volunteered.

We have arranged with NZ Police to significantly streamline the time it takes to process Police Vetting Checks. This means that we can now Police Check a potential volunteer in under 24-hours. This is vitally important as it enables us to control and monitor the support we are providing and helps us mitigate any potential risk to vulnerable older people. It is laudable that so many across New Zealand have stepped up to help but it is important that help is appropriate, monitored and free from risk. We encourage everyone to assist their older relatives, friends and neighbours – those people they know and are known by. Where an older person does not know of anyone that they can call upon for help, we are urging them to reach out to Age Concern or another known organisation, to ensure that the right help can be provided.

A number of issues have arisen out of our work in this area, not least that the majority of older people that Age Concern Auckland works with aren't set up with online banking which raises the practical issue of how they pay for the essential items they need. While volunteers are usually incredibly flexible and happy to accept a cheque, it does highlight how technological solutions don't necessarily work for older people.

Related to this is what do older people do about their bills when they aren't set up for online payment? We've spoken to a number of older people who are distressed about receiving utility bills that they're unable to pay during lockdown because the majority either post a cheque or pay in person at the post office, options which are now unavailable.

The final issue that has arisen are problems relating to the stopping or disruption of homecare or ready meal services during the lockdown. Currently there don't seem to be immediate replacements available. We're actively advocating with the relevant organisations and agencies to try and address these issues and provide the support the older people in our community need. When appropriate, we are also advocating in the media about these issues and their need to be addressed.

The final very crucial part of our work over the past two weeks has been calling every one of our clients and members, over 8000 older people in total, to check that they have the support and assistance they need and that they are safe and well. This is allowing us to identify older people in need of support but who don't want to be a bother and so won't call us to ask for help. It has also allowed us to be a friendly and welcoming voice to thousands more older people who are overwhelmed and frightened by what is happening.

In the coming weeks, we will continue our work in all these areas to ensure that the older people in our community get through the Covid-19 Crisis and receive the support they need.

Kevin Lamb  
CEO, Age Concern Auckland