

## Community Business re COVID-19, Mutual Aid Theme – Offline social connection (services, information & entertainment) Host – David Floyd, Social Spider 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020

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### Social Spider CIC - Publishing community newspapers during the Covid crisis

#### What we do:

Social Spider CIC publishes monthly community newspapers in Waltham Forest, Tottenham and Enfield - places that no longer have any other local newspapers primarily focused on or based in the area.

Our papers are produced by and for the local community - with our editors (professional journalists) writing some news stories themselves, while commissioning features from local residents and community groups who want to write about their work and raise issues that matter to them.

Our main source of income is print advertising with some supplementary income from donation-based membership schemes. We print and distribute 10,000 copies of each newspaper primarily through a mix newsstands and community venues (such as libraries, cafe, pubs and and community centres).



**WALTHAM  
FOREST ECHO**

**ENFIELD DISPATCH**

#### Links:

Waltham Forest Echo - <http://walthamforestecho.co.uk/>

Tottenham Community Press - <https://tottenhamcommunitypress.co.uk/> Enfield Dispatch -  
<https://enfelddispatch.co.uk/>

Video celebrating five years of Waltham Forest Echo -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HP6k7PkH5U>

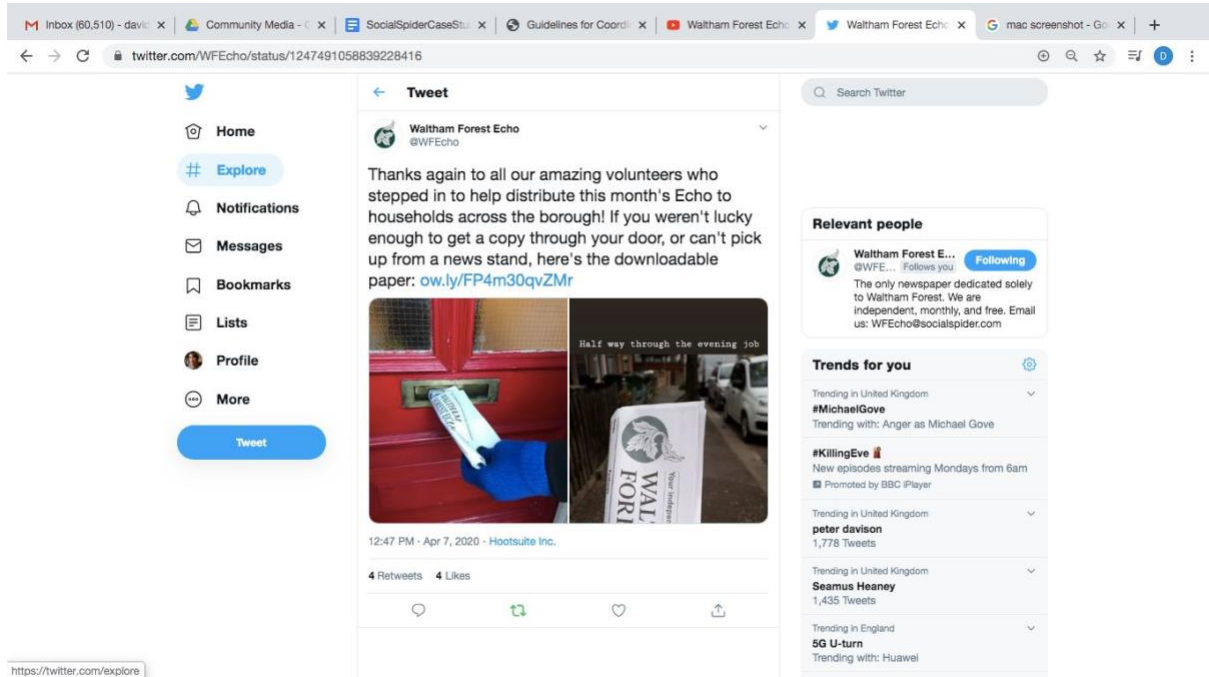
#### Response to Covid:

As a result of the Covid crisis our role as a community news publisher has simultaneously become more important and more difficult to carry out.

As the major source of locally-produced and locally-focused independent news in the areas we operate in, it is vital that we continue to publish so that local people can access information about the local response to Covid - as well keeping in touch with local news in a broader sense.

Doing this has involved - on the content side - contacting relevant local public sector and voluntary sector agencies, along with newly emerging mutual aid initiatives, to enable them to publicise their work and other relevant information through the papers.

On the distribution side, our community drop off points are mostly closed and our on-street newsstands are ineffective as far fewer people are walking down the street. As a result we have had to totally revamp our distribution model - moving to primarily door-to-door distribution.



### Risks, issues and unanswered questions:

The main challenge we currently face is continuing with the social aspects of our work when our primary source of commercial income - print advertising - has collapsed.

In a bizarre irony, we are unable to access the government's grants from small businesses due to the fact that our office is located in a community hub managed by a charity - and is therefore outside the business rates system. We would be eligible for 80% 'furlough' payments to cover wages for our staff team. Unfortunately, these payments are only available on the basis that the staff concerned do not do any work while 'furloughed'.

This leaves us in the position of being able to claim £9244 per month to do nothing but £0 if we chose to continue to provide a service to our local community. Our current biggest risk is that we will be forced to choose between financial survival and socially useful activity.

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