



## Supporting our communities during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Here in the Province of Monmouthshire we can be justly proud of the efforts we are making to support the fight against the Covid-19 Pandemic in all corners of the Province. I am delighted to describe in more detail the support we have given within our communities so far.

### Helping to meet the shortfall in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

There has been much in the news regarding the shortage of PPE for our frontline staff and the risks that this places them in. We have taken a two pronged approach to helping to bridge this gap.

- Firstly, in the short term, we placed an immediate order for 1,000 visors. Secondly, we are very pleased and proud to be working in partnership with 4 local schools to support them in manufacturing visors. The schools are: -
- West Monmouth Comprehensive School, Pontypool, Torfaen
- King Henry VIII Comprehensive School, Abergavenny
- Monmouth Comprehensive School, Monmouth
- Croesyceiliog Comprehensive School in Torfaen

This excellent partnership arrangement means we have purchased £800 worth of plastics and acetates and the school Design & Technology Departments are working to an NHS approved specification using their laser cutters and 3D printers to manufacture the visors.





### **Staff of Monmouth School**

### **Llantarnam Dentists Surgery**

We are continuing to deliver the visors to where they are most needed. This has included over 45 care and residential homes, seven dental practices, opticians, GP practices and NHS Community teams. Those Masons freely giving of their time to deliver the visors have been overwhelmed by the appreciation and gratitude from those receiving them.



### **West Mon School Pontypool**

Not only have Monmouth Comprehensive School and King Henry VIII School in Abergavenny volunteered to make visors, they have also expressed an interest in sewing scrubs. We have been pleased to be able to support them in contributing funding for both these initiatives. There is a national shortage of the scrubs that medical and nursing staff wear on a day to day basis and it is hoped that this initiative will help to meet the shortfall for those staff working in a range of care settings.

It is a pleasure to be working with so many excellent local schools and we are grateful to them for their time and expertise. As Masons we recognise the tremendous job that staff across all aspects of the care sector are doing and are keen to support them. The provision of visors and scrubs for those that need them is our small contribution to say thank you and to help them 'stay safe'.

## **Support for Vulnerable Families**

There is already evidence emerging that although the COVID-19 pandemic will affect us all, it will affect us in different ways. The Aneurin Bevan University Health Board had become aware of some particular difficulties that vulnerable families with babies and young children are experiencing. They immediately put out a request for a range of donations such as nappies, baby milk, sleep suits, vests, sterilising tablets, cotton wool, baby wipes, children's food bowls, plates, cutlery, colouring books and pencils. Monmouthshire Freemasons were quick to hear the call and we were very keen to respond to support vulnerable families within our community.

We appreciate that some families will be struggling with the additional costs of raising children during the pandemic, school and nursery closures, the loss of financial and social support and the additional food costs of having the whole family home all day all play a part. Freemasonry is very much committed to supporting the local community and we feel it is important to do what we can to help others.

We immediately contacted the Health Board for a complete list of the items required and having purchased the items, they have been distributed to various children's services such as 'Flying Start' and Children's Centres across each of the boroughs of Newport, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Torfaen.

Sourcing the items needed involved many shopping trips to different supermarkets as some of the items such a baby milk are restricted and there is currently high demand for items such as sterilising tablets. Each of the Boroughs were delighted to receive the donations which will be distributed to those families and children most in need. To date this includes:

- 4,424 nappies
- 168 packets of baby wipes
- 136 baby grows
- 63 sleep suits
- 50 bibs
- 150 colouring books and crayons
- 200 plates
- 240 bowls
- 200 cups
- 350 sets of cutlery



Aneurin Bevan University Health Board said:

*"We are very grateful to our communities for their support and offers of help during these very challenging times. We are humbled by the number of donations we have received for our patients"*



We know that children's experience in their early years can have an impact on the rest of their lives. We are committed to working with our local communities to play our part in helping to ensure that these experiences are positive for parents and children and to supporting vulnerable families.

## **Delivery of iPads - Helping patients and their families to keep in touch**

We have been greatly moved by the plight of those patients in hospital who due to the necessary restrictions of the coronavirus are unable to receive visits from family and friends. We immediately contacted the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to ask how we could help. Recognising how important it is for people to maintain contact with their loved ones the Health Board suggested a technology solution. We were pleased to purchase 11 iPads to help provide a vital communication links for patients to home. Obtaining the iPads, however, was quite a challenge as all Apple Stores were closed. An e mail to Apple Head Office put us in touch with the Manager from the Cardiff Store who fast tracked the order to ensure the Health Board could receive the iPads as quickly as possible.

We recognise that being in hospital can be difficult for people at the best of times and not having the comfort of regular visitors and contact with loved ones must be very isolating and distressing. We are pleased that technology can provide a vital communication in the most difficult of circumstances. We are proud of how Monmouthshire Freemasons are responding to the Covid 19 crisis and making a difference to patients and their families during this most difficult time.

In particular patients in hospital who have the coronavirus are likely to be very poorly indeed. They will be cared for by staff wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) this means they will be wearing masks and visors and makes the importance of seeing a familiar face from home, even more important.

Tanya Strange Associate Director of Nursing at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board said:

*"I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Monmouthshire Freemasons for their very kind, and extremely generous donations of iPads. The physical and mental well-being of our patients is paramount, and there is no doubt that the cessation of visiting has had a psychological impact on our patients. The donations of the iPads has provided an avenue to open up communication once again for the patients, and families are reassured by the ability to see their relatives. These donations will (and are) making such a difference."*

The Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is currently liaising with the wards to identify the areas of most need in order to prioritise the allocation of the iPads.

## Nightwear and toiletries sourced and delivered!



We responded immediately to a call for help from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board who requested a range of toiletries and nightwear for their patients. Being admitted to hospital in any circumstances can be a very worrying time but when then happens in an emergency situation it can leave little or no time to prepare for a hospital admission. This circumstance, together with the necessity of

the Health Board to stop all visiting to hospitals to limit the spread of Coronavirus has meant that patients were running out of toiletries and clean nightwear.

The Health Board said:

*"It has been essential for us to put measures in place to protect patients, families, staff and the public by reducing the people traffic in our hospitals and minimising risks of cross-contamination."*

Although the solution would seem simple, with shortages of basic hygiene items such as soap and many shops closed. The demand for items such as nightwear presented quite a challenge! The Freemasons of Monmouthshire made available over a £1,000 and sourced a wide range of toiletries from the Health Boards 'wish list' and were able to purchase over 70 sets of pyjama's and nightdresses from a local supermarket chain.

We are pleased to be able to meet this important need within our local community. We are determined to play our part in supporting the Health Board and our local community at this difficult time for so many people. We recognise the comfort that this small gesture can bring to individual patients in hospital.

## One Square Meal

We were pleased to support the '**One Square Meal**' initiative which helps vulnerable and elderly people in the Newport area through the provision of a nutritious meal delivered to the door by members of our Armed Forces Lodge.



## Small things can make a big difference!



We asked the Health Board what we could do specifically to support the staff. The answer came back loud and clear! "We would love some sweets!" Wearing masks and face visors all day as a necessary part of their PPE can leave staff with a really dry mouth. Being able to suck or chew on a sweet can really help. We purchased

80kg's of sweets, much to the surprise and puzzlement of the cash & carry outlet. If you hear rumours of a shortage of Everton Mints you know where it started!

In keeping with the values of Freemasonry, the Freemasons of Monmouthshire will continue to respond to calls for help within our community.