

Not-for-profit but far richer

Local organisations, companies and individuals in Fishguard have provided desperately needed help since March. Jeremy Martineau hopes these services will continue in the long term for the benefit of all

What began as a spontaneous response to the needs of the self-isolating rapidly developed into a well-organised system of distribution of food parcels to supplement what the food bank was already doing. Typical response "thank you for helping me with my shopping but also referring me to someone to talk to while I have been shielding". And from volunteers "I have really enjoyed volunteering, meeting new people and chatting with our neighbours who are so grateful".



The Community Fridge, set up to reduce surplus food going unnecessarily to landfill, also joined in and Fishguard and Goodwick Food Support was formed. Organiser Lesley says: "We are supporting those waiting ages for Universal Credit payments, many whose employers have gone into administration and those self-employed who are not eligible under the government schemes. Many people who have never claimed benefits before are absolutely shocked at how little there is to live on." Over 45 more vulnerable households continue to be supplied in this way, down from 74 at the peak.

Mutual Aid Fishguard also put together a list of local businesses, eager to continue supplying their customers, either by order and collect or by home delivery. This information was delivered to every household – about 2000 homes.

Fishguard and Goodwick Chamber of Trade and Tourism updated the information as more businesses joined in or changed their arrangements. Updates are published regularly on six local Facebook pages.

"This has opened our eyes to the delight of having meals delivered to us," said Michael and Pam. "We would not normally have gone out for a meal, but we are working our way through all the providers; it's a great initiative we hope will continue."

Paul, a long established local café owner shared his story. "It was our first day of deliveries when we met a client who had never visited our restaurant. He explained that I was the first

person he had spoken to that week; he was so grateful and appreciative and when I listened to his story it brought tears to my eyes. Although we have provided the service for no profit, the appreciation and gratitude make us far richer. We now have 62 regular clients receiving meals, some seven days a week, some one, two, three or four”.

We pray for guidance as the uncertain future unfolds.