



VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

# Our Impact

April 2020 -  
March 2021





# Foreword

**I've been a volunteer with **Volunteering Matters** for nearly four years. I volunteer because it's the right thing to do.**

I really believe we should all do whatever we can to help each other. It doesn't have to be big.

Before the pandemic, I volunteered at Lifelines in Brighton. Amongst other things, I ran movie nights and coffee afternoons for people living in assisted accommodation. But during the early stages of Covid-19, it was all hands on deck and I significantly increased my volunteering hours. I was soon taking calls from older people who needed help with shopping and collecting prescriptions. I was the friendly voice on the other end of the phone, making sure they didn't feel alone, before liaising with colleagues and other charities in Brighton so they got the help they needed. I also became a telephone befriender, ran a virtual coffee morning, and welcomed people to a range of activities to keep them connected. I've also been volunteering for the Getting Together Matters project, coordinating activities to connect people nationally. I'm now connecting with and supporting people up and down the UK.

I've met some amazing people and it is so special hearing about their lives, and in some cases becoming part of their life. I believe "what goes around comes around" so I hope someone will be there to support me when I need it. I've been so pleased to be able to offer my time, my office skills, and my conversational skills - that's a polite way of saying I like to chat!

In August 2020 I was awarded an MBE for my volunteering during Covid. I was really surprised and honoured to be recognised in this way. I questioned 'why me?'. The team at Volunteering Matters told me what a difference my gift of time had made to the people being supported and to the volunteer and staff team. To other volunteers, I know many of you will say that you've benefited as much as the people you engage with. I know I have. I feel very honoured to have spoken with so many interesting and wonderful people. To those of you who volunteer, you can be proud of having a positive impact on your community. You are amazing.

**Theresa McIvor,  
Lifelines and Getting Together Matters Volunteer**



## Foreword

**Throughout the past year, I've been mentored by a volunteer as part of the [Volunteering Matters Grandmentors Programme](#).**

I've always had goals, I just needed some help to get there and Jim my volunteer has done this. He's given me hope and taught me not to worry too much. My big goal was to go to university but I also needed to sort some practicalities and my finances too. Jim and I have lots of good conversations and I trust him. I now have my own flat, which he helped me decorate and fix. And he helped me get to know my local area better, and feel part of it. I know that Jim gets peace from it too because he likes to help people. I plan on being a youth ambassador so I can help other young people like me as well.

I've achieved my main goal and I will be going to university! I am so happy and glad to have Jim and Volunteering Matters in my life, they have become my family here.

**Eyob Hagos,  
Mentee, Grandmentors, a programme for care experienced young people.**

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## Who we are

**At Volunteering Matters we bring people together to overcome some of society's most complex issues through the power of volunteering. This builds stronger communities and enables everyone to thrive.**

We work with local partners, turning local knowledge and energy into action and progress. And because we are a national charity, we do this at scale.

### **The power of volunteer-led support during Covid-19**

This report shows the impact of our volunteers from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 – the year since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Through Volunteering Matters, volunteering and social action enabled a wave of support for those most in need and their communities, helping them to navigate unprecedented challenges safely. Our volunteers also supported other partners within charities, the NHS and Local Authorities.

This report highlights just some of our creative volunteering and social action during the year. To achieve this, under the circumstances of the pandemic, we invested in new technology to enable online mentoring and befriending, we redeployed staff to speed up the recruitment and vetting of volunteers and to offer new volunteering solutions in poorly served communities. Volunteers were screened and given the necessary support and guidance on how to volunteer safely including access to personal protective equipment (PPE).

To make sure people connected safely, we delivered training and resources online and made them available across the charity and voluntary sector.

# Who we are

## Making a difference in local communities

At Volunteering Matters we believe that communities have the power, knowledge and energy to improve themselves from within and that we are most effective when we work with people, not on their behalf – and we achieve this with local partners.

We work with volunteers to make a real difference on the issues they care about, from immediate responses to fostering long term change. We enable volunteers to use their local knowledge and life experiences and collectively we tackle complex issues. All the projects highlighted in this report support one or more of these areas:

**Reducing social isolation and loneliness**



**Improving mental and physical health**



**Ensuring young people can lead change**



**Building skills, confidence and opportunity**



# A snapshot of our year

Across England, Scotland and Wales,

**8,711** volunteers supported **20,769** people.

Our volunteers led change in over

**50** 

local communities, building on strong local partnerships

**243** 

care experienced young people worked towards their goals with the support of Grandmentor Volunteers

**1,443** 

volunteers from our Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme supported

**3,542** people

**276** volunteers supported

**910** 

people to achieve their family's aims through the Family Mentors and Family Supporters programme

**1,727** 

people volunteered through our National Programmes supporting

**2,232** people

Through our Employee Volunteering Programme,

**932**

volunteers supported

**1,927** 

people in local communities

In Scotland, Action Earth

**121** 

projects ran by

**3,312**

volunteers

**84**

Full Time Volunteers supported

**419** 

people

In recognition of their amazing achievements, volunteers received over

**8** external awards, including

**2** MBEs 



# Volunteering Matters in England

## Brighton

“The groups helped me cope both practically and emotionally with the challenging situation we are in”

Jean, Brighton



## Lifelines and Getting Together Matters

The **Lifelines** project in Brighton brings together people both as volunteers running activities and as participants. Through activities and one-to-one support, older people stay more active and engaged with their communities. This volunteer-led activity was vitally important during the pandemic.

At the beginning of lockdown, the staff and volunteer team quickly established ways for people to stay connected with isolated older community members by post, phone and online. Soon hundreds of isolated people were connected through group activities such as quizzes and Pilates to tailored befriending and shopping support. One of the Lifelines' online quizzes was featured on the BBC News at Six.

- **395** people aged 50+ engaged with the **Lifelines** project.
- **102** active volunteers.
- Over **400** prescription and shopping runs were completed by volunteers on behalf of shielding older people in Brighton & Hove across the year.
- **52** people were matched with a telephone befriender.



Following the incredible impact of these activities, Volunteering Matters set up a national version of the programme, **Getting Together Matters** which along with **Lifelines**, has brought nearly **500 people together** to take part in activities but most importantly, share the connection and support of others.

# Ipswich



## Youth Social Action to support potentially isolated families

Concerned about others' wellbeing and connectivity, youth social action volunteers in Ipswich developed a fun and informative series of activity packs to support families at risk of social isolation. The young volunteers created the packs, focussing on the fictional characters Astra and Patrick who demonstrated skills of resilience. The packs were targeted towards children but also included links to local support networks for the families receiving the packs.

The youth social action volunteers developed the packs with local partners including **Ipswich Museum, Wolsey Theatre** and **Suffolk Libraries** to provide resources to children across the town. The packs focused on different topics each time, including health messages, for different communities across Ipswich.

For their role in the packs, Ipswich Museum won the **Community Impact Award** as part of the **National Museum and Heritage Awards**. In recognition of this vital social action, volunteer **Lanai Collis-Phillips** won a **Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland Young Citizen Award**. Lanai also led on a report by the **University of Suffolk**, which highlighted the impact of Covid-19 on young people.

During the year, **1450 packs** were published in 5 different languages, reaching families from **13** different nationalities.

**“A huge thank you for all the packs provided for our pupils during lockdown. They have made a real difference and helped some of our most vulnerable families access learning at home. Volunteering really does matter!”**

Head Teacher, Ipswich



## Volunteers supporting Suffolk schools with Covid testing

Working with **Community Action Suffolk**, volunteers in Ipswich supported the safe return of pupils to school through Covid testing as part of Volunteering Matters' role with the **Voluntary Sector Emergencies Partnership, Public Health England** and the **Department for Education**.

**“I am so proud of the vaccine rollout and the testing in Ipswich and across the UK. My volunteer tasks include monitoring the Lateral Flow Devices, checking the timers, and marking them negative/void/positive. We had to be careful and regularly clean surfaces and equipment making sure they were clean and sanitised.”**

Ian, a regular volunteer at Volunteering Matters who supported testing in schools

# Ipswich



## Support for homeless people and adults at risk

Through two projects, **Perspectives** and **Safe Journeys**, volunteers and staff worked with homeless people. Based at a market stall and funded by **Suffolk County Council**, the project provided information and resources to help those living on the street, and in other unsupported circumstances, to better navigate the pandemic and stay safe. Feedback was recorded and fed back helping the council to tailor its services. The project was so successful that Public Health Suffolk requested it to continue. It also gave rise to other support such as a dentist providing a regular walk-in service for homeless people at Volunteering Matters' Ipswich community hub.



- **1** stall in Ipswich every Friday in the centre of town.
- **483** sets of PPE handed out.
- Over **600** people reached.

## Young people's mentoring in Ipswich during Covid-19

Young people's mentoring activity in Ipswich not only continued but grew last year. This included Grandmentors, an intergenerational mentoring project for care experienced young people, and the Equip programme, providing mentoring for young people who are not in education, employment or training.

- **89%** of the young people mentored through Equip moved into education, employment or training during the year.
- Throughout the year, **52** young people in Ipswich were mentored by a volunteer.



## Abraham's story

Abraham left Eritrea on foot and made his way to England when he was 16. When he finally arrived in England he was nearly 18 and was supported by the Local Authority care team who recommended he was also supported by a volunteer Grandmentor. His first goal was to maintain his legal status and then he set his sights to going to university. Abraham accepted a place at the University of Suffolk to study nursing.

**“When you think you can't change your life, make sure you tell yourself that there is someone who can help change your life.”**

Abraham, Ipswich

## Norfolk



### Match and Mentor

Throughout the year, **Match and Mentor** in Norfolk continued to provide support for 45 individuals with learning disabilities, whilst they were shielding from Covid-19. This support was vitally important. Whilst it was not possible to provide support in person, letters, phone calls and a regular newsletter were introduced, which also provided a link to parents and carers.

Digital exclusion is often a key factor for people with learning disabilities, our Match and Mentor programme was able to gain funding to purchase 5 tablets and 5 laptops. Training was provided and there will be more digital inclusion training sessions in the future.

## Milton Keynes

### Volunteers Drivers' Service

Our projects in Milton Keynes include a drivers' scheme to help older people get to critical medical appointments and for children to access specialist education and support. During lockdown the driving scheme was repurposed to provide much needed support. Existing and new volunteers shopped for and delivered food for residents in a local retirement village, focusing on isolated older people without a local family support network. Due to its success this grew to include a second retirement village and included prescription collections, so that older people self-isolating could stay safe.

Once the first lockdown ended, the **Volunteers Drivers' Service** was back up and running, with over **787 safe journeys** including many to Covid-19 vaccination appointments.

Milton Keynes Drivers' Service received the **Mayor of Milton Keynes' Award for Contribution to the Community** in recognition of their adaption to the unprecedented circumstances to continue to provide an essential service to the community.

**“On behalf of all villagers [residents] and staff I want to end with a sincere thanks for what you have done for us... You... set up an exemplary system and your teams made it work; kindness, speed and efficiency have been the hallmarks and reflect great credit on you all.”**

Chair of Residents' Association, Milton Keynes



# Milton Keynes



## Grandmentors Programme

Milton Keynes **Grandmentors Programme** continued throughout the pandemic. There were **22 matches** of care experienced young people with mentoring volunteers in the area.

**“Joni and I were a virtual match in Milton Keynes in April 2020. When we started talking it was a phone call every few days or a text.”**

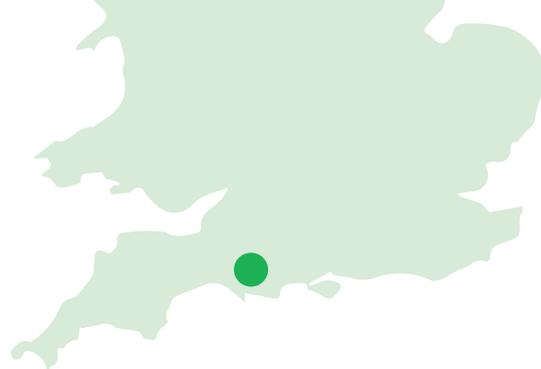
Joni was very low and scared. We then moved to Teams and this helped as we could see each other. Snatching a walk when the rules allowed was wonderful. Through our mentor/mentee friendship, Joni completed an extra year at college and feels it is great having someone she can rely on. She has now secured voluntary work with young people, which she would never have done before she joined Grandmentors. These are her words not mine!”

Jane, Mentor, Milton Keynes

Rooted in community life in Milton Keynes, Volunteering Matters continued to build local partnerships this year. This included **a new collaboration with the Canal and River Trust**. Volunteering Matters adopted a one mile stretch of the Grand Union Canal, with many outcomes including supporting skills development.



# Dorset



## Twigs Gardening Club

**Twigs Gardening Club** in Dorset is part of our **Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme** (RSVP). Twigs has a dedicated team of **12 volunteers** who are the backbone of the gardening club and over **100 members** who share gardening tips and plants and get involved on a more adhoc basis. More than ever this year, Twigs has helped prevent people feeling isolated. This year Twigs also expanded with **Twiglets**, helping young people into gardening and giving parents a respite including through gardening workbooks.

**“I’ve been a volunteer at Volunteering Matters for 11 years, running the Twigs Gardening Club in Dorset. It has been such a busy year.”**

As soon as lockdown started, we organised a welfare check for all of our members – starting with a call to see if they were able to get food and medicines and that they knew what to do if they were having to self-isolate. We increased the newsletter from quarterly to monthly too – just as another means to check-in and keep everyone informed and knowing they are part of our wonderful gardening community.”

To give people a boost at Christmas, Twigs worked with local businesses including **Tesco** to make goody bags to show their support. At a time when people couldn’t see their family and were feeling low, had suffered illnesses and lost loved ones, it meant such a lot to know they were still part of our community. There were lots of tears – but of happiness!”

During Covid, there has been such a surge of interest in gardening. I’m so proud of my fellow volunteers and of how we have helped to support people in Dorset and to continue to volunteer and garden.”

Dee Hoy, Twigs Gardening Club, Dorset



## Newcastle



### Volunteer Centre Newcastle

Volunteering Matters has run **Volunteer Centre Newcastle** since 2005, acting as a one stop shop for all things volunteering in the city. We connect people to communities by supporting them into volunteering opportunities available across the city. We also provide a wide range of support to Volunteer Involving Organisations including advertising their volunteering opportunities, sharing Volunteer Management good practice, providing infrastructure support and being a critical friend.

- The Volunteer Centre supports over **1,000** volunteering organisations.

During the pandemic, we continued to run the Volunteer Centre, working with organisations to recruit volunteers to respond to the pandemic and their various communities. Best placed to see the expanding and changing face of volunteering, we supported both the formal charities and newly-created mutual aid groups. The Newcastle Volunteer Passport was developed as an innovative response to the barriers highlighted in the recruitment of volunteers. In partnership with the **National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)**, the passport is now being piloted on a wider scale, working with local and national government.

**“It’s a valuable resource which enables us to do good volunteer recruitment and therefore frees me up to support our volunteers and coordinate our volunteer delivered service for women and girl survivors of sexual violence.”**

Local Volunteering Organisation, Newcastle upon Tyne

## Islington, London



As part of the **Grandmentors Programme**, care experienced mentees volunteered to improve circumstances in their own community. Over the past year, they have been involved in many community projects, including sewing hospital gowns, packing and delivering parcels to isolated people and working in a soup kitchen for homeless people. They also transformed a community garden from a neglected weed covered space into a vibrant garden, a haven for wildlife, with colourful plants, trees and vegetables. When schools opened, the young people also distributed school uniforms and school supplies.

As a result of their volunteering, the young people received an award from the **Jewish Volunteering Network** for being one of the **Outstanding Volunteer Teams of the Year**.



## Greenwich, London



### Family Mentors

Our trained volunteers work with families involved with social services, empowering the family to be self-sufficient and reach their own goals. With the support from volunteers and staff, families have been empowered to better navigate the pandemic and keep their families safe and healthy.

Last year in Greenwich, **94 families** were referred to be supported by a Family Mentor, **59 matches** were made with a total of **252 children**. **100%** of the parents involved reported improved outcomes including improved parenting skills and confidence, ability to manage routines, boundaries and behaviour, as well as engagement in employment and healthy lifestyles.

**“I absolutely love this service, I told Barbara I find it hard to trust professionals and she understood. In the beginning I was heavily pregnant with my 4th and didn’t really know how they could help me.”**

Family Mentors has helped me sort out my bills and apply for some extra money when I needed it to buy a pram for my new baby. She listens and has supported me through some hard times recently with my partner. Sometimes I just need to talk to someone who I feel understands me.”

Parent

**“Thank you for your ongoing work with the families – your support is invaluable.”**

Social Worker, London

### Volunteering programme in schools throughout London

**Team London Young Ambassadors**, in partnership with the **#iwill** fund, is the **Mayor of London’s** volunteering programme for schools, which connects young people with their communities through social action. This year, we began our activity supporting and encouraging young people in non-mainstream schools and those most at risk of exclusion. As a result, young people across London led change, developing progressive and impactful social action in their communities. The young people themselves are central to the design and shaping of the locally based social action.

Based on the first term’s activity, we recruited **13 schools** and engaged with a further **12 schools** via our Home Learning packs that reached **430 young people**. **20 young people** started the programme in the first term – **7 young people** with complex needs and **13 young people** with special educational needs. Many more will join soon.

**“Thank you so much for today. It really was great from our side, especially to see some of the students who usually never interact have the confidence to do so.”**

Teacher, London



# Volunteering Matters in Wales

## Newport

As an existing partner with **Newport City Council**, our team in Wales supported Newport Social Services to make sure local community needs could be met. With the Council acting as referrer, volunteers, including many from our **Employee Volunteering Programme**, and the local **Rotary club**, provided vital support such as shopping and telephone befriending for those lonely or isolated, often signposting to other support where needed. In partnership with **Newport City Council and Trussell Trust**, volunteers delivered food parcels and IT Equipment to families struggling financially.

- In Newport, **77** volunteers supported **227** people, carrying out **1,996** tasks.

## Gwent Youth Social Action

Young people in Gwent repurposed their activities across our existing **SAFE** (Safety Awareness For Everyone) programme and **Mind Matters** projects, a mental health and wellbeing project for young people. As 'online wellbeing champions', the project's volunteers developed accessible resources to help fellow young people to stay safe online, promote positive wellbeing and stay socially connected during lockdown. Throughout the lockdown period, Mind Matters and SAFE content was viewed over **5,000** times.

**“It brightens my day to know that I could have made an impact in someone’s life. Who knows, that person may have then positively effect someone else’s life so that the cycle of positivity continues.”**

Online Wellbeing Champion



# Volunteering Matters in Wales

## Welcome Friends

**Welcome Friends**, in Rhondda, Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, alleviates loneliness and social isolation for people aged over 50 through home visits from volunteers and group activities such as craft/knitting groups, lunch clubs and social groups. To support local needs during Covid-19, volunteers held befriending and group activities over the phone as well as making referrals for food parcels, delivering medicine and taking knitting wool to members looking for something to keep them occupied whilst in self-isolation.

- **159** people were supported by **157** volunteers.

**“My befriender is my friend, we can chat for Wales!  
Before her I never had a chance to chat properly, everyone  
is so busy and worrying about their families”**

Trudy, Rhondda



## Rural Wisdom

**Rural Wisdom** is a partnership project led by, and for, older people located in Flintshire and Pembrokeshire. The inspiring community volunteers develop age-friendly projects within their area, helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness. Existing volunteers and Rural Wisdom community members became Covid-19 Response Volunteers, supporting isolated people with practical needs such as shopping, collecting prescriptions and telephone befriending. In the two Rural Wisdom areas, **32 volunteers** were involved in delivering the Covid-19 response work and **74 people** were assisted – many of whom have come to rely on our volunteers.

**“I spoke to one lady yesterday and she is over the moon with her  
befriender...the positivity was radiating down the phone.  
She said we had filled her with so much positivity...”**

Council Referrer, Pembrokeshire County Council

**“My poor mental health means I become very unwell if  
I have to go out – my volunteer has been so reassuring  
and has helped me get the things I need.”**

Edie, Pembrokeshire



# Volunteering Matters in Wales

## Blaenau Gwent

Our partnership working with **Blaenau Gwent Council** and **Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations** enabled volunteers to support local people with referrals for prescription collections, shopping deliveries, dog walking or someone to talk to via befriending calls at a time when loneliness and isolation was effecting thousands of people. The volunteers continue to support residents across Blaenau Gwent, and have supported over **130 people** over a year.

## Activ8 and Employee Volunteering helping young people achieve their aims

**Activ8** is a project operating across Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, and Newport supporting 16–24-year-olds not in employment, education or training. Activ8 helps young people to develop skills, confidence and knowledge to help them progress into volunteering, education, employment or training.

Through our **Employee Volunteering Programme** we were able to connect volunteer professionals to these young people. Through this, staff at **Aviva** and **National Grid** provided mentoring and workshops and **Barclays** hosted a series of webinars. This activity was part of the Activ8 programme focused on key skills to help young people to achieve a longer-term outcome, ultimately leading to full-time sustainable employment. Of those taking part in the programme during the year, **42% of people** went on to volunteer, **46% remain on the programme**. One young person went into training and another went into education.



# Volunteering Matters in Scotland

## North Lanarkshire, Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Falkirk

Our amazing Covid response volunteers ensured people who were self-isolating or shielding still had their needs met – collecting shopping and prescriptions, providing telephone befriending and taking dogs for walks. We were able to do this through partnerships with other organisations in the community including **Clackmannanshire Council, Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire, Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise, CVS Falkirk** and **Clacks Third Sector Interface**. Volunteering Matters were the lead voluntary organisation providing volunteer support in Alloa.

## Befriending younger people, North Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire

We have been working in partnership with **North Lanarkshire Council** since 1999 to provide a befriending service to isolated young people aged 8 to 18. As a result of the pandemic, volunteers and staff responded to the health and wellbeing needs of young people and their families by carrying out wellbeing checks and providing resources such as wellbeing activity packs.

**48 young people** from North Lanarkshire benefitted from the service by receiving support during the year. This includes **23 young people** who had not been supported by the service before. Thanks to support from **The Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund**, tablets were provided to 30 young people who had no other means of digital inclusion. **Befrienders** in North Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire supported young people throughout the pandemic in creative ways remotely, including taking part in quizzes, remote baking activities, playing games online, chatting and watching interesting documentaries and films together online.

## RSVP, Forth Valley

**RSVP** (the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) operates in Forth Valley hospitals. Prior to the pandemic, the aim of the volunteers was to ensure a visit to the hospital was a better experience for patients and visitors. Volunteer roles varied dramatically including directing visitors to the correct locations and chatting with patients.

Following the pandemic, many RSVP volunteers had to stop volunteering as they had to shield. However, our volunteer coordinator for the RSVP hospital volunteering, established a new Covid-19 volunteer response role. As a result, new volunteers were recruited to support NHS Forth Valley. We were delighted that in recognition of her many years of volunteering, and particularly for her support during Covid, RSVP Volunteer **Rosemary Fletcher** received an **MBE in the New Year Honours**.



# Volunteering Matters in Scotland

## Action Earth

**Action Earth** is an environmental grants scheme, funded by **NatureScot**, that supports volunteers across Scotland to improve local green spaces in some of the most deprived areas of Scotland. Funding is available to purchase plants, tools and materials with higher level grants covering projects involving people with defined health and social needs. Action Earth projects responded with great resilience during the pandemic, with excellent results that exceeded expectations in these difficult times.

- **121** projects were run by **3,312** volunteers.
- **70** of these projects were health related.

**“A very positive experience to be supported by Action Earth! We feel our small project is part of a much bigger positive contribution towards a world where collective small improvements really can be of benefit when they all come together.”**



## Family Supporters Edinburgh

**Family Supporters** Edinburgh began in September 2020. By March 2021, **42 volunteers** had been recruited and **14 families** had already joined the programme. Volunteers support families including with their health, wellbeing, education, employment, housing and finances. This helps families access services they need.



## Equip

**Equip** provides mentoring opportunities for young people across the Wee County aged 15-18 who need additional guidance and support or who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Volunteer Mentors support the young people practically (such as CV writing and interview skills) as well as emotionally (building confidence, resilience, and independence) whilst reducing social isolation and loneliness. In the six months since the project has been in operation, we trained almost **20 fantastic volunteers** and have over **10 active matches** who were able to meet up face to face due to the restrictions easing. These matches are all off to a great start.



# National Programmes with Local Focus

## Family Mentors and Family Supporters

Volunteering Matters have been actively working with families involved with social services for over ten years. Volunteers are trained and supported by staff, before providing tailored weekly support to the family, empowering the family to be self-sufficient, de-escalated from their child protection plans and reach goals set by the families. Family Mentors provide their support in **Southend**, **Greenwich** and **Waltham Forest**, with Family Supporters operating in **Edinburgh**.

- This year **276** volunteers supported **912** people.

Our new **impact tracker**, introduced this year, tracks the outcomes of the families often focusing on: Housing and Finance; Education, Training and Employment, and Health and Wellbeing.

In **Southend** the impact tracker showed that after taking part in the project **86% of families** needed little to no support around school life and behaviour. **50%** of families were financially independent. This was a **25% increase** in families not needing support by the end of the programme.

## The Sadiq family story

Before they joined Family Mentors programme the Sadiq family, London, needed help with improving their finances. By the end, they were able to access the correct financial support and improved their homelife conditions. The volunteer mentor helped secure resources to assist with home-schooling and supported an older child to prepare for their career.

The family mentor also helped the parent to improve their health and wellbeing by accessing support from their local GP and preparing home cooked family meals together. The time spent cooking and eating together enhanced their family time and improved their wellbeing immensely.



## Grandmentors

**Grandmentors**, is an intergenerational mentoring project for care experienced young people. This group of young people are amongst the strongest and most resilient in any community. Through the skill of mentoring, care experienced young people are supported to be autonomous, capable, and empowered adults.

- **243** care experienced young people were supported by our volunteers during the year. This was in ten locations: **Islington, Milton Keynes, Bradford, Wiltshire, Hounslow, Brent, Wandsworth, Wolverhampton, Warwickshire and Suffolk.**
- During 2020, we introduced a **new impact tracker** to closely track the outcomes for mentees.
- **5** of the mentees started **University in September 2020.**

As part of the Warwickshire Grandmentors programme, care experienced mentees were supported to manage their own social action projects in the community. One mentee created a project which prepared and provided period boxes for young girls who are care leavers after experiencing that “they often have little support around menstruation and everything that comes with it.” The volunteer mentor supported this young person to find funding to explore the skills required to manage this project and to request support from local businesses to keep it sustainable.

During Eid festivities, the Wolverhampton Grandmentors Programme received donations of food from a volunteer, intended for mentees who were celebrating Eid. The Project Co-Ordinator delivered the food and packages to each young person celebrating.

**“It was great to see the appreciation and happiness for what had been donated”.**

## Kai's story

Through the 20-month support of a mentor and in partnership with other key services, Kai achieved his life goals. His mentor helped him get a property and make it into a home. He cut down on smoking and eventually quit. He sorted his finances and the mentor also helped him to put a CV together and accompanied him to the job centre so he could apply for jobs to then eventually being able to go by himself and be confident applying himself. He found casual work then a full-time job. He's now in a stable relationship and is now able to treat his partner to gifts (something he is quite happy about).



## Employee Volunteering in Local Communities

We believe everyone has a stake in local communities, including businesses and their workforces. Through our **Employee Volunteering programmes**, businesses were able to involve their employees in long-term partnerships and one-off events with local community groups, charities, schools and colleges.

Employee Volunteers have supported their time, skills, passion, and energy across the UK, through delivering virtual workshops, webinars, activities, events as well as off screen behind the scenes with bespoke skills sharing to enhance and develop individuals and even whole charities or organisations As listed elsewhere in this report, Employee Volunteers were also part of wider community responses undertaken by Volunteering Matters.

During the year, **932 Employee Volunteers** from eight businesses supported **54 different community partners** and nine Volunteering Matters projects.

**“Thanks for the opportunity to get involved with SPEAK language skills programme. It was rewarding to contribute in a small way to such valuable work connecting local citizens with migrants and refugees.”**

James, Barclays Volunteer

**“I want to thank you all so much for your continued support in working with your mentees, there have been challenges throughout the year that have been unprecedented, but I really appreciate the work you have put in with our young people.”**

Assistant Head Teacher, Mulberry Academy Shoreditch

**“Anna has given me the confidence to raise my career aspirations and help me to focus on my short and medium-term goals to achieve success”**

Student mentee at Colleges of Haringey, Enfield and North East London





#iwill

**CALLING ALL TRAILBLAZERS  
AGED 10-25! THE #IWILL  
MOVEMENT NEEDS YOU!**

VISIT [IWILL.ORG.UK/](https://www.iwill.org.uk/)  
WERE-RECRUITING-IWILL-AMBASSADORS



## #iwill

Supported by over **1,000 organisations** from across the UK, **#iwill** has aimed to make participation in social action - volunteering, fundraising, mentoring and campaigning - the norm for young people aged 10 to 20. At the start of 2021 **Volunteering Matters** and **UK Youth** successfully came together to form a consortium that will provide coordination of the programme for the next five years. Our partnership vision is to take **#iwill** from a campaign to a movement. Our shared belief is that all children and young people should be supported and empowered to make a positive difference on the issues that affect their lives, their communities, and broader society.

## Support for the UK Government



VCS Emergencies  
Partnership

During the year, Volunteering Matters was an active member of **The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)**. The Emergencies Partnership brought together local and national organisations to deliver a more coordinated response to emergencies and its aspiration is to bring the right support, to the right people at the right time. All this with the overall end goal of supporting communities and individuals during Covid-19. This has been a truly collaborative effort.

## National Volunteering Coordination Cell

As part of its role within **VCSEP**, Volunteering Matters convened **The National Volunteering Coordination Cell (NVCC)** for Covid-19. The Cell acted almost as a single point for the interface between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector to provide support and advice on volunteering. This has meant that Government Departments were advised where to quickly focus the efforts of volunteers to have the most impact whilst at the same time avoiding potential mistakes in placing volunteers in roles that would be unsuitable.



## Journey Makers

Together with the **Department for Transport**, Volunteering Matters collaborated with local partners, community organisations and volunteers to coordinate a nationwide volunteer support programme to assist travellers at transport hubs as the government eased Covid-19 restrictions to help get the UK moving again safely as it started to rebuild from the devastating crisis.

- This project spanned **84** stations, with **460** individual volunteers contributing **11,386** hours of their time.

Despite the national steer, **Journey Makers** was essentially community focused, ensuring that local partners and local people designed and delivered their own solutions.

**“I am the founder of The RecordShop, a social enterprise in Wood Green, London. It is a multipurpose music space that makes a difference, helping young people, aged 16-25, from low income households to pursue their passion in music and improve their confidence and life opportunities.**

In many ways Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on young people, local communities and social enterprises. But one of the things that has been positive this year has been partnering with Volunteering Matters as part of the Journey Makers scheme. The young people involved at the RecordShop were able to volunteer at Tottenham Hale Station and Finsbury Park station, advising local people of the new travel guidance and therefore helping them start to travel again - safely. In addition to the supported volunteering experience, I was able to provide time at our record studio in between the two lockdown periods.

The **25 young people** involved made the most of this partnership, including producing a brand new song. One young person received a Point of Light Award for their volunteering from the Prime Minister. Many were able to use the volunteering experience on their CVs. This also enhanced my own project management experience too. More generally, we all supported our communities, kept ourselves going and ‘did our bit.’”

Mary Otumahana, Founder The RecordShop, London



## Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers

At the request of the **Voluntary Sector Emergency Partnership**, the **Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers** repurposed their usual activities to supply face coverings as one of the measures to enable homeless people in Bradford to stay safe during Covid. This change in the volunteers' focus also meant that our Retired and Senior Volunteers in Norfolk could continue to safely feel part of their volunteering community whilst providing vital support to those that needed it.

- **1,540** face coverings were made.

**“One lady made 137 coverings. She was working through the night! It’s good to know we’ve helped people who really need it.”**

Linda, Volunteer Organiser from Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers



## HMPPS Befriending

The **Befriending project** was brokered between **Her Majesties Prison** and **Probation Service** and several organisations to help assist people serving sentences in the community and victims of crimes. Volunteers provided critical and immediate support to these people. During the year, 481 people have been referred to the service. This support was especially beneficial when services in the community were limited due to COVID-19.

- **76%** of people taking part believe the calls improved their **sense of wellbeing**.
- **78%** of people taking part say their **confidence** improved.
- **73%** of people found benefit in **speaking to a person** who is non-judgemental.

**“I used to only leave the house once a week but now I leave the house a lot more as I feel more encouraged to go out. My confidence is growing a lot since having these phone calls and I am glad I got referred”**

HMPPS Befriending participant

## Schools Rapid Testing

The **NVCC** were part of a collective who supported the organisation of rapid testing in schools when face-to-face learning resumed in March 2021. In partnership with **St. Johns Ambulance** and the **Royal Voluntary Service**, volunteers supported testing pilots in Wigan and Ipswich to gauge the requirements needed to administer ongoing rapid testing. This programme allowed rapid testing to be effectively carried out and contributed to the ongoing safeguarding of staff and pupil health within schools. As a result, schools were better able to manage the return to face to face teaching and reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

## Afterword



The last year has been an incredibly challenging 12 months for our volunteers, staff and trustees. It was remarkable to witness how rapidly and positively everyone involved in Volunteering Matters' activities - our staff, volunteers and the people they support - responded to the crisis as different needs emerged within communities across England, Scotland and Wales.

It has been a testament to the support of our partners and funders that existing funding could be reallocated to meet the needs of communities, expertise could be shared to meet emerging situations and new links made across sectors to put volunteering at the heart of the response to the crisis.

And finally, on behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank everyone involved in the Volunteering Matters family, whether volunteers, our staff team, funders, partners, and the communities we work with. Thank you for all the effort, dedication and energy shown over such a difficult and challenging time.



**Anne Heal**  
Chair of Trustees  
Volunteering Matters



A special thank you for the support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, awarding funds from Postcode Support Trust, which has supported our work across England, Scotland and Wales.

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