Undoubtedly, the onset of Covid-19 has created the greatest public health crisis of our generation, and we shall undoubtedly see the effects of this epidemic for many months to come. We’re in this for the long haul, but this is a time for caution, care and consideration, not panic and alarm. We’re all in this together, and if we all work together, then we will get through this crisis.

**Avoid Misinformation.** Only take medical advice from trusted medical officials, and from the NHS website ([**https://tinyurl.com/vccz7ux**](https://tinyurl.com/vccz7ux)**)** which should be checked frequently. Our understanding of Covid-19 is evolving rapidly; keep up to date. **Do not spread** unverified rumours; direct anyone asking questions to the NHS website or their local GP.

**Follow Protective Guidelines**. Our best chance of beating this epidemic is to slow the rate of infection as much as we can. That means taking the measures recommended by the NHS. Avoid physical contact and keep a good social distance (six feet) from others. Wash your hands frequently and well. Soap kills Covid-19. Avoid crowds where possible. Cough into a tissue, then dispose of it. When you go out, plan your journey to minimize contact with others.

**Stay at Home.** If you have any symptoms, no matter how minor, don’t take a chance. Stay at home for two weeks, along with your family and anyone else you are living with. Even if you feel fine, the person who catches Covid-19 from you might not. Do your part to stop the virus from spreading. Think of your neighbours, your friends. Stay at home. Over-70s and those vulnerable to the virus are also being asked to remain at home; follow this advice! Do not expose yourself to unnecessary risk.

A significant portion of our community fall into this category; we have an older population, and the next few months will be hardest on those forced to isolate themselves. Already there are volunteers offering to provide support to those in need; that is a fantastic expression of our community spirit, and the more help we have, the better. If you know someone who might need help, then please offer. Please think of your neighbours, your friends. Whether it is picking up something from the pharmacy or walking the dog, anything you can do will help.

**Protect Yourself and Others.** While those in isolation will need all the support the community can provide them, always remember that they are in isolation for a reason, that they may avoid contracting Covid-19 if they are in a vulnerable category, or that they will not pass it on if they have contracted the virus. If you are helping them out, avoid all contact, wash your hands before and after visiting, and where protective gloves where possible while handling any items you might be collecting for them.

**Don’t Let This Get You Down.** It might sound strange to say that, but don’t dwell on this more than you must. Stay informed, stay safe, but be reassured that this will be over, that things will return to normal, and that everything will go on as it has before. The birds are still singing, the grass is still green, and we live in a wonderful community filled with wonderful people. Don’t spend all your time glued to the news. Sit in the garden, read a book, watch a film, work on a hobby, and stay connected with your friends or neighbours over the telephone or through social media.

**Help is Available.** A community helpline has been established at **0121 318 5138**, and an email address at **worthencovid19aid@gmail.com**. The helpline is open from 0900-1600 Monday-Friday, and is being hosted by the Worthen Medical Practice, with support by our local member, Heather Kidd, Worthen With Shelve Parish Council, Chirbury with Brompton Parish Council and the Worthen Village Hall Committee. If you need help, get in touch. If you want to help others, get in touch. We can use all the help we can get – even if you are self-isolating, you can still help us from home. If you need information, get in touch. Don’t hesitate to use this service – it is there for you, and your privacy will be respected. There is a support system for us all. Make use of it. That’s what it’s there for. If you know of someone in need, pass these details on, and get them to call.

*We’re all in this together, and if we all work together, if we’re kind, thoughtful, and if we look to the well-being of both those around us and our community as a whole, then we will all get through this together.*

**Self-Isolation is Physical, not Mental**

Over the next few months, all of us are going to be spending a lot more time indoors than normal; either because we are in vulnerable categories or because we’re self-isolating due to suspected symptoms. Treat this as an opportunity, not a problem. Think positively and work out what you are going to do in this time. We’ve all got a stack of books or films we’ve been wanting to get to for years; this is your chance. Think of some sort of project you might be able to do, whether something craft-based or home-improvement. Work in the garden. (Just because you have to stay at home doesn’t mean you have to stay indoors!)

If you have friends and family who you cannot see face-to-face, then pick up the phone and give them a call. Send an email, arrange a video-chat through Facebook or some other means. We live in a world that allows you to speak to anyone you want in a matter of seconds, whether they live in the house next door or on the other side of the world. Make use of that. If you know your neighbour lives alone, give them a call. Talk to them. Keep them company. Think of it as expanding the guest list for your ‘we beat the virus’ party. And when all of this is over, we’re going to have a big one, all of us, and we’ll have earned it.

If you are on your own, then there are people you can call. We’ve got the local community helpline at 0121 318 5138 (M-F 0900-1600) and the email address at worthencovid19aid@gmail.com. Make use of them. Use the local Facebook group, or other online social groups you have joined. We’ve all got a list of people we haven’t spoken too in years. The time has come to pick up the phone and make that call. You aren’t alone. None of us are alone. We’re all in this together, and we will all come through this together.