

Volunteering News Flash - June 2020



When you received our previous Volunteering Newsflash in February no one had any idea about what was about to befall us. Since then volunteers have been the backbone of the country's Covid-19 relief work.

Volunteer Centre staff in Towcester and Brackley have been working at home, looking forward to our weekly Zoom meetings!!

In Brackley, the Volunteer Car Service staff have been fully occupied with the redirection of the service to support shopping and prescription collection (see more below).

In Towcester, the snvb Community Minibus and Rural Information Centre have both been central to the distribution of food from the Community Larder. Our normal volunteer brokerage service has been working alongside South Northamptonshire Council to deal with the many offers to volunteer that have been made and to satisfy requests for help such as prescription deliveries, shopping etc.

The Garden Buddies project has been carrying on at a very reduced level trying to keep as many lawns cut as possible, unfortunately without the use of volunteers. We are hoping this situation will change in the next couple of months so that we can welcome our volunteers back and start getting to grips with all the gardens again.

We have still seen some people offering to volunteer for the normal range of opportunities and urge potential volunteers to consider what they would like to get involved with when the pandemic is over. For now, the central go to place for Covid-19 relief volunteering is the [County Council website](#) - volunteers are then passed on to us for South Northamptonshire.

This week is National Volunteers Week. We normally have various events to celebrate volunteers. These have of course been curtailed this year - ironically, as the part of volunteers in society is so prominent at the moment.

Please remember all our wonderful volunteers, if you are out clapping on Thursday evening.

Go to our [website](#) now and search for something that catches your attention!!

Latest news from the Brackley Area Volunteer Car Service

Most people have no idea that the Volunteer Car Service exists, but for our passengers it is a lifeline. Our volunteer drivers are "Community Heroes". They transport around 50 passengers per week to their medical appointments. These journeys can be anywhere, it doesn't matter where, what matters is that the passenger needs to get there safely and on time.

Our drivers do not just drop them at the door. They accompany them to their appointment, which reduces the anxiety and worry that the passengers feel when attending somewhere they haven't been before.

We have had to radically change what we do during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 75% of our drivers have had to self isolate because they are high risk. We have over 400 registered passengers of which 84% are aged 70+, most with underlying health conditions which also makes them high risk.



Our average of fifty journeys per week have been non-existent during the lockdown. But the welfare of our passengers is still a great concern to us. How could we ensure that our passengers felt reassured and not completely isolated during this lockdown? How could we adapt our service and use the resources available to us? We decided upon two areas where our resources could be used to assist those most vulnerable.

The first area was to set up a "telephone service" where we would contact the most elderly and vulnerable passengers as a priority to ensure they were well, they had everything they needed and knew that they could call upon us should their situation change. This has been a real life line, more so for those who do not have family locally that they can depend upon.

The second area was to reach out to the wider community to offer a "prescription delivery service". This service has also been a life line, especially to those living in the surrounding villages. We offer this service to ANYONE not just our registered passengers. We have been able to work specifically alongside one of the dispensaries within Brackley and the demand for this service is still continuing to increase.

When we aren't busy telephoning passengers for a chat or delivering prescriptions we have also been carrying out essential grocery shopping for those in need.

Even our volunteer drivers who are having to isolate have been doing whatever they can. Most are in contact with their regular passengers to ensure all is well which helps to reduce the feeling of isolation.

It would be fair to say that our jobs haven't been nine to five since lock down with the normal, relaxing weekend off. Our phones are always ringing and we are always looking out for those that we know are vulnerable. Only recently over the weekend we received a call from one of our volunteer drivers who was concerned for the

welfare of one of our passengers who has known mental health issues. Due to lockdown this passenger who was receiving weekly support for their mental health found themselves completely alone and without their normal support. Thanks to their volunteer driver who raised the concern for the passenger the emergency services were called and the passenger is now receiving the support they need.

We are not just a "Volunteer Car Service" we are a family and we look out for each and every one of our passengers and drivers all of the time.

If you can spare any time and would like to be a part of our wonderful volunteer family then please contact us 01280 841099 or [go to our website to register an interest in being a driver](#).

Some comments from a local Covid-19 volunteer

I have really enjoyed playing a part in the local volunteering effort over the past few weeks during this unprecedented situation. I have collected prescriptions for people in self-isolation who have been so grateful, often leaving little thank you notes outside their doors.

Each week, I have picked up groceries for a few ladies - again they have been lovely; I have got to know them better each time I deliver to them and enjoy having a chat (at distance!) before I leave. One lady has been giving a donation to the Happy At Home charity, for whom I am volunteer befriender, each time I get her shopping and has repeated that she couldn't have coped without us all.

It has been a heart-warming experience and I am glad to have been able to play a small part.



Hilary has been busy delivering prescriptions and groceries to people who need help

Volunteering this summer

Of course there are lots of volunteering opportunities that are not available at the moment. But in addition to the special Covid-19 opportunities there are still plenty on our website to consider, either now or for when things get back to a bit more like normal.

AgeUK - Towcester

The AgeUK shop in Towcester are currently planning how to open the shop again as the restrictions are lifted. As many of their current volunteers aren't able to come back yet, they are looking for people who can give a few hours.

If you would like to offer to help out - even if just in the interim, please [go to our website to register your interest...](#)

Silverstone Experience

The Silverstone Experience is hoping to re-open in July and are looking for more volunteers for that. [Details on our website...](#)

Volunteering report from Nether Heyford

We have received a report of the setup of a branch of the Community Larder in Heyford. It makes interesting reading - how a community can come together to help those less in need. [Download here...](#)

[For more ideas just browse the full range on our website...](#)



Food parcels being unloaded from the snvb Rural Information Centre for distribution in Nether Heyford

Volunteering - a great way to make a real difference in your community

It's time to celebrate
Northamptonshire's
Covid 2020



COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE INVITES ALL NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT GROUPS TO JOIN IN THE CELEBRATIONS OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE'S COVID 2020 COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS.

THESE CELEBRATIONS WILL SHOWCASE ALL THE WONDERFUL WORK THAT VOLUNTEERS ARE DOING DURING THE PANDEMIC.

TO BE PART OF THE CELEBRATIONS SIMPLY FILL IN OUR ONLINE FORM AND TELL US HOW YOUR GROUP HAS SUPPORTED OTHERS DURING THIS PANDEMIC.

ALL FORMS NEED TO BE RECEIVED BY THE 31ST AUGUST 2020.

FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT OUR WEBSITE
WWW.NORTHANTSACRE.ORG.UK

Help for organisations looking for volunteers

Organisations can register on-line via our website and then add and maintain their opportunities themselves. We have found that a majority of organisations have opted to do this.

Of course, we are still here to manage the information for you if you prefer. If you have any questions just contact Lorraine at the Volunteer Centre.

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