

LEVENS HULME

NEWS

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Covering coronavirus

Welcome to a special edition of Levenshulme News. In such unusual times



we thought we should try and document what's going on in this area and share some information. We went to press on 20th March and things have been moving very quickly, so some info will inevitably become outdated. At the time of writing, the government has advised against socialising but has not ordered pubs and restaurants to close.

Levenshulme News is a free, independent local news source, online and in print. The basic idea is to make people more aware of what's happening in their area and highlight important issues.

We encourage contributions so please get in touch at levenshulmenews@gmail.com

Market off

Levenshulme Market has postponed all events until at least the end of the month.

That means there will be no seventh anniversary night market, or a Saturday market on March 28.

In a statement the team said: "We're awaiting further clarification on whether it will be possible to continue with our events in Levenshulme in the coming months."

They added: "The situation we find ourselves in comes as a huge blow to both the market and our traders. Markets exist due to small businesses born out of passion and dedication whose survival depends on opportunities to trade.

"Cutting off those opportunities gives us no pleasure and we would like to take a moment to add our voice to those venues and events organisers who have highlighted how unreasonable it feels that a decision of such magnitude has been left in our hands."



levy corona helpers

More than 700 people have committed to help their self-isolating neighbours in Levenshulme.

They have all signed up to Levy Corona Helpers which was launched on Facebook in mid-March by Carey Bamber and Karen Clarke.

The idea is for those involved to put cards through doors in their area inviting people to phone if they want a chat or need any help.

One of the co-ordinators, Sue McPherson, said: "This is about neighbours supporting each other. One of the main things is posting the card. We're not professionals, we'll signpost people to professional support.

"It's amazing so many people have said, 'I'm happy to co-ordinate', right through to people who say 'I've got a skill, maybe I can offer something'."

The group has teamed up with Inspire which is using the Corona Helpers network to help deliver support to older people. Inspire is also the base for resources and meetings.

If you want to get involved you can find Levy Corona Helpers on Facebook or email levycoronahelpers@gmail.com.

allfm rides the radio waves

Community radio station Allfm will continue broadcasting from its base at Levenshulme Old Library.

The station, whose presenters are all volunteers, is making some adjustments in response to the crisis such as suspending its training programme and cutting out live guests. But management felt it was important to continue.

An email to volunteers said: "We're a community radio station and I think we should attempt to find that balance between being of use to the community that we serve and being sensible regarding health considerations."

You can tune into Allfm on 96.9fm and allfm.org online.



library times

As things stand the council is keeping Arcadia open.

That means the swimming pool and library are both available, but there have been several changes.

All libraries in Manchester are now closing at 5pm, and Burnage library closed altogether on March 19 until further notice.

Levenshulme pool has closed the sauna and steam room because it involves sitting closely in a confined space.

Ardwick Sports Hall has also closed.

Corona confusion

Lawrence Hennigan, whose Levenshulme Pub Company has five pubs in the area, thinks the crisis could knock business for six months. He's still trying to understand what government help is available and how he can get it. "A £25,000 grant would be nice, but loans - you have to pay them back... I've never faced anything like this. Does the government mean each venue could get £25,000? Or is it just the company? I don't know and neither does my bank manager. No one can answer that."

Mr Hennigan employs 30 staff and runs Fred's Ale House, Hennigan's Sports Bar, M19, The Union, and the Farmers Arms in Burnage. "We'll stay open as long as we can, but we may have to reduce hours. We can't make a decision until the government is clear with us and says you must shut."

He said closing would be hard on some regulars. "The bar staff know them personally, if they're poorly they're on to them, or they'll phone their family, and if they had to self isolate the staff would be calling them." adding, "I might be the biggest bar chain in Levenshulme but we're not Wetherspoons or Enterprise Inns that can afford to take a hit like this."

Inspire(d) to stay open

Lots of sessions at Inspire have been cancelled but the centre and its cafe are staying open. Centre manager Roxanna Locke said: "We're open as long as we can, until we're shut down by the government. The job of community centres is to support communities through things like this. We're having meetings to co-ordinate activities like getting food to people or helping with shopping. We already have links with older people's services and we see this as our role - to go through the transition with them."

Kate Williams, a co-ordinator of the Inspired Task Force, is organising telephone support for people that usually go to the centre. "If people can talk about things, we know it will make a big difference. We're going to throw all our resources into looking at ways to support older people who may be isolated in their homes." One idea is a choir which could turn up and perform outside homes and sheltered accommodation.

Soon the centre will have two banners outside, one reading 'Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Levy' and the other, 'Physical Distancing Equals Social Solidarity'.

Mecca trips cancelled

Haji Tours on Stockport Road is dealing with thousands of cancellations after Saudi Arabia closed its borders. The business specialises in Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca. "Business has collapsed," said manager Sarfraz Patel. "We're telling customers they can have a refund or change to another date."

Umrah trips - a year round pilgrimage - have been directly hit, but the Hajj, which happens in July/August has not yet been affected. "Hopefully after three months they can all go. At the moment there's been no Hajj announcements."

The government has promised financial support for the leisure and tourism industry, with some businesses eligible for grants of £25,000. "I still don't have a clue how we can get it," said Mr Patel.

Switching to take-outs

Some bars are offering a take-out service as they adapt to a new reality.

Nordie has a menu of alcohol with a take-out discount and Station Hop is also offering it. But in a statement co-owner Amanda Finch said: "It goes without saying safety of staff and customers is our priority. We aren't encouraging anyone to come. We have plenty of DIY and crisis management spread sheets to keep us busy."

The Klondyke is offering a Sunday roast delivery service on Mother's Day (if you're reading this before the 22nd) and a food delivery service on other days including pizza and veggie boxes. Cibus at Fred's Ale House is open as usual but also offering takeaways. Check their Facebook page for menus.

Isca has switched to take-out only. You can pre-pay online for a range of goods, including eggs, chocolate, cheese, wine and coffee. They also offer local delivery or collections.

Co-owner Caroline Dubois said: "A lot of people are coming for take-outs... people are working from home and they've made it part of their routine to go out and get something."

Levy fringe

Organisers of the Levy Fringe are still planning to go ahead with the annual cultural festival in June. But they say they're prepared to postpone if the advice changes.

In a statement organiser Veronika Diamond said: "We're working in partnership with our funder, venues and artists and will take all measures necessary to ensure the wellbeing of our community. At present we are still planning events between June 25-July 4, but we may not put tickets on sale until we are in more certain times. We may delay this year's Fringe if advised to. In the meantime, please be kind to each other, support independent local businesses and look out for the vulnerable."

Government must do more, says Khan

Afzal Khan, Labour MP, has called for more support for people struggling with the economic impact of the virus. A package of support has been promised including loans and grants for businesses, but he says they don't go far enough. He told us: "Although measures have already been announced, the Government must provide more clarity and support for private renters, people who are self-employed, and businesses like restaurants, pubs and theatres that are significantly affected by social distancing measures."

Mr Khan has been forced to close his constituency office because of the outbreak but is working from home. He added: "These are difficult times, and we face an unprecedented challenge. All our thoughts are with the individuals and families dealing with the virus in Manchester and across the world, and the loved ones of those who have sadly passed away."

Mr Khan can be contacted on: afzal.khan.mp@parliament.uk or 0161 226 5546.

Prayers postponed

Major places of worship in the area have closed until further notice. Madina Mosque in Barlow Road closed on March 19 with worshippers advised to pray at home. The madrassah is also closed and the mosque's community activities have been suspended.

Nationwide, the Catholic church and the Church of England have suspended services. St Mary's website has a letter from Cardinal Vincent Nichols saying despite the suspension, churches will stay open as a "focal point of prayer".

COVID-19 symptoms

For advice in a range of languages go to - www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/.