

VOLUNTEERING  **MATTERS**

Our Impact

During Covid-19

The impact of **Volunteering Matters**
during the early stages of Covid-19

October 2020

Foreword

I have been a volunteer for the Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme (RSVP) at Volunteering Matters for nearly eight years.



Shortly after I retired from the NHS I took on the Hospital Volunteer Organiser role in NHS Forth Valley. Since then I have also been supporting the other RSVP Forth Valley groups - schools, knitting and walking. I'm an active member of Volunteering Matters RSVP Steering Group, working with other volunteers and staff on the strategic direction of RSVP nationally.

In early March, as the threat of Covid-19 hung over the country, some of the 92 hospital volunteers started to withdraw from their roles. Not long after that the over 70s and people with underlying health conditions were told to stay indoors. Finally, everyone was told to stay at home and I lost my life as a hospital volunteer organiser. I didn't stay out of action for long, by the end of April I was back organising Meet and Greet volunteers at a GP centre, then at a Minor Injuries Unit, in a community hospital and at the Eye clinic. The volunteers have been wonderful. They've supported NHS and GP staff and I know the staff are very happy with the help provided.

From my anxieties in March about an important role being taken from me, this (originally) little Meet and Greet project, mushrooming in the last few months, has helped me to feel useful again to the local community, and I know the same applies to all the volunteers involved. When you read this fabulous impact report you will see that I am not alone. I stand shoulder to shoulder (virtually) with volunteers across the UK doing very special things, acts of kindness that greatly benefit people and communities at a time of suffering for people across the world.

**Rosemary Fletcher,
RSVP Volunteer, Forth Valley**

Foreword

I've been a volunteer for the WASSUP project for four years.



Here in Suffolk, Volunteering Matters has played an essential role in reducing the negative impact this global pandemic has and is still having on our communities.

During lockdown we continued capoeira classes virtually, I met with our mini youth social action team for some Saturday fun in which we did virtual quizzes, dancing and learnt about important topics from internet safety to positive black history and trying to help them cope without school and real-life interactions. During these sessions we realised we could support those potentially isolated, resulting in the children's packs that have been so important in helping safeguard and support many families in Ipswich. The WASSUP (Women Against Sexual Exploitation And Violence Speak Up) team have also met on Zoom to record podcasts on topics such as victim blaming and consent, which you can find under "WOW women of WASSUP!" on Spotify.

I've been able to be in a safe space with other women I can relate to, and with staff that are invested in hearing us, to gain confidence, experience, belief that I can break barriers to my ambitions. I have had the support to get through other struggles that many of our women didn't have the privilege to forget during the pandemic.

I'm so proud to be a volunteer for Volunteering Matters and to be part of the incredible support that's given to communities right across the UK.

**Lanai Collis-Phillips,
WASSUP and Full Time Volunteer, Ipswich**

Who we are

At Volunteering Matters, we believe that everyone in the UK should have the opportunity to thrive. So we bring people together to overcome some of society's most complex issues through the power of volunteering.

We partner with communities to overcome adversity, **tackling social isolation and loneliness, improving health, developing skills and opportunity and making sure young people can lead change.** And because we're a national charity, we do this at scale, sharing our expertise and building partnerships to make an even bigger impact.

We turn local knowledge and energy into action and progress, building stronger communities and a better future for all.

Volunteering - A National imperative during Covid-19

When Covid-19 struck in March 2020, it was clear that there needed to be a community wide response right across the UK. The six months since the outbreak have been some of the hardest that people have ever faced, from the initial lockdown to the uneasy coexistence with the virus, from the fear of losing loved ones to the reality of losing jobs and the opportunity to study. Despite this, throughout the UK, volunteering and social action enabled a wave of people-powered support for those most in need; people selflessly giving their time to assist the most vulnerable in our communities, helping them to navigate these unprecedented challenges safely.



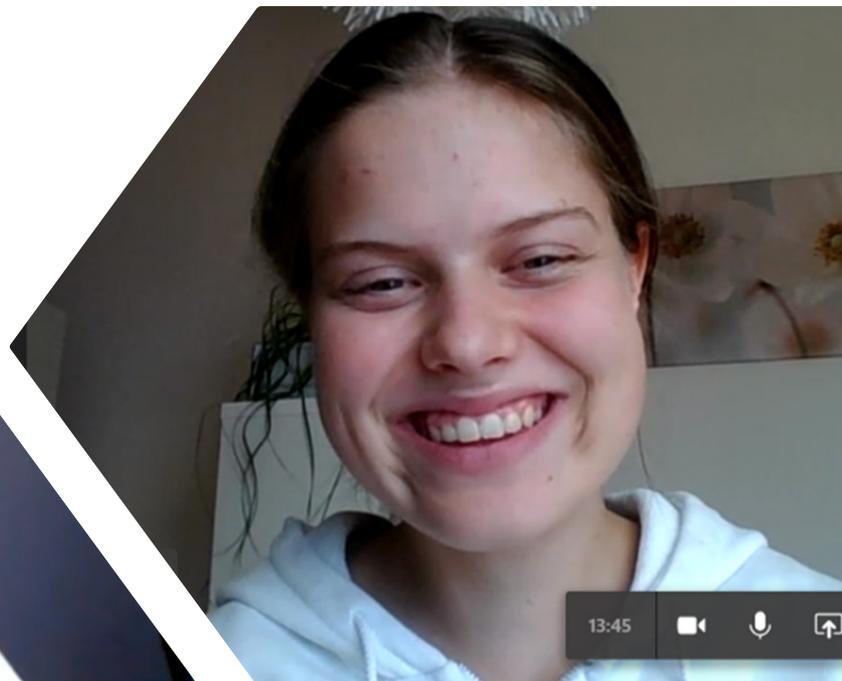
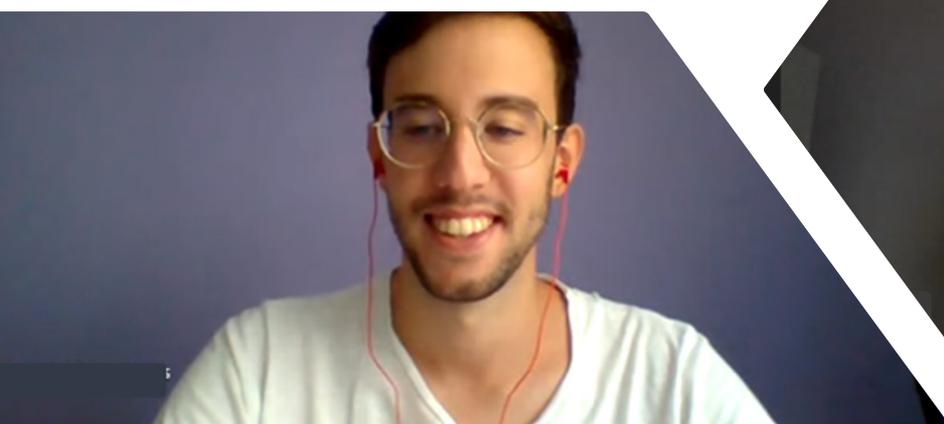
Who we are

Enabling Volunteers to Protect, Collaborate and Innovate

As an organisation, ‘**Protect, collaborate and innovate**’ was at the heart of our approach to the pandemic. **Protect** the communities we support, **collaborate** with our volunteers and partners to maximise safety, **innovate** solutions.

To help facilitate creative volunteering and social action, 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 solutions to funders looking to move volunteering in poorly served communities.

To make sure people connected safely, we delivered training and resources online and made them available across the charity and voluntary sector. This Impact Report gives an account of the incredible community-based response of our volunteers to the pandemic across the country.



Snapshot of our response

A snapshot of the activity of our amazing Volunteers from April to September 2020.

We saw our Mentors become Drivers; Drivers become Befrienders; Befrienders run older persons' activity groups; our Youth Social Action volunteers offering peer support; Mentees supporting Mentors and Handyperson volunteers delivering shopping & prescriptions. We also recruited new volunteers and enabled them to volunteer safely in order to meet the immediate challenges in their communities.

A total number of **3,240** volunteers helped **15,010** people



In Ipswich



189 volunteers supported **683** people

This included the production of over **1,000 packs for local young people**. Reaching families from **13 different nationalities**.

In Milton Keynes



83 Volunteers Supported **428** older people

This included **176 people** helped through shopping and prescriptions in Milton Keynes between April and June.

In Brighton and Hove



79 LifeLines volunteers helped **348** people aged **50 and over**.

Volunteers delivered prescriptions and shopping and helped older people stay connected and learn new skills.

In Wales



526 Volunteers supported **7,717** people across **Wales**

Youth Social Action helped young people stay safe online. Volunteers provided befriending to those isolated and practical support with shopping, prescriptions and dog walking.

Snapshot of our response

In Scotland



205 Volunteers supported 392 people

Volunteers provided befriending support to young people and helping those shielding with shopping, prescriptions and befriending. Volunteers also continued to support the NHS.

Support for UK Government



400 Journey Maker volunteers completing 6,986 volunteering hours

We supported the UK Government, as part of the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership. Volunteers at 84 bus and train stations across England helped the UK travel safely.

Grandmentors



168 Young people continued to be supported by mentors

Volunteer mentors helped care leavers to stay on track to achieve their goals, including 5 young people starting University.

Our Volunteers have provided

Shopping and Prescriptions



Mentoring

Befriending



Youth Social Action

Volunteers Supporting Families



126 families received ongoing support from volunteers

Volunteers supported struggling families, including to access additional financial support.

Covid-19 Change stories

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, as it became clear that our delivery response was driven by our volunteers and staff in the communities in which they live and work, we set about recording our place based responses through Covid-19 Change Stories.

Each **Change Story** highlights the people, places and power Volunteering Matters has in that particular community, and the changes we collaboratively made, enabling volunteers to support the people most in need due to the pandemic.

Ipswich

Ipswich Covid-19 Change Story

With a community hub in Ipswich's Old Crown Court, Volunteering Matters plays a key role in the community life of Ipswich, principally with young people leading change through award-winning youth social action programmes such as **WASSUP** and **We Are Patrick**. Young people are listened to and enabled to solve the issues that matter most to them and their local communities. In turn, this helps develop a new generation of future leaders in the town.

Our youth social action volunteers were concerned about the wellbeing and connectivity of their peers and their families.



Their response was to lead on the development of packs to support potentially isolated families throughout the first six months of Covid-19. **With thanks to the Suffolk Community Foundation**, the packs included activities for primary school children, based around the characters created by the young people themselves – **Astra and Patrick**, modern day superheroes, with the power of resilience and emotional strength. Fully endorsed by **Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership**, the packs linked families to local support networks, with family resources regarding health and wellbeing support.

Ipswich

This aspect of the packs, written in five different languages, provided a route to families to get the information and support they need. Four **EU-Voice** volunteers supported the young people to translate the packs and produce activities, and these were also distributed to our **EU-Voice** families, including refugees and recently arrived migrants. EU Voice enables newly arrived communities in the UK to volunteer in cultural institutions.

Between March and September over 1,000 packs were published for local young people.

Reaching families from **13 different nationalities**, packs were distributed by **Primary Schools, Social Care Teams, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation, community groups working with young mums and the BME food pantry (foodbank).**

“I just wanted to say that we have had some amazing feedback from our vulnerable families about the packs that were delivered....Thank you so much!”

Deputy Head Teacher

“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

The packs connected with other aspects of support already provided by our team in Ipswich, including entry level safeguarding training for **40** members of the local community new to volunteering in the town. A simple guide to Safeguarding was developed for use by local groups and it was adopted by **Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership**. The guide links to a hotline with local Safeguarding Champions who are ready to talk to volunteers in the community about safeguarding concerns. Two young volunteers also provided training to Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership regarding young people and the impact of Covid-19 on their health and wellbeing.



Ipswich

Under Covid-19, it was vital to maintain existing mentoring activity with young people. This included continuing volunteer activity within the **Grandmentors** project, which empowers and supports young people within the care system, and through **Equip Mentoring** for young people who are not in education, employment or training.

In both programmes, mentors support the young people they are matched with to achieve outcomes within **housing, finance, education, employment and training, and health and wellbeing**.

This activity didn't stop due to the pandemic, but instead it grew. Existing mentors and mentees connected with each other via phone or online. Initial meetings, support plans and weekly catch ups continued. And new matches were made to enable more people to benefit.

By September there were 34 matches. 17 from pre-lockdown and 17 new ones.



There are reciprocal benefits to both the young person and the volunteer mentor. By having a young person to connect with weekly, volunteers have often increased their own contact with the outside world as a result, reducing their own social isolation and loneliness. New activities, events and classes were developed during lockdown and young people were involved in the national **#IWill Campaign** and in a research group for the **University of Kent**.

“Having a mentor in Covid-19 helped me to talk to them about home life and to have support with knowing who I can turn and talk to about home life through them and the contacts they have given me”

Mentee

Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove Covid-19 Change Story

LifeLines is a volunteer-led project supporting people aged 50 and over in Brighton and Hove. Led by volunteers, LifeLines runs group activities and one-to-one support schemes to help older people stay more active and better engaged with their communities.

LifeLines recruits, trains and supports volunteers to start up their chosen activities and is a key example of the reciprocal benefits of volunteering. Through these volunteer-led projects, volunteers aged 50 plus are less lonely and isolated, and physically more active.

At the onset of Covid-19, LifeLines volunteers wanted to continue to benefit their community whilst ensuring that they continued to be connected and supported themselves.

Volunteers immediately offered shopping support and telephone befriending to people who were isolated and/or shielding, all of which went ahead within the first week of the lockdown.

Volunteers were invaluable in delivering prescriptions and shopping, and the project team also established a way for everyone in the project to stay connected through activities such as quizzes, seated pilates, singing groups, creative writing and much more. Activities took place by post and phone and crucially LifeLines has enabled older people to get online. This has given them a skill they can use in the future to help navigate the digital society we live in. They will have the knowledge to get safely online and stay connected in the future.



Brighton and Hove

LifeLines has received support from organisations, partners and individuals to enable the LifeLines magic to reach as many people as possible. This includes **American Express, The Aging Well Umbrella, players of People's Postcode Lottery, Coronavirus Community Support fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, Hangleton Mutual Aid, Sing Well, Southern Water, Sussex Police, and other local housing and care organisations.**

The success of LifeLines has influenced the development of a national programme called **Getting Together Matters**, which involves people of all ages in interactive sessions.

During Covid-19, LifeLines expanded across Brighton and Hove, including 3 senior housing schemes.

83% of participants said they felt less lonely thanks to LifeLines activities

76% of participants said they felt activities put on by LifeLines had improved their wellbeing during lockdown



43 new volunteers

289 people updated with activities and opportunities through the newsletter

“It has helped me cope, both practically and emotionally with the challenging situation we are in at the present time”

LifeLines member

“From the wide variety of topics, I found activities to accommodate needs for body, mind and soul!”

LifeLines member



Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Covid-19 Change Story

Our projects in Milton Keynes include Grandmentors and a drivers' scheme to help older people get to critical medical appointments and children to access specialist education and support.

Following the announcement of lockdown, many volunteers had to shield themselves, our older beneficiaries were immediately cut off from society and our young people, already without support networks, became incredibly isolated. We needed to redeploy existing volunteers, and recruit new ones to meet the challenges of the community.

Working with local partners, **Extra Care Charitable Trust, Lidl Wolverton and Community Action:MK**, we quickly put in place systems and processes to enable volunteers to undertake food shopping and deliver food for residents in a local retirement village. With thanks to the **Milton Keynes Community Foundation**, on our **first week of activity, volunteers delivered food to 31 residents**, focusing on isolated older people without a local family support network. Due to its immediate success this was scaled to include a second retirement village. Through effective policies and enthusiastic volunteers, the support also included prescription collections, so that older people self isolating could stay well.



176 people helped with their shopping and prescriptions in Milton Keynes between April and June.

“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

“I am normally a Volunteer Driver with the MK Volunteer Drivers Service and was the Covid-19 Financial Controller for the MK Response Team. I was responsible for coordinating the shopping lists, money and the checkout procedure with Lidl. The role suited me down to the ground, it was enjoyable, easy to adapt to and like being back at work!”

Volunteer Driver

Wales

Wales Covid-19 Change Story

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. Volunteers were able to step in to support people in Newport with their practical needs such as shopping, collecting prescriptions and dog walking.

This also included telephone befriending for those who needed someone to talk to, often signposting to other support where needed.

With the Council acting as referrer, volunteers were able to support those most in need – those without nearby family or those with health issues, carers and people shielding.

In Newport 56 volunteers have supported 107 beneficiaries, carrying out over 700 tasks.

We were able to repurpose our nationally managed and locally delivered volunteering opportunities for employees to support Wales' Covid-19 response. **14 volunteers from four companies** were trained to provide telephone befriending to isolated people in Wales.

A local company also provided befriending support and **Calon Energy** donated several laptops. Using business links, two local Rotary Club volunteers were brought in to help manage other volunteers.

Gwent Youth Social Action

Our young people in Gwent repurposed their activities across our existing **SAFE** (Sexual Awareness For Everyone) programme and **Mind Matters** projects, which aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Both projects have developed accessible resources to help fellow young people to stay safe online, promote positive wellbeing, staying socially connected during lockdown. Our volunteers, "**Online Wellbeing Champions**", developed accessible resources that promote positive messaging around mental health and developing healthy relationships while educating young people around safety awareness – from considering their own personal wellbeing to using the internet in the safest way possible to stay in touch with friends and family.



Wales

Throughout the lockdown period, Mind Matters and SAFE have recruited 21 volunteers whose content has been viewed over 7,000 times.

“It brightens my day to know that I could have made an impact in someone’s life, even if it was only one person. Who knows, that person may have then positively affected someone else’s life so that the cycle of positivity continues.”

Online Wellbeing Champion

Welcome Friends

Running across **Rhondda, Cynon Taf** and **Merthyr Tydfil**, Welcome Friends alleviates loneliness and social isolation for people 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.

During this time, Welcome Friends doubled the number of people supported from **40 to 80 people**. This included **11 people aged under 70** and either self-isolating or shielding.

To support their needs, there was an increase in volunteers from 49 to 79 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”

“I like it when she calls as I am down and worried, she makes me laugh and I feel better”

People supported by volunteers while shielding

Rural Wisdom

Rural Wisdom is a partnership project led by, and for, older people located in **Flintshire and Pembrokeshire**. Older people living in rural locations run activities with support from a project worker, leading their communities through social action.

The inspiring community volunteers develop age-friendly approaches within their area, helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

Existing volunteers and Rural Wisdom community members became Covid-19 Response Volunteers, supporting vulnerable and isolated people with practical needs such as shopping, collecting prescriptions and telephone befriending.

Wales

Community café helpers in Flintshire stepped up to become fully-fledged Volunteering Matters volunteers and in Pembrokeshire some brilliant telephone befriending was carried out by some of our older volunteers.

In the two Rural Wisdom areas, 30 volunteers have been involved in delivering the Covid-19 response work and 36 beneficiaries have been assisted – many of whom have come to rely on our volunteers.

During this time, we have also been able to help communities with all kinds of other issues, including organising bin collections for residents and arranging for a butterfly garden to be built.

“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



Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent Council’s Locality Response Teams were set up to respond to requests from vulnerable residents looking for help from within their community for things like shopping deliveries, prescription collections, befriending telephone calls or anything else they were struggling with during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as dog-walking or parcel collections.

The locality teams continue to support vulnerable and shielding residents across Blaenau Gwent, and have supported over 550 households since the end of March.

Our effective partnership working with **Blaenau Gwent Council** has enabled council and **Aneurin Leisure Trust** staff within the locality teams to support local vulnerable people with referrals for prescription collections, shopping deliveries, or someone to talk to via befriending calls at a time when loneliness and isolation is affecting thousands of people.

Scotland

Scotland Covid-19 Change Story

North Lanarkshire, Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Falkirk

Volunteering Matters has supported Scottish communities for the last sixty years, enabling volunteers to tailor support to those who need it and lead change in local areas. In response to the pandemic additional volunteers were recruited, joining existing volunteers to carry out emotional and practical support tasks across **North Lanarkshire** and **Clackmannanshire**.

Our volunteers ensured people who were shielding still had their needs met – collecting shopping and prescriptions, providing telephone befriending and taking dogs for walks. Volunteers were screened and given the necessary support and guidance on how to volunteer safely including access to PPE. All to ensure that vulnerable people did not have to put themselves at risk and in turn felt constantly supported by their local community during this difficult time.

We were able to do this through partnerships with other organisations in the community including Local Government and **Third Sector Interfaces** to connect those in need of support and those willing to provide it.



Befriending younger people, North Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire

Befriending Volunteers in North Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire support and befriend disadvantaged young people.

The young people usually have complex issues and support is tailored to the individual, often including a fortnightly activity or outing.

Despite Covid-19, stopping this support was not an option. All befriending was reconfigured to happen remotely, either online or over the phone.

Thanks to support from **The Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund**, tablets were provided to **30 young people** who had no other means of digital inclusion. As a result we have built the knowledge and skills to facilitate matches online. This means geography and access will no longer be an issue, and we will be able to reach a wider range of young people.

Scotland

Clackmannanshire Befriending Families and Young People - 69 families and young people supported

North Lanarkshire Befriending Families and Young People – 120 families and young people supported

“The help and support we have received from Volunteering Matters has been invaluable. So our thanks go out to all the team.”

Clackmannanshire Council

“Our volunteers made it all happen; putting the needs of others before their own; being prepared to be out and about when many of us felt anxious about stepping outside, but most of all completing their tasks without hesitation and a willing smile.”

Volunteering Matters staff member

“I was able to offer online befriending to a young girl. She said seeing me online was the best part of the week. We’ve played lots of games, chatted lots and even baked cakes”

Volunteer Befriender

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, one of the RSVP volunteers, the coordinator for the RSVP hospital volunteering, worked hard to establish a new Covid-19 Volunteer response role.

As a result new volunteers have been recruited to support **NHS Forth Valley**.

168 people helped with recurring prescription collection and drop off

98 people helped with recurring supermarket food shopping and delivery

122 Covid response volunteers

How projects have adapted during Covid-19

Grandmentors

Grandmentors Covid-19 Change Story

Grandmentors, is an intergenerational mentoring project for care experienced young people, across 8 locations in England. It was vital to maintain existing mentoring activity with young people to enable them to stay on track to achieve their goals. The combined efforts of all at Volunteering Matters and our Local Authority partners ensured a swift redesign of the project.

During the pandemic many volunteered in their communities and 5 of these young people started university.

We commissioned an online mentoring platform, Brightside, to enable new matches to commence entirely online. Volunteer Managers worked with existing matches to move them online, while ensuring a rigorous adherence to Safeguarding. Risk Assessments were rapidly reviewed in partnership with the Local Authorities to ensure any young person at greater risk (either from Covid-19 or other factors) was supported throughout the lockdown period with a holistic, interagency approach.

New volunteers were recruited and trained. Local Authorities referred new young people and matches continued, with new matches beginning their relationship using telephone and online contact as well as the Brightside platform.

As the easing of lockdown approached, colleagues worked collaboratively to complete individual health checks for volunteers and young people to assess who would be safe to meet face to face. Volunteers were all trained to be Covid-19 Secure, with a specific focus on local rates of infection and Local Authority protocols, and then provided with PPE for themselves and their young people.

168 young people were supported through the Grandmentors programme during Covid-19.



Volunteers Supporting Families

Volunteers Supporting Families Covid-19 Change Story

Volunteers Supporting Families (VSF) have been actively working with families involved with social services for over ten years. Volunteers are trained and supported by staff, eventually going on to offer 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.

In the last year 166 families were matched with a volunteer and supported on the project.

During Covid-19 lockdown, with schools closed, the vulnerabilities of the children and families we support increased greatly.

Family's means of feeding children, supporting emotional wellbeing needs, maintaining a stable home environment and maintaining link to support networks were all hugely impacted.

All across the UK, safeguarding referrals plummeted. Our volunteers, as a trusted support network to such families, became one of the most crucial components in ensuring that children and families were able to safeguard themselves and access support.



Volunteers Supporting Families

Our families' projects quickly moved online and over the phone so that volunteers and families stayed connected. Working closely with Local Authorities and frontline social workers, our volunteers ensured the families stayed motivated and on track towards their overall goals and we could effectively signpost families to other essential services that were needed, especially in this period of uncertainty.

Thanks to the support of the **Mayor of London Emergency Fund** and **City Bridge Trust** we were able to support families in **Greenwich** and **Waltham Forest** who were struggling financially during the pandemic. The financial support was used to provide shopping vouchers, mobile phone credit and games for children during the lockdown period.

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex also provided additional financial support for families in **Southend** who were at risk of domestic abuse. The team have been identifying families they can support through the purchase of digital items to make them more connected to support networks.

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

Social Worker

“From the very first day the volunteer got me focused on my debts.... I’m really trying to sort out my life. In 3 months things have changed and I am feeling more confident and competent.”

Parent

“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. VSF 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



The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership

During early stages of Covid-19, Volunteering Matters became an active member of **The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)**. The Emergencies Partnership brings 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.

The Central Coordination Cell

As part of its role within VCSEP, Volunteering Matters convenes **The National Volunteering Coordination Cell for Covid-19**. The Cell has acted almost as a single point for the interface between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector to provide support and advice on volunteering. It has had a key role in translating ideas into action to enable volunteers to fulfil key roles, in supporting the management of supply and demand to co-ordinate efforts and in finding the right expertise and agencies within the sector to respond to government's request. This has meant that Government Departments have been advised where to quickly focus the efforts of volunteers where they can have the most impact whilst at the same time avoiding potential mistakes in placing volunteers in roles that would be unsuitable.

All this with the overall end goal of supporting communities and individuals during Covid-19. This has been a truly collaborative effort. Throughout the pandemic, we've worked with civil servants and ministers across **Cabinet Office, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport, Department of Health and Social Care, Department for Education and Department for Transport**, and with dozens of charities including **Royal Voluntary Service, British Red Cross, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action and St John Ambulance**. In all, we've supported government and other agencies with over 30 briefs since the crisis began, large and small, relating to volunteers and their support during the crisis.

Volunteering Safely

We are passionate about volunteering and the amazing impact it has, so we wanted to help everyone volunteering during Covid-19 to do this in a safe way. The **Volunteering Safely Campaign** was devised as part of our role within VCSEP. It helped organisations or groups wanting to get their people volunteering safely, for the first time or maybe doing different activities through resources available to download. Most recently this has included resources to assist community organisations who are planning to have staff or volunteers return to their buildings or workplaces with essential Risk Assessments.

Supporting the UK Government

Connecting Business Skills with Urgent Charity Needs

During the early stages of Covid-19, on behalf of the partnership, Volunteering Matters issued a call to businesses on behalf of the Charity Sector. The request was for businesses to support charities by volunteering their skills, services and logistical support. Skills and support offered from businesses included IT expertise, logistics and legal advice. These were then matched against requests from charities and voluntary organisations urgently needing support to help respond to Covid-19.



Journey Makers

Together with the **Department for Transport**, Volunteering Matters has been collaborating 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.

400 Journey Maker volunteers are now active at 84 Bus and Train Stations across England.

There have been 2,129 volunteering sessions, helping people to use public transport.

6,986 volunteering hours have been completed.



Paul Reddish
CEO, Volunteering Matters

BBC NEWS

Supporting the UK Government



“Working with Volunteering Matters has been a fantastic experience for The RecordShop, as it has allowed us to continue working with our network of young people during a challenging time. We are delighted that we can provide free studio time for our emerging artists and also provide work experience for those who wish to develop new skills through supporting passengers at training stations”

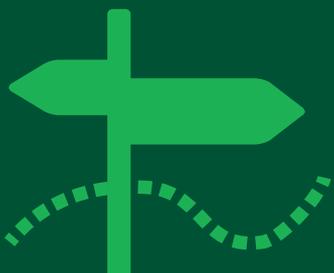
Local Business Owner

“The volunteers have really enjoyed their time helping commuters remember to wear face coverings. Most travellers have been in good spirits and have welcomed the cheery hello each morning. Some have been quick to comment with a fancy remark or two but the volunteers have met these few comments with a ‘have a nice day’ and ‘thank you’.

Local Volunteer Centre

“At Southend Central a lady approached me saying I’m so pleased to see you, she had her face covering on with tears in her eyes explaining that she was frightened by the amount of people on the underground without face coverings and was anxious that people were generally wearing face coverings, except on public transport. We advised her to turn her back and move away when she saw someone without a face covering, she explained she was so pleased to see something being done at her home station, to encourage and remind people.”

Volunteer at Southend Station



Our Chair



This report tells an inspiring story. I am so proud of the Volunteering Matters staff for their swift and effective response at a time of great uncertainty. And, of course, I am profoundly grateful to every single one of the volunteers who have made all of this happen. What they have done will have made a real and lasting impact in the communities of which they are part. I would like to express my sincere thanks on behalf of the trustees of Volunteering Matters for the amazing and crucial difference that they have all made.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Anne Heal'.

Anne Heal, Chair of Volunteering Matters



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

VolunteeringMatters.org.uk T: 020 3780 5870  @Volunteering_UK