



News release
2 June 2020

Catalyst awards £650 grant to Houghton Regis Helpers

In response to the impact of Covid-19, housing association Catalyst set up a 'Coronavirus Voluntary Sector Support Fund' to help small charities and voluntary sector organisations continue to support their communities, and has awarded £650 to Houghton Regis Helpers.

Volunteer group 'Houghton Regis Helpers' provides the town's residents with short term help with lifts to doctor's appointments, shopping, odd jobs around the house and popping round for a cup of tea and a chat.

Founded in 2011, the group's aim is to be there for local people who don't have family or friends nearby and who might need short term help. All volunteers have Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance and carry ID cards.

When social distancing measures were introduced, the group had to quickly adapt their service to continue to help residents access food and collect prescriptions and prevent loneliness and isolation through regular phone calls rather than visits.

Houghton Regis-based Aldwyck Housing Group merged with Ealing-based Catalyst last year and the group has many residents living in the town. The Catalyst Communities team works closely with community partners and charitable groups across London and the home counties to help support residents and their families.

Catalyst's Director of Community Investment, Sahil Khan, said:

"We set up the fund to help charities and community organisations to continue to deliver their vital services during this unprecedented time, and to support people who are most at risk during prolonged periods of isolation. The fund is open to organisations working in our neighbourhoods that are supporting those with low and insecure incomes, young people, older people, vulnerable adults, and those experiencing mental ill-health. Groups can apply for up to £2,000 to help cover costs such as staffing and volunteers, equipment and general running expenses.

"We were delighted to award £650 to Houghton Regis Helpers to help with additional costs and so they could continue to support to the local community during these especially challenging times."

Jenny Gallucci, Secretary for Houghton Regis Helpers, told us:

"In these unprecedented times, our group has received a huge increase in requests for help from residents in need of support. To adapt our service to meet the demand we have set up a second phone helpline and have been fortunate to recruit new volunteers to help with shopping, collecting prescriptions and making 'connect and chat' phone calls to self-isolating and lonely residents. The help we provide is free and voluntary and we are extremely grateful for the grant awarded by Catalyst, which will help sustain our service during the Covid-19 pandemic. Anyone in need of support or advice can contact Houghton Regis



Helpers on 07587 004514 or 07708 201112 or by email
houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk”

A local resident who Houghton Regis Helpers support told us:

“I would like to say an enormous thank you to the volunteers who are simply amazing. I am a visually impaired mum with three young children and struggle with various tasks especially in these unprecedented times where I cannot have family or friends round. The Houghton Regis Helpers pick up my shopping, collect my family prescriptions and other things that we might require from the pharmacy or shops. Without them I would be completely stuck fulfilling these tasks. I am very grateful and hope they will continue in the great work they do, for they have truly kind hearts of gold. Thank you”

-ENDS-



NOTES TO EDITORS

More information on Catalyst

Catalyst is one of the leading housing associations in London and the South East with 34,000 homes and 1,200 employees, having merged in December last year with Bedfordshire-based Aldwyck Housing Group.

We are experts in placemaking and developing tenure-blind neighbourhoods, with a strategy in place that will see us build up to 1,300 quality new homes each year. Our approach to creative design, effective urban planning and high-quality development is underpinned by our long-term interest in our neighbourhoods. By adopting a stewardship role, we ensure that the places we help to create are well maintained, look great and remain desirable and affordable places to live. A prime example of Catalyst's work is our flagship regeneration project in North Kensington, Portobello Square.

Catalyst Communities, our social and economic investment arm, helps our communities grow with bespoke neighbourhood strategies that help deliver initiatives such as youth mentoring projects, after school homework programmes, exercise classes and much more. We also deliver an individual offer to our most vulnerable residents, with services such as financial inclusion courses to help people with their money; parenting support classes for young families and employment courses for those out of work.

www.chg.org.uk

For more information, please contact:

Liz Brown – Senior Communications Officer

liz.brown@chg.org.uk

01582 869224

Charlotte Stamper – Head of External Affairs

charlotte.stamper@chg.org.uk

020 3693 2464 | 07815525365