



Thank You Everyone!

We can't say thank you enough for all the wonderful help and support that is happening across our area during this difficult time - you are all amazing!

We sent an email out to the local groups that have started up during the Covid-19 crisis asking them to share their experiences

Their stories are a celebration of all the good that is happening on a daily basis!





Busbridge and Hambledon Churches

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

Frantic at the beginning and much calmer now! Things seem to have settled to a pattern, with some volunteers doing regular shopping or (e.g.) prescription collections for people; some volunteers have not been used as much as they expected. I think this may be partly because neighbours and friends have stepped in to help people.

When they first asked us for help, I don't think they knew whether that would be the case.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

Nothing specific, but I hope they have been aware of the very real gratitude of the people they have helped, also that they are part of a much bigger picture, both locally and further afield.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

Yes! "We could not do this without you and you have been amazing. Enormous thanks."

Alastair from Right at Home

"I am hugely grateful to the 170 or so people who have signed up to become Friends of Right at Home. They have been absolutely amazing, supporting those isolating with shopping trips and friendship. We have had incredible feedback from those we are supporting about how caring and compassionate the volunteers have been and new friendships made. I am immensely proud of the difference we have been able to make across South West Surrey and none of that would have been possible without these fantastic volunteers."





Shamley Green Village Care

We have not used our regular Shamley Green Village Care drivers as most are over 70. We had a great response to our flyer and Facebook and have about 40 younger, new volunteers during Lockdown.

One 95 yr. old lady requested a lot of skin and hair care products and one of our lady volunteers was very happy to purchase them for her. She was very pleased. It made a nice change from getting prescriptions!

"A big thank you to all our new volunteers in Shamley Green for their time and friendship to our older residents."

Milford & Witley Village Care

We had an amazing uptake of volunteers - over 70 signed up in 2 weeks however we have had very few requests for help.

A big thank you to all that signed up and we plan to keep offering help for as long as it's needed. We are normally a good neighbour's local driving scheme and have been running for over 20 years. Since the pandemic we've changed our offering to help with shopping, errands, picking up prescriptions and a befriending service.

Farnham & Villages Coronavirus Helpline

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

We are a new voluntary group established as a local response to the crisis. The helpline has been organised principally by Farnham Maltings and Farnham Town Council with the support of a number of other local organisations and community groups. We have a newly set up database of over 150 local volunteers and 84 local businesses, charities and community groups. The helpline is staffed by a rota of volunteers and is open 9-6 Monday to Friday. Since it opened we have received over 1200 calls, 83% of which were requesting prescription collection, 10% needing food shopping and the rest social or other requests. We use volunteers from the database to fulfil these requests and they have been amazing!





Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

We have collected a number of 'good news' stories as follows:

- We have had lots and lots of positive feedback from the callbacks: one lady said "you've helped restore my faith in humanity" and another service user said we should be organising the supply and distribution of PPE as we were so efficient. Some have even been in tears as they were so grateful that we had been able to help.
- We have used a number of local volunteers, initially for 'one-off' jobs but they have now been helping the same person a number of times, e.g to pick up Click and Collect orders. Local volunteers have also topped up mobile phones for service users and cut grass for more elderly or unwell people who are unable to do it themselves. It has also been good to hear how peoples' neighbours are assisting. There was one lady who had never met her neighbours before, but they popped a note through her door saying they were available for help, and she now felt as though she'd made new friends and was better connected with people on her road and in her community.
- We have also received several emails from people living abroad, concerned about their elderly relatives in Farnham. We've established contact, made social calls, arranged food shopping and kept in contact with the relatives abroad to let them know all is OK.
- A number of people have received food parcels which they do not need to so we have arranged for these to be collected and delivered to the local foodbank to be distributed to those in need.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

"A huge thank you all of you who have given up your time to help others in the community. We have been so impressed by how positive everyone is and how keen to help you are - whenever we phone a volunteer with a request for help, the answer is always yes! It is a pleasure working with you all."





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Cranleigh Food Bank

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

Our volunteers all went into action to adapt to the crisis and within a week we had a team ready to deal with a mounting need. We put social distancing and other processes into place with everyone slotting into particular roles. There was a real feeling of 'let's do this together'

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

All our volunteers are so positive and look for ways to make it happen. They have all offered to do extra jobs to serve our clients. One volunteer expressed that our Friday morning was the highlight of her week. Being with the team and feeling like we are making a difference. When the parcels are delivered they come back with stories that spur us all on to do all we can.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

We as a steering committee would like to thank all our volunteers for their enthusiasm, commitment, flexibility and positive spirit that makes up our team serving in this local community. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you

Woncare

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

At the start of the pandemic and before lockdown Woncares Committee of volunteers met to decide a strategy to help ensure that we could continue our service to village residents. We agreed that, if at all possible, we would continue to provide a service even though many of our existing volunteers fall into the vulnerable category and would be isolating. We devised a new form and procedure to process and bring on board any new volunteers who would not have direct contact with clients (ie no going into homes or offering transport services). As soon as workers started to be urged to work from home we experienced a number of communications, through our own phone line and through a local Facebook help group, from new volunteers wishing to help.





From this time we also experienced a surge in requests for shopping and picking up prescriptions. So we have been able to meet all requests for help from our village residents.

We also made sure that posters went up in the village shop, the pharmacy, on the Parish Council website and the village Facebook page to let everyone know that Woncares was still open for business.

It has been very heartening to see the response from volunteers and that our services are now being used by a number of people who have not previously needed us.

It has been doubly heartening to hear, when we phone our more regular clients, that many of them are already being helped by neighbours.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

Two stories - first a new volunteer who was working from home and helping to look after his young family - he was one of the first to offer to do shopping for an elderly lady, happily agreed to add in requests from two of her neighbours (who had been told by her what a great job he was doing), took on extra requests to go to the post office and finally went the extra mile, queueing at a local butchers when a request for liver was received which was unavailable to add to the online shop.

Second - a teenage girl who had been making cakes as part of her Duke of Edinburgh scheme volunteering for the local mother and toddler group; she is continuing to make cakes but is now delivering them with her mother to the doorsteps of around 20 elderly residents who are self-isolating - to great appreciation all round.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

A HUGE thank you to all our volunteers who have willingly queued at shops and the post office, negotiated the frustrations of online shopping, queued at the pharmacy and delivered with a smile and a wave to all those who are not able to get out and about at this time. And to all those that have made contact with and are looking out for neighbours. Never forget that everyone who is elderly or self-isolating is so pleased to hear from a neighbour and get a wave through the window from a friendly face and Woncares is getting messages that ALL your efforts are being so much appreciated.





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Grayshott & Surrounding Villages Community Support Group

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

We started the group right at the beginning of social isolation and were initially overwhelmed with the response. So much so, that we set up a call centre line staffed by volunteers to field the calls, provide or direct callers to information and to find volunteers to fulfil requests.

Our initial promotion of the group was via social media and when we realised that many of the people who needed us most were unlikely social media users, we did flyer drops to Grayshott and surrounding villages - again by volunteers. It has been a large, but very rewarding operation serving our community.

The number of calls has dropped significantly, mainly due to the fact that we have paired callers with volunteers who they now call directly.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

People have got to meet neighbours through responding to requests for help and tell us how amazing that is. More specifically, at the beginning of the lockdown, a woman called us urgently needing a freezer. Within hours after we posted her request to our Facebook group, someone had offered her one and delivered it to her. How is that for neighbourly help and support?

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

Heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our volunteers - the organisers, the call handlers and the neighbours who respond to requests and fulfil them so graciously. For being the friendly voice on the other end of a phone line, the face seen through a front window as groceries and prescriptions are delivered, we are so very grateful for your kindness.

Crossroads Care Surrey

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

Crossroads immediately responded to Covid-19 and our staff were motivated to volunteer to complete shopping and prescription collections for carers and other vulnerable people living across Surrey. We've been incredibly busy, with up to 80% of our staff base being out in the community to provide these services.





So far since social distancing began on 23rd March, we've made 2,904 wellbeing telephone calls and completed 714 shopping and prescription collection trips.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

At the end of April, our Care Co-ordinator for Guildford and Waverley received an emergency call from the Voluntary Action South West Surrey requesting help for an older gentleman.

The gentleman was down to his last bit of food, milk, and bread and had not had a government food parcel for nearly 3 weeks. Rosemary, one of our staff volunteers' took this on and that evening she did his shopping for him at about 6.30pm. The gentleman was so grateful he showered Rosemary with thanks and praise, and has even made a £10 donation to Crossroads as a thank-you.

The gentleman is not able to work due to disability and medical conditions and has found himself having to isolate and rely on the help and support of others. He says that Crossroads are the only people he's been able to reach out to for support during this coronavirus period and tells us how much he appreciates and values the support.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

Crossroads Care Surrey are extremely grateful to our staff who so kindly volunteered their time to support our Covid-19 response with shopping and prescription collections for vulnerable clients and carers. Your efforts have been immensely appreciated by all those that have received support and we are overwhelmed by the dedication and enthusiasm that you have shown in supporting Crossroads. Thank-you from all at Crossroads Care Surrey!

EwCare

EwCare has continued to run as normal with the exception of driving clients to medical appointments. Our telephone number has been advertised to all in the village of Ewhurst & Ellen's Green so that anyone in need can contact us and as a result we have acquired new Clients.

We have also received many offers of help from other people in the village who have offered their help and in particular youngsters home from Uni or those furloughed and they have been a tremendous help to us and we are extremely grateful.





We have mainly been collecting prescriptions and helping with grocery shopping. We extended our normal Monday-Friday 10am-12 noon hours to include weekend cover too.

We set up a "phone buddy" system so that all Clients are regularly receiving a call from a Volunteer to check on them and some have sparked up a real friendship which will continue long after this crisis!

Our Volunteers have been so helpful and supportive and it so much appreciated.

Clandon Good Neighbours

I have contacted my fellow committee members at Clandon Good Neighbours, and we would like to say we have been heartened to see how the community has been pulling together through the Covid-19 crisis. Very early on we were contacted by dozens of residents, many of them relatively young, all keen to help in whatever way they could. Without training, they are able to help with errands and deliveries. Some of them are now in established and regular shopping and pharmacy runs for specific isolated residents. Others have volunteered as NHS Responders.

Just before Easter, both East and West Clandon were contacted by the National Trust at Hatchlands who had hundreds, if not thousands, of chocolate Easter Eggs to dispose of. Because of the crisis they could not hold their annual Easter Egg event for young people, so asked for help in giving them away to every household in the Clandons. The Churches and Clandon Good Neighbours were instrumental in getting families to deliver the chocolate gifts in wheelbarrows around both villages, on a rather warm weekend!

Several of our villagers have joined forces with Send volunteers to make scrubs, masks and other non-clinical PPE, so there is something of a production line in progress, with young volunteers on their bikes delivering packages to sewers and cutters around the community.

We are so pleased that so many people have stepped forward wanting to help in so many different ways. The fact that not all of their offers of help have been taken up reflects the generosity of the community in these difficult times.





Robert Good from the Stoughton Neighbourhood Support Facebook group

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

We have had four co-ordinators manning a phone line and answering email enquiries, and 90 volunteers helping people with their needs. At the start we were getting 100 messages a day. This has reduced considerably now as people have got things sorted.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

Overall, using Facebook has worked well for us and forming a WhatsApp group of our volunteers has been good. Unfortunately, some of our volunteers had to come off our list as they had to self-isolate as someone in their family had Covid-19.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

All volunteers have been absolute stalwarts, and what they have done has rescued this government of ours.

Sheila Wills from Fairlands Community Association

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

We have 69 volunteers who have been helping people by delivering food and supplies. A large part of our help has been delivering prescription medicines from the Fairlands pharmacy to people local to us and also further afield in Guildford as well as parts of Woking. To date, we have delivered more than 4,500 prescription items.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

We have two volunteers who have set up a mobile library service. People contact us who would like some books taken to them. We have had plenty of books donated to us, and people can either keep them or return them at a later date. Also, we are producing a fortnightly 'keeping in touch' newsletter called KIT.





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Several volunteers are printing out the copies on their home computer printers and others are delivering them to streets in Fairlands as well as Gravetts Lane, Keens Lane, Liddington Hall Drive and Liddington Hall New Road.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

They have all helped in many ways and it would be lovely if some could continue to support our community when the crisis is over.

The Reverend Mandy MacVean from Effingham with Little Bookham Parish

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

Like all Church of England parishes, we have had to shut our church buildings and run our religious services via Zoom. As part of our 'presence' within the parish, we are usually involved in organising and hosting many community events and groups, which have sadly not been able to function during the crisis.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

We are very pleased to have 'mastered' Zoom. We run twice daily church services online and have far more people attending than would normally happen in the church building. On a Sunday, our Zoom congregation is double the usual church building attendance and we are also joined by people from further afield including abroad.

In addition, because we have been unable to run our usual community events, we have had to be 'creative' in reaching out to local residents. These initiatives have included food parcels, telephone support and creating PPE for local NHS establishments. Our biggest initiative has been to create and run a Community Store in Effingham in the wake of a devastating fire behind our Village Supermarket. The Community Store was felt to be particularly necessary to help those without transport for other villages or the ability to food shop online. It has also meant that the parade of village shops has continued to have a regular 'footfall' to ensure that customers would still be coming when the supermarket was again up and running.





Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

No one could have foreseen what an impact this crisis would have had on church communities. It would have been very easy for people to have lost interest once our regular church services had to stop. But instead members of the church family have become even more committed to their faith and to serving their neighbours and I am really proud of them all.

Keith Childs of the Henry Smith Fund - Shere and The Village Larder fund

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

The Henry Smith Fund is a long-running charity. We have set up and manage a separate fund called The Village Larder. It offers financial support to people who live in the civil parish of Shere (which includes Shere, Gomshall, Peaslake, Holmbury St Mary and parts of Abinger) who, due to an unforeseen and drastic reduction in their earnings owing to the Covid-19 crisis, find themselves unable to afford their weekly shop. We can give money to these residents to be spent on groceries and household essentials

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

The story is that we have not had a single application to The Village Larder fund at all, so far! This can be seen as good news in that people in our parish are coping. We have promoted the scheme throughout the parish by way of the parish magazine, local Facebook and WhatsApp groups. However, it may be that at a later date if there is a rise in unemployment due to the pandemic and people struggle financially that our fund will be useful.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

I find it incredible that a virus so small in size has caused so much havoc. But thanks to so many people community spirit has remained strong.





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Haslemere Information Hub

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

We've had to close our Information Hub at the station but some of the 30+ volunteers have joined #HaslemereHelp. We have ramped up the social media and the volunteers have provided us with images from their local walks and from their gardens.

We've continued with the regular email that goes to them usually monthly but have been sending it weekly with general information about Haslemere and about our community partners that include Haslemere Museum, Visit Haslemere Surrey Hills AONB and South Downs national park.

I feel that these communications have been well received and I'm pleased to say that volunteers have responded with how they are feeling.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

They are amazing and resilient! Had some lovely photos that I've managed to share on social media

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

Thank you to all volunteers at Haslemere Information Hub for all their help and support of this relatively new project. We will be back to welcome people to Haslemere and to inform our local community when everyone is comfortable!

#Haslemere Help

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

#HaslemereHelp began on March 14th as we knew that we needed to get volunteers ready for a potential lockdown. The first few weeks were crazy! But with coordinators working in local areas with local volunteers it soon got easier. Spreadsheets/spreadsheets/spreadsheets! We have a core team of just 5 admins and a team of over 300 volunteers who have been amazing!

Working with the Haslemere Town Council and with the Mayor taking all the calls has been amazing - as has working with town, borough and county councillors who have realised that volunteers are capable and are literally stepping up to help their neighbours and communities.





The Town Council and Surrey County Councillor worked with the local hospital pharmacy to work on how to reduce the strain on the queues and staff at the chemist and there is now a Monday to Friday delivery system to help those who are shielding. So far we have made over 350 deliveries from Haslemere Health Centre with that system alone!

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

Both volunteers and those in need have said that HaslemereHelp is more than community help and are like family. We are so proud of all of us as NONE of us realised the challenge that we have had to face.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

Our volunteers have been incredible in this time of extraordinary stress. They have done everything without complaint and have really helped understand that community matters more than ever.

We thank each and every one of the volunteers - all incredible all selfless and all should be so proud of what has been achieved. We set out to be a faceless community organisation and that's (to an extent!) what we've remained.

Elstead Parish Council's Emergency Response

Can you tell us briefly what it's been like for your voluntary group since the crisis began?

We've had a tremendous amount of spirit and community engagement to support our residents - with continued passion to help those in shielding or vulnerable groups. Our primary challenge is to keep our volunteers interested as the supply of volunteers massively outweighs the demands from those needing assistance.

Do you have a particular story from your volunteers that you could share with us?

Elstead as BEAN great: Volunteers from Elstead Parish Council's Emergency Response have stepped up above and beyond the call of routine duty to meet a request from a villager for help with a less conventional request for some runner bean plants.





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The overwhelming response to the EER's call for volunteer support from the village has meant the needs of those seeking support have been met comprehensively, leaving excess capacity to be directed towards additional, non-critical support where possible. In this spirit, following a check-in call with one of the clients, the village network quickly found a grower from the Allotment Association who was able to help. The plants were happily delivered and gratefully received by the client, concluding another example of the strong, active and effective community we are proud to be part of in Elstead.

Do you have a message of thanks for your volunteers during Volunteers Week?

Huge thanks for your efforts, spirits and energy - but importantly your patience in waiting to be asked to help - incredible and wonderful to see.



Volunteers' Stories

"I've signed up with The Blind Veterans as a phone befriender and now enjoy a weekly call to two different veterans. They are both very thankful for the conversation as lockdown has completely stopped all of their usual social activities. It's lovely to chat with them and it feels like something that is helping them get through this time. Really glad I signed up!"

"The WitStock team's helpers have been able to support Witley's vulnerable residents. From shopping and medicines to food parcels or chats, the team thank the people of Witley for their support."

"My project Front Door Photos - family portraits on the doorstep - is raising money for Your Sanctuary. I've been bringing some cheer and creating positive memories for Surrey families. I'm normally a wedding photographer but since they're on hold at the moment I thought I'd raise some smiles and donate my time and expertise to a good cause. You can read more about it here www.jamescroftimages.com/front-door-photos/"





"I have been shopping a couple of times a week for two gentlemen, both of whom live alone and are shielding. There are volunteers in Portsmouth who are doing the same for my mother in law so I am pleased to be able to repay the favour by helping people locally."

Finally a quote from our Chief Officer - Carol Dunnett:

"The lockdown due to the coronavirus crisis would not have worked without volunteer help. An army of people have literally saved lives."

