

# Bringing Information Together for Rural Communities - Case Study

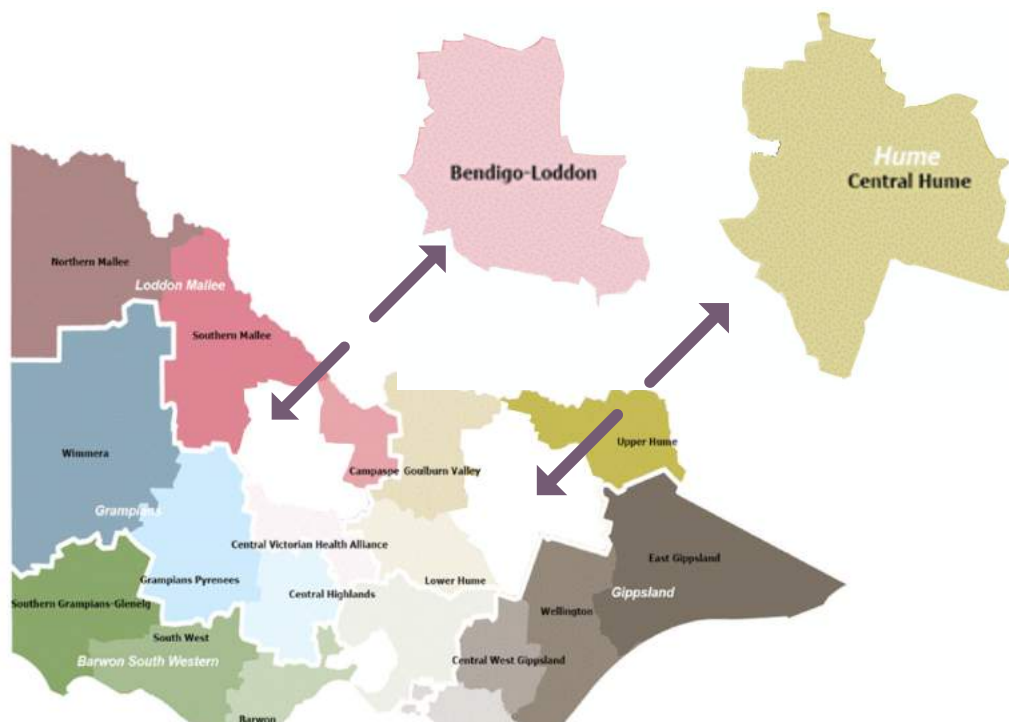
## COVID-19 Response March - June 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented disruption to health and community service systems, and the community. As our environment changed the internet became saturated with information and resources about COVID-19. In order to effectively and efficiently respond to the pandemic and to address the overload of information for our communities, Bendigo Loddon and Central Hume Primary Care Partnerships (PCP), along with many other PCPs, hosted reputable, high-quality information from both national and local sources. We also enabled our partners to promote their organisational responses; such as alternative service delivery once face-to-face consults were suspended.



**This case study outlines how our two PCPs reacted to the pandemic. We both supported our communities by providing a communications platform with relevant resources and accurate information.**

Central Hume and Bendigo Loddon PCP are partnerships of cross-sectoral organisations that assist in addressing and improving health outcomes to enable equitable access to health care services and information. Our PCPs cover six Local Government Areas (LGAs) including Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta, Bendigo and Loddon.



## Community Information and Service Updates

Rural and regional communities are faced with particular barriers to accessing healthcare and health information. COVID-19 exacerbated those barriers. Mobile and internet access for many in rural communities is unreliable, with a large proportion of the community dependent on local newspapers and newsletters. Unfortunately, the pandemic has forced many local newspapers to close, limiting the community's access to place-based information.

Central Hume and Bendigo Loddon PCP coordinated information flow using both written and online formats to ensure local communities were able to access the information they required. Whilst most of the information we provided was in a digital format, it empowered service delivery partners with the confidence to provide information directly to those who struggle with access to digital platforms.

### Central Hume PCP

COVID-19 brought with it heightened emotions. It was therefore important that the information being available to the community was reliable, factual and relevant. Central Hume PCP did not want to replicate information and advice already on other websites. The website hosted information with a prevention, social connection, mental wellbeing and local focus. The webpage provides links to:

- Local information
- Guides to food access
- Information for vulnerable groups (culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD))
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people information
- Resources on staying socially connected
- Information and supports for mental wellbeing.

COVID-19 has also seen a significant increase in family violence incidents. We included on our COVID-19 web page a list of family violence services developed for the Ovens Murray area by Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership. Other resource links and information could be also found which support victims, victims friends and family and survivors of Family Violence.

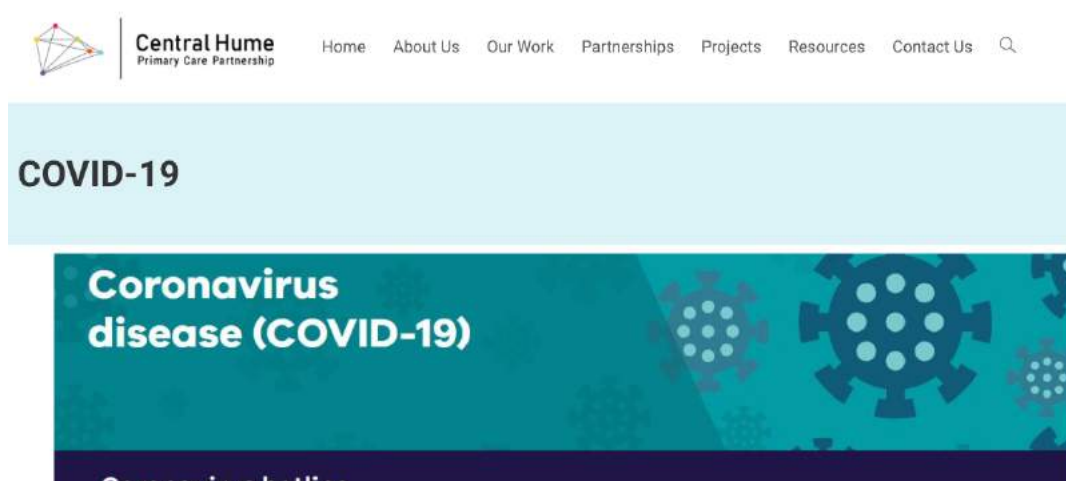


Image: Central Hume PCP COVID-19 resources webpage

Partners were appreciative and found the webpage beneficial due to the significant amount of information being shared with organisations.

### Access Resource: [COVID-19 webpage](#)

Central Hume PCP continued utilising their weekly eBulletin 'What's Happening?', to provide our partners with up to date local information, emerging state and national information, resources, and training opportunities in regards to COVID-19. The weekly newsletter was dispersed to our subscribers through the MailChimp platform. The newsletter also provided a platform for our partners to share information, resources, guides and any initiatives they were undertaking during COVID-19 with other stakeholders.

### Access Resource: [What's happening? eBulletin](#)

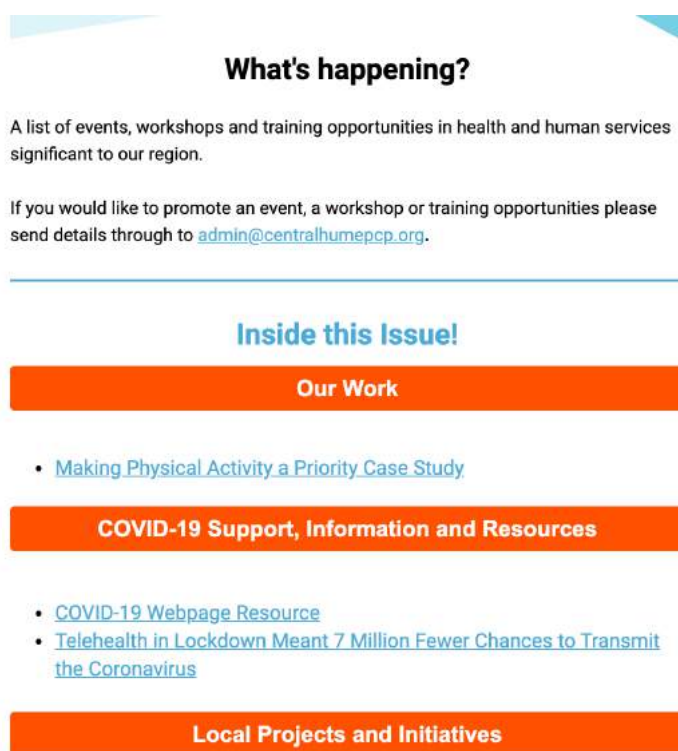


Image: Central Hume PCP 'What's Happening?' eBulletin

"The COVID-19 web page is so beneficial, as the information is clear, concise and relevant to our local communities. I have been able to support colleagues and community folk by utilising resources on the web page."

Deb Smith, Community Health Nurse  
Mansfield District Hospital

"I feel incredibly inspired by all the information and opportunities outlined – an amazing array of goodness and energy."

Liz Grogan  
Dementia Australia

### Bendigo Loddon PCP

The aim of the Bendigo Loddon PCP website was to support our partners and wider community by providing community information and updates, sharing local resources and enabling access to reliable place-based information from the one area. The COVID-19 webpage hosts organisational links from a wide range of health areas including:

- Mental Health
- Family Violence
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources
- Easy English resources
- Local information for both Bendigo and Loddon LGAs.

## Access resource: [COVID-19 Resources](#)

To address the limited mobile and internet access in Loddon Shire, a 'Loddon Contacts List' was developed. The contacts list was posted to all residents throughout the Loddon Shire to ensure all had access to up to date health service information. The contact list included address, phone number, email and website information for services throughout Loddon Shire and the City of Greater Bendigo. It focused on areas such as COVID-19 testing sites, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, hospitals, mental health, domestic and family violence, food support, financial relief and youth support services.

## Access resource: [Loddon Contacts List](#)

"During the critical early days of the 2020 pandemic event, the PCP was able to undertake the development of these vital resources. This allowed Council to provide trusted and reliable information to our wider community that we would otherwise have been unable to complete in such a timely manner; which ultimately increases the resilience capacity of the community as we continue to navigate the impacts of this pandemic."

Wendy Gladman, Director  
Community Wellbeing  
Loddon Shire Council

**LODDON SHIRE SERVICE CONTACTS** | Emergency Call 000 | CORONAVIRUS HOTLINE 1800 675 398

**LODDON SHIRE**  
Community Services/Emergency Assistance/Business Support  
P: (03) 5494 1200  
W: <https://www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Fer-business/COVID-19-business-support>  
Monday - Friday: 8.15am to 4.45pm  
Weekends: Closed

**HOSPITALS**  
Boort District Health  
3 Kiniry Street, Boort VIC 3537  
P: 03 5451 5200  
E: [admin@bdh.vic.gov.au](mailto:admin@bdh.vic.gov.au)  
Inglewood District Health Service  
3 Hospital Street, Inglewood VIC 3517  
P: 03 5431 7000  
E: [admin@idsa.vic.gov.au](mailto:admin@idsa.vic.gov.au)

**PHARMACIES**  
Boort Community Pharmacy  
108-112 Godfrey Street, Boort VIC 3537  
P: 03 5455 2044  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Saturday: 9am to 12pm  
Inglewood Pharmacy  
30-36 Brocke Street, Inglewood VIC 3517  
P: 03 5438 3021  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Saturday: 9am to 1pm  
Pyramid Hill Pharmacy  
15 Kelly Street, Pyramid Hill VIC 3573  
P: 03 5455 7016  
Wedderburn Pharmacy  
71 High Street, Wedderburn VIC 3518  
P: 03 5494 3309  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Weekends: Closed

**MENTAL HEALTH**  
Bendigo Health Mental Health Triage  
100 Bernard Street Bendigo VIC 3550  
P: 1300 363 788  
Open hours: 24hrs/day  
Life Line  
P: 13 11 14  
W: <http://www.lifeinvcms.org.au/>  
Open hours: 24hrs/day

**Medical Clinics/ GP'S**  
Boort Medical Centre  
2 Coultas Street, Boort VIC 3537  
P: 03 5451 5200  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Weekends: Closed  
Dingee Bush Nursing Centre  
21 King Street, Dingee VIC 3571  
P: 03 5436 8009  
Open hours: Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Weekends: Closed  
Marong Medical Centre (Inglewood)  
8 Hospital Street, Inglewood VIC 3517  
P: 03 5438 3008  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Weekends: Closed  
Northern District Community Health (Boort)  
119 - 121 Godfrey Street, Boort VIC 3537  
P: 03 5451 0260  
Open hours: By Appointment  
Northern District Community Health (Pyramid Hill)  
12 Victoria Street, Pyramid Hill VIC 3575  
P: 03 5455 7065  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5pm  
Weekends: Closed  
Wedderburn Health Clinic  
25 Wilson Street, Wedderburn VIC 3518  
P: 03 5494 3311  
Monday - Friday: 9am to 5:30pm  
Weekends: Closed

**DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE**  
1800 Respect  
P: 1800 737 732  
W: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>  
Open hours: 24hrs/day  
Centre for Non-Violence (CNV)  
P: 1800 884 292  
W: <https://www.cnv.org.au/>  
Open hours: 24hrs/day  
Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria  
P: 1800 806 292  
W: <https://casacv.org.au/>  
Open hours: 24hrs/day

Updated: April 2020

Image link: [Bendigo Loddon PCP Loddon Contacts List](#)

Bendigo Loddon PCP began producing a weekly All Partner Newsletter focused on COVID-19 resources, information and training opportunities through the online MailChimp platform. The aim of the weekly newsletter was to promote reputable emerging information from both National and local services to our partners. The All Partner Newsletter was sent to the leaders of our partner organisations. The Partners were then able to forward the information to staff and the wider community.

Additionally, Bendigo Loddon PCP implemented a Kindness Campaign through social media and developed a working from home resource for local organisations.

## Access resource: [All Partner Newsletter](#)

## Access resources: [Kindness Campaign](#)

## Access resource: [Working from home](#)



### Commonly Asked Questions about Coronavirus - ပုံသေကွက်လားဘဲတင်သံကွက်အီးညီနုာ်သုာ်တဖာ်ဘဲလားခိာ်ရိနုာ်တင်ဆါယာ်



**Image:** Bendigo Loddon PCP partner Bendigo Community Health Services have produced Karen, Dinka and Dari COVID-19 resources. A link to these resources can be found on the Bendigo Loddon PCP website.

## Outcomes

The communications sought to address the disadvantage and inequity in access to health care in these vulnerable regional and rural communities through easy access to reputable information. Whilst the information was provided in a digital format it enabled our service delivery partners to share this local and specific information directly with those community members who are disadvantaged and might not have access to the information being provided. Both Central Hume and Bendigo Loddon PCPs have had good engagement from local organisations and the community.

### Central Hume PCP

The Central Hume PCP COVID-19 webpage has been very well supported by our partners and community with nearly 800 views in the first 2 weeks of being up and running and now more than 1,300 views of the COVID-19 webpage altogether. The feedback received from our partners outlined that they received an immense amount of COVID-19 information but don't have the time to spend sifting through to find the relevant information. The Central Hume PCP website and what's happening? eBulletin has provided our partners and community with a mechanism to easily access relevant information and resources in a timely manner. Overall, the what's happening eBulletin has an opening average of 38%.

1,312

Views to our COVID-19 web page

253.2%

Increase in website visits

122

Subscribers of What's happening? eBulletin

## Bendigo Loddon PCP

Similarly, the Bendigo Loddon PCP website has been appreciated by all partner organisations and the feedback has been extremely positive. The communications and resources have allowed easy access to reliable information and the increase in website usage demonstrates its importance. Bendigo Loddon PCP has had an increase of 51% in website visits with 590 visits to the COVID-19 resources library. The All Partner Newsletter average open rate is 52%. Furthermore, the *Loddon Contacts List* was distributed through a mail out to 3694 residents of the Loddon Shire. An updated version will be sent in July 2020.



### Summary

This case study highlights the importance of communication during crisis. By providing a communication channel the PCPs play a role in enabling place-based messaging by responding to local community needs and being seen as a reliable source of information for partnering health and community organisations. This demonstrates how the PCPs support the work of our partners and stakeholders throughout times of uncertainty.

Both Bendigo Loddon and Central Hume PCPs have long standing and trusted relationships with our partners. Our PCPs bring diversity, perspective, expertise and knowledge, to ensure our partners feel supported and equipped with the relevant resources needed to adapt to the ongoing nature of this pandemic.

### Our Partner Organisations

#### Central Hume PCP Partners



#### Bendigo Loddon PCP Partners - [Link to the Partners page](#) [Click Here](#)

