

Out and About Card Pilot



Report September 2020

Background

The Age Friendly Island Steering Group set up an Environment Task and Finish Group to meet, discuss and provide feedback for how public spaces can be adapted to help with social distancing and ensuring Age Friendly principles are met. These adaptations are a direct response to Covid-19 with the easing of lockdown and the implications this has.

A suggestion to produce a card to let people know that the card holder was having difficulties with the new social distancing measures came from a discussion at the Older Person's Steering Group. The idea was based on the successful 'Safer Journey' cards that had been produced previously by Age Friendly Island. This suggestion was taken to the Environment Task and Finish Group who developed the idea further.

Development of Out and About Cards

The Environment Task and Finish Group produced draft wording and designs for three cards to address the issues for those who:

- Find social distancing challenging. They may have a visual impairment or have difficulty in understanding social distancing instructions.
- Are exempt from wearing a face covering under the Government Guidance.
- Find the use of face coverings by other people challenging. Face coverings make communication difficult for those who rely on lip reading and facial expressions, for example.

Suggestions received through consultation with both the Older Person's Steering Group and the Public Forums included:

- Less text is better.
- Use a lanyard.
- Create an additional card for those coming out of shielding: 'I need time and space'.
- The communications to businesses should include a poster to be displayed in shop windows to indicate to users that they will recognise the cards and to raise awareness with the public.
- People may not want to wear cards all the time – option to wear or put in wallet.
- Community groups could be used for distribution.

The Public Forum members agreed that they would use the cards and knew people who could find the cards beneficial.

Taking into consideration all the feedback, the designs were amended and the final design was approved by the Groups. The final design was for 4 statements to be printed back to back on 2 cards. Corners were removed from the cards to assist those users who have a visual impairment. The cards and lanyard used the "Stay Alert: Control the Virus: Protect the Island" logo to be recognisable as a response to the current pandemic.

The final 4 statements on the cards are:

- Please be patient social distancing is challenging for me
- Please be patient I am exempt from wearing a face covering
- Please be patient your use of face coverings is challenging for me
- Please be patient I need time and space

Distribution of the Out and About Cards

The cards were funded and printed by the Isle of Wight Council. 500 sets of the 2 cards were printed along with 500 lanyards.

The cards were distributed by organisations on the Environment Task and Finish Group and members of the Older Person's Steering Group as well as other partner organisations who were interested in being involved in the pilot.

Those involved in the pilot included Action on Hearing Loss,

Age UK IW, Alzheimer's Society, Independent Arts, Isle of Wight Council, McCarthy and Stone, NHS Trust, Seaview and Nettlestone Partnership, and Sight for Wight.

IW Council incorporated the cards into their Out and About project, headed up by their Public Health team, for residents who have been shielding.

There were challenges of distribution of the cards in the current circumstances with many offices closed and limited face to face contact with service users. Distribution relied heavily on posting the cards. This incurred additional expense which was greater when lanyards were also included.

Promotion of Out and About Cards

As the distribution of the cards for the pilot project was primarily through the project partners direct to service users, the publicity focused on raising awareness of the cards to businesses and members of the public.

Using the message 'Please be Patient' publicity was targeted at businesses so that they would understand the purpose of the cards if they were shown one by a customer. They also could download a poster to display to show that they would be supportive to users of the cards. Publicity was also targeted at members of the public to encourage them to be patient and show consideration, especially to people using the cards.

It was explained that a limited number of cards were initially being distributed as a pilot but that the cards could be downloaded and printed. A telephone number being available for anyone who wanted to request a card at this stage.

Feedback from Out and About Cards

A limited number of formal feedback forms were received for the Out and About cards, and this was supported by anecdotal evidence from telephone conversations with both card users and potential card users.

Some of the comments received included:

“They are an excellent idea. Takes all the worry out of going into shops”

“Really helpful for me”

Some people who had been shown the cards had not been out yet and so they did not know the new way of life, others were still worried about the virus and not being able to wear a face covering, and worried about not being able to hear well and struggling with communication because of the face coverings.

Many of the Sight for Wight service users commented that they felt much happier going out as they felt they would not get challenged as to why they were not wearing a face covering.

Some users reported that the card rips too easily. Sight for Wight resolved this for their service users by sending out a plastic card holder for the lanyards.

People would prefer to have a card with a lanyard and have suggested that there should be more publicity to raise awareness of both the use of the cards and the issues faced by people around the use of face coverings.

The Next Steps

The cards were well received so we will be continuing to make them available through the project. Additional AFI Steering Group members will help with the distribution of the cards, including libraries and several departments within the IOW NHS Trust. There continue to be challenges to distribution and publicity in the current situation as many services are not running in the usual way. Posters are not an option in some situations where they would have been used previously due to COVID-19 closures and restrictions.

We will continue to publicise the cards through a variety of media and endeavour to get feedback from card users where possible.