



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A different Light"

A Different Light - 11th April 2020 – “Tough time for many disabled folk in lockdown”

We're halfway there. At least I hope we have done enough so that four weeks at Level Four will turn the tide of Covid 19 and we can start a journey back to some normality.

This time of lock down has been hard for all of us. For some it has been harder than others. Many Disabled people as are doing it tough. The ability to get essential items, including food, appears to be one of the most prominent issues. Some Disabled people are fully reliant on support workers to shop.

They are facing a number of snags when it comes to supermarkets. There is, for example, the 'one at a time' policy. Some people aren't being let in with their support worker because it's down to the discretion of the supermarket 'bouncer' (for want of a better word). Of course the support worker could go in to the supermarket with their list. This approach is fraught however as some Home Support Providers have told their staff, who normally accompany the disabled person to shop, that they can't use their clients' eftpos cards. Bit of a Catch 22

Another associated 'snag' is that Disabled people entitled to shopping support are normally allocated a set amount of support time to do their shopping. That works okay in the normal scheme of things but in lockdown by the time they get to the front of the supermarket queue they have run out of any decent time to do their shop. I know that work is being done with the supermarkets to come to some arrangement to alleviate this- hopefully this will come to fruition soon.

Here is some information that may be helpful if you're disabled and find yourself stuck:

Pharmacies – If you check with your local pharmacy you will probably find that they may do home deliveries of medications for a small or no fee. Most of their hours have changed to 10am – 12 noon then 2pm – 4.30pm during this lock down period.

Groceries, deliveries – While the big suppliers have indicated that you can do online shopping/delivery there has been some reports that their websites are overloaded. I am sure they are working hard. Countdown has been promoting their “Priority Assistance” on the government’s guidelines around those who are most at risk. You can register online for this support on the Countdown website.

Pickup/delivery other options – Volunteering Northland are putting their hand up to help **vulnerable people** get essentials, to provide guidance over the phone on the use of online services, to offer someone to check in on them (via phone or online) or just for a chat. All enquiries: <https://volunteeringnorthland.nz/covid/help> or ring 0800-865268.

Driving with Miss Daisy – will happily discuss options and costs to assist those in the community who require assistance with getting their essential shopping requirements. Call Mike on [09 430-8091](tel:094308091)

Meat Delivered- One service that is working is the local Omak Meats who will deliver in Whangarei, Hikurangi, Onerahi, Kerikeri and other areas on certain days. You can order online – omak.co.nz or talk to them on 09-435 1403 if you haven’t got internet.

Civil Defence : If you find that you need help and you fit 'outside the gap' e.g. other networks, channels, services can't help you, maybe you aren't a NZ citizen , maybe you are but you still can't get help – just ring **0800 790 791**

At home we have been getting into the swing of our bubble. My wife, daughter and I are doing our respective work through the daytime and watching Netflix at night. One series we have found perversely entertaining is ‘Doomsday Preppers’, a documentary series, about people in America who are convinced that society is on the brink of collapse and how they are preparing to hunker down and ‘bug out’ for an extended period of time. They dedicate their lives to hoarding all kinds of supplies including weaponry and are an eclectic mix of conspiracy theorist hillbillies and paranoid freaks. While we laugh at their irrational obsessions, I know at this time they will be rubbing their hands and saying “I told you so”.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception. A Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.