**Date: 01/11/2020**

**Duration:** 59:57

**Interviewer:** \*Project introduction\*

**Participant:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yes, so, my first question urm, so I want to know a little bit about your group, can you tell me the name of your group?

**Participant:** Yes, it’s called [GROUP NAME].

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm and it’s based in the village called [VILLAGE NAME] in [COUNTY NAME], and also in a little hamlet called urr… [HAMLET NAME], I forgot there for a second. Urm, so everything that’s organised in the village always includes [HAMLET NAME] as well which is just, just basically two streets of houses near to urm, the main road. Urr and we, my husband I set it up because nothing was really happening in the village at the start of lockdown and we felt that there was lots of isolated people that couldn’t access food and people in genuine hardship. And somebody needed to step forward and do something. And my husband and I both work half an hour away from where we live, so we were actually saving money by not going to work, we were working from home but we weren’t spending money on petrol and diesel so we decided that we would pay the £24 a week for [CHARITY NAME] to come and deliver food to the village out of the money that we were saving.

Urm, so we stared very small, outside urr just where the war memorial monument is, and we pout tables out and we put the food out and we didn’t know if anybody would come, but people came. And urm, slowly the word got out and we set up a Facebook page, not everybody’s on Facebook but it was just a way of trying to connect with people, and it was very slow to start but within about four weeks we’d spread. So we went from one stall urm in the village to having – to the second week we put one in [HAMLET NAME], the little hamlet because we felt that we’d missed them out so we should do something there. And then we put another one at the top end of the village, and one in the community hall because we didn’t initially have access to that. And then I used to drive around with food in my car to two different areas of the village for people who weren’t very mobile, so we ended up with six different stalls running on a Wednesday. Urm and we chose a Wednesday because that’s my day off I don’t work on a Wednesday, just so that – because I’m a [OCCUPATION 1] and it was very unclear what was going to happen with schools at the time, urr so I knew that during lockdown whatever happened I’d be able to continue, because I didn’t work on Wednesday.

So, that’s where we started and we put urr, a donation bucket out and the food is there free for anybody to take there’s no –

**Interviewer:** Sorry, I lost you for a minute! Okay. Can you hear me? Yeah, so maybe it’s the microphone problem?

**Participant:** Yeah. Shall I start again?

**Interviewer:** No, start, you were saying, explaining how did you start?

**Participant:** Yeah so very very small, we really didn’t know how people would respond and it was really important to get the message out as well that – have you lost video of me or can you see me?

**Interviewer:** No, no, I can see you, yes.

**Participant:** Oh right. Yeah, it was very important to get the message out that it wasn’t just for people in difficulty, it was for everybody, it was to help stop food wastage. It was, it was for everybody in the village. And we start - so we, we, so we started off with one stall and ended up with six stalls in the end, and we also did things like picking up people’s prescriptions, going shopping for people, urm, but we felt very strongly that the stall wasn’t just about food, it was also about social contact as well for people’s mental health. Because yes, we couldn’t socialise but actually you were allowed to go out for food, so people could actually have a chat whilst wearing the masks, being safe, keeping themselves two meters apart but actually for some people it was the only people that they saw in the week. So, it was really good for mental health as well. Urm…

**Interviewer:** Have anything changed in the group since it starts?

**Participant:** Yes, urr, we’ve had different numbers of volunteers. We had lots of volunteers at the start, so many that we didn’t need as many as we had, people were very generous. And then in September, we really struggled because everybody was going back to work. But we’ve managed to keep going but we now only run two stalls because of the weather. Because in [COUNTY NAME] the weather is not fantastic. So, having stalls outside is not ideal for people standing in the rain and for the stalls to be in the rain. So, we have one large one in the hall and one in [HAMLET NAME] still where we use somebody’s garage if there’s bad weather.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, so yes, we’ve cut back, we’ve cut back on the stalls, just because we don’t have any spaces that are indoors that we can use. We’re trying to set up another one in a community building but its through the county council and its proving quite difficult to get the, to get the go ahead. Urm, so we’ve been trying to do that for the past four weeks because that, that buildings where… in a urm, in a, it’s a housing area where old people live so we’d really like to support them but we’re just waiting for the yes to come back so we can start that one up again.

Urm, my husband and I are going to try and do urr online, our food and – what’s it called? Food, Health, Safety, so we can handle food urm, because we don’t have that qualification and during the October half term, we got involved in the free school meals for families. So, Morrisons donated some food and we delivered that, and a local café did and it got us thinking that actually for Christmas, we have lots of bags of pasta that have been donated, we could actually make macaroni cheese, we could deliver it to the families that are struggling. And it was important to us, it was any family that was struggling, not just free school meals because lots of people have been affected by it.

Urm, but I’ve forgotten a main thing. So, we started off with [CHARITY NAME], £24 a week, urr we would just get a random selection of food, urr and then not long after that Morrisons came on board and they donate to us every week, free of charge and then we also found out about [NETWORK NAME], and urr we now have Marks and Spencers, we’ve probably been working with them for about three months and they donate any food that they can’t sell the next day on a Tuesday and Wednesday to us. So we put that food out on the stall on a Wednesday and then we have a pop up stall that isn’t manned by anybody it’s just put out in the village and people can pick up whatever they want and then the table just gets taken in at the end of the day. And then two weeks ago Lidl came on board, so we’ve got Lidl as well. So, we have a lot more food than we did when we started, so.

**Interviewer:** Really, okay so it’s growing, the number of donations?

**Participant:** Yes, it is - I’m just going to turn the volume u because I can’t quite hear you very well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** There we go. Yeah so it’s growing in a different way now I think, urm I don’t know how long we’ll be able to keep it going with – because it, it is my day off and I am a [OCCUPATION 1] and basically I work for days because on the fifth day when I’m not at work, I use that day to plan so actually I’m not doing that at the minute so long term I’m not sure how long I can keep going. But we said we’ll keep going until March. Urm, and then hopefully somebody will step forward to take it over in a different direction maybe., but we we’re going to keep going as long as the pandemics here to support people.

**Interviewer:** When did you, exactly when did you start?

**Participant:** March.

**Interviewer:** March, okay.

**Participant:** So, it will have been a full year by the time that we stop.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urr, oh, I’m just thinking of other things that we’ve done as well. We’ve gone all sorts; it just keeps mushrooming! Urm, we got donations of sweets from Morrisons, over a thousand pounds worth of sweets, because the children, because we’re tier two, urm I and it was talking about tier three in our area, so trick-or-treating wasn’t going to happen so we made up bags for 160 school children in the school in the village school and everybody got a bag of sweets to take away, and the nursery did and then we also reached out to families who send their children to other schools and delivered those.

We’ve done random acts of kindness with a bunch of flowers that Marks and Spencers donated. So, we’ve got some paramedics that live near us, so we just left them on the doorstep and we just delivered them to make them smile. Urr, what else have we done? Urr, oh, we organised a Halloween competition, decorate your house competition and then we put the pictures on Facebook so those people that couldn’t get out could still enjoy Halloween. Urr we had prizes for first, second and third place just from things that were donated to us from the supermarkets. Urr we’ve probably done more things than this but I can’t remember.

**Interviewer:** And how often do people in the group do these things? You said that every Wednesday urr you you place the stall in the village, right?

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But how about the kind of activities that you mentioned now, urm?

**Participant:** Like the, like the Halloween competition?

**Interviewer:** Yes, not the Halloween competition, those kinds of activities.

**Participant:** Yeah, I’m, I’m trying to remember what else we’ve done! It’s so hard to remember. Urr, we did free school meals over the summer as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** We were wanting to do something with the children over the summer but it proved too complicated because we couldn’t use the school grounds because they were having work done, so we didn’t have a safe space because we wanted to get some sports people out – like COVID safe, small numbers and do something but that didn’t happen.

Ooh, we did get involved with the county council and we had Health and Wellbeing van come to the village and they came and did exercise in the street. And that was socially distanced, so that happened for four weeks over the summer. We did do that. But urr, apart from the stalls we don’t do anything regularly, it’s just as things happen, we’ll react to it and think what can we do to help. Urm.

**Interviewer:** And how many people are in the group?

**Participant:** Urr we have a 155 people on our Facebook group.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And, I would say there is probably another 20-30 people who are not on Facebook that regularly come to the stalls, off the top of my head. Because there’s a lot of older people that don’t have Facebook.

**Interviewer:** And how many of those people were active helpers? They were actually volunteering and helping you in the…?

**Participant:** Oh right, okay, right I have to work this out. So, urm, I’m just going to write this down.

**Interviewer:** No, just to have an idea, four or five, ten or twelve, something like that.

**Participant:** Urr, I’ll just \*muttering\* I think I have to say the name so myself to remember.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, urr… so I think at the minute there’s myself and my husband, and five or six other volunteers who every week are involved and then we have another two volunteers we can call on when we’re struggling for numbers because people can’t, can’t - oh, I’ve forgotten the vicar – yeah, so maybe six or seven regular volunteers, two more that we can call on if we need some extra support. But in the height of it we probably had about fifteen volunteers, we had more volunteers than we needed really, during lockdown, because most people were at home, so they were really eager to do something to help.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and have you had any previous experiences like that? If you had any previous experiences of organising groups like this?

**Participant:** Urm… well we organised the parent and toddler group when my children were younger. So, we’d we’d done that, but we’d never done anything like this before. My husband works in the charity sector and he helps groups access funding, so we kind of had a head start that he knew of some organisations that were doing similar things, so we could look them up and see what they were doing and think about what we could do. And… we, we looked and we saw groups were delivering shopping to people they thought were vulnerable and we decided that wasn’t for us we actually wanted to do it differently and actually like have a market stall kind of experience so people could have choice. Because we felt it was important that people could choose what they want and not somebody else deciding for them what they needed. Urm and we didn’t want wastage either because there wasn’t very much to start with so if we were deciding what people wanted then perhaps things would end up in the bin because they didn’t actually like it, didn’t need it. Urm so it worked quite well, what we’ve done, people just took what they wanted.

One positive is people trying things that they wouldn’t normally try because it’s free and they just put a donation in if they can. So, we had plantain last week. I spoke to a lady last week when I was delivering some flowers and she said, “oh! I tried that Actimel and I’ve had years and years of tummy trouble and I would never have tried it if I hadn’t seen it on the stall, but now I buy it all the time because I know I like it and it makes a difference.” So, there’s all kinds of different positives to it as well as people getting the help that they need and looking after their mental health, yeah.

**Interviewer:** How do you reach people that need help?

**Participant:** Urm, we had contact with the county council and the housing associations and housing officers and social services .basically we made contact with county council to say, “this is what we were doing,” and we had a point of contact and then when issues came in she’d filter them through to us and would give the details and say, “can you go and see this person, can you go and see how you can support them.” So we provided emergency food parcels to people that were in real need, people that couldn’t get out to pick up their prescriptions, we took that over, and so that was how it came about. And we got one of the teaching assistances from the local school involved and she’s born and bred in the village, whereas we moved here about twelve years ago so she had a lot more local knowledge that we had. So she was able to identify people and also to speak top [people and encourage people during the week to say, “this is what’s happening, please come along,” and then she was a happy face for them to see and she made people feel comfortable and we developed relationships with people as it went along. And now we know a lot more people and people, you know, would talk about what we do, and we still get new faces coming through the door each week, so word spreads.

**Interviewer:** Were there, are there any particular skills that people in the group have?

**Participant:** Urm… I think that, the real thing is the ability to talk to people, the ability to make people laugh and smile and brighten up the day, I think that’s the key still that the volunteers have. Urm, none of us have a background in social, social work or anything, you know, there was a few teachers that were involved and you know, we have experience of talking to parents and children so we were able to like step into that gap when they didn’t have the contact from the school – you know when they were struggling with parenting and things – we could give advice there. But apart from that no, we didn’t have any specific skills. It was just making people feel at ease and there wasn’t a problem with them coming to the stall because, at first it was stigma of people accepting help and being seen to be accepting help. But actually, very quickly lots of different types of people came along to the stall, and it wasn’t clear who was coming for what reason to the people on the outside. People felt more comfortable in coming because nit just looked like they were showing support rather than they were actually in desperate need.

We had one old lade why was using kitchen paper for toilet paper because there was no toilet paper available. Urm, we we actually managed to solve that, one of the local toilet paper companies in [CITY NAME] have donated to the county council but we weren’t aware of that but my husband found out and we managed to fill the car full of toilet rolls and bring them up to the village so we could get that out to the people, so that was really well received. Because there was just a lot of people that were not leaving their houses because they, they were in the urr, I forgot the name now – in the group of people that were not allowed to go out. Urr – how could I forget this term? The shielding group, that’s it. And so they weren’t going out and the village shop didn’t have toilet rolls so they, you know, some people live from day-to-day and they don’t have stockpiles of toilet papers and other food items, they will just go to the village shop everyday and it was struggling to have stock in so.

**Interviewer:** Yes. How would you describe your role in the group?

**Participant:** My role… I think my role’s joint with my husband, it’s it’s the nitty-gritty of getting things done. So, it’s not just on the Wednesday when the stall happens, it’s doing everything in the background to make sure that it happens, and it continues to grow. And its its picking up all the food, it’s monitoring what we’ve got, urm it’s thinking about what extra we need to buy so we place Asda orders for extra good from the donations that we’re receiving. So Morrisons have donated… probably about twenty boxes of pasta, it goes up to the ceiling, urm but realising that people aren’t taking lots of pasta because they have pasta so what can we do to get them to take it in case of a second lockdown and here we are facing a second lockdown. So, we’ve ordered lots of pasta sauce so, on Wednesday this week people can take lots of pasta sauce as well as pasta. So, for however long this last, whether it is the four weeks or longer, they’re going to have plenty of food in the cupboards.

It’s counting the money, putting it on a Google sheet that’s shared with the headteacher of the primary school and two teachers in the village that work elsewhere so that it’s all above board everybody can see what money’s come in; the money’s counted by two people at the end of each stall and signed ofr, so it’s all above board. Because it only takes one person to make an accusation and, we we don’t want – we just want to protect ourselves from anything. So, we we keep all the receipts and it’s all there for anybody to see. So, if there was any questions raised at any point we can show where the donations have gone.

And urr, it’s, what else is it? It’s publicising things on Facebook, keeping the conversation going, engaging with topple, it’s talking to outside organisations, all the time trying to get more and more support as much as we can. Building up relationships with the supermarkets. Urm… I don’t know what else. It feels like it’s kind of full time, \*laughs\*. Whenever I’m not working, I’m trying to do this and that for the stall. But it it has a really good feel good factor to make a difference, so.

**Interviewer:** How do you fit all the activities in the group that you do in the group in your life? How do you fit?

**Participant:** I don’t know. I think it’s because I’m a [OCCUPATION 1] and I’m used to never having any free time.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** I think and I’m a mum of three, I’ve got an [AGE OF CHILD 1], [AGE OF CHILD 2] and a [AGE OF CHILD 3], and I think our house is always busy and it just comes together somehow. But it’s, you know, I don’t go to bed ‘til midnight, urm, but I, I manage to juggle everything, and it fits in. And I think in my mind I know that it isn’t forever, it’s just, it’s just for while the pandemics now and we’re just making sure that we play our part in our community, because there was nobody else stepping forward and it was just important to fill that void. And we have done and, I think, once this is over, we’ll not, not do anything, but I think we’ll hand over the stalls. But as a result of this I’m going to be on the, on the steering board of the community hall, my husbands now signed up to be part of the youth group to now try and get more activities in the village for for, the kind of 12-18 year olds, because there is not very much. So, when were out of it, we might give up the food stalls but we might, we’ll still be involved in some way. We’ll still contribute in another way to the village.

And it’s been really good for getting to know people in the village as well, when you, when you - it’s a, it’s kind of a traditional village there used to be a mine just outside of the village so there’s, there’s a big social mix in the village there’s families where they’ve been affected by the coal mining, the lack of coal mining and there’s been unemployment and that’s been carried on through generations. There’s people that work really hard but not on high salaries, there’s other people that are professionals living on the newer estates. And it’s a real cross-match of society within the village.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm.

**Participant:** Urm and it’s just good to bring everyone together.

**Interviewer:** And how did you get people to get involved?

**Participant:** Lots of enthusiasm.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** I would just talk to people on the street when they were, when they were walking on the other side of the street staring as if to say, “what are you doing?” I would stand in the middle of the road and say, “oh, do you want to come and have a look?” And explain to them what we’re doing, and the rest of the volunteers did that. And I think the Facebook group as well just, people could just in the comfort of their armchair have a nosey and see what we were doing and then ask people – you know pick up the phone and say, “ah, what are they doing there? What is all this about?” And we had a few people just phoning us up as well because we put our phone numbers out there as well, which I’m not too comfortable with doing, but we did it, we made posters we put them up around the village with our phone numbers on so if people needed support they could contact us. Urm, and even just two weeks ago we had a new person ring us up who’s moved to the village, hasn’t got a stick of furniture, there’s some falling out with social services, I’m not sure of the ins and outs but they were asking for support, needing things picked up from the shop urm, I’ve out him in touch with a cleaner because he has OCD. Urr and he wants this council house cleaned to within an inch of his life. Urr so slowly but surely supporting him and that’s just started, just two weeks ago. So, we’re still getting people contacting us.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urm… apart from the Facebook do you use for example WhatsApp, other kinds of social media? Or just Facebook?

**Participant:** No, no, we just use Facebook.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and is the group part of a national network?

**Participant:** Nope, it’s just us. It’s just a group that we just set up.

**Interviewer:** But you mentioned some connections with the local council for example?

**Participant:** Yeah, urr… it was, because my husband works [OCCUPATION 2], and – he doesn’t work for the county council, but he works with individuals from the county council so he knew, urm, that there was some new new – during the pandemic there were new new roles created called locality coordinators so there were people that were redeployed from their original roles urm and I think she – our locality urm officer, actually came from the NHS, she was employed by the NHS but it all came together with the county councils somehow, I don’t understand. But he already knew her so he contacted her to let her know what we were doing and that’s how the referrals came through the NHS and through the county council to our locality organiser and then she passed them on to us, so that’s how that worked.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But I don’t think if my husband didn’t work in the sector, we would have known necessarily about her, it was just he had the connection?

**Interviewer:** Why, why is that? Its difficult to connect with other groups and?

**Participant:** Urm, I think, I think it was very unclear what what the county council was doing during lockdown because probably they were very unclear what they were doing, just like in education we were very unclear what we were doing. In most sectors most people were very unsure of what, what the future looked like and what our roles were. So, I don’t think it was that well publicised what was initially, that there were locality officers and what their jobs were.

**Interviewer:** And now it is more clear?

**Participant:** Yes, I think it is. You see adverts for it, urm… yes, I think it is, yes.

**Interviewer:** And there is any other groups that emerged after your one group?

**Participant:** You mean in my local areas are there other groups?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** Yes, yes, yes there are, we’re not linked to them in anyway but urm, yes there is a mutual aid on our local town of [TOWN NAME], urm and they’ve taken over a public phone box and they put food in there and people take what they want and other people donate food in there. But I think it was quite easy within the town itself because there’s a foodbank.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** So, the foodbank was already doing quite a lot so that mutual aid that sprung up stayed fairly small, I think, because the foodbank were doing a really good job.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, and I don’t really know about other areas, I think I didn’t really have time to look around to see what everybody else was doing, I was too busy just doing what we were doing.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urm -sorry? And have you tried to get any official recognition urm by becoming for example a charity, company something like that?

**Participant:** No, no, we haven’t we just decided to keep it informal because… we’re working really hard already and it’s just another, another level of formality and people work and were really busy. So, we’re just keeping it informal and so that it can just keep running as it is. So, if we apply for funding we go through the hall in our village because they are a registered charity. So we did get a £500 grant from the county council to pay for the delivery of the food from [CHARITY NAME], so that didn’t go to us, that went into the hall account and it’s just set aside for us, urr, just to pay for the [CHARITY NAME] delivery so that’s the way we went around it. And I think because we never through it would be something long term, we thought – we didn’t see the need in making it formal. And because we had the lady that runs the hall, we had the head teacher and two other primary school teachers on board with us and everything was out in the open we felt we had enough trusted figures to be looking at what we were doing to make sure that everything was as it should be.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urm, and how about other kind of resources that you have?

**Participant:** Any other, any other…?

**Interviewer:** Resources?

**Participant:** Resources, we don’t really have any resources. We have some borrowed tables, urm, we have a trolly for carrying crates that we bought but we don’t really have any resource we, yeah, it’s the bare essentials.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. You talk about your own motivations for getting involved, in your opinion what are the motivations of other active participants in the group? Why did they get involved?

**Participant:** Because they wanted to help, they wanted to make a difference. I think that’s something that’s shared across all of us. Because we wouldn’t give up, the volunteers wouldn’t give up their time every week if they didn’t believe in what we were doing. So, I think they probably started because they wanted to help and then saw what we were doing and believed in what we were doing and saw the impact of what we were doing and that, and that’s engaged them.

So, we have, one of our volunteers for example, she started, and she was very nervous and very loud, and we thought, “oh, not sure about this lady.” But actually, urr she’s grown and she’s one of our best volunteers now. And she picks up food for us on a Wednesday night, she puts out the stalls on the Thursday, the free one where it’s just the pop up one. And any food that’s left at the end of the day she takes it to our town, which is about five minutes away, to the phone box that I mentioned earlier, and pops it in there for the people in the town to benefit from because that food is then left over on Thursday, if there’s anything left, so she make sure that it doesn’t go to waste. So, yeah, she’s kind of grown she she used to just volunteer for the two hours at the stall but now she does a lot more.

And urr, yes, it’s kind of developing your volunteers as well to be able to share the workload. But it’s it’s finding trusted volunteers that you can rely on as well.

**Interviewer:** Why is it so important that?

**Participant:** Yeah, because you know, you need, you need people to rely on that you know are going to do it. You don’t want to let people down in the community. So for example if this volunteer wasn’t reliable and the food didn’t go out on a Thursday when my husband and I are at work now, then there would be people that will be let down who wouldn’t have been relying on that food, for that day, so, yeah. That’s why it’s important.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how about the problems that you and the group have encountered. For example, in your opinion has involvement in the group meant a lot of, a lot of time an effort for you?

**Participant:** Has it taken a lot of time for me; it has. It has, and, it was much better during lockdown because I could, I was teaching online so, because I wasn’t, because it wasn’t face-to-face teaching it was on Google Classroom so I would set the work and then if there were questions and queries it was via e-mail, so I could do that at anytime of the day. So, what it meant was I was free to help the community when I needed to, and I could fit my work in around it. But now I’m back to work face to face it’s really hard to keep doing what we were once doing but we still feel that we should and there’s a need. So, it’s its, yeah, it’s that battle of trying to find enough time. That’s probably the biggest problem.

What other problems have we had? Urm… some some sometimes, we’ve we’ve got got an issue with one volunteer. And so sometimes it’s yeah, sometimes its an issue, oh how do I put it? We’ve got a great set of volunteers but we have one volunteer who’ve we’ve identified we *think* is taking food, which is okay if the volunteer needs to take food if they’re in need, but it needs to be above board and honest. So, we’re needing to have a conversation this week just about. Because he takes the food to the little hamlet, and I went last week because it was half term and there was lots of food left, and normally he doesn’t bring any food back so we’re wondering where the food is actually going to? Because it needs to come back into the village to support more people, so that’s an issue that we’re dealing with next week. But that wasn’t an issue before because my husband always used to go to that stall as well because we always thought there should be two people, minimum on the smaller stalls. But obviously we’ve gone back to work. So, there’s, there’s not the people around. So, my husband actually works on a Wednesday, well he works Monday to Friday so yes, I think since September this volunteer has perhaps not been as honest as we thought he was being. And we’ve realised now so we now need to tackle that unfortunately. Urm, but thankfully the rest of the volunteers, we haven’t had any issues with, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how about your emotional effort?

**Participant:** How about emotional…?

**Interviewer:** Effort. If being-?

**Participant:** Effort?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Yeah. Yes, it’s true urm, I think, when we, when we first started my husband and I got the food delivered to our house and as the stalls grew we used my eldest sons bedroom for the storage area because we didn’t have the hall, the hall was just shut. So everything had to be stored in this house so it did get quite chaotic, and there were times – I have a very good marriage and a very good husband, but we would be biting our tongues because we would be tripping over crates of tinned food, toilet rolls and it was a desperate mad rush to get both the cars packed and get to the stalls on time, and yeah, there probably were a few tears along the line, from frustration and tiredness. But no, we got through it and it’s a lot easier now-a-days, now that we have the hall. So, we have the hall, we also have a small room for storage where, so we use as a storeroom, so it’s much less stressful now-a-days.

**Interviewer:** Have people drop out of your group?

**Participant:** Urm, people coming to the stalls or volunteers?

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** Which one do you mean? People coming or volunteers?

**Interviewer:** The, the, both.

**Participant:** Urm, yes to both. So, we we know some people aren’t coming to the stalls because they’re back to work. So that’s a really tricky one, a really tricky one, because we want to help those people that are at work but equally as a family of five, we have nothing left to give. We we we’re at capacity, we can’t give any more of our time and none of our volunteers are coming forward to say that they would do it in an evening. So, my husband and I talked about perhaps opening one Saturday a month, which isn’t great but its more than we do now. So that those that those who are at work can come and do a really big shop once a month and take quite a lot of food. So that’s something that we’ve just started thinking about doing, because we know we’re not reaching everybody. But my work’s really hard in school, my school was, has been really badly affected by COVID and we’ve had over a third of the staff off and only a quarter of the kids in, it’s a secondary school and it’s not build for social distancing. So, I was absolutely exhausted by the end of term. And I, I we can’t we’re we’re too tired, we can’t do any more. So, so, we though as a compromise one Saturday a month, urr but now obviously we’re going into lockdown, things might change. Who knows? Schools are going back full time, my school, I know hand on heart will close if it wasn’t half term because we, yeah it wasn’t working so it may well be that I’m back off at some point and then I can open more regularly for those that work.

Volunteer wise, we’ve lost, urm… we’ve lost three, we’ve lost two teachers because they’re back at work, we’ve lost our teaching assistant from the village school that was a great contact to have because she’s back at work. We’ve lost the headteacher who also used to come and help. Urm, we’ve lost two really solid volunteers urm, because the stall that they used to help us run is closed but there the two that we can rely on. So, if we have low numbers one week, we can say can you help, and they just jump to it and they come back. Urm, trying to think if we’ve lost any more volunteers. We’ve probably lost a few more but its people, because of people’s work, they can’t physically be there. But the teach- the two teachers that we lost and the teaching assistant that we lost they came back at half term and they didn’t have to, but they wanted to come back because they were off work and they wanted to see how things have changed and how, and see people again, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay, any other problems that have affected the group? Organising, coordination, urm…

**Participant:** No, I think, I think we’re very organised – I like to think that’s me. \*Laughs\*

**Interviewer:** For sure.

**Participant:** I think I treat it like I treat my job and it has to be organised, I don’t like to to be unorganised. And despite the fact in the background it’s a mad rush, all the hard work is done and organised, all the paperwork is done on the Wednesday night ready, so it just needs picking up the following Wednesday. Urm, yeah, it just works like clockwork and then if there are any problems along the way like late delivery or something like that, we can deal with it because everything else is sorted. Oh, I’ve forgotten something else we did. We organised a uniform swap shop as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, people donated their uniform and we just had it on…little wardrobe things and people could come and take uniforms and that was free as well. Urm, any other problems?

**Interviewer:** Differences in aims amongst people for example.

**Participant:** Say that again sorry?

**Interviewer:** If differences urr in aims amongst people, amongst the group.

**Participant:** No, no, no, we haven’t.

**Interviewer:** Too many people?

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** Or not enough volunteers?

**Participant:** Say that again.

**Interviewer:** Not enough volunteers.

**Participant:** Urm, sometimes we don’t have enough volunteers, so last week urr, well yeah there’s an issue. So last week we decided to do Halloween to bring a smile to people’s faces, so my family dressed up. Urm, and we have a Facebook messenger with all the volunteers on, so I was saying, “are people dressing up?” And unfortunately, the Vicar didn’t agree with Halloween, so she didn’t volunteer last week and then there’s another lady who runs an alternative church, I don’t know much about it. But she was anti-Halloween as well. So, she didn’t volunteer last week. So, there’s there’s no ill feeling but they weren’t comfortable with it. But we felt it was important for the village, for the children, for the old people, to bring a smile to their faces. So I think while we don’t agree on everything, the bigger need of the village comes first and urm, so then we had other volunteers step forward to fill it, to fill in, so that was good. And I think everybody just pulls together because they believe in it, so.

**Interviewer:** And what kind of things have you done that might have help keep the group going?

**Participant:** Urm… I think we keep expending.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** Urm, I think if we just stayed with the food, we had from [CHARITY NAME], it was quite small, not much variety and very random as well. You know, so from one week to the next we might get a sack of potatoes one week – we we we probably get ten different types of food, but we never know what they’re going to be. So it could be a sack of potatoes one week, urm, we we could have a catering size pack of chicken another week – it’s very random and it’s not, it’s not going to help many people. So, I thin constantly trying to get new organisations on board to donate food. Urr, and then actually building a relationship with those organisations. So initially Marks and Spencers just donated urr bread but then I got speaking to the staff and they were like, “oh, can you can you take fresh things?” And and its food that they can’t sell the next day so yes, we can take it but we can’t put it out on the stall because it has to be used that day. So they we started actually driving around to people’s houses in the evening, people in need that we knew of and saying, “oh we’ve got these, we’ve got this salad, we’ve got this coleslaw, would you like anything?” So those people now expect us on a, on a Tuesday night and a Wednesday night to be popping around their house if we’ve got anything like that to give out.

Urm, but yeah, developing that relationship – they then said, “oh we’ve got flowers, could you do anything with flowers?” So now we get flowers every week and the smiles that those flowers bring. Urm, so all the flowers on the Tuesday go out on the stall, people pick them up for themselves for their friends who are at work, they take them to the graveyard, and then we get flowers again on the Wednesday night and some of those go on the pop up stall and then between my self and the other volunteer that picks them up, we do random acts of kindness. So, this week I was just delivering them around the village. My idea was to tie them to lampposts, but it was throwing it down with rain and they would have got damaged, so we had to deliver them to people. But I also take them into my work, because work was so hard people were on their knees and I just put them inn people’s offices and classrooms with a little sticker on them saying, “from the flower fairy” so nobody knew who they were from they were just random acts of kindness.

Urm, and then… yes Morrisons developed a really really positive relationship with the lady the organises that. Urm and she gives us all the best things, we’ve had all sorts urm. And then just Lidl that’s in the last three weeks I think and we get, we’ve had all kinds of eggs, like box after box of egg so we’ve made posters and put them on the stall showing what you can do with eggs, that you can freeze eggs. And I think that because we now get so much variety, people keep coming because they can do a proper full shop, whilst we might not have everything, we’ve got a lot of things. Urm, so I think that’s what keeps people coming.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, and the volunteers?

**Participant:** And what sorry?

**Interviewer:** And the volunteers what-?

**Participant:** Yeah, I hadn’t had a chance – yeah we changed how we run it in the hall, so people used to queue up outside, but we were conscious of the bad weather, so now we actually put individual tables out and as people come through the door they get handed a number and then they can sit at any table and then their number gets called. So, while they’re sitting at the table, they can have conversations with other people. But obviously it’s only one household per table, and we can’t have anybody shouting for transmission but everyone’s wearing a mask and people do sit and chat. And we have a lady on the door welcoming people in because you can come at any time between two o’clock and half past three, so she has a chat and she wonders around so she cleans the tables after people have got up to shop, so that they table’s clean for the next person. So, while she’s going that she’s having a chat with the people sitting down. And as they go through the stalls they chat to the different volunteers on the stall and then we’ve got a kitchen as well with a kitchen hatch where we’ve got all the fresh food. And then they talk to me in the kitchen. Yeah, so it’s a sociable thing, I think it’s the highlight of some of the old folks weeks. And for some families its its just essential, it really is, because they are struggling.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm, and for the group, because you said that you have urr regular group of people that are engaged in the activities, in all the activities even if they don’t volunteer. Urm, why do you, why do you think those people keep going?

**Participant:** Why do the volunteers keep coming?

**Interviewer:** Yes, they keep going, they keep engaging in the group.

**Participant:** Because they believe in it because we live in a community and it’s actually a very good community and… they feel that it’s their role in the community now, I think. Yeah, yeah, you know, they are a volunteer for the mutual aid and its its they know that people expect them to be there and they want to see them there. And they feel, I hope they feel valued as part of the group and the group wouldn’t happen if we didn’t all pull together and, urr yeah, I’m not sure I’m being very clear but.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Participant:** I think, my husband and I run it but it’s a group thing, but we do all the donkey work in the background but when it comes to stall day everybody just pulls together and everybody feel part of it.

**Interviewer:** You have meetings with the rest of the group for example?

**Participant:** We tend to try, well before, we arrive before everybody else to setup the stall and, they’re not meetings as such but we’re all talking and sharing ideas so I guess they are meetings but they’re not formal.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, so yeah. Because it’s difficult because in tier two you shouldn’t really be meeting. Urr, so its kind of, we keep it informal so because you can do community and shopping and things like that, so while we’re setting up the stall and having a chat, that that’s acceptable so, yeah, that’s what we do. I suppose we could have proper meetings using Teams but I don’t think we need that formality. I think everybody… the the I think everybody is quite vocal, and they will say what they think and we agree or we disagree but nobody falls out it just, you know, somebody might out an idea forward, we might say, “yes, but, what about these people?” and they’re like, “hmm, hmm,” so then we don’t do it. But then somebody might say, “I’ve thought about this, what do you think?” and then we think, “oh that’s a really good idea -yes we’ll do that.” And it’s just very open and people say what they think.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I see. Uirm and how, all the things that you said, the things that you do as a group, were any of these strategic or just ad-hoc? So, you, I mean if you you plan how to do things?

**Participant:** It, it … it was urr, it just it just evolved. You know obviously there was some degree of planning so we did week one, it was successful but somebody from the local urm, from [HAMLET NAME] the local, urm, little place said, “are you going to do anything in [HAMLET NAME]?” We thought, “yes, we should have done something in [HAMLET NAME].” Urm, so then we reacted to that and the next week we had two stalls, and then the next week somebody from the top end of the village – because the village ahs one long road running through it, and its not a massive village but it’s very long. Urm so somebody from the top end of the village said, “are you going to do anything on our road?” So, then the following week we did something on the road. And then about two weeks after that we thought, we’re not doing anything for the bottom end of the village, we need to speak to the lady at the hall and se if she will she will let us go into the hall. So then, it kind of evolved naturally but there was some degree of planning because it didn’t just happen, just like that. You know we have to think about how we can divide the food, and that’s where we got more supermarkets involved, urr, so. but the first two weeks it was just [CHARITY NAME], but then after that we got Morrisons, and then by the time we got to wanting to be in the hall, we got Marks and Spencers on board so yeah, there was kind of some planning. Urr.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But it was natural as well.

**Interviewer:** Urm, how many people live in the village just to see an idea?

**Participant:** I don’t know but if I do a quick Google actually, I’ll be able to do it.

**Interviewer:** That’s okay I can do it. Just to, how many families do you cover in your activities?

**Participant:** Oh, how many families, oh…. Well we delivered thirty, urm, free school meals on Wednesday and twenty-two on Friday. And we probably could have delivered more. Urrr… and these families are all regularly involved in the stall.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm… I’m not sure how many families there are in the village though. But I;’ll get the population up.

**Interviewer:** That’s okay I can have a look as well.

**Participant:** Urr… oh, that’s very old… urr….

**Interviewer:** No problem.

**Participant:** It says [NUMBER OF INHABITANTS] in 2011 census.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, I don’t know how many are here now.

**Interviewer:** Okay, a small village.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, finally, final questions, I want to ask you whatever you have, if you feel you have learnt something from coordinating this group?

**Participant:** Urr… I’ve learnt that there’s many people in need that I never realised before. I think I always knew that there were some people that struggled, but I didn’t realise to the extent they struggled. And I didn’t realise how far reaching it was. Urm, that there’s a lot of families that’s really in difficulty. Urm, and not just during COVID but all, all the year around. And actually, nothing really happens to help those people. And that’s really sad and, and it’s probably unfair to say nothing happens because in normal times the hall is open and the children do get fed when they go to youth group and those children do go and those happen. Urm but from a shop, from a food point of view, urm, because its its only about five minutes into the local town, so it’s not far but these people don’t drive, and the bus is quite expensive. I think it might be about £6 return, so actually these people. Not ‘these people’ that sound derogatory it’s not meant to be but, some of the people in the village live from day to day, they they pick up the benefits from the post office and they go to the village shop where the prices are higher than they would be if the went to shop in the local town and the supermarket if they went to shop in Lidl where they’d get much value for money – more value for money. And because they can’t afford to take the bus and how to they carry all of the shopping, they are stuck in that cycle of paying higher prices from the village shop, so I think that’s something we’ve talked about as well, for the future, perhaps having urm. Some kind of shopping services. We were talking about maybe bulk buying from Asda, urm, if we, if we could encourage families to group together to place an order because it’s a minimum of £40 spend for delivery, not for delivery, you have spend £40 at Asda other wise they charge another £4 and actually asking a family on a low income to spend £40 out of their bank account is actually quite a lot. So, if they grouped together with other individuals once every two weeks, they could access cheaper food and share the delivery cost amongst families. So we’ve thought, that’s another thing we’ve thought about, perhaps we could do that with maybe two or three families that we’ve identified really do struggle and then maybe it could be something that they could carry on themselves, but, it’s just an idea we’ve had.

What else have I learnt? I’ve learnt that there’s some wonderful people in my community, I’ve got to know people that urr I didn’t know before. I walk around the village and urr I talk to people that I never would have talked to before because I just didn’t know them. You’d have just said, “hello” and that would have been it. Urm, I’ve learnt that there’s some wonderful people willing to give up their time freely every single week. Ive learnt the positive impact you can have on your community if you’re willing to give up some of yourself to your community. Urm, I don’t know. And and that the the businesses are there that will support organisations all year around not just during COVID. That there is a lot of food waste that normally would go in bins but doesn’t need to go in bins because it’s perfectly fresh. And I’ve learnt that it’s a real shock that that food would normally go in bins, when it’s such vast quantities and it could be used to help people. And I think that’s it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you already mentioned some ideas but how do you see the future of this group?

**Participant:** \*Deep breath\* Urr, it’s hard because I can’t… I think we’ve spoken to the lady at the hall and one of our ideas is they would take over the [CHARITY NAME] delivery and when the, when the youth groups are back up and running so like the mini youth club, well there’s the mini-mini youth club there’s the mini youth club and then there’s the teenagers youth club. When they’re back up and running then the [CHARITY NAME] food would then be used to provide evening meals for those children attending. I think our volunteers that picks up food on a Wednesday night would be happy to continue to do that and put up the free tables, the pop up stall on a Thursday, so it’s just seeing if there is anybody out there amongst our volunteers that would be willing to continue with the stall idea. In conjunction with the hall because the youth groups run on a Wednesday and that’s the day that the stall currently runs so the stall could run between maybe half past twelve and half past two and then the youth groups start at three o’clock so that could be a way forward.

Urm, we’ve defiantly got the support of the lady that runs the hall so I think it’s nearer the time trying to see what we can achieve. But we would at some point like to take a step back from being the two people that organise everything and just playing a lesser role so I can get my day off back and… because at the moment I get to the hall for half past eight and I sort out the Morrisons food and then at about half past nine the [CHARITY NAME] delivery comes and then I urm, we sort everything out for the other stalls to take to the little hamlet and then about eleven o’clock I dash next door to the school where I go and volunteer an teach French for an hour. Then I have my lunch there then at quarter past twelve I dash home, then at quarter past one I’m back at the hall for the stall and then we finish packing up at about five o’clock. So, I didn’t really get a day off and I really need to eventually get that back. It’s not that we want to just give up, it’s just, I do need that time, so.

**[Debriefing]**

**[End of Interview]**