



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE'S COVID-19 COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

**A celebration of extraordinary people
after an extraordinary year.**

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Introduction from Richard Hollingum

One day in March 2020, my partner woke not feeling too well. As the day progressed she felt worse and eventually worked her way through the NHS on-line self-check and it appeared that yes, she did have COVID-19.

We immediately went into self-imposed seclusion and for the next two weeks relied on the kindness of strangers, as well as friends and neighbours, to deliver the necessary groceries and to walk the dog. All this was thanks to a volunteer response force that had suddenly been formed as a result of the threat of this new virus.

Similar scenarios were being played out in other villages around Northamptonshire where groups of people would form ad hoc units offering general or specific help. And this response was not just restricted to the public. Local companies, pubs, shops, all played their part in making sure that life went on as best as possible through lockdown, uncertainty, and concerns for the future.

Northamptonshire ACRE felt it only right to celebrate these groups, these champions of the local communities that make up so much of this county. You will be surprised as to how many groups have come into being, offering food support, helping beat the isolation blues, motivating the local community to keep positive. Some have worked specifically with families or with the elderly, others with youth groups. All have shown that when things get difficult, communities come up with the solution that is just right for them.

This, then is a record of an extraordinary year, some extraordinary situations and a celebration of some extraordinary - yet at the same time as ordinary as you or I – people, what they have achieved and how they have shown how resilient communities are. Please join Northamptonshire ACRE in celebrating our Community Champions.

Richard Hollingum
Trustee, Northamptonshire ACRE

The structure and purpose of this booklet

The stories in our booklet have been selected to showcase highlights of the work carried out across Northamptonshire in response to Covid-19 in 2020.

However, these amazing groups and individuals are more than just their 'highlight' - so whilst a group may be applauded for their fantastic work in battling isolation, they may well have carried out outstanding work collecting prescriptions or befriending too.

We recognise that there are many groups and individuals not named in this booklet that have been working incredibly hard in their community. Thank you for all you did in the pandemic. We tried hard to locate all the groups and include them and we have left a space at the end of the booklet for you to record your own personal memories.

We hope that this booklet serves as not just good memories of your herculean efforts during the pandemic, but will also inspire ongoing grassroots investment in the value of our communities.



Helping people to survive the pandemic



Brackley Food Bank

Fresh volunteers for existing services

Brackley Food Bank was established over 10 years ago, however many of their volunteers had to self-isolate at the start of #Lockdown1.

Whilst those volunteers were still keen to help remotely, that left a gap for how to supply the food safely. A campaign to recruit was quickly launched and 12 new drivers came forward to collect donations and deliver the food parcels, saving the day!

Brackley's residents were so generous in their support, a local catering company offered extra storage space to enable the increased efforts.

Overall, the community's response during this time of crisis has been 'epic', so thank-you!

Call to action

Been inspired by everyone's efforts to support others in Covid? There are many opportunities to help others, in the middle of a pandemic or not. Whether you can offer time, transport, money or goods, harness that impulse in the future and get involved!



Bugbrooke

Delivering food for everyone

When the pandemic started, a number of volunteers came together wanting to help residents who had to self-isolate or were in a at risk group to ensure they could still access the food and perscriptions they needed.

Volunteers were recruited to help deliver shopping and perscriptions but as the pandemic went on, it became clear that more families and older people needed additional support.

Bugbrooker residents started to increase the number of food parcels delivered as well as including frozen meals that could be heated up when needed. Up to 30 volunteers came together to help deliver over 2,000 food parcels and 1,500 frozen meals to approximately 50 households in the village during the pandemic.

It was a fantastic effort from the whole community.

The Shack Food Bank

Ensuring everyone is well fed.

Local mum Claire and other volunteers set up a store during the first lockdown in her conservatory. Supported by Tesco and Morrisons, they put together food parcels and delivered them to elderly people in the area.

The Post Office in the village was closed due to illness, and the FareShare food bank at the Grange Estate in Kettering closed because volunteers were mostly over 70 and self-isolating.

The Fire Brigade helped Claire with shelving and the village donated a fridge freezer.

At one point they were using a van as a mobile shop to deliver to families with vulnerable children and the elderly, although this then broke down, street coordinators continued to make sure people had food and medications. Some coordinators also cooked meals for people.

One man had been living in a tent as he had lost his job and his accommodation due to the lockdown. The group found him a room at the Holiday Inn, and then put him in touch with his embassy. He was helped to sort out his papers, and to find a flight home to his family.

After a bit, they reopened the community centre in Grange Place, Kettering and started helping with prescriptions and mental health support. For many people, this was a lifeline – somewhere to go each week to chat and collect some supplies. There was also a charity shop, with donated clothes, and some bedding.

The shop remained open in Geddington for a while, and the centre is open every Tuesday.

Well done Claire and friends for helping everyone get through the lockdown and for keeping life as normal as possible for local people!



Daventry Danetre Rotary Club

Responding to the call

Daventry's Danetre Rotary Club stepped up to the plate when called upon early in #Lockdown1.

The Danetre Rotarians helped turn £2,000 worth of food into emergency food parcels, which were distributed from the Daventry Leisure Centre. Co-ordinated by Brian Thomas, they also helped members of the community by delivering food parcels when requests for them came in, sometimes at very short notice. Additionally, when Daventry District Council had to organise the delivery of leaflets to every household in the district, the Danetre Rotarians stepped in to deliver thousands of leaflets throughout the town.

Call to action

Joining an existing organisation with charity as its core will put you in a great place to provide instant help where it is needed most, at any time of the year.

Irthlingborough Food Bank

Groups working in harmony

Irthlingborough and the surrounding areas are an inspiring example of a market town activating their whole network to support everyone in Lockdown.

The established Foodbank was incredibly generously supported and fed families in need, giving out as many parcels during Lockdown1 as they normally do in a year. The excess food supplies went to the local Café 25, where Jim and his team provided takeaways and free meals for the vulnerable, plus an additional 'help yourself' table for anyone who needed it.

Shopping and prescription support came from a quickly established Covid19 group, and a cohort of individuals went the extra mile to provide safe contact for the isolated feeling the effects of loneliness. Faith leaders 'went virtual' with services and opportunities for social interaction as often as possible, and phone contact for those who weren't 'on the computer'.

The Town Council provided financial support to the groups where necessary, added safety measures for all - such as sanitiser at the outdoor gym and skate park, and the events committee devised activities for those having to keep local for exercise to enjoy whilst they were out and about, such as the Scarecrow Trail. Lots of residents were active 'frontline workers' in care homes, Kettering Hospital, in the local shops.

A special thank-you goes to the Heads of the local schools, Jan Marshall and Nick Garley, and their teams, who not only taught the children of key workers, but also drove the school minibus to fetch and deliver them safely.



Kelly Mercer – Kettering Food Bank

Volunteering is its own reward

An instant response, Kelly and her volunteers have run a food bank every day since 21st March, at the height providing support for 70 families facing the Lockdown and ramifications of redundancy since then, averaging 30 packages a day.

So far, so normal (unfortunately), but when your volunteers dress up and hand out 150 packs of Easter Eggs and Cookies on children's doorsteps, you know you are dealing with an extra-special team!

Among the numerous expressions of thanks they have received there is a recurring theme that those helped do not know how they would have managed without the food bank and that Kelly and her team are so compassionate that no one is made to feel unworthy.

“You have helped my family with food and mental health but most of all by being a friend”

Like all of Northants' groups, the volunteers gained so much from the experience.

“ to see a sigh and smile of relief from those who we have helped is probably my greatest achievement. Thank you, Kelly, for letting me be a part of an amazing selfless group of people”

“I loved helping out, I met some great people, had a laugh with everyone, travelled hundreds of miles collecting and delivering food for the food bank, always greeted with a smile from those people we have helped out especially at Easter, seeing all the beaming smiles from the kids when their favourite characters visited them with Easter goodies. Thank you for letting me be a part of your team.”

Call to action

The desire to help is all around you – why not put out a small idea to help a neighbour and see who steps up?



Far Cotton and Delapre Community Support Group

Support pours in

Just 4 volunteers began the Far Cotton and Delapre Community Support Group, but it swiftly grew to over 80 volunteers and the Facebook Group has over 1100 local members. In addition to shopping, prescription support and befriending, the group provided 135 hot meals a day to local school children, as well as delivering 60 boxes of food weekly together with top ups for gas and electricity for those in need. Anyone with an emergency was also given top up supplies so that no one went without.

Julie Davenport, the local councillor, organised successful funding applications from the Council, Tesco, Northamptonshire Community Foundation. Donations came from the Friends of Far Cotton Library, Southern Quarter Development and The Old White Hart pub who emptied their freezers for distribution and collected and delivered goods from their wholesalers when supplies were short initially. Delapre Abbey donated gift bags and colouring books whilst Fruitful Abundance, a type of food bank, provided produce.

Goods were donated to the Community Centre, everyone wanted to be a part of the project and all the community came together, including local boxing star Chantelle Cameron delivering to the school children. Anyone with a problem was encouraged to ring for assistance, and even the local postman did jobs for those isolated in their own homes.

Call to action

If you step up to organise, you'll be amazed who comes forward to support you in creative ways – why not let them know what you're up to?



Roade Community Food Larder

Support pours in

Whilst many groups sprang up from concerned individuals, those areas with active Parish Councils leading the charge were instantly effective as they had access to household data not readily available to others.

At the beginning of the pandemic Roade's Parish council sent a letter to all households, requesting volunteers, and details of the phone number and e-mail address for help requests.

The pool of volunteers was quickly established, however the demand for help took more time to evolve – across the county, many groups found there was often an unwillingness to admit dire straits. As requests came in, the Parish Council was in a position to understand the need, and allocated the task to the volunteers, the community larder or to a local charity for additional support as appropriate.

One special person who should be mentioned is Brenda Woolf who without her the Community food larder would not have happened.

RBN Gurdwara Sahib Northampton

Support pours in

A central tenet of the Sikh faith is looking after those in need and the RBN Gurdwara Sahib, the Sikh Place of Worship in central Northampton, was certainly a hub of that in 2020.

Their help was initially for the elderly and vulnerable within their own community, providing vegetable curries every week, but has grown to regularly supplying the Hope Centre in Northampton and any in the Duston community who need their help every week, as well as food packages via local schools, and now a regular foodbank at the Gurdwara.

The community effort was welcomed and supported by non-faith neighbours as well as worshippers, and has grown understanding and common goals they are looking forward to achieving by helping others.

Call to Action

Making your kindness easily accessible and welcoming to new volunteers will introduce you to new friends along the way – how can you make your invitation to everyone heard?



The Old Swan, Earls Barton

The heart of the local community

Earls Barton Parish Council has nominated Paul Dexter and Keith Goddard at The Old Swan, Earls Barton.

During the lockdown, they provided a service by delivering take away meals to those in need in Earls Barton. Rose Smart, Parish Clerk said that they should be particularly recognised for their “Stew Wednesday” when they delivered stew free of charge to the elderly and vulnerable in Earls Barton. They were offered financial support for this service but turned it down as it was their way of helping the community.

Paul says that they helped and supported over 1000 people over the 14-week lockdown, delivering over 7000 meals.

The ages ranged from people in their 20s up to those in their 90s. Anyone that needed free food was helped. We did free food on Wednesdays, Burger Night on Fridays, fried chicken on Saturdays and a complete roast dinner on Sundays. We also delivered our very own Pub-in-a-Box . All delivered.

It had a massive effect on the community and brought everyone together. The biggest difficulty was getting the word out to more elderly people that are on their own. Five members of our team worked their socks off and we are still delivering to many, many, people.

We will continue to delivery free food on Wednesdays, more food at the weekend as well as providing free food hampers to the elderly and vulnerable in the area. We are also asking people to bring in any food they want to donate to the appeal. All our team here at The Swan help and it’s a great team effort.



Battling Isolation



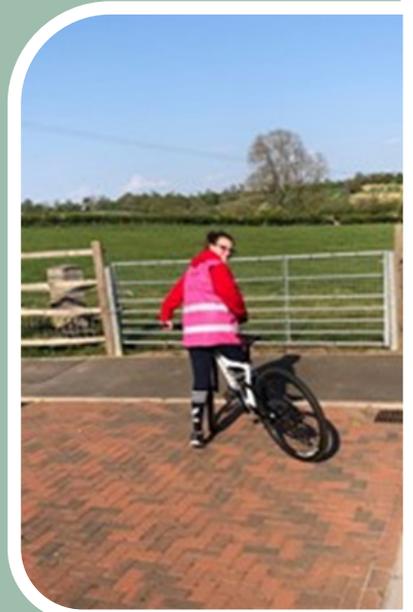
Braunston Heart

No-one left behind

'Braunston Heart' has been instrumental in co-ordinating the many efforts in Braunston, and has done a particularly great job in including everyone in the area, for example, the canal dwellers, both permanent and those who happened to find themselves in Braunston when the 'stay at home' order went out.

Their call handlers have had basic training in mental health and suicide awareness, which meant that a simple call for assistance could lead to more targeted support if necessary. Phone buddies and the cake fairies also played a crucial role in alleviating the more pernicious aspects of isolation this last year

Jo the Founder has done a sterling job in fostering the connections within Braunston for the benefit of all.



Broughton Village

Lifting morale

Broughton Village also stepped up to help those in need. Many came forward and volunteered their time and resources to support their neighbours. A few allotment holders donated surplus produce to those in need via food banks and volunteers.

The Broughton Rex lifted moral in the village for children and adults alike and made a very special guest appearance to a resident who celebrated her 94th birthday.

Call to action

Your 'community' should be everyone – who in your locale could be feeling left out of their local life? Could you reach out to make them feel welcome?



East Hunsbury Parish Council Phone Buddy Scheme

A team effort on a massive feat of logistics

East Hunsbury's Seniors Club has 300 residents on its books, and pre-Covid regularly saw 100+ at their fortnightly get togethers at Greens restaurant at Collingwood Golf Course, enjoying quizzes, games, guest speakers, classes and subsidised trips.

#Lockdown1 meant a speedy cessation to all the fun however, but the Parish Council were keen to keep that sense of community going, and swung into action with a 'Phone Buddy Group' that kept in contact at least fortnightly with every Senior.

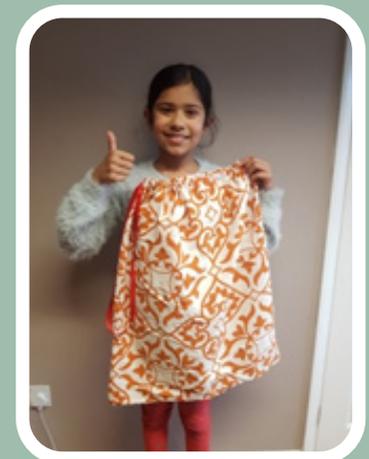
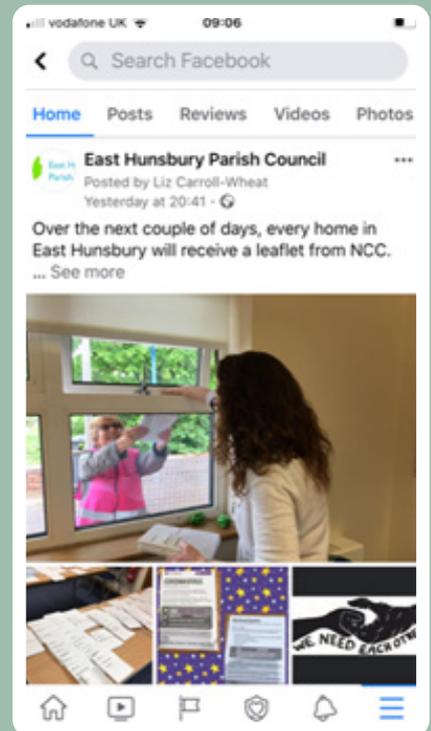
The regular contact ensured that they did not become isolated, nor felt forgotten, but also that they felt able to ask for support when needed with food or medicine supplies, or keeping medical appointments, which the group then arranged.

The Seniors Club's famous quizzes were kept alive via the regular newsletter, together with updates on parish council issues and ongoing Covid-19 information.

Liz, Caroline & Maggie have been the main drivers behind a life changing project for most of our very vulnerable senior residents, but the whole Phone Buddy Group is a team effort and everybody involved has gone above and beyond to ensure the welfare of our most vulnerable seniors has been well taken care of.

Call to action

No-one could imagine the disruption to 'normal life' before Covid – how would your group respond to different types of emergency – could you help / adapt?



Brigstock Support Network

Supporting each other and local charities

Brigstock village was quick to respond to the pandemic. Residents quickly set up a support network and distributed letters to their neighbours.

With a coordinator allocated for each street, prescriptions and shopping were quickly delivered. New ways of communicating were established including a WhatsApp group for coordinators, and an isolators group on Facebook. The isolators group quickly become lifeline to some, providing friendship and alleviating loneliness for those unable to leave their homes. It also contained lots of useful contact numbers. Isolating villagers also received gifts from 'the Gift Fairy' these gifts were kind donations from other villagers.

The village hall became the home of Brigstock Pantry. It was becoming evident by then that some families were struggling financially. The aim of the Pantry is to provide groceries and other essential items to those in need. As well as store cupboard foods and essentials, cash was also donated by village folk. At the end of each day, the newly opened Bake & Brew tea shop gifted unsold bread and cakes, which was distributed to elderly residents who were isolating.

The village pulled together with my new initiatives including craft projects, scrabble competitions, yarn bombing, and even exercise classes, some of which will continue after the pandemic. Of note is the villages fundraising activities which raised over £8,500 for local charities and churches.

Call to action

How can loneliness be combatted in your community?



Sally's CD Challenge. Covid wall hanging for the village hall



Children decorate their windows for our NHS Heros

Battling Boredom



Yardley Hastings

Keeping 'community' going

Yardley Hasting was fortunate to have a good help group prior to the pandemic, which stepped up for about 10% of the village who received varying and multiple levels of support from them.

When the urgent care was well in hand, their thoughts turned to how to keep the nearly 1000 villagers entertained in #Lockdown1.

There have been socially distanced outdoor coffee mornings, virtual activities to keep residents involved, quizzes and virtual gardens (63 gardens were open virtually). To help the wider community, makers were engaged to produce scrub bags, headbands and knitted hearts. Important milestones were recognised via congratulations and happy birthday greetings, and individual journals were given to residents to record their experiences as a record of these difficult times.

The support group is still going strong with no shortage of volunteers to help the community

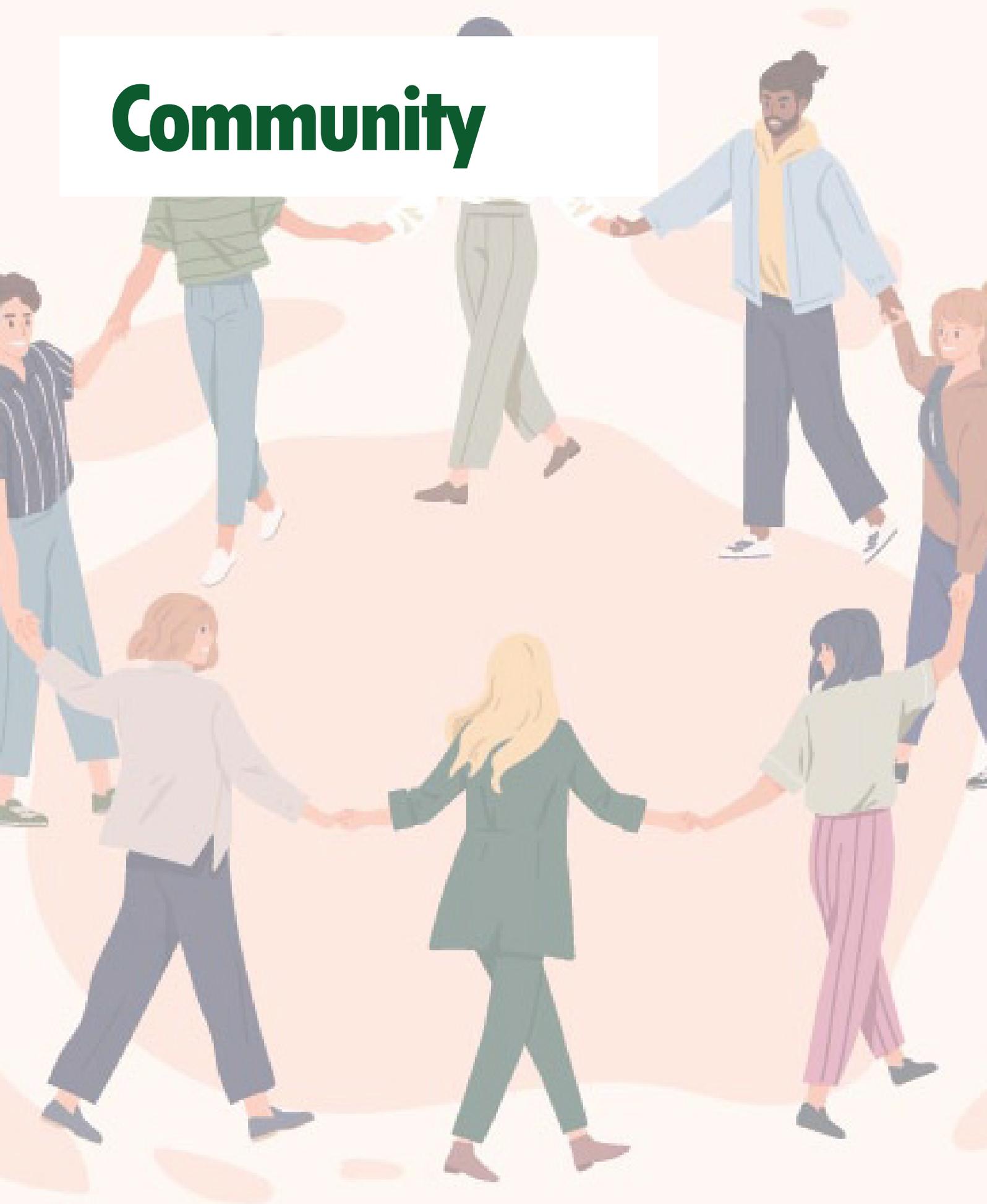
One special person who should be mentioned is Debby Smith who is the lynch pin of the village

Call to action

Life isn't just surviving! How would you keep your community activities going in a socially distanced world?



Community



Byfield Good Neighbours Scheme

Thinking of others

When Byfield set up their village Good Neighbours Scheme in October, little did we know that we'd be thanking our lucky stars within 6 months!

They liked the idea of 'help and be helped', with the emphasis that there is something that everyone can do for others, even if they need a bit of help on certain things for themselves too.

They focused on reducing journeys and contacts for all, with everyone taking part in a communal shopping list and picking up extras for others in the village.

This inclusive and communal attitude won them even more instant support, with no-one feeling overwhelmed nor obliged by the requests, and 'rewarded' by getting a bit of help in return.

Over 780 shopping deliveries were made, and at its height, 60+ 'hunter/gatherers' were on the '+1 Shopping Group' on WhatsApp.

As a result of the sourcing efforts, as a village they had flour to bake, and volunteers – both 'free' and those isolating – got busy making cakes for the vulnerable. They made sure that every house (580+) in the village received a treat, making sure that no-one felt left out.

They also arranged a holiday hunger project, produce swap and a plant and seed exchange! Other talented Byfielders made masks, whilst prescriptions for the whole village were picked up daily.

Special recognition is given to Karen Pollard who stepped up at the beginning of Covid to become the village's Shopping Captain, co-ordinating a team of volunteers to communally shop for the vulnerable, and a second team to deliver safely (tracked and traced!) around Byfield. Karen then expanded recognition the operation to group source for the village as well, making connections with a local fruit and veg wholesaler and buying flour in bulk for all the home-bakers.

Quote "Of course, there have always been acts of kindness by Byfielders day in, day out, but we've been heartened to hear how we've encouraged everyone to think of each other as a matter of course – which can only be a good thing, post-Covid."



The Boddington Action Group

Existing Village Committee pivots to organise Covid efforts

Boddington's active Village Hall Committee were the perfect group of people to co-ordinate the volunteers of Upper and Lower Boddington at short notice.

They quickly provided a single contact number for requests to come in, together with a webpage. Outreach was done to both settlements, with flyers, in the parish magazine, as well as direct contact for those for whom IT might be difficult.

Shopping collection, food support, prescription collections, fruit and veg delivery, dog walking and facemasks and PPE were all provided by the village's volunteers, as well as bespoke help, such as getting people set up for online shopping.

Call to action

If your community stepped up for Covid, can this be translated into an ongoing support system, by your village, for your village? NACRE can help.

Cogenhoe and Whiston

Personal circumstances no barrier to getting stuck in

Fortunately for Cogenhoe and Whiston, their Parish Clerk was self-isolating but not isolated from her technology. She used the parish email list, printed leaflets and Facebook to rally the local troops, appointing Street Champions to understand in depth the need in each portion of the villages and get it addressed by the new team of volunteers. They utilised the new shop delivery service, prescription collections and could access the village hall porch's lending library of jigsaws and books for their residents.



As with all the actions tackling Covid, lots in the community now feel more involved and included, with the new village newsletter destined to continue on

Vitality, the regular community bus - 5 round trips a day to Northampton - was kept in action throughout Lockdown serving key workers and others who still needed.

The response to Covid 19 built on the past but has become a lesson for future parish action and development.

Call to Action

The ethos of a Good Neighbour Scheme is to 'help and be helped' - everyone has something to offer – draw on all the talents in whichever way works !!

Deanshanger Covid-19 Community Response Volunteer Project

Renewing community spirit

In March 2020 Deanshanger Parish Council (DPC) coordinated a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, establishing a small community response team to take a lead on this. The team included the Chair of DPC, a DPC Councillor, the DPC clerk and two members of the local community. The Deanshanger Covid-19 Community Response Volunteer Project was set up to provide a community based safety net of support for residents.

An information sheet was dropped into every household describing the services that could be provided (shopping, picking up prescriptions and befriending), asking who needed support and who could volunteer. Village noticeboards, notices in shops and social media such as the DPC website and community Facebook groups were also used to promote the service.

A team of volunteers was quickly set up to meet requests for support as they came through.

The project has run very successfully and continues to operate with volunteers who have been linked to those needing support continuing to assist as required. Over 100 volunteers signed up and 52 received services either as a one off or more usually ongoing.

A survey was sent to volunteers and service recipients who had taken part in the Deanshanger Covid-19 Community Response Volunteer project. There is clear and consistent agreement that the current Covid-19 Community Response Volunteer project has been positive and has worked well to support residents who need help during the pandemic. People also believe that the project has brought a renewed sense of community to the village.

It was clear that residents supported the continuation of the project moving forward post the pandemic and as a result the emergency response group has developed into a Good Neighbour Scheme.

Call to action

If you think your community action could have a legacy as a Good Neighbours Scheme, contact Northamptonshire ACRE to see how we can help.

Eastern District response group

The Eastern district had between 10 and 30 volunteers. These volunteers helped with shopping for those self-isolating and shielding. They also assisted people by picking up prescriptions and dog walking.

These excellent volunteers also worked very hard producing 83 sets of scrubs, bags and headbands. A very welcome assistance to the NHS at this time.

I am sure many of the volunteers made new friendships that will last for the years to come.

Northampton T&W Civil Engineering Ltd

Northampton T&W Civil Engineering Ltd volunteered over 2 days to move large amounts of PPE on behalf of Northampton Borough Council and the NHS. These items were divided between storage locations with tens of thousands of boxes moved.

Call to action

No-one could imagine the disruption to 'normal life' before Covid – how would your group respond to different types of emergency – could you help / adapt?



Earls Barton Coronavirus Response Group

Earls Barton Coronavirus Response Group was an offshoot of Earls Barton Is Kind and provided a volunteer service for the vulnerable and those in need in Earls Barton during the lockdown period. Activities ranged from picking up shopping or prescriptions, to walking dogs or a telephone befriending service. The Group's nomination comes from Earls Barton Parish Council, who would particularly like to recognise the work of Mary Ayotte who co-ordinated the service, dealt with all of the admin, as well as volunteering herself.

Mary says that during the lockdown period she thinks that the Group helped approximately 150 people, ranging in age from 3 to 95 though 90% were over the age of 55.

The sort of work we carried out included getting vital prescriptions and medicines to the vulnerable and elderly by providing a group volunteer on the same day. An elderly or self-isolating person would call the helpline and a volunteer on the Group's list would collect and deliver the prescriptions. There was also an enterprising initiative whereby food could be donated and dropped off at a designated premises. Volunteers were coordinated to distribute these items to self-isolating people and low income families.

Funding was the biggest issue for the group. Mary worked for 4 months voluntarily and administration costs, IT costs and phone calls came from her own pocket. During the 4 months the response group helped people, they felt a sense of community and the feedback gained from the people helped was a very positive one. The elderly and self-isolating felt a lot more secure and valued knowing our response group was on hand to help. Unfortunately, the Group had to close down one month after lockdown ended and though I would have liked to have continued, it was not viable due to financial reasons.

Crick Good Neighbours

Engaging with local organisations to meet the need

As an established Good Neighbours group, Crick recruited even more villagers to their ranks of volunteers when Covid was looming, ranging from age 18 to 80, and divided the village between them to ensure no-one was left behind.

They are a wonderful example of becoming the linchpin for the local organisations providing help and support to their community.

Being served by several GP practises, prescription collection was co-ordinated to allow everyone to 'stay home' wherever possible. The local Co-op and Post Office were grateful to have Good Neighbours do the shopping for those shielding locally, keeping the local economy as robust as possible. They even delivered takeout lunches from the Red Lion!

A new innovation for Crick, as well as many other villages, was supporting those with food insecurity. CGN partnered with the Community Larder, an organisation that usually supplies food boxes for a low fixed price, collecting them weekly from Nether Heyford. Special thanks to Julie for the three months of collection duties!

All Good Neighbours groups have their examples of unusual requests, but sourcing kale for a guinea pig's diet has to be a first?

Special mention – Karen Massie's area of the village had a particularly high level of support required, and Karen has been an outstanding support to them.



Call to action

You don't have to do it all yourself! Making connections with local public and private organisations will pay dividends when helping others.

Chelveston cum Caldecott Parish Council

Emergency plan comes into its own

During the immediate run-up to the lockdown, Chelveston cum Caldecott Parish Council activated its emergency plan. In particular, this involved the appointment of an emergency coordinator, establishing a support/command centre (Village Hall), formally co-opting a team of volunteers, providing hi-vis tabards (PC stock, as the County “pinks” were not immediately available), and implementing a village-wide communication system.

Many of the activities undertaken during the emergency were well received by residents:

- The WhatsApp group was popular with many residents and had 136 users at its peak, falling to 116 users at the point when we wound down the plan on 14th June;
- using trusted volunteers in Parish Council hi-vis for shopping and medication delivery worked well;
- Parish Council ID letters for volunteers were accepted by local retailers, allowing preferential access for volunteers shopping on behalf of vulnerable households;
- the daily podcasts and on-line newsletters were very well received. The podcasts in particular had a wide following, allowing the Council to speak directly into residents’ homes. A monthly podcast for the future has been requested by several residents;
- the twice daily “Red Van” delivery service by the Parish Lenghtsman worked well, minimising the need for residents to make journeys around the parish;
- the entertainments committee events – including a tulip arranging competition, and a scarecrow competition in June - worked very well, developing community engagement and with building community spirit.

Call to Action

If your village doesn’t have an emergency plan, now is the time to consider one!

Duston Village

New and existing community groups joining forces to help people in need during the pandemic

The Royal British Legion + 2 Parish Councillors and the Vicar joined forces at the start of the lockdown, distributing postcards and posters explaining what the group was and inviting people to make contact. They offered support to all communities, not just the people of Duston. Working in partnership with Upton & Duston Parish Council, as well as shopping, food parcels and collecting prescriptions, the group gave 80 Easter eggs to families, gave birthday surprises which hit the news and working with Liberty organised a Bugler for veteran Keith Fairey's funeral.

It is amazing what can grow from a "small acorn". The Duston Covid-19 Mutual Aid Support Group Facebook Group was created and started distributing leaflets through doors and putting up posters. Within a matter of weeks, all 7,000 homes across Duston had received a leaflet providing contact details to volunteer and/or request help! In total over 100 individuals across Duston volunteered to help, with a variety of tasks from shopping, prescriptions and being a friendly voice at the end of the phone for those who need this type of support.

Duston Players have been bringing community theatre to Duston for over 70 years, the group collaborating with 'Click Arts' they produced a version of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night (12 Nights in Lockdown)', raising £500 for the HOPE centre.

The 11th Northampton Boys' Brigade operated from home during the lockdown and by July our members had completed over 270 different activities and had sent over 2500 photos and videos of these activities. During lockdown one of the members, Alfie-Jay Hine (Aged 11), decided to complete a fundraiser for BB. He cycled 50 miles and raised a huge £740 to help fund work in Duston. Well done Alfie-Jay!

Liberty Youth Music is a youth club for young people who love music. Throughout 'lockdown' Liberty have been running individual zoom lessons and workshops. The members have also been supporting our local community by playing Last Post at the VE Day Remembrance service and at the funeral of a local veteran.

Call to action

Could different organisations in your community work better together? Perhaps you could be making those contacts now for when you need to swing into action



Long Buckby Angels

The support Long Buckby Angels give to their community is diverse and far reaching. Although the group was in existence prior to the COVID 19 epidemic the numbers of residents it supported post COVID escalated. At its peak there were 170 volunteers.

There is a dedicated call handling phone line to contact the Angels who can allocate an angel to support the caller. The types of help given are varied but loosely fall into four categories. Errands: such as shopping, Prescriptions, posting letters etc. Wellbeing: house and phone calls, treats of flowers, afternoon tea and much more for those requiring a boost. Physical help: providing food parcels to the needy, hospital and dental appointments, odd jobs, indoor help, dog walking plus other varied activities. Support services: Help with Care Homes, social services, housing officers and District Council

This could not happen without the support of the community, local business and Angels.

In summary

The Angels and community of Long Buckby from the start of the pandemic have offered a level of practical and wellbeing support enriching the lives of their community, some only needed a little help, others are in difficult circumstances through no fault of their own and need additional help and support.

Overstone Village

Councillor Angela Taylor from Overstone Parish Council and a group of volunteers set up a support group to help those needing assistance during periods of isolation or for those who were vulnerable.

They provided support to those in Overstone Leys, Overstone Village and Sywell Village with shopping, collecting prescriptions, talking to people who were not coping with the pandemic and those with mental health issues who had not been able to gain access to their regular groups.

The Welford Community Group

This is an independent group set up by volunteers in Welford with virtually no funding. They used the local Welford magazine called “Bugle” to inform residents and to gain helpers.

The group coordinators split Welford into 3 areas covering 505 properties with a population of approximately 12-1300.

Most of the assistance they initially supplied centred on the elderly and vulnerable in providing prescription collection and delivery. They also helped with grocery shopping, mailing letters, dog walking and even provided a befriending phone calling service for the lonely as well as taking many other individual calls for help. Neighbours helped by making meals for fellow neighbours in need. Every resident who had registered for assistance had a helper checking in on them on a regular basis. All recipients of assistance have been extremely grateful for the readily available help with some commenting that they didn’t know how they would have coped without their help.

It had the desired effect of bringing the whole village together and that people became more aware of neighbours they hadn’t really known in many years of living in the village.

The group plan to continue with the services they currently offered with the existing group of volunteers and are ready to step up in the event of any future lockdowns!

Wilbarston Village

There was a wide range of support offered to residents of Wilbarston during the lockdown. The village shop and post office played a key role in keeping services open and the local pub offered a takeaway meal service. Various groups in the village were set up to produce PPE.

A special mention to the Headband Army which was started by local resident Jean. She was approached by a friend in the NHS to make some headbands with buttons, so that the masks could be hooked over the buttons, thereby lifting the mask strings off the back of their ears.

Jean and a group of volunteers distributed headbands to the Barnsley District General Hospital (BDGH). The group were thrilled to be nominated for a Pride of Britain award!

To keep the community spirit alive various informal activities were organised. The newly formed Good Neighbour Scheme helped those in need by organising trips for medical purposes, in the absence of the suspended volunteer driver scheme and Welland Wanderer weekly bus services to Corby and Market Harborough (both now resumed).

Summer 2020



**SPECIAL EDITION
PARISH NEWS**

Welcome to this slightly different edition of The Chronicle. Usually there would be an article here reporting the Annual Parish Assembly and other parish council matters but this time those have been summarised elsewhere and the report which would have been made to the assembly has been displayed on the notice board and is available on the website.

In the past three months Wilbarston, along with countless communities in the UK and elsewhere, has had to adapt to a different way of living and to become even more vigilant in providing help to those who need it. The result has been tremendous. Many of the activities which often make up a large part of the Chronicle content are suspended at the moment and instead this is very much a celebration of community spirit in lockdown, a survey of what has been happening from a number of different viewpoints. Inevitably there may be a few repetitions and overlaps but please bear with these, we wanted to leave the sentiments intact.

It has been noticeable that although offers of finance have been on the table, and where there are ongoing costs and no income such as with the village hall that has been a lifeline, what we have been seeing has been much more about people willingly giving of their time, appreciating others and looking for ways to help and that has a value all of its own.

Nick Richards
Chair, Wilbarston Parish Council

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Wootton Mutual Aid Group - Wootton Northampton

This group has been set up and project managed by Nikesh Jani with 5 other administrators and during the pandemic had 100 volunteers registered. It was the first Mutual Aid Group in South Northamptonshire.

Nikesh established a website www.wootton-covid.co.uk to support the groups work. The group was supported by the local MP and the parish council as well as arranging links with the Co-op and M&S to provide food for the most vulnerable.

Leaflets and a helpline were distributed to support people to make contact when they are in need.

To date they have been able to offer help to 78 families and individuals which is a significant number within this community. They hope that this model which they have established will be copied by others in the County.

Call to action

Could your Parish Council be ready to step up next time? NACRE has the resources to help you build a crisis response plan now for the future.

Park Ward Northampton Neighbourhood Group

Urban communities working together

Park Ward's neighbourhood group was launched via Facebook by Anjona Roy, which then distributed 'real life' cards offering help and support around their area, providing shopping support, prescriptions and friendship throughout Covid-19.

They liaised with and cross-referred to other urban nearby groups in Abington, Kingsley & Cavendish Kindness, and the umbrella group in Northampton for mutual aid groups made it possible to pass on referrals across the town. They kept in contact with people living alone and shielding by e-mail and telephone which they felt was particularly important from a mental health point of view.

To keep people informed of localised changes they distributed the County Council leaflets and provided information about changes to the Council's services to those not on twitter or other social media. Their work has continued until recently collecting prescriptions and keeping in contact with isolated people.

Anjona Roy said that she and the other volunteers gained a great deal from the work they were doing and other people's responses of kindness to each other.

Call to action

Working with other community groups is a great way to share ideas and get support from other volunteers in a similar position. It's worth contacting neighbouring support groups to see how you might be able to work together.

Blisworth Community Resilience and Response Group

A community already prepared

Blisworth already had a Community Resilience and Response Group looking at community preparedness in times of an emergency led by Jack Founder. This led to the village being able to easily and quickly get hold of volunteers and setting up a system to provide shopping, prescriptions.

This also meant that they had already done the checks using verified and trustworthy people and knew which ones had DBS checks and set out to give people tasks.

They found that existing and new groups stepped up and came forward to support the community.

What made Blisworth stand out was that the whole village came together, Blisworth friendship group, Art Group, WI and volunteers to support the over 65's. Everyone helped and supported the response.

They linked in with the SOFEA larder, who delivered to a central point and with that and donations from the community were made into food parcels and given out to vulnerable members of the village.

There has always been amazing community spirit in Blisworth and the pandemic has just enhanced and strengthened that.

Call to action

Find out more about community resilience training by contacting ACRE.



NLive Radio



Working as a team

When lockdown happened the NLive Studios, based in Northampton's cultural quarter, also went into lockdown to keep everyone safe. All the volunteer presenters, producers and journalists had to adapt and start broadcasting and producing from home. Many had to buy their own kit to make it all work.

They worked together as a team, supporting each other, and produced more presenter-based radio than ever before, averaging presenters on air between 7am and 10pm 7 days a week!

Everyone was united in three aims – to continue broadcasting, to increase the number of presenters on air and to increase the amount of local content. On air there was a stronger focus on promoting community groups, local businesses and individuals, covering their response and support for covid and lockdown, and talking about things like meal deliveries and foodbanks. There was also material about other projects supporting the community at this extraordinary time.

NLive brought in new guests to raise awareness of what was going on locally, and to discuss what local community groups and businesses were doing to support Northampton through lockdown and beyond. It all worked well, and since lockdown there have been more presenters on air than ever before. There have also been more locally produced news bulletins, more online content and more interviews.

For the first few months of lockdown they ran free promo messages so that businesses could thank their customers and keyworkers, wish people good health and to stay safe, and to promote what they were doing to help support the town and the local community.

NLive Radio continues to grow and serve listeners in Northampton. It prides itself on being a 'great local radio station which aspires to be the only local radio station that's for everyone who lives, works, studies and plays in and around Northampton.'

Facts

NLIVE Radio produced more presenter-based radio than ever before during the pandemic!

Helping out Higham and Rushden

Teamwork

130 beneficiaries of Helping out Higham and Rushden had the luck to be living in an area where teamwork was instantly activated in #Lockdown1.

Each beneficiary was matched with two local volunteers, working as a pair, to assist them in the most appropriate manner. The volunteers were supported with maps, best practise advice and safety support from the wider group.

Each volunteer brought their expertise to the benefit of all – Andrew Wise's technical abilities enabled the systems to work beautifully, Luisa Mattei was on hand to co-ordinate referrals from the GP surgeries, Irena Bonnett arranged the printing and distribution of leaflets.

They were particularly pleased to have been able to help those whose own families were anxious about them, either through enforced distance or health issues.

Call to action

Whether your contribution to 'the team' is an ability to organise, or perhaps you are an excellent 'chatter', your local volunteers will be able to make use of your talents – don't be modest, get stuck in!



Vulnerable to COVID-19?

If you are elderly, immunocompromised or otherwise vulnerable to Coronavirus and need help with:

- ♥ Shopping
- ♥ Dog Walking
- ♥ Running local errands

Then please search Facebook for **Helping out Higham and Rushden**

A group of local volunteers who are willing to help the community in this time of crisis.

Serving Higham Ferrers, Rushden and surrounding areas.



#HelpingOut

helpingoutham@gmail.com

Team Harpole

At the beginning of the lockdown Team Harpole was set up by Harpole residents Sharon Matthews and Helen Cordingley, to reach out to the elderly and vulnerable in their village.

The help given by around 50 Team Harpole volunteers included dog walking, helping with lack of electricity, shopping, medicine deliveries and requests for visits to friends and family from those who do not live in the area. Harpole Guides wrote letters to shielding villagers and they decorated small wooden hearts which were distributed round the village to elderly and vulnerable people.

Miranda Richardson, the manager of the Live and Let Live pub in Harpole turned the pub into a takeaway and she and Team Harpole volunteers delivered meals for the over sixties. The pub also became the place from where medicines and prescriptions could be collected. Miranda started an online blog, and asked for details of all those who had birthdays, births, funerals or any other occasions. She then arranged a drive-by passing the addresses of these people.

Following an idea by Colin Wilkinson, another Harpole resident Kate Gardner organized a fun run round the village to raise funds for Northampton General Hospital which became known as 'Not the London Marathon'! Over a few days, around 150 residents of all ages between 0 and 80 took part in the fun run, many in fancy costumes, raising over £3,000 for the hospital.

The Harpole Fellowship presents Zoom services featuring singing, testimonies, bible readings, sharing meditations and sermons, to spiritually bless the people of the village.

With the agreement of Parish Council, Sharon and Helen set up a community allotment. Eight families regularly work on the community allotment, and the Harpole Guides have vegetable beds.

Facts and Figures

150 residents of all ages raised over £3,000 for the Northampton General hospital during a fun run.



I-Lov Buddies

Individuals doing their part

Jennifer Martin set up I-Lov Buddies at the beginning of the pandemic, and offered her volunteer efforts to the county. Several Northampton residents who had asked for support were referred to Jennifer, as well as several other volunteers who had also kindly offered to help in any way they could. Jennifer arranged the provision of companionship, shopping assistance and household tasks such as changing lightbulbs.

These small tasks made such a huge difference to the individuals helped, and the volunteers found solace in being able to do something for someone else in these challenging times.

The volunteers are continuing to support their new friends, and have offered their services to other charities such as Age Concern going forward.

Moreton Pinkney

Spreading Community Cheer

Thinking of ways to endure #Lockdown1 enabled Moreton Pinkney to thrive, with displays of hope and good cheer wherever you turned. Rainbow rocks were painted by children, to be discovered on your daily exercise route. Lockdown Limericks were a big hit, as were the shared recipes.

The flourishing Gardening Club supplied every household with sunflower seeds, with spectacular results later, as well as managing to still hold its Spring Garden Competition virtually and, later, its 78th annual Horticultural Show with 270 entries, adapted to be judged and viewed with social distancing and face coverings. VE Day saw village wide bunting and socially distanced picnics, that might well catch on!

Morton Pinkney also remembered others, donating food to the Hope Centre Northampton and raising £900 - for them and for Medecins sans Frontieres - from selling home-made face-coverings.

We've got a pet rock ain't that sweet?
I've spotted a few down our street.
He sits by our arch,
He's been there since March,
Come and see, but do mind your feet.

We had really big plans at the start
Learn Italian! Bake bread! Take up art!
But we sat on our bums
And Zoomed all our chums
All all of our plans fell apart.

Call to Action

Can your activity group spread joy or community feeling beyond its usual activities? Perhaps you don't have to wait for a global pandemic to be inspired

Power of the Minds Network (cont'd to page 47)

The Power of the Minds Network was awarded funding from Northampton Community Foundation to buy ingredients, cook and provide Afro-inspired hot meals to elderly and shielding people within Northamptonshire.

They have set up a network of five BAME groups and under this project are delivering food parcels to disadvantaged families that live in Kettering and Corby areas of Northamptonshire.

The group was involved in the preparation and delivery of over 100 hot meals to the elderly and vulnerable who were shielding during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The group provided mobile phones to volunteers to be able to befriend those in the community that needed a chat and the group were referred cases by the Local Authority.

The group has a very strong community spirit and have provided on-line activities for its communities to continue meeting. They have provided mental health workshops with support from a therapist to talk to the community about wellbeing which have been really popular.



Power of the Minds Network

The group have been so community minded and one of the impressive accomplishments of the group was to continue meeting as a community by organising on line activities such as the mental health workshops, however other ones included an Afro Moves dance event, widows' events on the International Widows Day in June and a Black History event, getting up to 80+ people on each event.

The most important lesson that the group has learnt from 2020 and the pandemic is that it has made people slow down and consider others. People in their day to day lives are so busy, this is the year that communities have come forward to support one another. The group was referred people that needed support and they were able to offer this on a 121 basis and discuss what everybody needed, whether that was to talk to someone or provided a meal.

Mavis Munderwa submitted the application, however the network has some key dedicated members who need to be mentioned: Tatenda Thelma Makoni and Yvonne Shami Marawo. They are both instrumental in how well the group has operated by cooking food and delivering across the network. However, they do need more members to help.

The most important lesson that the group has learnt from 2020 and the pandemic is that it has made people slow down and consider others.

Rothersthorpe

A village with a big heart

At the start of the pandemic the small community distributed leaflets offering support with shopping, collecting prescriptions, walking dogs and providing friendship calls for those people that were isolating or just felt they needed help.

Community spirit has been overwhelming in the village! News and updates have been provided via the new Rothersthorpe Community Facebook Page. This has been quite active with social media bringing together neighbours that had not met before.

To engage the families and younger residents the village ran 'I Spy Rothersthorpe' with a different theme each week, people were encouraged to display the items in their windows for others to look out for on their walks around the village.

A number of people answered a plea on facebook to support 'Kettering Surgical supplies' to sew elastic straps for PPE visors, scrubs and scrub bags and face coverings for various organisations raising money for the NHS.

For a small village the response has been amazing, they had over 20 people volunteer and they set up a Whatsapp group so that no one has gone without things they require.

They managed to hold 2 socially distanced cake sales within the Church grounds and have offered to deliver cake for those people who are isolating.

For a village of just over 600 residents, they proved they have a big heart.

They were about 10 core volunteers for the scheme, however more people have been getting involved on Facebook. Names to note: Val Bridges; A J Dickens; Lisa Wood; Caroline McDonnell; Samantha Hughes; Julia Harris; Kate Kutas; and Christine Consdine.

The Community WhatsApp group is still going on and looking to set up a buddies system.

Raunds and Thrapston Area Volunteers

The pandemic highlights the strength of our community spirit and resilience

Raunds Area Volunteers started as a simple Facebook group for residents to offer assistance and to enable good neighbourly acts to those who were isolating. The group membership rapidly grew to nearly 800 people and those who wanted to be formally enrolled as volunteers were remotely interviewed, ID checked and supplied with safety guidelines to protect themselves and those being assisted. The group soon expanded to work with volunteers and organisers from Thrapston and the villages in-between, they changed their name to reflect this to Raunds and Thrapston Area Volunteers. At the height of the lockdown in 2020, they had over 100 formal volunteers.

Over 2000 voluntary acts have now been undertaken from more than 400 requests which includes delivery of essential shopping, medication and working with local churches and councils. They have especially close links with Raunds Foodbank whose wonderful organisation has greatly supported those most in need. During the school holidays we worked with them to procure and deliver school lunches and food packages to assist families who may have been financially burdened during the lockdowns.

The requests they receive are as wide ranging and diverse as their vibrant community. Collecting shopping sometimes includes food for pet birds and lizards, birthday, and Christmas cards, paying utility bills or simply giving advice about the latest coronavirus rules and regulations. We have recognised that once a volunteer is able to offer help, an ongoing friendship can follow leaving the recipient feeling much less socially isolated.

From the outset they have been greatly assisted by Raunds and Thrapston Town Councils and amazing local businesses such as Jesters, The Co-op, The Spar, Mod n' Vape, Cookies, Raunds Hardware, A&R Print Solutions, Taste of Spice and Bennetts. Their support has proven invaluable.

The lockdown restrictions have changed over time, but some people have been isolating since last March when the Government advised many groups to stay at home. Their aim is to continue our group's activities for the foreseeable future, beyond the immediate coronavirus crisis.



Union of Liberian Organisations in the UK (ULOUK)

During the pandemic ULOUK have been engaging with the Liberian communities across the United Kingdom as well as various communities within Northampton where they are based.

Across the Liberian communities, they have been able to work with local community leaders and volunteers for Liberians who have been affected by Covid-19

In Northamptonshire they have joined with the local councils in their efforts in raising awareness and supporting the local communities including BAME communities.

They have distributed covid-19 leaflets and published social awareness messages, re-enforcing the messages from the government; they organised delivered food drops and helped with IT, supporting the most vulnerable within the Liberian community.

They took referrals from Northampton Borough Council, as well as making regular check-in calls to the elderly living alone.

It has been an overwhelming period and there have been many challenges to overcome.

The main one has been funding. Due to being an umbrella organisation, it has been difficult to access local funding that was available especially within the peak of the first wave which was quite important as they struggled to keep the volunteering going.

The generosity, contributions and humanity and volunteers has been amazing.

Quote

The generosity, contributions and humanity and volunteers has been amazing.



United African Association

Addressing particular vulnerabilities

United African Association stepped up to support a neglected section of Northamptonshire's populace during Covid, the African and Afro-Caribbean healthcare workers affected by Lockdown.

These workers are often on zero-hours contracts as agency staff, and the Lockdown meant their work dried up. As one of the most vulnerable populations, the staff who were able to work also daily risked more just by going in to work, and when they were unable to work through, if they or their clients were having to isolate totally, they were often left bereft.

UAA provided food parcels weekly for 55 families, covering ages 0 to 84, with African staples such as maize, fufu and hard chicken, which they could cook at home.

More than 15 volunteers also undertook telephone befriending for 30 isolated members of their community, providing a vital lifeline throughout. The UAA's WhatsApp chat is still going strong, with the whole community supporting each other through a wide variety of situations week in, week out.

David Kinuthia has been invaluable in identifying and supporting the most vulnerable. A particular triumph was obtaining a mobility scooter for an elderly disabled gentleman, who was not entitled to any support for mobility aids, and who has been given back his independence through David's efforts.



Brixworth Covid-19 Help Group

Street champions!

Lisa set up the Brixworth group in early March of this year prior to the lockdown. Her primary concern was to ensure that every household in Brixworth would have the contact and support they required. With the help of Jonathan & Christine Ware they quickly recruited over 50 Street Champions ensuring that every street in Brixworth, which has a population of approximately 4200 people in 2300 houses, had been leafleted with their Street Champions & Help Group Coordinators contact details. They also recruited an additional 70 volunteers to support them with requests for shopping & prescription deliveries as well as befriending.

They set up a website and a Facebook page which kept residents updated with all the latest lockdown information, services, assistance, and events available in Brixworth.

The group assisted 2 local chefs in making available soup & cake, as well as every Thursday being a pie night for the old and vulnerable residents which was sponsored by a local company. In addition they arranged for Fancy Dress days with Super Heroes running around the village, decorating houses for VE & VJ days, they arranged exercise sessions for residents, teddy bear weeks where residents placed their teddies in their windows, street meets for residents. They made special events for a young man in the village who has terminal cancer.

One of the good things to come out of the pandemic is the willingness of residents to come together and help one another. Lisa specifically pointed out that without the help from Jonathan & Christine Ware she would not have been able to carry out all the events they have done, she also pointed out the stint from the 2 chefs Cath and April in producing the food for the elderly and vulnerable residents in the village.

Looking to the future

Going forward, Lisa with help from her team of champions aim to continue with the good work they have already supplied but also to focus on mental health. They intend to set up "The Olive Café" and table top sessions where residents can meet up and talk through their issues or just to meet up and talk.



Weldon Support Group

Teamwork

Weldon should be proud of its volunteers' efforts during Covid19, it has been a fantastic example of people giving up their time to help others, without seeking any thanks or recognition for their efforts.

The network of supporters arranged shopping deliveries, and prescription pickups. ` Meals were made and delivered to whole families who were in need.

A community store was established for hard-to-get items and games and toys were made available for children. Vulnerable members of the community were checked up on regularly.

Call to action

So many places were like Weldon – ordinary people doing extraordinary good for others – thank-you!

Guilsborough (cont'd to page 56)

Leaving a legacy with new services

Over a third of the 300 households in Guilsborough were engaged in active support in one way or another in a truly remarkable and effective coming together of the community. It started with a parish-wide coordination group that was set up with core membership of the Parish Council, Guilsborough Volunteers leaders, Saxon Spires GP Surgery, the Pharmacy, the Uplands Group of Churches, a mental health counsellor, other village representatives and a senior link to the general hospital.

A support pack was sent to every household in the village promoting the new support network. It included a friend/buddy system for every household, particularly targeting the vulnerable, which is a great idea. And regular postings and updates about the latest Coronavirus news were issued through various media outlets. Residents also helped deliver prescriptions, made PPE equipment such as Scrub Bags, hairbands and mask savers and put out community messages from the GP surgery.

But the most pleasing aspect was the number of new support services that set up to help residents. These ranged from a new Gardening Group (supporting over 30 gardeners, many new) with plant sales on the village green, a free book-swap scheme and free online resources for school children to Guilsborough's very own swap shop group!

Call to action

By coming together to help others it can foster good mental health everyone and leave a long lasting legacy of community spirit.

Guiltsborough

But a special thanks needs to go out to the newly formed Guiltsborough Volunteers Group. This active and successful support group, with over 60 volunteers providing 150 support activities per week, has been the main backbone of the community.

- They put up Perspex screens and safety signs in the struggling pub and village shop within the first 2 to 3 weeks of the start of the lockdown.
- Facilitated a new £5 affordable nutritious menu and a new contactless till.
- Provided 28 deliveries per week of pub food orders
- Confidentially offered mental health support including general awareness raising with 5 sessions a week of daily walks for a person with dementia as well as providing respite care for carers, one -to-one 'coffee & chat in the garden' and 'buddy phone calls' for the isolated (20 sessions a week).
- There were pharmacy prescription pickups, cake baking, daily newspaper deliveries, garden maintenance and a dog walking service.
- As well as homemade hot meals at times of personal crises and taking some vulnerable residents to the doctors.

A fantastic range of services offered by the Guiltsborough Volunteers Group!

Many of the groups mentioned intend to continue after the pandemic eases and there is a strong community spirit that has flourished and will also last. Most importantly, the village feels the long term benefit of the extensive community support network on individuals' mental health is unquantifiable, but will be significant.

Wollaston & Bozeat Is Kind

Celebrating the important moments, even in a pandemic

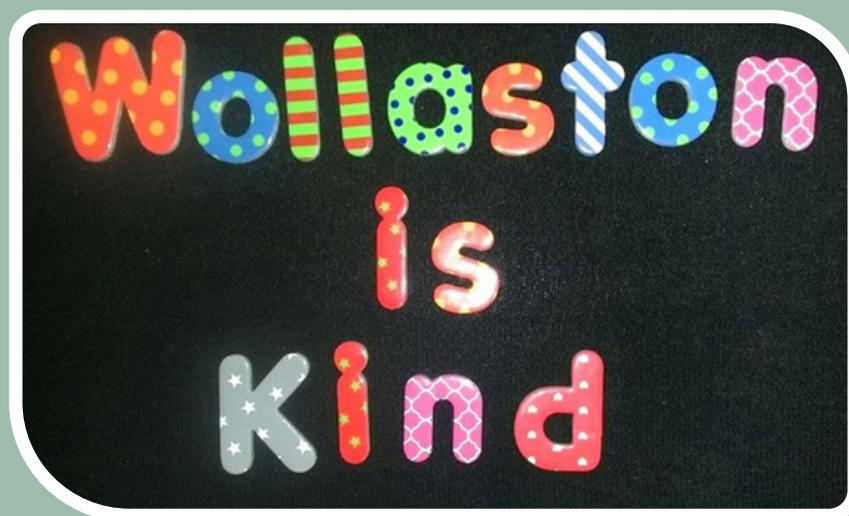
Wollaston and Bozeat were looked after by over 300 volunteers organised by 'Wollaston is Kind', at the peak dealing with over 50 requests for assistance a day.

They delivered (and still are) shopping, prescriptions, essentials including to tackle period poverty, provided door step chats and phone calls, dog walking, news papers and errands.

With addressing the risk of loneliness as one of the most important acts of kindness, they arranged street birthday 'moments' where the whole street would be invited to come outside at a certain time to sing Happy Birthday to the celebrant and share a socially distanced piece cake!

Another innovation the 'Leave if you can, Take what you need' table - designed to provide unobtrusive support for those financially struggling – has evolved into a more permanent and weather proof food station, made by villagers from things they had to hand.

Taking in donations from the Co-op shoppers and utilising an Amazon Wishlist for easy donations, this station benefits all the community, 60% of 'customers' are elderly, with young families making up the total. What a great idea!



Friendships made



Grendon Parish Council

Building bonds

Within 2 days of the lockdown starting, Grendon Parish Council had set up a support scheme for the elderly and the more vulnerable residents within their community.

This scheme recruited volunteers who were able to support residents by delivering their shopping, collection of medication and daily newspaper deliveries. For many of the elderly residents in the village this was an essential lifeline and ensured they had regular contact with other villagers as well as getting their daily news!

One of the most useful things was the prescription collection and delivery service the Parish Council set up. A student would collect and deliver prescriptions twice a week to residents who were unable to go out. Since this was set up a 175 prescriptions were able to be delivered.

The local Church set-up a lending library in the Church porch and residents could drop off books to be shared with other villagers and this service was very well used.

Although some volunteers were busier than others, everyone found that there were wonderful bonds built up and strong relationships formed during this time. Grendon Parish Council hopes these will be built on in the future to continue providing the support and community wellbeing Grendon's residents need and that will help to reduce social isolation.

Moulton Parish Council COVID-19 Volunteer Support Scheme

Handling the challenges of confinement

The support of Moulton's 150 volunteers provided the full range of support for their community, many of whom were unable to get delivery slots from supermarkets and had no nearby relatives or friends to help them. However, it was often the seemingly small offer of help that proved the 'way in' to building the relationships to help more fully.

D*** a local 'hearing dog' needed to be walked, and she was well catered for by an enormous roster of 'volunteers' (of course!) but the real value was maintaining contact with her owner, providing regular contact and support to help her get through the tough times of enforced isolation.

Some of the usually-very-social Moulton neighbours found the confinement of #Lockdown1 to be particularly miserable. Margaret's volunteer Sailesh was a life-saver of fun and friendship, and their relationship will continue beyond Covid undoubtedly.

Moulton are ready for future crises, but good friends have been made during this time and many will continue when this pandemic is a just a memory.

Call to action

It may seem like a small thing, but an offer of a small task is a step in building a friendship that may be vitally needed. Is there a small easy service you could set up in your area?



Inspiring Individuals



Many people across the county just got on with what they could do to help, be that on their own or as part of their role.

People such as **Kelly Marshall** on the Highfield Estate in Kettering. As well as working, she tirelessly stocked a table outside her house filled with things for people to help themselves to, mainly food. Donations from local businesses, individuals and fundraisers such as raffles helped there be stock for those that needed it.

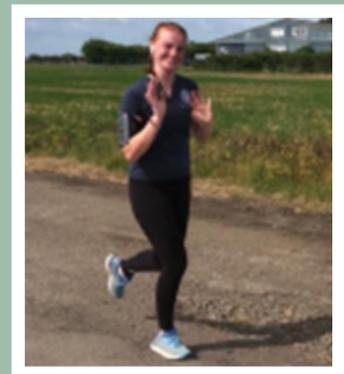
Nicola Toms who works for Happy @ Home, which is part of Daventry Volunteers Centre. This organisation does great work co-ordinating help and support for people in Daventry and South Northants. With an explosion of tasks, Lockdown there was much more need and Nicola worked extremely hard – well above her normal levels – to meet the needs, co-ordinating with Daventry District Council's Covid 19 Response to ensure that everyone with needs was helped, undertaking many extra errands herself and voluntarily helping others.

Bethany Brown, Project Coordinator for HYD Breastfeeding Project, which is part of Daventry Volunteers Centre. She created support groups and supported mothers, while undergoing a full 40 hour training programme during lockdown to extend her knowledge base and while home educating two young children! Bethany has been a peer supporter for 5 years and just continues to keep on giving!



Bethany Brown

Holly Walters from Farthinghoe, aged 17, ran 25 kilometres to raise money to support the new landlord and landlady of The Fox pub in the village. This lady and gentleman had taken over the pub just before the pandemic started, and as such were not entitled to Government support. Despite this, they still made a significant contribution to supporting the village during the pandemic. Holly completed her run on 24 May, and through a 'Just Giving' page raised £1,305 for the landlord and landlady to show the village's thanks for everything they had done. The Parish Council say that this was a great achievement by such a young person, who used her own initiative to set this up. (Holly's parent have given their consent to her nomination).



Holly Walters

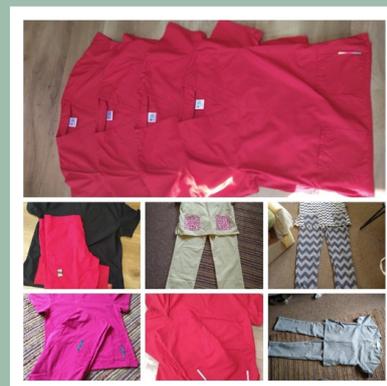
Inspiring Individuals

Julia Pepler from Farthinghoe, who was the volunteer co-ordinator for the village during the crisis. Julia arranged for volunteers to be allocated specific streets in the village for the distribution of a leaflet to all residents explaining what help was available in the lock-down. When a local charity then offered food parcels, Julia was instrumental in informing all residents of their availability, and the criteria for their receipt. Julia then took on the collection and delivery of the parcels to local residents. She did all this whilst keeping her business going, and managing her family at home. The Parish Council say that Julia was an outstanding contributor to the village of Farthinghoe during the lock down.

Jennifer Martin set up I-Lov Buddies at the beginning of the pandemic, and offered her volunteer efforts to the county. Several Northampton residents who had asked for support were referred to Jennifer, as well as several other volunteers who had also kindly offered to help in any way they could. Jennifer arranged the provision of companionship, shopping assistance and household tasks such as changing lightbulbs. These small tasks made such a huge difference to the individuals helped, and the volunteers found solace in being able to do something for someone else in these challenging times. The volunteers are continuing to support their new friends, and have offered their services to other charities such as Age Concern going forward.

When **Gabrielle Morley** was unable to continue her job as a registered childminder in Kettering during the pandemic, she decided she wanted to do something for others. So Gabrielle collected food parcels from Morrison's supermarket in Kettering and delivered them to some of the most vulnerable people in Kettering. Gabby did this throughout the pandemic, with no thought of gain for herself, "It's just what she does". Gabby had done so much for everyone in the community and it would be lovely for her to be recognised for what she does.

Scrubs Up Northamptonshire worked tirelessly as a group to supply scrubs to the NHS and other care and healthcare environments. Many of Scrubs Up Northamptonshire worked non- stop sewing together the vital scrubs, raising money and ferrying fabric and finished items to locations all over Northamptonshire. The co-ordinated group in the Thrapston area alone supplied nearly 100 sets of scrubs. What a fantastic response and so needed.



**Scrubs Up
Northamptonshire**

Inspiring Individuals

Heather Stevens: exceptional support to others during the Pandemic. Heather is a Good Neighbour Volunteer who for 3 years helped to run our Friday Games Morning at Moulton Community Centre until the Pandemic hit. Around 25 mostly older people attend the morning and Heather has always made sure everyone feels cared for and welcome. She would often bake flapjacks and had a list of each attendee's birthday so that they received a card and had 'Happy Birthday' sung to them on the day.

Since the first Lockdown last year, Heather has been in constant touch with every member of the Games Morning Group for a chat and to check on their wellbeing – some of them she calls every day. When it's their birthday, she still makes sure that they get a birthday card through their door and encouraged them to keep in touch with each other. This has helped the members of the group to get through this very difficult time as they know they're not alone and they have someone to talk to.

Heather updates me regularly as to how everyone is getting on and passes on any concerns she has.

More recently Heather let me know that a lady, who was a regular at the Games Morning, was going to move away from Moulton to be with her family in another part of the UK.

This lady is much loved by the other Games Morning attendees as she is always so cheerful, no matter what she's going through and is a very good scrabble player. Heather went out of her way to make sure she got a good send-off: she drove her around the village to wave goodbye to her friends and we presented her with a personalised card and a big bag of presents from everyone at The Games Morning - with strict instructions to open one present a day after her move.

Heather put a great deal of effort in to making sure that everyone signed the card (which had photos of the lady with her friends at the Games Morning), drove her safely around to wave at her friends and organised the bag of presents, including asking a friend to make the large colourful bag they were put in.

Inspiring Individuals

The lady herself said Heather has a 'heart of gold' and I really feel she deserves this award because of that. She loves caring for others and does everything in her power to make sure everyone she knows is safe, well and happy. She even became concerned about the volunteer who helped her with shopping during the first Lockdown as she hadn't heard from him for a while and wanted to make sure he was ok.

During the first two Lockdowns, **Kathy Holley** supported a couple who were shielding at home, by walking their dogs every day and going shopping for them. The lady was 82 and her husband was 62 and suffered from diabetes.

Kathy alerted us that the lady had developed a patch of skin which made the GP suspect she had skin cancer and made an appointment at Northampton General Hospital a few days later.

Later, Kathy also made us aware that the gentleman was becoming increasingly depressed and the couple also needed help with filling in their housing paperwork. We notified Moulton Surgery of his mental health issues and also contacted Daventry District Housing Officer who phoned to help them with their housing paperwork. The GP contacted the gentleman and ensured he received the support he needed with his mental health.

Sadly the gentleman passed away after having a heart attack in early November 2020 and a friend moved in with the lady. Kathy continued to support the lady who was in deep shock and was very confused. Sadly the lady also passed away in hospital, two weeks after her husband. Kathy continued to support the friend by walking the dogs and helping her to contact the couple's family.

Over a six month period, Kathy supported this couple through every difficulty they faced and continued to care for their dogs and alert us of any concerns she had, meaning we could channel professional support when required. Even after they both passed away, she even continued to make sure their friend was supported.

Inspiring Individuals

Kathy is such a kind person who genuinely cares about others and without her help, this couple would have had a very different experience during this difficult time.

Jodine Hyland from Abington Vale decided that at the start of the pandemic she could either panic and look after her family or find ways to help others in her community which has brought a lot of peace. She wanted to be a role model for her two daughters so with the help of Nationwide, where she worked, she printed and distributed 400 leaflets saying that as a young healthy family they were offering to help those in lockdown. She also posted on Facebook.



**Jodine Hyland
and Family**

She decided that rather than being part of a group, the family would concentrate on looking after 32 residents who are shielding. She feels blessed to be able to ensure that everyone has access to food shopping, prescription collection and a chat to stave off loneliness. She made weekly phone calls to some, others texted or emailed their requirements. She used her own funds and then some people used BACS transfers from the receipts, others had families who arranged payment. She found people also needed her to help send packages cards and letters to keep in touch with family and friends.

Her daughters have written letters and sent drawings as well as chocolate treats to those isolated. One particular lady, Dawn although only in her 50s seemed elderly and frail and her form of dementia meant she was unable to speak directly. She seemed able to connect with one of Jodine's daughters so they have been writing to one another and the relationship is set to last. Jodine herself can now understand what the lady needs.

Jodine was also approached by a man in his late 40s, Steve, with a heart condition, working from home whose wife and child were unable to get back from Africa. He was completely alone and needed help so she and her family stepped in.

The family also delivered Easter eggs for households, the girls using their own money and including a drawing or a poem.

Call to Action

So many people are prepared to 'do their bit' – your Good Neighbour Scheme could be a way for them to step forward and share their talents with their neighbours.

Adapting to Change



McCarthy-Dixon Foundation

From pub to community food project!

The landlady at the Swan and Helmet in Abington started the community food project after the pub was forced to close in March. The food bank began with just donations but demand has grown so much Teresa applied for a grant from the Northamptonshire Community Foundation and for council funding from Northampton Borough Council.

During the height of the lockdown the demand for Teresa's food bank was huge and hundreds of food parcels were delivered to families across the town. The pub has reopened, but Teresa is keen to carry on lending a helping hand in anyway she can, so the food bank has evolved and has now become a registered charity.

Named the McCarthy Dixon Foundation, the charity helps people who suffer from some kind of hardship with gardening, home makeovers, affordable haircuts, cookery lessons and so much more.

After the initial lockdown the foodbank had a dip in use, and so has now been reduced. Instead, while the pub is closed until 4pm, the landlady is using the space for cookery lessons for people who do not know how to make basic meals, as well as affordable haircuts priced between £6 and £8.

Since the launch of the charity, the team of volunteers have also tended to 22 gardens for people who cannot do it themselves, as well as a number of home improvement projects. The charity has also sourced proper beds, fridges and other important household items for people who were living without them.



Looking to the future

Teresa is also planning to open a community larder in the pub later this year to provide local people with low cost food, as well as a 'doorstep buddies' scheme whereby volunteers will have a chat with those who live alone and a weekly group that will focus on wellbeing, once it is safe to do so.

N.E.T.Tenants and Residents Association - Grange Place Kettering Resource Centre

Rapidly adapting existing support to a 'new reality'

With 20 years of experience, NET Tenants & Residents Association has had plenty of experience with the problems their neighbours face, but the pandemic meant a speedy realignment of their support in to safe and sustainable ways to help those they knew needed help, but also reach out to those newly in difficulties.

With their café, tai chi, mindfulness and bingo having to be put on hold, helping with food insecurity became their major role, collecting donations, applying for funding such as the National Lottery, accessing the supermarkets' support via Fareshare, distributing food parcels. The café provided outdoor takeaways, giving volunteers an opportunity to build a rapport with those struggling.

Homestart activities – which usually happen in the home – were continued via the school and remote support with form filling, job applications, etc all continued in the new format. Even though the craft club couldn't meet, their machines were used to make face coverings.

No-one was forgotten: Nearby villages of Pytchley & Geddington were included as they didn't have their own shops, and local co-ordinators and Johnny's Happy Place, which helps the homeless and people with mental health also receives food, as does Greenpatch's foodbanks.

The Group have now been offered a second venue, a shop in Kettering town so they are able to go from strength to strength.

Special mention to Claire Gurney, who goes above and beyond for others. One stand out occasion was helping a homeless Hungarian gentleman, funding his accommodation whilst helping with paperwork and all the practicalities – even the fare - to get him back to his son.

Farthinghoe Village

Truly mutual support

Farthinghoe's new landlords of The Fox were very unfortunate to have just taken over the village pub pre-Lockdown. Even though they had no government support, they still made a significant contribution to the village support network during the pandemic.

The village appreciated their efforts so much that, in return, when Holly Walters, at just 17, ran 25 kilometres with a Just Giving page, they donated £1,305 for the landlord and landlady to show the village's thanks for everything they had done.

The Parish Council loved the initiative of Holly, the selflessness of The Fox's Landlords and the Community Spirit.

Special Mention:

Farthinghoe's volunteer co-ordinator Julia Pepler, for her outstanding efforts for the village during Covid19.

Call to action

Can you see an issue that needs fixing? You could be the one to make the difference!

South Northants Responders



Responding to the emergency

One of eight similar charitable organisations across the county – and covering the largest area – there are 35 professionally trained volunteer responders. With shielding, some 15 to 20 responders were active during the first lockdown in 2020. South Northants Responders covers the area from Crick to Moulton, Northampton town to Towcester to Daventry.

Volunteers have different backgrounds – from teachers to policemen to personnel specialists. Responders normally attend 999 calls as directed by East Midlands Ambulance Service.

During lockdown, they were also delivering prescriptions from chemists to people who were shielding or housebound, and around 200 prescriptions were delivered safely. Volunteer responders also supported EMAS personnel directly by restocking ambulances with PPE – gowns, masks etc – and cleaning touch points (door handles, steering wheels for example) ready for the next crew to take over.

Potterspurvy Parish Council

The old ways are sometimes the best

Like many places, Covid19 inspired a group of civic-minded individuals to come together quickly and do an outstanding job meeting the demands of the new era.

Creative solutions to the new problems of restrictions were found, such as when the shop was able to return to the old-fashioned manner of serving its clientele, maintaining monthly accounts or 'tabs' to reduce the cash handling necessities – after all, they knew where everyone lived!! Likewise, group sourcing of items like large bags of flour really helped when there was a national shortage when everyone turned to making their own bread and cakes!!

The 'Easter Bunny' also made a visit to Potterspurvy

Call to Action

There's often a more traditional solution available to some of the obstacles you may face. Think back as well as forward when overcoming challenges!

POTTERSURY PARISH COUNCIL

Dealing with Coronavirus (Covid-19) is a worrying time for everyone.

Are you self-isolating and unable to get supplies?

**Feeling lonely, confused and isolated?
Would you just appreciate a friendly phone call?**

Do you need medical prescriptions collected?

Our wonderful village is pulling together

A team of volunteers is ready to provide help if you need it.
We are just a phone call away to help with shopping & other support.

CALL 07311 482834
to contact one of the volunteer team

Facebook Group: **Potterspurvy News**
www.potterspurvy.org.uk
clerk@potterspurvy.org.uk

Girlguiding in Earls Barton

Girlguiding in Earls Barton was nominated by Rosie Smart, the Parish Clerk. Rosie says that from early on in lockdown the leaders set up online meetings via Zoom for the Brownies and Guides in the village and for many of the girls this was the only way to remain in contact with their friends, particularly before schools began to reopen, and it became the one bit of stability in their lives.

Catherine Johnson, the Unit Leader of 1st Earls Barton Brownies explains what Girlguiding in Earls Barton did during this period, and what it means to their community:

I was delighted to hear that Girlguiding in Earls Barton had been successful in the Northamptonshire's COVID-19 Community Champions awards. Whilst our role is predominantly with Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, during the lockdown, leaders of these groups found that they were also providing support to the families of the girls. We became the "friendly adult face," providing someone to talk to - an important role when these adults may have been stuck inside their homes with only their children to keep them company!

We have probably helped about 30 girls and their families during lockdown ranging in age from 6 to adult, but in particular Brownies (aged 7-10) and Guides (10-15). We delivered craft parcels to the girls and their families at various points during the lockdown and then held Zoom meetings where we all made the crafts together. We also did this with cooking, although we asked parents to buy the ingredients but then did synchronised cooking via Zoom!

When delivering the parcels, it was a good opportunity for us to catch up with the girls but often it was their parents who were grateful for a socially distanced chat, so we feel we helped parents' mental wellbeing as well as that of the girls. It has been great to see the parents working alongside the girls during the Zoom meetings but also to see how siblings have been keen to join in!

All the volunteers that were previously involved in Girlguiding in Earls Barton have been helping during the lockdown and beyond. In fact the leaders plan to continue with online meetings to keep the momentum going and to provide the girls with some stability, as well as giving them something to look forward to outside their very limited school year group "bubbles." With the new lockdown coming into force, we hope we can continue to support both girls and their families in these continually challenging times.

Inclusion



Woodford Halse Good Neighbour Scheme

Dealing with a crisis in the middle of a pandemic

Each example of support has made an incredible difference to individual lives in their areas, often providing shopping support, prescription collection, additional food and friendship. But each community has had its own situations to respond to in an emergency.

Woodford Halse has done an amazing job from scratch, creating a phonenumber, website and support systems almost instantly. They've also stepped up when those unpredictable situations arose, and literally saving the day!

A lady living alone whose washing machine hose split flooding her kitchen. She had no close family or friends so they searched for a family member to video call while they cleaned up her house. They introduced her to neighbours and regularly check on her and she is now no longer isolated and is happier and safer.

They helped a homeless man who with his dog was found sleeping in the village bus shelter. Initially offering him a tent, sleeping bag, hot food and drink, a kind family offered their caravan for him to stay in. The fight is on to get him permanent accommodation, and in the meantime the group are supporting both him and the family who are looking after him.

The villagers of Woodford Halse further benefit from the phone support available for anyone feeling isolated and needing a chat and the group has a qualified grief counsellor available if required.

The Community spirit engendered was phenomenal and continuing from strength to strength.

Call to action

When normal life is suspended, emergencies don't stop. A Good Neighbours group is a great resource to have in any community. NACRE can help you get set up with the basics and the support you need to respond to emergencies in the future.

East Hunsbury Stitchers

Talents put to good use

It's hard to say exactly how many people were supported by the work of the East Hunsbury Stitchers, but the frontline workers have certainly felt the benefit of their work.

Over 2000 items were provided for Northampton General Hospital, as well as supplies given to the Ambulance station at Mereway, to Community First Responders and to other frontline community groups.

East Hunsbury directly benefitted too, with over 300 masks made for the East Hunsbury seniors group, giving reassurance for those who needed to shop or get to medical appointments.

Materials were sourced and scavenged from the local community, and East Hunsbury came through to supply the 40+ stitchers in their efforts. As a side benefit, those shielding could still be stitchers, and the group feel that by being part of this effort they have gained as much as they donated.

Special mention:

Lynn Ferman was and is the powerhouse of the group, going above and beyond to make items for donation. She is still making and donating.

Call to action

Having to be careful doesn't necessarily mean you have nothing to contribute – think creatively!



Great Cransley Scrubs and Mask Making

Mary Geidt and Julie Cox in Great Cransley started making scrubs for Kettering General Hospital and then went onto making masks. They and their families have been acting as village post men distributing leaflets to keep the village informed.

There has also been a sunflower competition in the village to see who could grow the tallest over the summer and there was a Christmas raffle planned to keep people's spirits up. They have been very keen to carry out their activities in a discrete and low-key manner.

They have now raised about £2,000 for charity by the sale of masks as well as making things for Kettering General Hospital.



**Protecting our older/
senior neighbours/
residents/friends**

Duston Old People's Welfare Association

This local organisation is steeped in history going back over 125 years. It is run completely by 15 volunteers, most of which were vulnerable or shielding and supported over 350 members. Like everyone else, the group had to postpone all activities during the lockdown so instead they have been calling their members (who range in age between 70 and 100) periodically to see how they are coping and they have been amazed at their resolve and resilience during this difficult time.

Some of the positive stories that came from the calls are:

- Meeting neighbours for the first time
- Neighbours offering to help
- Seeing their own children more as they drop stuff off
- Taking up baking and crafts that they did when they were younger to pass the time
- Mastering online supermarket shopping
- Mastering Facetime
- Organising Zoom sessions with their friends Duston Players



The Autumn Centre

The Autumn Centre is a charity day care centre based in Corby, Northamptonshire. The Centre is run by a Management Committee and is especially for the over 50's.

During the lockdown they were able to distribute food care parcels to those in need. They also provided activity packages and tablets so they could still deliver most of their online services for example their Falls prevention programme.

Ability CIC

ABILITY provides a community bus services in the North Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire rural areas into local towns such as Banbury so when COVID 19 lockdown occurred, the not for profit organisation which operates minibuses locally was faced with a challenge. The organisation is just 2 years old and the Directors Nigel and Lynn Hinch had to act quickly to protect all the hard work carried out by the team by getting over 500 users.

In just 48 hours the demand dropped on our regular bus trips because travelling together was a risk. Most of their customers (Over 70's) went into self-isolation for up to 12 weeks, a number were told to shield, and they needed to protect themselves, families and friends and other customers from the virus. The decision was made to stop all bus services immediately with a commitment to restart as soon as safe to do so.

Their booking line was maintained throughout the period as they responded to different matters that users had or if they just wanted a chat. With the help of a grant from Northamptonshire Community Foundation they launched KIT (Keeping in Touch) programme, where the team kept in communication with customers by post with postcards and birthday cards, and also spoke with them on the telephone. They found that they were missing their customers just as much as their customers were missing them!

They had to deal with some emergency requests when users needed help when friends and families could not help, such as special dietary needs, outpatient appointments, in one case following major heart surgery. One weekend they were asked by South Northants District Council if they could move 350 food parcels from Milton Keynes to Brackley for onward distribution in the rural parishes. They took on this role and will continue to do so whilst there is a demand for food parcels to be sent to vulnerable people.

Great Doddington

Turning professional experience to local advantage in the worst of times

Great Doddington was fortunate to have Natasha Tyrell as a resident, as her business is literally providing caring services for the elderly.

Her boundless energy and talents were turned to setting up a volunteering group including herself and many of her 40-odd employees for those in need of extra help in the local area, giving their own time to socialise, chat, and encouraging people to safely exercise.

As a trained counsellor, she was able to offer help and advice with their wellbeing, vital when sadly some members of the community did not survive their Covid exposure.

Now Natasha is in the process of setting up a Life Centre for post -Covid help with Physical and Mental problems with hopefully help from a Lottery Grant.

Call to action

Your community will have a lot of skills and knowledge ready and able to be put to use for you all. Who do you know that could be called upon in a crisis?

Glamis Hall's Day Centre

Unprecedented times need all hands-on deck

Glamis Hall's Day Centre activities are, in the normal course of things, a vital part of their, mainly older, clients' lives.

With #Lockdown1, there 4 staff members and 12 volunteers had to adjust their support for their clients, particularly helping them to adjust to the new situation with their complex needs.

With the Victoria Centre and support from The Wellingborough Council, they have helped their clients with their contact with agencies, as well as practicalities of food provision, shopping, medication, etc, often with new, very demanding problems arising from the change and lack of contact.

They have supported around 2,500 people, undertaken more than 6000 support tasks, including providing over 1,500 meals.

Call to action

Local support services may be under huge strain, with new problems presenting themselves due to restrictions. There may be opportunities for you or your group to step in and alleviate an aspect of this – for example – collect and deliver prescriptions - why not ask how you can help?



Families



HYD Breastfeeding Project, Daventry Volunteers Centre

Particular circumstances need particular help

Daventry Volunteers Centre specialises in co-ordinating a diverse group of supporters of vulnerable mothers and their families.

Pre-Covid, the help and encouragement of this group provided emotional and wellbeing support for families as required, perhaps with breast feeding, or providing essentials such as clothing and other material needs for babies with the help of St Martin's Church. Some families are supported via self-esteem and practical experience opportunities to enable a return to work, with lovely but practical ideas such a 'Returning to Work Hamper' to help the transition for the family.

During #Lockdown1, they were in the perfect position to provide support to 80 mothers in vulnerable circumstances, and had the resources and experience to step in, sometimes with literally life-saving effects.

Call to action

If you're already helping a particular cohort of people, you are likely best placed to know what they might need in extraordinary circumstances – there's no need to wait to be asked, start the push to help straight away!

Food for Thought Daventry



Locked down, but not locked out

“Food for Thought Daventry is dedicated to ensure that no child in Daventry goes hungry during school holidays” and their actions towards that aim made a huge difference in 2020.

Unable to use their holiday kitchen venue - the facilities of the Parker E-ACT Academy – David Kolb canvassed local enterprises in Daventry, and Cummings Engineering agreed to sponsor Food for Thought with not only the use of their vast kitchen facilities but their catering staff and the food required to produce meals for not only children but for whole families.

Between March & July they were producing up to 340 hot meals every weekday and distributing to needy families in the Daventry district. In all, in a 15 week period a total of 21,349 hot meals and Cummings Engineering had sponsored them to the tune of £43,000! Not only that, but the Cummings plant in the North East followed suit to help their local families.

For the summer holidays and out of #Lockdown1, the school kitchens were back in use, but the focus was on food parcels for those nominated by schools and the council which made a vital difference to all their lives.

David and his volunteers would like to thank Cummings Engineering and Parker E-ACT Academy for their amazing support.

Call to Action

You'd be amazed what people can be inspired to help with – why not ask!!

Community Resilience Cell

The Community Resilience Cell was set up in March 2020 to support and meet the essential needs of those self-isolating in Northamptonshire.

We had an incredibly successful appeal to find pop-up volunteers and existing community groups to help those in need in Northamptonshire during the coronavirus pandemic. We then set up a support line to help the most vulnerable members of our community.

The support line allowed those who could not leave their homes under current restrictions and who had nobody to call upon for help, to request support in getting access to food, prescriptions and other vital services they require.

With the County Council taking the calls, the Community Resilience Service co-ordinated requests in conjunction with the District and Borough Councils, mapping the areas and linking up with local community groups, volunteers and voluntary organisations who have registered their support.

Community Resilience Cell

The Community Resilience Cell also:

- **Maintains connections to groups like places of worship, community groups and local infrastructure organisations to support residents during the pandemic.**
- **Set up links with emergency response volunteer organisations through the Northamptonshire Emergency Response Corps to respond to urgent requests of support and provide safe and well checks.**
- **Maintained the Government's Shielded/Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list. This included contacting everyone on that list and involved 100 library staff calling over 42,000 people and the Northamptonshire Emergency Response Corps undertaking over 800 safe and well visits where telephone calls were not answered.**
- **Keeps our residents safe by issuing information on potential fraudsters and scams.**
- **Keeps our residents informed by producing factual and relevant information, sent through existing channels and via regular newsletters. It also provided a leaflet for every household in Northamptonshire.**
- **Offers clear and consistent guidance to support groups set up to assist residents in being safe and well in their homes.**
- **Provides a method for offering psycho-social support to our residents.**
- **Administers the DEFRA grant that was awarded to local authorities to provide money to food banks and food charities supporting residents during the pandemic. This also helped form closer relationships between the food organisations and the local authorities.**
- **Administers the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, which has seen children who normally receive free school meals receive supermarket vouchers for the school holidays. We also work with referral agencies to give money from this grant to people suffering hardship during the pandemic - especially to those with children, so no child goes hungry over the winter period.**

Thank you

Thank you so much for all the support that you are providing your communities. The champions within this booklet are truly inspiring, along with all the other communities that have been tirelessly supporting their neighbours and relatives during this pandemic.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

120



STAFF REDEPLOYED TO HELP

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

4,591

SUPPORT LINE NUMBER



0300 126 1000

#No

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

2,566



URGENT FOOD PARCELS

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

1,500



PRESCRIPTIONS COLLECTED

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

23



SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO GET ONLINE

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

486



CALLS MADE TO THOSE FEELING LONELY

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

16



HELPING PEOPLE POST MAIL

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LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

325,000

17% of deliveries



CORONAVIRUS

LEAFLETS DELIVERED

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

43,567



SHIELDING (CEV)

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LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

£2,800,000



COVID WINTER GRANT SCHEME FOR FOOD & FUEL

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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

£770,000



DEFRA GRANT FOR FOOD BANKS AND CHARITIES

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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CELL

15,000



VOLUNTEERS

Rose

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

Sustainable future

If you have been inspired by some of the stories in this booklet, here are some ways you could get involved!

CHECK ON YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Even a simple 'hello' in the street can make a difference, small actions like these can reduce isolation, and may lead to someone reaching out and asking for help.

REMEMBER RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural communities often struggle to access the same level of support and services that are available to urban communities. If you would like to do more to connect your organisation to rural Northamptonshire please contact Northamptonshire ACRE.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL GOOD NEIGHBOURS SCHEME

There are 30 existing and pending schemes in Northamptonshire, all supporting our rural communities. You can support your local scheme by volunteering, giving a donation or the gift of a food parcel. If there isn't a scheme in your area you could even start your own! Contact Northants ACRE for more information.

SHARE AVAILABLE SUPPORT IN AS MANY DIFFERENT WAYS AS POSSIBLE

Research carried out by Northamptonshire ACRE in 2020 has shown that many people are not aware of the support available to them. By sharing the information in as many ways as possible you can ensure that the people most in need of help know exactly where they can find it.

REMOVE STIGMA

Anyone can find themselves in food poverty or insecurity, its important that people are able to access support with dignity and without fear.



NORTHANTS GOOD NEIGHBOURS

New and existing community groups are invited to join the Northants Good Neighbours Network, with over 30 members across Northamptonshire!

Your group will stay independently run but by registering your group you can access:

Up to £700 of grant funding (depending on location)

Free support, advice and resources

Regular funding updates

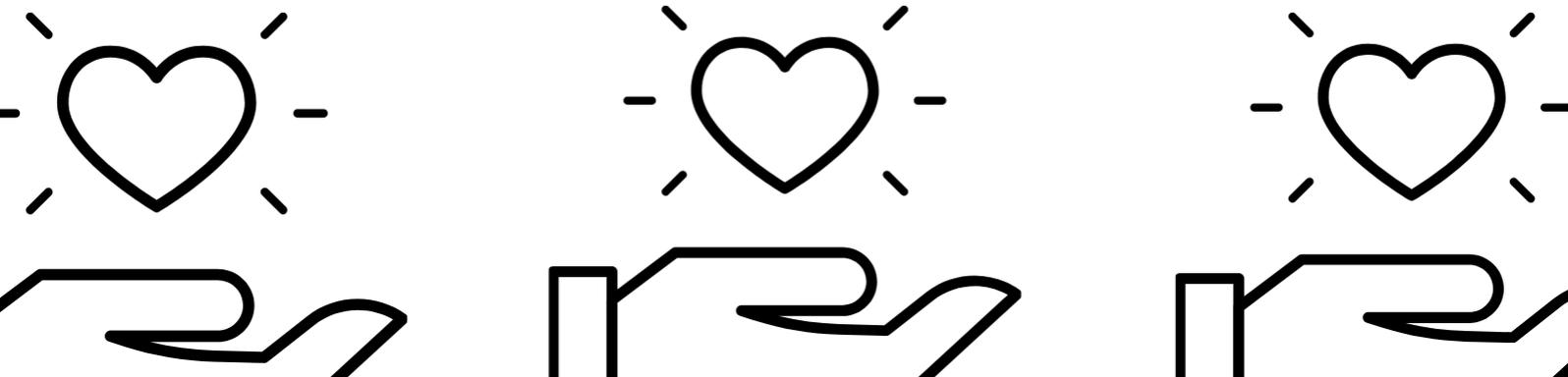
Free training for you and your volunteers

Become part of a larger network of groups

Regular networking meetings

TO REGISTER FOR OUR NEXT FIND OUT MORE EVENT:

Email: acre@northantsacre.org.uk



The story of your community...

This booklet captures the absolutely inspirational surge in community and volunteering action in 2020, but we know there are many more stories to be shared and recorded. This space has been left blank for you to record your own pandemic story.



Northamptonshire ACRE

(Action with Communities in Rural England).

We are a countywide, independent charitable organisation working with rural communities in Northamptonshire to improve their quality of life, especially the disadvantaged.

We offer a range of rural services including:

- **Good Neighbour Schemes and rural wellbeing**
- **Community support for village halls and parish councils**
- **Neighbourhood plans**
- **Community planning**
- **Northamptonshire village awards!**
- **Training and networking events**

Contact Us

Phone: 01604 765888

Email: acre@northantsacre.org.uk

Web: <https://www.northantsacre.org.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/northantsacre/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NorthantsACRE>

Registered Charity no: 1080038

Companies House: 3937576



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE

www.northantsacre.org.uk