**Date: 16/12/2020**

**Duration:** 55:09

**Interviewer:** \*Project Introduction\*

Urm, and my first question, urm so, to start the interview I would, I’d like to ask some things about the group, how the group began. So, what is the name of your group?

**Participant:** Ah, the group is called [GROUP NAME].

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** [AREA NAME 1] the area we live in, so urm, and it’s a very rural area. Urr so it was very lacking in any… services, or I suppose, networks. So, we were trying to come together, it’s quite a special area and we wanted people to realise how special the area they lived in was. So, we thought we would try and get together a group of interested people who would share the history and the importance of the area.

**Interviewer:** And when did the group start?

**Participant:** August 2017.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so how did it start, and how did you start to do COVID support issues?

**Participant:** Okay, well basically it began just with a few of, myself and a local historian and a couple of other local interested urm, people who are interested in genealogy and we got together because we were discussing, there was a fairly significant anniversary for the [AREA NAME 1] area of a migration that left here and went to [COUNTRY NAME] in 1718, and so we’d all been entered in that and it was coming up to urm, 300th anniversary. So, we wanted just to share that with other people in the sort of, there’s significant amount of people who have moved to the area from different places, who wanted to live in the countryside, and they didn’t know the history and the importance of the area they were living in. So, we thought it was important and it was the right time, to, to bring together a group of anybody who was interested. Because basically before that, the only social outlets within the area would have been church, churches. So, people would congregate in their own churches but not mixing with the wider area. But that’s basically what brought us together to start with, that we wanted to promote the historical importance, the cultural importance and to educate urm, the people of the importance of knowing where you live and what significance there was to the area.

Urm, basically, from there it’s kind of expanded and grown to be more of a caring and nurturing group. Urm and I suppose the situation that we’ve brought, or that’s been brought, that we’ve been forced into this year has developed that even further. But that’s where it all started and it was really about the core history and culture of the history that we – we didn’t want to get lost urm, in the next few generations. And most of us have lived in [AREA NAME 1] for the significant amount of our lives.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so urr has anything changed since it start?

**Participant:** Urr our, our core principles are still the same, we still have the same urm… outlook on what our, our objectives were. But we have, I suppose expanded that slightly to become urr, a facilitator for community outreach as well as the historical and educational side of things. We’re now included more in the caring side. And reaching out to people who urm perhaps fall outside and maybe, wouldn’t have engaged with our group for any other reason. Urm so we’re just, we, we, we, I suppose widened our remit to whatever we, if we’re required to help in some other way by another organisation, we will do that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and what is the situation with the group at the moment with all the changes?

**Participant:** Okay so we, we found, we’ve been active since March really, on the coronavirus scene. Urr we are still actually, we have, one of our members who everyday goes and collects the newspapers and delivers them to urr, the more older members of the community because we don’t have a bus services really that would – we have one, one shop in the whole area. There’s about urm seventeen thousand in the whole wider area of [AREA NAME 1] people that live her. Urr it’s about ten square miles of an area, and we have one shop, kind of in the middle of all that. So, there’s no other way of getting to the shop other than going by vehicle. So, we’ve got, some of our elderly members now, ah, well they were shielding for many months and now they just don’t have the confidence and feel… urm… urr ready to go back out and do that. So, we’re still providing a newspaper drop of service every day.

Urm, we still collect prescriptions for people who are perhaps just that wee bit out of reach, and perhaps need something urgently that the pharmacy perhaps can’t deliver maybe until the next day. They give us a call we go get it for them. We also, we, we found that there wasn’t really, urm… a a not so much poverty as in food poverty, there was really no one asking for food that they couldn’t get food. They perhaps couldn’t get it but they wanted us to use their money to go and get it. Urm… and we’re very, quite proud, you know the – I suppose maybe proud’s not the right word. But they saw that there was probably people in other places of more need of food than them, urm but they just haven’t the access to get to food. Maybe they didn’t have internet access to get online shopping, and they didn’t have a vehicle or weren’t able to get shopping themselves. So, they were to give us a list, an envelope with money in it and we would go and get their, their things for them and bring it back. And we still do that on occasions when someone just not able to have a family member to come and get it or it they’re in urr, an isolating situation. So that, that we… urm… perhaps as a group wouldn’t have seen ourselves doing as much, but it’s something that we really, really find is really important to make sure that there’s no one sitting, urm, that doesn’t have somebody to go and get them something. That they don’t feel is out of the way to go and ask for help.

Urm, we also urm, we’re doing a bit of outreach with the local school children. Because they’ve missed out on so much this year. There’s two schools in the [AREA NAME 1] Area, one on either side of the ten mile radius, so there’s about 200 children so we’ve, we’ve organsied a gift to every child in every school. We’re actually delivering those later on this afternoon. Because there’s so many events that they missed out on this year, the school nativities. So, we just wanted to reach out and let them know that they haven’t been forgotten about. And although they’re being cared for with their school and their teachers and they’re doing as much as they can for them, we wanted to let them know the wider community still cares for them. And so that’s why we’ve got together and we’re giving them all a book and some urm colouring pencils or crafting equipment. Urm, because we feel it’s important that they have urm, activity stimulations over the Christmas holiday and not just, perhaps computer stimulation or urr gaming stimulation. So, we went back to the old-fashioned urm way of gifting traditional books like, urm *Black Beauty* and urm, Enid Blyton and those, because that that kind of promotes our historical importance as well. That we can’t forget about things from the past because they’re still important in the future. Urm so instead of looking at all the modern literature and things that’s out there, we wanted to encourage children to look at someone of the older things. That they could read an Enid Blyton book with their parents or their grandparents, because they would have rad them.

So urm that, that’s our plan for this week and next week we’ll be dropping off seeds and bulbs and planting equipment and, bird defers and bird watching books to some of our more elderly and isolated community members. So that they have something over Christmas, they can look out for robins they can record it in a book, they can perhaps, urr – you know it gives them some form of stimulation, it’s something else to think about. A diversion really from loneliness.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urm have you had any previous experience or organising groups like this?

**Participant:** Urm, I have been a, I suppose a community activist for many years. I’m a [ELECTED POSITION] so I’m, I have experience through that. I’m very active in my own church. Urm I’ve been organising events and fundraising events for years. Urr separately [unclear 09:41] club, so we we organise a major event in the area every year and have been for about twenty—five years now and I’ve been invoked with for about twenty years. My Dad’s a former founding member. Urm so and yes, in terms or organising community events I have a fairly expansive experience in that.

Urm, community rescue events I suppose that you would call this more of a, a- maybe not so much but urr we learnt a lot on the way. We learned a lot about ourselves and how we can adapt, and we’ve learnt a lot about how our community has adapted and how we can adapt to help them. And I suppose, yes, I have experience in some sense, but I have learnt new experiences in terms of the ways in which we’ve been moving forward.

**Interviewer:** Which specific things have you learned?

**Participant:** Urm well I’ve learned that you don’t always have to take things at face value. When someone says they don’t need help, it doesn’t always mean they don’t need help. It means you have to ask them in a different way. Urm, what we found was we had a lot of our elderly people who said, “no, no, I don’t need any help, I’m fine, I’ve lived here for eighty-odd years and I’ve managed so far!” So, we, we figured a way then, around that, so we’ve said, “could you help us then? because what we want to do is we want to give urr, we, we want to knit blankets or we want to gather stories so we can share with other people.” So, what we did we, we provided knitting needles and wool and patters and everything and we gave it out to some of our more vulnerable members and older members, stuck at home. It gave them something to do as a diversion, that they were doing something else. But at the same time, they were in the belief that they were helping someone else, but basically, we were helping them to have something to do, to stimulate them. Urr rather than, you know, you know, them feeling that they were obliged. So, it was just a different way of working with some people that urm… to help them, we need to try and make them thing differently, that they’re not asking for help. So, we were giving them stimulations and we were giving them something to commit to. Urm and something to… divert their attention from loneliness and I suppose… urr the isolation. And at the same time we, once this is over, we plan to have a get together where we will bring all the squares that everyone in the community has been knitting and we will sew them together and we we’re going to send them off to under-privileged countries where they need supplies, such as some of the Romanian orphanages and the urm, there’s a, some hospital in the likes of Chiwoko and places in Africa that are looking, needing the supplies. So that’s basically how we’ve managed that situation, we’ve, we sometimes help people by urm, leading them into a false sense of, of supposed need, that – they’re being helped by helping us, if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer:** And why did you get involved in the COVID support?

**Participant:** Urm, I have lived here for practically all my life. I, I I am from a long generation of people who have lived in the same spot where I build my house. And most of the farming areas are urm… so I I know from my parents, my grandparents, the history I know of my great grandparents. That in situations like this, it’s always been the same in a rural community, people pull together urm, like it’s a farming area so in bygone days when somebody needed a harvest and their house took lame, the neighbouring farm leant their horse to them. And when the weather was turning bad, everyone worked together to get everybody’s crops in. So, it’s kind of ingrained in me as a rural dweller that this is how we work. So, it kind of became, it’s just a natural thing that when urm, with the situation developed, we had a full year of planned everts, we have an event every month and then we have urm, two fairly major events in the year and another, two bus trips so we would take people urr away on a trip. We had to cancel all those, those then, we diverted our attention to, if we can’t bring people to us, what can we bring to them? Urm and that’s basically where it come from. We felt we needed to continue with what we were doing. Urm, and if we couldn’t bring people together, we would – you know if they can’t come to us then we’ll take the mountain to Muhammad if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And what is your role in the group?

**Participant:** I am the vice chair of the group.

**Interviewer:** Okay, has your role changed at all in the?

**Participant:** I suppose, and basically, basically I’ve come a bit more of a leader because out chairman, urm, unfortunately in the early days of it caught COVID 19 and then has obviously had to fairly… urm restrict himself. He’s also [OCCUPATION 1] so he’s gone back to [WORKPLACE] in September, he’s been busy with that side of things. So, we kind of set-up a smaller sub-committee, urm of which I, myself and the treasurer urr do most of the management of our COVID 19 response. We call it our COVID 19 response group.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how does the activity that you do in the group relates with the other parts of your life? How do you fit everything?

**Participant:** How do I fit everything? Urm I suppose it runs a bit in line with my [LOCAL ORGANISATION] work, you know, because that’s, I’m always trying to help and support my community anyway. Urm, my other role is urr I work, I’m [OCCUPATION 2]. So, I would help urr in terms of urm a case work with benefits and urm… employment law and things like that. So, its basically, all of my roles in life, urm… merge into the same kind of theme. I really just like helping people. Urr and I get a lot out of helping people. The more I help people the more I think I develop as a person. Urr so this became a kind of a natural thing for me, to get stuck in.

**Interviewer:** Urm, okay, so in terms of geographical area, you already mentioned but can you – because I don’t know the area – how many people for example were involved in the COVID response?

**Participant:** Okay, in the, in the response there was fairly limited number of people involved directly because we were very conscious that we didn’t want to put a burden on any – any of our members. In, in our membership of the [GROUP NAME] we have about thirty-two members. And then we have associate members who don’t live within the area, because that’s one of our criteria to be a member, you have to live within the [AREA NAME 1] postcode. Urm but they have either lived in it before, or they have family members, or they have an association with it. So, we have associate members, and we have those, they live as far away as [TOWN NAME 1] which is probably about sixty miles away. But they have an interest in the area. Urm and so… in in terms of the COVID response, there’s probably only been about six of us, that have been very involved in it. I suppose I was fortunate at the beginning of it, I had the time. And our, and one, our treasure is also returned, and she had the time. Urm… I I was actually working for a charity at the start of the pandemic and so was furloughed for that, and so that gave me the time then to concentrate on the community efforts. So, we headed up the whole urr event. And then we had about another, as I say, we have a member who does the newspaper runs every day, and we have a couple of members who were… more or less doing some coordinating from home. And worked as a, urr, connection. So, they would have – we, we, we delivered over eight hundred households a letter at the beginning giving all our contact details and numbers and so they would have had their contact details provided as urr…a contact point. So that there was one person coordinating the contact and then they would have shared it out wherever it needed to go. So basically, we have managed with about five-to -six members doing most of the, most of the work.

**Interviewer:** And they, they were already from the organisation? They were members?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you didn’t get new people involved?

**Participant:** We had, we had some, yes, we’ve had some new people who have volunteered that whenever we get back to up and going again, they want to become involved. Urr and we have had some, we had people who volunteered, that if anyone on their particular route or their road needed help that they would volunteer to do that. Urm, we’ve had to only call on them a few times, a couple of times. But, yes, we have had some people who, when they knew what we were doing, they rang up and said, “look, is there anything we can do to help?”

**Interviewer:** And what did you do to get volunteers, members involved?

**Participant:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** What kind of things did you do to get volunteers involved, the members also?

**Participant:** We, we just we basically outlined what we wanted to do and asked them what they were prepared to do so we had sort of a stretch of people doing, heading up particular jobs, like the one member we have who, he volunteered to do the newspaper run. He’s continuing with that, its great. We had another urr member who volunteered at the time whenever we had some food delivers to do for the local council. So, he volunteered to go and collect the food boxes every week. And fortunate- well I suppose it’s fortunate in some ways that most of those food boxes weren’t for out own area, because our area didn’t feel that there was a food poverty issue. But we volunteered them as an outreach to outlying areas and other towns. So, we had members who would have went urm so far as [VILLAGE NAME 1], [VILLAGE NAME 2], [TOWN NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 3] and those are all maybe within ten- and fifteen-mile radius of our own area. Urm but they needed help and didn’t have help in their areas, so we stepped in and delivered for them.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urm, so and in terms of resources, what kind of resources do you have?

**Participant:** Urm, at the beginning we applied for a grant, we had a council grant of £2000, and… we actually kind of struggled to spend it because the grant was based on food and need and, we basically, we were struggling get people to take food. So, we had to think outside the box and what we prepared then was a gift bag, urm of… non-, non-essential but treats I suppose if you like. Like nice biscuits, we had things like tins of, urr fruit and custard, we had… urm… sweets and fudge and urm, you know stuff that people weren’t putting on their list for their shop that when people were going get it – just so they could just sit down of an afternoon. We put in some wee quizzes and historical urm… crosswords about our own area, so that they could, you know, sit down, have an afternoon tea as such and enjoy a bit of stimulations and remember about the area that they were in. And that, so that’s what we spent the money on, and we made up some graft kits and cookie baking kits for the children in the area and we delivered them to those, to stimulate I suppose urm… a bit of, a bit of urm family bonding, you know, in that you need to make things with your parents or whoever you’re at home with. Urm and that’s about the only resources that we’ve had.

Urm, we’ve been offered resources just in the last week and that’s where were using those funds to help with our urm, operation Christmas as we’ve termed it. And that’s for non-food issues. Which was good, so what we’re preparing for some of out more elderly people is we’re making up a winter kit. So, we’ve got blanket, urm a torch, and ice scraper, urm some spare bulbs and de-icer and urm, you know, a wee word search and puzzle books and things. Urr to tide them over and give them something at least if we have an outage or a power cut, that they have urr some preparation at hand, because it will be all there, they’ll not have to go looking for it. Urm… but that’s about the only resources we’ve had. We had initially a £2000 grant and this second one is a fifteen hundred pounds grant. And the rest of fit we’ve managed on our own resources. We’ve managed on some of our donations and volunteers have have given their own time and money into resourcing whatever we need.

**Interviewer:** Any particular skills that people in the group have that could be important, that was important for the group?

**Participant:** Urm… one one of our group members is, she’s an excellent coordinator, urm she, so she takes charge of whenever we’re doing any deliveries or drop off, she works out the most, urr, effective route plan urm and who, who goes where, and who would know the area best. So, she’s she’s excellent at that. We call her the List Maker, she has a book full of lists. So, you ask her anything she’ll say, “well let me check my list,” and she can find it from whatever week or date or whenever it was we had been planning and working that out. Urm… obviously myself I am… good with… urm, resources and I I would complete any grant forms or evaluations and contacts, I’ve got a fairly extensive range of contacts urm if we need to find anything out. Re-research and resources urm, is where I would kind of come in at. Then we have other members who are just hands on, urm… we have had some people who have maybe, urm, difficulties with urm, say, maybe some other home equipment breaking down, or… urm needing help to even read a meter or something like that because they can’t get out – you know couldn’t get out to do it themselves. Urr so we’ve, some of our members our newer members are hands-on people and good with their hands. And have been able to go around and do those things. And thar’s urm… what we’re basically doing there.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how do you coordinate, organise?

**Participant:** Urm, we have, we’re still having oursmaller team group members. So basically, there’s a couple of us that get together urm, we’ve been working together for for some time now, so we get together even in our cars in a car park urr to discuss our issues, or we do it on Zoom. Urm… and get urm plan, do our plans that way. We have a WhatsApp group where we send out urm our our updates and urm, if we have any calls or need for anything, we stick it in our WhatsApp group, or just to keep people updated with what’s going on. Urm and that’s basically how we’re working from there.

**Interviewer:** Okay, do you use Facebook as well?

**Participant:** Yes, we have a Facebook site, now we’re very conscious on what we put on our Facebook page. So, we’re… because our group is not urm… this is not the essence of what our organisation was set up to do, so we don’t want, we don’t want to detract from what our original urm… objectives are for the group. And we, we’re very conscious of GDPR. And we don’t want to identify any people who wouldn’t particularly like…. Urm, you know, when we have our group meetings and we take photographs and we put them on, we make sure we have the consent of every single person that’s in the photograph, before we put anything up. And we didn’t want urm anybody in the area to feel that our diversion to COVID response was going to make them feel or be exposed to other people thinking they were needy when they’re not. Urm so we’ve been very, very conscious abut what we actually post. Now we have urm, through our WhatsApp page we have collated urm photographs – especially of like the kids when they made up their wee craft things, we asked if they would like to send a picture of their cookies when they were finished or of them when they were doing the baking. Now we haven’t put those on our Facebook page, but we plan to do at the end, if and when we come to an end of this, is we hope to have a community engagement night where we will have a slideshow, and we will show everyone of what happened during the pandemic and what we were able to do and what the people in the area were doing to help keep themselves amused. But I, at currently at this time we don’t feel its just the right thing to publicise everything on our Facebook page. We’re very conscious of what urm… we feel is right for the area.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and is the grouping in contact with other support groups locally?

**Participant:** Urr well we’re in contact with the council, we’re in contact with urm, urm some of the bigger umbrella organisations where you probably found our name, urr being involved. Urm, so we get, sometimes we get referrals from them and its maybe just to make a phone call to make sure that someone’s okay. Or urm, because maybe a family member have contacted them. Urm, we have… the local urm… I suppose community network, because we’re all urr urban network we’re involved in them so they keep us updated and actually they, urm provided the last lot of funding – we didn’t go looking for it, they contacted us and asked us would we be able to do something if they could get some funding. So yeah, we’re in contact with some of the wider umbrella groups.

**Interviewer:** And national networks, are you part of?

**Participant:** Urm yes, we’re under the, I think, I think we’re named in the, urm, community foundation urr page and the [NAME OF UMBRELLA BODY] group think we’re on-

**Interviewer:** [NAME OF UMBRELLA BODY] group?

**Participant:** [NAME OF UMBRELLA BODY].

**Interviewer:** Okay, didn’t know-

**Participant:** It was, it a link through the councils so urm… people can if they search there, they might find our name and contact details.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how was the relationship with the council? This is a strange question for you because you are also part of the council-

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** -but how was it?

**Participant:** Yeah. Urr and it has, I suppose it’s important for me – as a [ELECTED POSITION] I have to declare an interest whenever any of the information comes to the council meetings because I’m directly involved as a group member. But I found it was, it was actually more important for them to be directly involved with my immediate community. Urm… and, and rather than making decisions in the chamber, because there’s enough other [INDIVIDUALS in ELECTED POSITIONS] there to do that. Urm, so… I have, in terms of the direct input to the community, I have to declare my interest in council. But we have had, I mean there’s defiantly lots of support there and I suppose our group is in a … a privileged position because I already have that information and know that information. So maybe we didn’t need to contact the council as much as some groups may have done. Urm but I know that if we needed support, I would know who to go to and I would get the support there.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urm, just to make sure, your organisation has official recognition, is a company, charity or?

**Participant:** No, we’re, we’re not a registered charity, we are just a registered community group. We have a constitution, and we have safeguarding policies and everything like that in place, so we, we do have our own rules and our own urm guidance within the… what’s, what’s regulated. But we, we’re not limited company and we, we never have urm… we’re not for profit so we don’t go out, we don’t have a lot of money in our bank. So urm, its basically its just, we have funds there to be able to react in what we need to do immediately, or to run our events. But beyond that we don’t have any income streams or anything like that.

**Interviewer:** So, you are not official, you don’t have official recognition?

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** No, okay. Why did you decided no, not having it?

**Participant:** Because that’s basically urm… the ethos of our group is about the community. We’re, we’re not…. I mean we may have, we may go down that route in the future if we feel it’s necessary but right at the time, we’re fairly fledgling, our groups still only three years old I suppose. Urm and… our first two years were concentrating on the purpose of why we were set up, which was to urm… ex, urr, explore the importance of the area and the history of the area. Urr so we really felt there wasn’t a need for becoming a a registered charity for that purpose. Urr we have very strong links and connections with the [COUNTRY NAME]. Urr and that’s where we want to develop our, I suppose our way forward. Urr a group of nine of us last year went on a visit to [COUNTRY NAME], to [REGION NAME] where the migration urm took place, and we visited three states where the migrants travelled. And we have made, we have urm, we have made some very strong connection with the two towns over there, which were [TOWN NAME 3] and [TOWN NAME 4], in urm [AREA NAME 2]. And we have, we had unfortunately we had three groups of [PEOPLE FROM COUNTRY NAME] coming to visit this year, but that ‘s all cancelled, so they still plan to come next year and that’s where we, I suppose we plan to expand our [OVERSEAS] links. And at that point, urm, when we get the opportunity, we may then look about becoming a registered charity, because we plan to expand our genealogy part of the group. And, and I suppose this year has changed everything, so we’ve had to divert our attention this year to immediate response and maybe when we get back to some form of normality, we will then look at urm, perhaps becoming a registered charity or a limited company.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you talk a bit about your own motivation, in your opinion, what are the motivations for other active participants?

**Participant:** Urm… I suppose I can only speak to some of our members of our group who we’ve, we’ve had mild discussions about this with, we get a great sense of achievement as a, as a, when we’ve pulled something off so to speak, where we’ve had a successful event or a successful job. Or we’ve had urm… just someone maybe contact us and saying, “oh, that was a really good thing you done.” Urr and I suppose its like the virtual pat on the back when you get a wee message, even a text message saying, “thank you so much for everything you’re doing,” urm and that’s what motivates most of us to do more. Because we know, when someone thanks you for doing something then you’re appreciated. So urm… that then stimulates you to try and widen your reach to, to support more people and get more appreciation. Because you know if someone appreciated something you’ve done then it’s made a change to their life or their day or their hour. And if we can make someone’s life or day or hour better then that’s what we’re all about.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and has involvement in the group meant a lot of time and effort for you?

**Participant:** Yes, it has. Urm, to the extent I suppose that I still don’t have any Christmas decoration sup, I haven’t got my tree up, I haven’t any Christmas shopping done for myself, but I’ve got Christmas presents for almost all the community. Urr, but do you know what, my family will understand, they’re all supportive and they’re involved as much as possible. Urm my husband’s very involved, my mum and adad where they can, they help out. My mum’s been knitting squares for our community urm blankets as well. So, they understand that if our Christmas is delayed ever so – we’ll get there, you know, should it be Christmas eve when we’re getting the tree up, it will get up. But they understand that this is important and urr, and so urm, they’re all, they’re all very supportive. So yeah, I suppose in my time in the last, I suppose I guess since March I have, I suppose, devoted a lot of time to this. Urm, but this is something that happens once in a lifetime hopefully, and if you can’t do what you can for for your community when you can then – you know my biggest fear would be having regrets and say in two or three years sitting back and saying, “I wish I’d have done this,” or “I should have done that,” or “why didn’t I do that?” So, if I can do it now, I do it.

**Interviewer:** And how about emotional effort?

**Participant:** Urm… yeah it can…. It can be emotional. I think you just realise through all of this how much more love you have for the people around you and and not just your immediate family and neighbours and friends, but the wider community. And do you know, it’s easier to love than to hate. Urm and… I have, I have found great urm, solace in being able to bring a bit of love to people. And just seeing the reactions on their faces has - you know I have come home and there’s nights when I have, I’ve worried about people, or I have just felt real comfort in what someone has said, and … yeah, there’s been times it’s been very emotional. But its good emotion, you learn from emotions, its good to have emotions.

**Interviewer:** Of course, have you, have people dropped out of your group?

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** No.

**Participant:** No, no, we’ve had nobody drop out, we’ve had some people who’ve had to step aside maybe for periods of time. Urr because of their shielding situation or a family member shielding, but they’ve still been, you know, supporting us and encouraging us. So no, we’ve had nobody drop out.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and any problems that have affected the group?

**Participant:** Urm, no I, I probable it would be good to have thirty-six hour days. That would be the only problem we have is I suppose our limited time and I suppose our, when I say limited resources urm… I more or less mean, it’s not all about the money. It’s just about protecting people so we’ve had to keep to a very tight, core group of of activists so that we can protect the wider members of the community. Urm… and sometimes that’s put a fair bit of burden on the active members. But nothing that anyone has said, “that I can’t do this, its too much.” Most times we’re saying to them, “look, I’ll get someone to do, to take some of that off you because it’s too much,” but they say, “no, I want to do it, I’ve committed to doing it, I want to do it.” So, I suppose basically our only burden would have been urm we would have loved to have more hours in the day and yeah, that’s about it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And what kind of things have you done that have helped keep the group going?

**Participant:** Urm… well in terms of at the very beginning when we put our our our initial letters and we made up urm… like, urm table quiz sheets, wordsearches, things like that. Urm and so not only stimulating the the community members by giving them something to do. But in what they’re doing they’re finding out the history of the place they live. And the importance of the place they live. So, we have kind of used it all to incorporate urm, our… original objectives. Urr and still get it out there, so that when we can get back to our normal urm… groupings and meetings, we hope that there will be more people come. Because we’ve, we’ve now, by putting things through the doors and introducing people to our group, urm they’re realising that they want to learn more about their area. And they want to learn more about the old-fashioned town lands names and the historical urm, residents who used to live it. I mean we had sirs and lords and barons, and all sorts of people how used to live here. And so, they want, they’re stimulated and motivated to learn more. Urm, we did actually get… one… one urm… one night when we were able to have a walking tour, socially distanced walking tour in [TOWN NAME 2] and it was all about the history of the town there, it was a walled town there at the time from four hundred years ago, urm and we had members who turned up would would not normally come to our events. But because of our connecting through the COVID response, they said you know, “we want to come.” So, we had to limit it, of course, at the time it was twenty-five members, or twenty-five in number. But we had a great response from that, and it was just people were actually able to get out. And something that was as near as normal as could be. That they were getting to an event that was not about… COVID 19, but it was limited by restrictions, but it was still able to get them away and think about something different, so urm, yeah. That’s, that’s how I think we’ll, I think we’ll thrive even after this, I think we’ll go from strength to strength.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, and were any of these strategic, the things that you did to keep the group going?

**Participant:** Urr yeah, I suppose it’s urr, it’s a bit of my nature, when I think about doing something, I always think of urm, outside, trying to think outside the box: “if we do this what will be, what will be the results, what will be the consequences, or what will be urm… the added benefits.” And so sometimes it’s just a case of urm, maybe having an ulterior motive for some of the things that we do. So, what we’re getting is… killing two birds with one stone. And not the normal straight forward response. Urm, so there’s always a hidden agenda – I suppose not hidden agenda, but I suppose hidden message in there. Urm, we, we we’ve been trying to encourage soe of our older residences, we’ve got quite a lot of octogenarians in the, in the area. Who would have went to some of the older schools, so we’ve been asking them to think about things from their olden school days and compare that to what the kids have been struggling through in this pandemic. And we hope together the urm memories and they’re thoughts urm, and then the kids from today, this is our plan for our next more, and then get some of the thoughts from the kids from today and publish a small booklet of comparisons. And that sort of inter-generational link.

And in fact one of the things we did in the early times was, at the beginning of March, we had, we had some of our teenage members, you know the teenagers are kind of lost in the whole thing people they weren’t old enough to help because of obviously you know, GDPR and restrictions, that type of thing, but they wanted to do something. So, we had some of our teenagers who wrote letters, and then they gave them to us, and we delivered them to some of our older generation. And they were just basically saying, you know, “my name’s Jacob or urm, urr Molly or whoever they were, I live here, and I love, “and they were saying what they love and what they like to do, and it was, “what did you like to do when you were our age?” and then we had older people were writing back to them and giving them encouragement. We had one young fella who, who wrote about his urm, he loves gaming, and he says, “I know old people don’t think that children should spend a lot of time on games, but I plan to make a career out of this,” urr with online gaming and he, plan and developing games. And one of the people we delivered his letter to, without realising, the connection because we didn’t know, we just put the letters in envelopes, and they had wee heart or something on them - so we didn’t know who was getting whose letter. And this lady was a a a retired lecturer from a university, and so she wrote back to him and gave him some advice on his career path. So that really, it was perfect because… it stimulated him to keep going with what he was doing and encouraged him that here was an older person who thought what he was doing was really good in stead of mostly older people are saying, “right, that’s enough time on that game now, come off that and do something normal.” So, it was just one of those… urr fluke interactions but it worked really well. And I suppose that was just, our aim in that was to have an intergenerational connection and connect our younger community with our older community. In a way they didn’t realise there was a being a connection made.

**Interviewer:** It’s still going on?

**Participant:** Urm, well that was in our, the earlier run so they have, they have, urm once they wrote to each other they have correspondence addresses, so we don’t take any part in that beyond that, so we don’t know whether they keep, the keep communication. What feedback we get from those who have still communicated urr, because once that, that was sort of pen pal sort of thing so… urm once they made the connection, we left that up to them.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how do you see the future of this group?

**Participant:** Well, urm, we have we have still urr we plan to continue with all our events we had to cancel, they will continue once we can get back to a situation where we can do them, I think the future of the group will be even stronger than it was before. And I suppose that’s because there’s more people know about us, there’s more people have interacted with us who haven’t before, who may now be a bit more stimulated to get more involved. There is, our our strong USA links that will continue and we have continued with weekly Zoom meetings with our US connections, and we actually have urr a commitment with one of the churches there, we we have… we have urr prayer teams. Where you know they send us, where they have joys or concerns, urr and they pray for us and we send them our joys and concerns, and it really does help to know that… urm… even through we’re in different corners of the works, we’re all going through the same thing, and we’re supporting each other even from a distance. The same way we’re distanced even from our families who just live down the road because of the pandemic and the restrictions that we’re distanced from our American cousins. So that’s, that’s been a really strong bond for us urm and we hope to expand that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and your role in the group, how do you see it?

**Participant:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** Your role in the group?

**Participant:** Yeah, I don’t think my role will change, I think it will remain, you know we have positions we have our chair and our vice chair and our treasurer and… but basically everyone… does, there’s no hierarchy within our group, those are the positions that you have to have. But it doesn’t make any of us superior to the other, so I don’t think my role with change. You now when it comes to doing any of our events, urr we all get stuck in and we do what we have to do, whether you’ve got position in the group, or whether you haven’t. Urm we we all get stuck in.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you, I don’t think I have any more questions. Is there anything you would like to add, for example in relation, in relation, in relation to the COVID response?

**Participant:** Urm no, I think I’ve probably said more than enough, you’ve probably got, I may have diverted it from some of the questions or where you wanted them to go, but, urm I think… basically urm, my interpretation of COVID 19 has been, urm… what, what you can do and what your community can do for you, when you’re put in a situation that’s beyond belief. Urm that we could never have imagined. I mean we used to sit back and think how people managed through world wars. I have a great grandfather who went to the Somme when he he, he survived and was injured and came back, but he was a very different person. I don’t remember him because I was only, I think about eight when he died. But you know now we have come through this, which is unprecedented, nobody would have realise, you know, that schools would close, churches would close, urm… and our hope is that in generations to come, that we will be able to tell people what we did, and how we came through it. Urm and encourage people that no matter what the situation you find yourself in, there’s always somebody out there that’s willing to help. And it’s only, sometimes its only reaching out or reaching for that person, if you can. If you can reach that person you do it and if you need help you reach out for the person. And it’s taken that, it’s taken that stigma away, urm and I suppose for me, that’s been my main objective in this, is at the minute, I can reach out but, if I needed to reach for that help in the future, I certainly won’t think twice about it now because I know that my community would be there for me.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I think this is a very important lesson to finish. Thank you very much for participating in this study, to give your time I know that you are very busy, so I really appreciate it.

**[Debriefing]**

**[End of Interview]**