**Date: 21/09/2020**

**Duration:** 1:16:10

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

So just some background questions first, firstly, what is the name of your group?

**Participant:** Okay, so, it’s [GROUP NAME 1].

**Interviewer:** When did the group start?

**Participant:** Urm… well, it started like fifty years ago, but urm, in the UK about six years ago, and we’ve had a branch in [CITY NAME 1] for about [\*audio cuts out\* 1:46]

**Interviewer:** Mm, and when did the, like, Corona activities start?

**Participant:** Urm… so, it was pretty much straight after lockdown. Urm, as soon as we knew we were going into lockdown we set up, urm… kind of our Corona community support team. Urm, and that was kind of - the idea of kind of setting it up and then rolling it out was done in a week, maybe less, after we’d had confirmation from our memb- from our elected representatives that it was something that people wanted to do, then we rolled it out pretty much straight away.

**Interviewer:** So that’s how it started? The elected representatives decided – wanted to do this support group, and then it was rolled out across the country, or…?

**Participant:** Yeah, so, in [CITY NAME 1], our committee had a meeting kind of at the beginning - just before lockdown or when we thought a lockdown was coming, about how we thought we wanted to respond, it was mainly about originally… shutting down current activity and stuff like that but then people had discussed about doing some kind of urm support for vulnerable people who were going to be shielding or isolating urm, throughout the crisis. And those discussions, I think, had happened in other places and then… organising staff and then… yeah, discussed it in more detail and then put together some sort of urm – put together a more coherent plan, and then urm… spoke to our leaders across the UK, our elective leaders, and like, who wanted to do it and who didn’t… urm and, yeah, pretty much most of our branches or groups who had capacity for it all were really excited about it, and then we rolled it out pretty quickly.

**Interviewer:** Right, so what was the aim of the support group when it started?

**Participant:** Urm… the aim was to… urr, provide urm, shopping, kind of like food supplies or shopping up to the value of like £20, urr, prescriptions collection and also check-in phone calls for people who might be, like, lonely… from isolation. And the idea was essentially to get support to where it is most needed… urm and try and get that out as quick as possible.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so that was the initial aim, did anything change once you had started? Did you end up doing anything more, or that was…?

**Participant:** Urm, not, not really, we kind of kept it quite, quite, tried to keep it quite simple so it was more user friendly, urm and also quite focused in what we were trying to do, just to try and make it easier. Urm… what… what we found was that it got a lot, a lot bigger than what we expected but that was fine, we were able to absorb that and deal with that as we got more volunteers. And we kind of, our… our, we were never at a point where we were beyond capacity, if anything we were kind of, over capacity in terms of like, the amount of volunteers we had to like how many people were requesting support. Urm, it did get a bit… I think…at, there was a point where I think there was only me answering the phone in [CITY NAME 1]

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** And that kind of got, got a bit difficult, but we managed to, to like, open that up and have some members doing that. Urm… I suppose when it changed, what might be relevant to this is how we’ve now… urm, our main kind of focus is building what we call community protection teams. So, we’ve had a lot of people who’ve become volunteers with us who’re now, kind of, active members who are, kind of involved in the community protection team, which is trying to organise a, kind of, large scale community response but to fight against COVID evictions. Ur…so with… yeah, I suppose that’s how, how we changed, how we – the corona support team is still kind of… separate, but, but we have contacts – spoken to a lot of volunteers, a lot of volunteers have joined anyway – spoke to a lot of volunteers about getting involved in our COVID evictions campaign and that’s been quite successful so far.

**Interviewer:** Right, right, so it’s kind of shifted a little bit? Or you’ve diverted volunteers from the support team into the eviction resistance?

**Participant:** Yeah, so… sorry I’ll try and think of a way of explaining this a bit more clearly. So… eviction resistance is something we’ve been doing for years anyway.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** But with there being a massive evictions crisis looming, what we… we’d… urm… what we planned to do is to try and like… organise a large scale community response, kind of, beyond kind of, our existing membership. And… and, and use… try and get our Corona volunteers on board with that. So, we haven’t necessarily changed, like what the Corona group’s for, but we’ve trying to like… get people from that group involved in the COVID evictions campaign and try to like… organise it in a similar way, so using a WhatsApp group that’s got like, non-members in it to post updates about evictions and kind of framing it as a community response.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, mmm. So, what is the situation with the group currently? Is that what you’re currently doing then?

**Participant:** So, our corona community support group in [CITY NAME 1] is currently, like, paused… it’s not active at the moment. And… I’m not sure if that’s the same everywhere else, I think the [CITY NAME 2] one might be still going… but most of the towns and cities have like paused them.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** And with, with, with like the infrastructure and stuff is like, still there, in case we open it up again, if there is like another lockdown. But urm, we put it on pause because, like, in [CITY NAME 1] we found that we weren’t getting that many requests for support. A lot of our members were either provided like, repeated support – kind of someone would get in touch and like, they would kind of, like form, like, a good relationship with them, and some of them are still kind of like, helping people out. Urm, a lot of… a lot of urm… well, this is more speculation but like, with urm... shopping, when supermarkets started delivering shopping again, a lot of the, the need was gone.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** And also, just a lot of our volunteers weren’t, weren’t, weren’t as active, obviously a lot of people were being forced back into work. So, we put it on pause and our, our, kind of, ur, the thing that we’re, we’re promoting at the moment is the community protection team and our… kind of trying to get a community response to our anti-evictions campaign, but yeah the Corona support team is kind of on pause until we might need to… to open it up again.

**Interviewer:** So, so, just to check that I’ve got that all right, you started it, when it started – when the lockdown started you started the community support team, that group quite quickly. Then it started to decline a bit, maybe because of the… the demand going down but also maybe because of volunteers being like… less active. But at the same time, concurrently, you also had the community protection teams and you’ve been trying to, essentially, get people who are involved in the community support to also be involved in the community protection and framing it in the same language as part of the same project. Is that right?

**Participant:** Yeah, yeah, mostly. Just to maybe… one point of clarification, I don’t, I don’t think that it’s necessarily what you said but we didn’t… like in terms of like… time… time sequence it wasn’t like the corona support thing kind of dropped off so we thought “what can we do now?” We had started the community protection team kind of, before it started dropping off, thinking…. I mean the thing that we do as an organisation, the corona support was quite different from what we normally do. It was really… you know its what our members wanted to do and we had the organisation infrastructure to really contribute a lot to what was going on and really, kind of, achieve things on quite a large scale which showed, kind, of, what we think the importance of having, kind of, an organisation that represents ordinary people in their communities all the time, not just responding to something but have got that organisation in place so you can respond already. But as, as things went on about we thought “okay, we need to start making some demands, because this crisis isn’t going to go away anyway; things are only going to get worse; what are the biggest, what are the biggest, what are the things that are happening in this crisis that are going to affect our members and their communities the most? And what do we have the capacity to try and change. So, we, we, we, yeah, that’s where the community protection team came from, we were already campaigning against COVID evictions and we thought about trying to organise a community response in a similar way. Urm, and then, and then as we were kind of trying to build up – the corona stuff, kind of, slowed down and then we put it on pause.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, urm, and just in terms of yourself and your own involvement, when did you get involved with [GROUP NAME 1]?

**Participant:** Urm, so I was involved as a member… urm… about… maybe ur, three, three years ago, I think roughly. So, we’d originally… urm… so it was myself and few other people in [CITY NAME 1] who had been in touch with [GROUP NAME 1] about setting up a branch here. Which we launched in February 2018, and then I was, kind of a committee member for maybe a year… or more? And then I became a staff member just over a year ago.

**Interviewer:** And that’s like an employed, paid role?

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, why did you get involved in [GROUP NAME 1]?

**Participant:** Urm… good question, urm… so, urm, at the time, we were very particularly kind of, with the idea of people who got involved in [CITY NAME 1] it was about… renters’ issues. We’d all been people who’d liked lived and worked in [CITY NAME 1] for different amounts of time and from…. And urm, yeah, we came across [GROUP NAME 1] who kind of had like won… won kind of campaigns and was kind of organising direct action, like for renters taking on dodgy landlords and things like that. I think… urr, there had been stuff already… so I think the students union, I don’t know if you know [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] when she was an [ELECTED POSITION] at the students union, she kind of like had been talking with [GROUP NAME 1] to set something up and then I got involved in the early plans to kind of get something off the ground. Urm… so yeah, why did I get involved? I suppose kind of like my own struggles as a renter, I wanted to… though it was interesting to build an organisation that would have the power to change things, but also, just through my own, kind of, direct experience of generally feeling quite powerless as a renter, whatever, and this was kind of an organisation that actually was like fighting and winning. Urm, and quite early on I think quite a lot of us kind of saw the potential of this model of… urm organising – one, being able to organise effective campaigns that can win, but two, the idea of doing that through a community union model. Urm, which kind of borrows bits from kind of traditional like, trade union, like structures in terms of membership structure, but fights on a number of issues. And that was something that I thought was quite refreshing, quite unique and urm… yeah, I think that’s kind of, what was the appeal at the beginning.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, definitely. And so, what is your role in [GROUP NAME 1], more generally?

**Participant:** So, I’m a community organiser. So, my, so my role is… urm… recruiting new members to the union and… urm, developing leadership from existing members, and ur, supporting members in organising campaigns are the three main things.

**Interviewer:** And in the support group, what was your role in that?

**Participant:** Urm… co-ordinating it I suppose, I suppose we didn’t have an official title at the time, but it was being, kind of, set up and co-ordinated through me in [CITY NAME 1]. So, I suppose part of the use of having staff as an organisation is we were able to, to work together with staff and other organisers across the UK. Urm, after kind of, you know, discussing, kind of, what we wanted to do and how we want to do it, we were then able to roll that out quite quickly because we had, you know, paid staff. Urm... so, urm, yeah, so my role was… getting it off the ground, so we had another staff member who kind of created the infrastructure, and then I would be involved a little bit in creating the [CITY NAME 1] infrastructure but the kind of, overall plan had been done elsewhere.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant:** Urm, and then... it was… what did we do at the beginning? So… trying to talk to loads of organisations to get there, you know… find ways of working together… see if they, they would find what we were doing useful. Contacted people who had already kind of, started to set up their own kind of community or mutual aid groups, seeing if they were people who were able to volunteer with us, could do it. Or if people didn’t have, like, a good system in place, they were kind of, tapped into our ones. So there is a whole bunch of kind of, particularly around [CITY AREA 1], like mutual aid groups who were essentially using our infrastructure but they were also, sort of, able to talk to each other through WhatsApp group as well, which we didn’t have – ours wasn’t set up to do that. So, and then… organising like loads of leaflet drops and… kind of, doing outreach kind of online, you know Facebook groups and stuff, to like get the word out there that we were able to offer this support and services to people who needed it and also to recruit volunteers as well. And then, throughout most of it, my job was, yeah, you know, building relationships, training up volunteers and also taking phone calls for people who were calling the Corona helpline.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, so has that changed at all, your role in that?

**Participant:** Well yeah in that, that… it’s not active at the moment. But there was… urm, a couple of months in we’d, we then got more members involved to increase capacity, urm… and also, in terms of, I suppose, developing leadership as well as much as possible, we have our members leading campaigns. Urm, so… some, a lot of those roles in terms of the administrative side… urm, and also the outreach, we had members co-ordinating outreach as well. We had a team of maybe… ten, ten to twenty members playing quite active roles in different parts of it. And then eventually after a while, I stepped back from it completely, in [CITY NAME 1], and then we had different members doing most of the work.

**Interviewer:** And so just to check that I’ve got this right, the activity kind of fits into your life because you work for [GROUP NAME 1].

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** You were employed before [GROUP NAME 1] - before the campaign started - to work for [GROUP NAME 1], so when the community support started, you know, that became part of your job was to roll that out and to manage it?

**Participant:** Yeah, so when this all came out and lockdown started, pretty much every other aspect of my work was, kind of, put on hold… for a month or two, maybe six weeks or something.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And so one of the things with [GROUP NAME 1], obviously you dropped a lot of leaflets and you were able to reach a lot of people, so, I mean, what kind of geographical areas were you able to cover in the end?

**Participant:** Urm… we were… we were kind of covering the whole of [CITY NAME 1] and parts outside of [CITY NAME 1] like [CITY AREA 2] and kind of towards like [CITY AREA 3] as well. Originally, when we rolled it out in [CITY NAME 1], we kind of… well we - me and, well some members as well, did, did some research into what was, kind of, happening already. So, um, in the kind of week it took us to kind of roll out our things going, there was kind of – particularly maybe in [CITY NAME 1] compared to maybe some of the cities – there were like various WhatsApp groups and things kind of set up already; but we found that, that was very much, very much concentrated in the centre of [CITY NAME 1].

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** And in the outside of [CITY NAME 1] , where kind of, so looking kind of, further in to [CITY AREA 1] – further in to [CITY AREA 1], [CITY AREA 4] particularly, [CITY AREA 5], [CITY AREA 6], [CITY AREA 7], [CITY AREA 8]… urm... those were… those were areas that there didn’t seem to be as much activity. And we’d kind of identi– instead of planning originally to, kind of, cover the whole city because realistically we just weren’t going to be able to do that, and if other groups were doing stuff already, it wasn’t that urgent. But we for– picked priority areas – the ones at the beginning being [CITY AREA 5] and the [ESTATE NAME] Estate and… urr… [CITY AREA 5] and [CITY AREA 6] those were kind of the priority areas. We had meetings with [NAME OF MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT 1] and [NAME OF MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT 2] to kind of identify where they thought – we parti- we particularly targeted areas where we thought there would be a lot of people who would be in need of a service, particularly people who would be vulnerable, so elderly people, disabled people, and also areas where they may not have internet access as well, which was why we wanted to deliver leaflets. And the ones that we identified working with MPs and, and other organisations, councillors were [CITY AREA 4] and [CITY AREA 5] – particularly north [CITY AREA 5] and so, we managed to leaflet like the whole of [CITY AREA 4] in a weekend and did [CITY AREA 5] in like a week.

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Participant:** And that kind of, and then over about a month, we kind of, we kind of moved through different priority areas with kind of like, those being the first ones and then like the [ESTATE NAME] estate [CITY AREA 7], parts of [CITY AREA 9]… urm, and… yeah [CITY AREA 8] and [CITY AREA 10]- but we didn’t do much in [CITY AREA 10] because they had like a well organised [? 21:21] already. Urm… so, that’s where we focused and eventually we kind of had people leafletting in different parts of the city just from people like… volunteers that we had, if people were able to leaflet where they lived they were doing that as well. Urm, and we manage to get overall, within that, a space of maybe a month or six weeks about 70,000 leaflets across [CITY NAME 1].

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Participant:** So that’s maybe a good, like quarter of the city, two thirds of the city which resulted in… I think at peak we had like 800 volunteers signed up with us and we supported about 650 households in [CITY NAME 1]. Many of those, we don’t have any hard data on that, but anecdotally, speaking to our volunteers, many people who requested support, a volunteer would kind of keep in touch with them and support them over a period do time. So rather than doing 600 like specific jobs, we kind of have been like saying, 650 households were supported because a lot of them were kind of getting continued support. Yeah, that was a big chunk of urm vulnerable people in [CITY NAME 1] who were kind of coming through our volunteers.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, I mean, that’s a lot of people. And how regularly were they, you know being supported? Was it like, once a week people would be delivering, or…?

**Participant:** Urm… yeah…like, again, like we didn’t have date on this, this is kind of anecdotal from speaking to some of our volunteers but I think people were like… “whenever I go to the shops, I’ll get stuff for you as well.” You know, I think it was roughly like once a week people would kind of…

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Participant:** Probably what I would guess was probably the average.

**Interviewer:** And there were 650 households, sort of, over time that were being supported?

**Participant:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And so how many, kind of, volunteers were there for that? I mean that’s a lot of people; how many people were there in the group?

**Participant:** We had… we had 800 people sign up, so we had several WhatsApp groups because there is like a limit on how many people you can get in each one. So, they kept filling up, so we had to make new ones. Urm… in terms of like volunteers that were actually active and did stuff? I think actually, realistically looking nearer to like 200.

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Participant:** I think like… I don’t think like people signed up and then didn’t want to do anything. I think it was mostly that… because of how… how many volunteers we had and also the very active volunteers we had found the system that we used very easy to use as well. So, at kind of the peak we were getting between twenty and thirty requests for support a day, and they were being responded to within a couple of hours each. So… there would be a lot of people who were in the WhatsApp group kind of waiting for stuff to do, but whenever they checked the spreadsheet, the stuff had already gone. So then it kind of… then we started to try to get people delivering leaflets which was more stuff to do - which kind of like was effective but it was just kind of like, good problem to have, but some volunteers I think got a bit disengaged because they were like “oh, like, kind of want to help, but there is not really much stuff to do.”

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** We’d have some like, like some super volunteers who like, do like, shopping for like five to ten people in like an area. So, like, say a bunch of people would come up in like [CITY AREA 4] they’d be like “right I’ll take all them and do them all today.” So, like we had like maybe a core group of maybe like thirty to fifty who were like, on it, and then like 200 who were like active at some point.

**Interviewer:** Wow. And so, what was the structure of that, how would it work? Was it via the WhatsApp group?

**Participant:** Yeah, so WhatsApp group was the main form of communication. Urm… but what… it seemed like… I don’t know if whether… mutual aid groups had set up different infrastructures, kind of as time went on. But it seemed like our research at the beginning is like… people would kind of set up a WhatsApp group but there would be, you know, like hundreds of people in a WhatsApp group and some people like “I want to help,” others “I need help” and it would be really hard to like match it up.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. It’s quite confusing, yeah.

**Participant:** Like, I could see it be like, someone would be like “hi, my names [NAME], I live at [ADDRESS], I’ve got a van.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** And it would just be loads of stuff like that. Good that people wanted to help, but it just didn’t seem that efficient. Our WhatsApp group was for admins only, so it wasn’t open, so people weren’t going to get like tonnes of messages a day, they were only going to get messages when there was like an important announcement, or like an update – like we did it… tried to keep it to once a day. Then how it would work was people would either put in a request for support on an online support form or they would ring a phone number for people who didn’t have the internet. Like, I’d do it just to get the information for the form over the phone. And then that would get… the information that they gave – none of it was like sensitive, so it was compliant with GDPR, we checked it with GDPR, the data commissioner that it was all good – urm, that would then, it was basically, the form on our website was a Google form that would drop into a spreadsheet and then everyone in that WhatsApp group, they could view the spreadsheet, so they were like tasked with checking it intermittently so we weren’t even having to send messages every time someone put in a request for support, because at one point we were getting up to thirty a day, so people would just check the spreadsheet like whenever they, intermittently, and whenever one would come up, they would just tag it with their name and, and, and, yeah, update it when they’d done it.

So, yeah, we found it mostly easy to use, I think, even for people who weren’t that computer friendly once… we did like… at the beginning we were having like, twice a week I was doing like a zoom training, like a forty minute training just explaining through how it works, and most people found that was all they needed in terms of what they needed in terms of figuring out how to use it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, well yeah, it was very simple, very simple to understand. So, what other resources did you have other than that do you think? Or was that it?

**Participant:** So, in terms of the resources that we had, so we had, we had staff members and we did this in non-staff branches as well and it worked, probably not… I think [CITY NAME 1] and [CITY NAME 2] were… where they were way bigger than they were in other cities, the [CITY NAME 2] one was huge, the one we did [CITY NAME 1] was… I don’t know, maybe [CITY NAME 1]’s quite small, maybe it’s easier to navigate, or maybe… yeah, we just did it quite well at the beginning.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** well, we’ve got, in [CITY NAME 1] we’ve got quite good connections with like… councillors and MPs and stuff that we’ve built up over the years. [CITY NAME 2], they were getting like forty or fifty requests a day and had like and had like they had about 1200 volunteers, so they were really big. So, yeah, sorry, to answer your questions, in terms of resources, we had, had staff… so we had… urm organisers in branches in different towns and cities… urm, we had leaders so we had elected representatives who can make decisions on behalf of members and there’s accountability there as well, so people can decide what to do and if things go wrong there is accountability. We had… through our membership, we had these pre-existing networks in communities all across the city, so, urm, [CITY NAME 1] at the time… we had around three hundred members, maybe more, more than that and like, they were dotted all over the city so people in… when we were looking at areas where there wasn’t - that we kind of wanted to get mutual aid set up in for example in [CITY AREA 5] and [CITY AREA 6] where there wasn’t things happening that much already, we would speak to our members in the area and be like “hey can you post on like, local Facebook groups so people can join this, or deliver some leaflets in that area.” And so, we had these, sort of, pre-existing networks.

And urm, we had like… we don’t have tonnes of spare cash but we have stuff for like leaflets and stuff when we need it. And we already had like a website and all the infrastructure that we needed that we kind of have used for other campaigns, so we just adapted it. And those pre-existing relationships that I found really useful in [CITY NAME 1] of working with MPs and councillors and working with organisations. And also, that we found quite helpful was that we were an organisation with a name that people, some people recognised and trusted because we’ve built a reputation over the work we’d done in previous years. And even for people who were particularly elderly who might not have been aware of [GROUP NAME 1] before… some of the people who were calling, people were putting through leaflets of like “Hi, my name is [PARTICIPANT NAME], here’s my number,” I think for quite vulnerable people they were quite… they were… they wouldn’t necessarily trust that, some might find it nice but the people who were ringing us, are saying oh, because it was from an organisation that like, was what did… they were asking about [GROUP NAME 1], a bit more nervous and we were like “yeah, we are an organisation, you can check us out on our website, you can-”

**Interviewer:** Well known, yeah.

**Participant:** “-we’ve already, you know the council kind of back it, you know, we have like… we’re on their website and stuff now so, you know, we do have, like, we can be trusted”. And I think having that trusted organisation to respond to particularly vulnerable people… I think, you know, a lot of, some people were like in their eighties or nineties who were like living alone, like it was super anxious. I think, I think for a lot of lonely people they’re pretty scared and anxious a lot of the time anyway.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, definitely.

**Participant:** But particularly during this, they didn’t know what was going on, they didn’t know who to trust, so they kind of… were, found it easier to trust an organisation. So, yeah, having a good reputation is something that we found useful in terms of people trusting us.

**Interviewer:** I mean, were there any particular skills that people in the group had?

**Participant:** Urm… so… I mean in terms of like our volunteers we have members who have experience of like organising other volunteers to deliver leaflets and things like that. So when we kind of, getting people to do leaflet drops in different parts of the city – I was isolating for like a few weeks at the time so I was kind of… with a map on my computer of the city trying to co-ordinate people from my bedroom watching kind of…

**Interviewer:** Control room.

**Participant:** Yeah,control room, yeah, so I wasn’t able to get out there anyway, but it, it was fine because we’d had members in different parts of the city who were like, “oh, here’s like, where… [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2] lives in this area get in touch with him. If you organise like a leaflet drop in that area, what you need to do is try and get some volunteers – there should be some coming already – make sure, here’s the health and safety guidance. Urm, you need to pick up the leaflets from here, can you do that? And they were like “yeah”, and we trusted them because they had done other stuff and had experience of other stuff as well, so that was useful.

Urm, in terms of like… in terms of skills to actually carry out the service, it was kind of straight forward, but we did create like a kind of drivers group. So, if we did get requests from places where we didn’t have volunteers, we could then contact drivers. And also, we were using them as like couriers like “can you pick up leaflets from here and drop them off here.” Urm… can you – we ended up doing loads of different jobs as well, like to kind of use this big volunteer base we kind of reached out to like food banks, community kitchens to see if there was any support and we were doing deliveries for them. One of our members who had a van, he ended up… urm, I think he worked with another member, ended up… urr, loads and loads of community kitchens, he kind of delivered all of - most of their kitchen equipment. I don’t know if he’d sourced it from somewhere, but someone had been like “have you got anyone with a van?” And then when I caught up with [GROUP MEMBER NAME 3] he was like, “yeah, I’m having a great time, I’m like driving around the city like delivering these fridges for people.” And we’ve, like, helped set up a whole bunch of community kitchens. Urm, he was going to get like a big [GROUP NAME 1] sticker on the side, but we never got around to it. But he’s like a member, we’d actually done a campaign to stop him becoming homeless when he was being evicted a while ago, and because of that, he like, he’s now like really passionate and really loyal to the organisation and he like, had some time and he was like really enjoying giving something back.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** So, yeah, that was quite good, but urm… yeah, in terms of skills, mostly that. And then, and then when we like opened stuff up to get other members involved in co-ordinating it… urm we had like a team of members and… some had had some experience in like organising things before… and kind of working together as team in other campaigns, so that, that was quite useful.

**Interviewer:** Sure, so, moving on to kind of issues in organising. Would I be right in saying, you kind of, you got volunteers involved in a couple of ways, firstly you already had existing [GROUP NAME 1] members as staff members? And then also you recruited more volunteers to kind of, volunteers with leafletting. Is that right?

**Participant:** Yeah, so… we’d…urm... so once we set it up, we then set up the volunteer, the volunteer network. We had got members involved at the beginning because we had, you know, they’re easier to contact, they’re easier to get involved. But then we wanted to… we had the ‘Join to Volunteer’ form which is a form on our website which will then take people to the WhatsApp group, but we get their contact details again so that’s useful for like accountability and stuff. Urm… so, yeah and then we just started recruiting volunteers via various online networks and like delivering leaflets.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, and you talked a bit about sort of other groups locally who you got into contact; what groups were they?

**Participant:** So… urm, so in terms of contacting first… we had, so we got like councillors and MPs to like share what we were doing which was use in terms of getting volunteers, urm, we’d had member who had links to the [POLITICAL PARTY 1] and the [POLITICAL PARTY 2], that were useful, they had like big - well there’s like… I don’t know probably not as many anymore, but at one point probably about seven or eight thousand members of the [POLITICAL PARTY 1] across [CITY NAME 1] – sorry my lights just gone off I just need to. Sorry, cheers. Urm… so we kind of used pre-existing, those pre-existing relationships that we had - and we did then contact different… resident groups across the city, various community groups… urm, other volunteer groups. We’d contacted like, we messaged like the admins of pretty much like *all* of the mutual aid groups. Urm, which like -

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Participant:** - was useful, some people were like “we’re cool, we’ve got a good thing going already, we’ve got like 200 volunteers who are all helping like one person or something.” Well, no, I, I, I think that’s probably not - some of them did have some pretty good, like stuff going on, and working with what, what was going on in that little community at the time. Most of the, yeah, some that we, some we worked well, particularly in [CITY AREA 4], when we got in touch with the admin there, was someone who was like “yeah, it’ll be really good to work together because there are a lot of like… elderly and vulnerable people here but we don’t seem to have loads of volunteers at the moment, so we ended up basically, doing all the mutual aid stuff that was happening in [CITY AREA 4], that was now coming through us. Urm, and… urm… yeah… so those are kind of the groups, we got invited to, so the council had a thing called like, I think, [NAME OF NETWORK] which was kind of like different organisations that were responsible for providing food across the city, urm we were invited to their meetings and kind of like, were apart of that for a bit. Urm… but urm, so we did kind of have those, have those connections with like different groups just to try and keep people in the loop of what we’re doing. Urm… yeah, that’s about it, I think.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So, what was your relationship with the council like then?

**Participant:** Urm… like… good, mostly, the, the leader of the council, well, at the time, the leader of the council [COUNCILLOR NAME] is a, an [GROUP NAME 1] member.

**Interviewer:** Oh right.

**Participant:** So, she’s quite helpful, so we got listed on their website and things like that. Which… urm, and we had some, um, councillors generally were supportive, urm, some of the, some of the community engagement officers, so in – I don’t know if you’re aware – but it generally seems to be that in the lower income areas, more council estate areas they all have like a community engagement officer. Not entirely sure what they do, but they’re kind of involved in, kind of doing… working with other networking groups. Urm, they actually ended up doing like a city-wide network on how people could get like, Corona support and we were kind of included on that – so, they delivered across the city. Urm, so, generally… yeah, generally supportive… urm… I think we found like… yeah, the didn’t try… I don’t think we had any incidents of trying to get blocked or anything like that. Urm, I think whenever we’ve kind of spoken to organisations that are kind of like… more, kind of like established or kind of like… I don’t know – they… maybe, like some people were kind of asking questions about like, data protection and like safeguarding and things like that.

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Participant:** Which, our system, we thought was like… fine, but it wasn’t like… I mean ideally, you’d want more safeguarding with things like this when you’re like dealing with vulnerable people. But in terms of like, responding quickly – that’s quite hard to do.

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Participant:** And the council’s emergency response in terms of getting people food – they didn’t really set anything up until like weeks later. And when I tested it out - I put in like a test type thing for food, I think that somebody got back to me like ten days later. Whereas we were… we were getting back to people within like two hours. And I, I, I think some people within the council, like, recognised that, urm… so overall mostly, mostly positive, I think. But we didn’t, didn’t necessarily really work with them – we kind of did what we did and then as the council, kind of support kind of got better, off the ground, we were…would have been happy for them to like, lead on stuff because we could then focus on other things rather than trying to like… compete. But people were still kind of getting in touch with us so we kind of kept it going as long as was needed.

**Interviewer:** Mmm. Has your group tried to get any, kind of, recognition, becoming a group or a charity?

**Participant:** So, we… we are a company already.

**Interviewer:** You are a company already. Has that helped at all with… the things you’re trying to do? Or not really?

**Participant:** Yeah, I mean, I mean, without kind of having like, being recognised as a company in like a legal framework as an organisation we wouldn’t really be able to do what, what we do, let alone just for this. I think with regards to the Corona support stuff, urm, I think when… so, like, I suppose where… I don’t know, maybe some other people are involved in mutual aid maybe see mutual aid kind of like a political end in itself, kind of, like an ideological thing for some people, maybe.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** I would think - we would think, to organise, you need an organisation. If you don’t have an organisation its going to be very limited in what you can do, kind of like, who is accountable to who? And like what like, what are you actually trying to do and how do you do that? So, like, and also, like, as an organisation we can then like talk to other organisations. So rather than like… more, I don’t know, loose collection of people, it’s harder for them to like approach another organisation and kind of like work with them. Whereas, as [GROUP NAME 1] we can contact x – this food bank or the council and things like that and speak as organisations. So, having, having set up as an actually company helps with that. Some people that we had… come across who were a bit – someone from like a residence group in [CITY AREA 11] who was like very like hostile when they got a leaflet and rang us and like… I don’t know they were saying “you could be like a scam”, obviously we weren’t-

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** - but like, we were like “well, we’re not, have you looked on our website?” and they were like “no”, and it’s like “okay, well check out our website, we’re a registered company, like, we’re on the council website you can verify us.” So that obviously helps with that… but yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, no I had people telling me I was a scam. Yeah, people will say anything’s a scam, won’t they? Urm, yeah. And so, I thought, what was interesting was what you said earlier, you know, that for some people mutual aid is a kind of, political end in itself. I mean, what do you think were the motivations for people getting involved? It was probably quite diverse, what do you think?

**Participant:** Urm… yeah, well from, from… I rang about… had conversations with probably about twenty or thirty of our, of our key volunteers, maybe more and that was kind of one of the questions that I asked them. And… urr, mostly… the motivations for people to get involved you could tell – well, from the conversations – they were quite like, community minded people, generally, and like cared about stuff like… to do… I think what we found with Corona support, throughout the coronavirus, is there are kind of like people who will view themselves as kind of, part of a community and responsible for other people, and there are people who don’t. And the motivations that people told me is… quite simple really, they… had time – either they’d been furloughed or had their hours cut or even like lost, lost their job.

And like, beginning of lockdown, no one knew what was going on, so… they were quite panicky and quite tense, no one knew what was happening, people wanted to feel – instead of just sat at home feeling anxious and scared, people wanted to kind of like, contribute and do something productive. And I think that by able to be proactive and actually do something that they thought was good and useful. People found it a really good way of like, one: people recognised the kind of need for it, from like thinking about “oh, what the hell are like… vulner- isolated people doing right now? How are people who are vulnerable, who can’t go out, how are they supported?” From people thinking - few people thinking about, from speaking to like… they spoke to their grandparents and we thinking “oh, if my grandparents didn’t have family, they’d be on their own, so kind of what to make sure that other people in my neighbourhood who are lonely are being looked after.” But for their own mental health as well, people felt like they wanted to be proactive and productive and contribute to something. So that’s kind of… that was the main reason that people were… were telling me. I suppose maybe their… motivations from people who were happy to volunteer from people who wanted to be proactive and set something up, are kind of… they might be different

**Interviewer:** In what sense?

**Participant:** Urm… so… I think with… with… kind of some research into mutual aid groups, there seems to be some people who are kind of like had had political or ideological motivations for doing it. Mutual aid seems to be like a thing that I think is like associated with like some strands of like anarchism.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** I don’t know, isn’t there a like a famous anarchist book called like Mutual Aid -

**Interviewer:** Kropotkin, yeah.

**Participant:** Yeah. So, I think… that then had people kind of like… some people kind of like projecting their own kind of ideology onto the like mutual aid, which I think like loads of volunteers, kind of, weren’t aware of, or knew anything about, they were just doing things because, like, they had their own personal reasons for wanting to help their community, so. Urm… and I think when you’re projecting ideology onto something it can, kind of like shapes how those things like, develop a little bit maybe. So, but… urm… I think, yeah, but most of the volunteers that we had, they were just really, really proactive people, it seemed. Like they would – quite a few people that I spoke to were like “oh, we joined a neighbourhood WhatsApp group, but it’s just like hundreds of people like, talking.” And like they joined - and our system was like “oh, this is really straightforward.” So, like, really just wanted to do stuff straight away. And also in terms of…building kind of – I don’t know if this was the motivation from people, I think a couple of people said this that this was one of the positive effects that it had – was actually getting to know people in their communities, which people don’t in [CITY NAME 1], even though its really… seen as a community minded city, which I think it is in a lot of places, there are a lot of people who kind of move here from different places, people don’t live here for maybe that long, and like people might be… know loads of people from like work, uni, you know, social networks that they’re in, but they maybe don’t necessarily know people based upon… urm… based upon their street, or where they lived, and they really, kind of, enjoyed building those relationships with their neighbours in ways that they didn’t before. And people generally found that quite positive.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. I mean, you said a lot of interesting stuff there, it seemed to be, basically, just to… if I can rephrase it, people got involved for lots of reasons urm… one reason was that they wanted to help the people around them, you know they kind of cared about the people around them and they knew that people were more in need when they realised that they themselves were kind of in – didn’t have a great situation, they realised that other people must be doing even worse, and so they were kind of motivated to help. Urm… but also kind of helped them because they felt they had more agency over their situation and more in control and they felt they were doing something instead of than being passive. And so that was a kind of dominant motivation from like volunteers. But there was also like a, kind of, other group who had more of a political – were projecting a political ideology onto it, that wasn’t everyone, but it was a subgroup of people, they might have been involved because they saw it as like a political end for themselves. And also, finally people wanted to have like a sense of community. Is that… about right?

**Participant:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. The majority of our volunteers I spoke to they were not – well I suppose political – but they didn’t have this idea that this is an opportunity to set up this political thing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, they weren’t viewing mutual aid through this kind of anarchist lens, they just wanted to do something good for other people. Yeah. So, does, does involvement in the group mean a lot of time and effort for you?

**Participant:** Urm… well yes, well for me, yes because it’s like a full-time job and I did end up doing – working quite a lot of hoursat the beginning.

**Interviewer:** And what about for other people?

**Participant:** Urm… yeah… it depended what people do, some people were, I think, quite busy, I think, I think urm… in terms of what they, some people did quite a lot of shopping and quite a lot of support for people for like most of their days – like a smaller group of people. Some other volunteers that I spoke to, they found it good because they… they didn’t necessarily, the way that our thing was set up, they didn’t necessarily have to be responsible for like, building and maintaining a group.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Whereas I think other ones that had kind of set up without a kind of structure at the beginning, there was then kind of… everyone needed to take responsibility for building and maintaining the group, otherwise it wouldn’t exist, whereas with us, they just, they were just responsible for doing shopping for like [RECIPIENT NAME 1] and [RECIPIENT NAME 2].

**Interviewer:** Interesting. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Participant:** It was just like, the actually getting help to people and they didn’t have to be involved in anything else. So it didn’t actually take up extra time which, anyone’s who’s been involved in any group before, like, to actually get the stuff that you actually want to do, unless you’ve got the good structures, decisions making – just kind of going around in circles mainly.

**Interviewer:** Exactly, definitely. Organising things, finding a date that everyone can make, discussing things…

**Participant:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Urm, so you said that people kind of started to drop out a bit towards the end.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think that was?

**Participant:** Urm… I think the main thing was people being forced back into work more than anything. I think some people maybe had like maybe other people who kind of liked the idea of it but then kind of like, you know, they liked the idea at that time, but then maybe moved off with their lives. But the main thing was people being forced back to work.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** We would also… with the kind of problems that I kind of talked about earlier about us having like *loads* of volunteers and not enough stuff for people to do… I think then, like, if you’re not engaging people early on then the engagement drops of and is quite hard to get again.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** People going back to work was the main thing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, definitely. Were there any other problems that affected the group, do you think?

**Participant:** Urm… no. I think… there were kind of some issues in terms of… dealing… quite… dealing with quite difficult people. Urm… the nature of us just, kind of, throwing things out there, trying to get people to get in touch with is, just kind of… you’re going to end up with people, there are a lot of people with quite complex needs-

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** -mental health issues, and things like that. Which… yeah…had kind of, you know, caused some issues. But I don’t think… people that I spoke to who had come across people who… who had become quite difficult… generally weren’t put off but it, I think. They, maybe, I don’t know, maybe made them, kind of, think like the importance of what we were doing, that there are people who are going to be a bit of a challenge. Yeah… that… not really it kind of, kind of seemed to work… to work fine. There wasn’t really any massive issues that came up.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, great. And just, given that the main issue was less engagement from volunteers, what kind of things did you do to kind of, keep the group going. Because what you said at the beginning, you want, kind of, a lot of engagement at the start which might sort of, drop out, what kind of things…?

**Participant:** Urm, we tried to give people stuff to do. So we urm… contacted other organisations to see if they wanted volunteers, because what, urm, we were like wow we’ve been really good at getting people to sign up as a volunteer, what can we do with them? So we had a bunch of people doing shopping, but then…we… had… so we spoke to community kitchens and like food banks for volunteers and there was a few, a few different places who got in touch to be like “oh, can we have”, particularly like [NAME OF COMMUNITY KITCHEN].

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** They’d set up a kitchen which was mostly done by our volunteers at the beginning, had come through us, I think they must have had like twenty volunteers overall. Even like, they’d found like a room where they wanted to do this but they needed it to be like, cleaned. I think we had like twenty volunteers sign up to give this place a deep clean, like not – I’d wait for another job if that was me.

**Interviewer:** I know, yeah.

**Participant:** But they, they, they got really stuck in. So like whenever we would have… what we found was like whenever we were like “okay the spreadsheet things are being taken up really quickly, so like here’s this other organisation who need like five volunteers,” and then like twenty people would contact, contact me like straight away. So, there’s loads of people like waiting for stuff to do. And then… getting people delivering leaflets so we were getting quite a lot of volunteers delivering leaflets and people delivering leaflets to their street and also helping organise leaflets drops in areas… urm, were key things. Getting drivers to like deliver stuff… and… yeah, they were the main, the main things. So like really useful in the way it was set up, like, we’ve got like a surplus of volunteers, so, let’s kind of like use them to deliver leaflets to parts of the city we haven’t be able to get to yet. And then we’d do that – whenever we’d do a leaflet drop, kind of the next day the phone would start ringing loads again with loads of people putting in a request for support, so then there’d be like a kind of like surge in like stuff for people to do. And then like, they would then start to get like paired off with volunteers, so then it would be like, “okay we’ve got another surplus of volunteers so let’s kind of leaflet.” And we kind of moved throughout the city like that.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** So, it was quite like effective, I had like a map of the city and was like turning places red on my computer and [? 58:08].

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Participant:** And like, we had huge parts of the city that we’d done like big leaflet drops and we’d had like volunteers and people getting support there, so it worked really well.

**Interviewer:** And were you able to… did you provide like that feedback, of the sense of effectiveness towards… to the volunteers.

**Participant:** Urm… yeah. So like, when we were doing like trainings, I think sometimes I would tell people the map to kind of… urm, I think it kind of made people feel that they were a part of something big.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** And also, in terms of trying to get people to volunteer for leaflet drops, be like “these are the places we’ve done already, but these are some of the target areas, who would be up for helping do some leaflets in these areas?”. And… in, in the updates in the WhatsApp group we would post messages like “Amazing, well done everyone, like, this is like-”, like if had rang the- sometimes people would ring the phone, sometimes, to like say thanks, or like someone thanked me. Like, not an understatement to say, like, lives were saved from what we were doing, from some of the calls that I had. So I thought it was helpful to kind of, put it in the updates to people rather than it just be long informational posts, to be like “we just spoken to – had some really good feedback from, you know the past day, people,” or like, without going into too much, a particular story of like “this person rang up they like, was in this situation, well done to the person who helped them, but this is just one of the multiple things that are happening.” Or even you know, just putting numbers out there, you know, “amazing, you know, we’ve helped x amount of people so far, let’s keep it up [? 59:54].” So, like, stuff like that, I think I, yeah, I hoped people found quite like motivating.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, and in terms of like feeling part of something, did you do anything to encourage people to feel like part of a group, or have an identity?

**Participant:** Urm… not… not massively. Urm… I suppose… for a lot of our members, they kind of, of feel like that already. I think for our members who were involved in this, they kind of felt that they had ownership of it because, you know, it’s *their* organisation that’s doing this. Even if they weren’t massively involved in it… like if they hadn’t kind of been contributing to building this organisation through the stuff that they’d done before this, we wouldn’t have been able to do this. So, I think quite a lot of the members who were quite involved in it did feel quite proud. I was speaking to a member the other day who had done quite a bit in [CITY AREA 5] who was talking about some of the stuff they did was some of the proudest things that, that he’s done and been involved in-

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Participant:** - and was really impressed about how we were able to do that. Even though he’s been involved in most of our campaigns he really felt why, why, why it’s important to have an organisation the way that we built it the so that we can respond to this and really take a leading role when - so if there is another crisis that hits, wherever that is, we are positioned to take a leading role in that and we know we can do it now and we can do it again. Like, it’s the first time we’ve really responded to a crisis in that way in the UK. Like the [COUNTRY NAME] organisation, there was a big, there was a big… urm… a really active [GROUP NAME 1] group – they’re called [GROUP NAME 2], in [CITY NAME 3] in like the ninth district or… whatever they call places in [COUNTRY NAME]. And like a lot of on the ground rebuilding of the city was done by the [GROUP NAME 1], they rebuilt huge parts of the city. So, we kind of took inspiration from that in terms of doing that and I think it’s had a similar effect in terms of organisation. Urm, in terms of non-volunteers, some people that I spoke to they did feel like they were part of something, I think from, from kind of the way that we tried to cultivate that through some of the messages we were sending but in terms of – we did like Zoom trainings which is kind of good for people to see each other, but it was mostly me talking at people.

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Participant:** I think some of the leaflet drops that people did, they would chat to people a little bit more, but a lot of people wouldn’t really have that much contact. I suppose it’s different from like the more local groups who had loads of contact with each other.

**Interviewer:** The volunteers?

**Participant:** Yeah, they weren’t really talking with each other, much. Urm… so… they did have some contact when we’d ring people up like “oh, you said you… have you delivered the food to-”

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Participant:** Things like that. So that kind of did increase engagement and then we did try and like, speak to people, when we had more time. Mostly to get people to join but also to – we did get quite a lot of new members out of it. But… urm… yeah… having those conversations with people was quite useful, probably something that would have been good to have done more of, but it was just in terms of time and resources.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so chasing up was useful as well, wasn’t it? Because I remember obviously there was a group of people that called volunteers so that was a good way of increasing engagement as well.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And interesting thing about this being the first disaster response, I don’t know if… if you have any relationships with local resilience forums?

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** So, urm they’re kind of multi-agency partnerships.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That basically work together to plan for disasters in local areas.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, could be quite an interesting thing to look into.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but in terms of these things that kept the group going, do you think they just kind of came up ad-hoc or were they quite planned out strategic ones?

**Participant:** What do you mean, sorry?

**Interviewer:** These strategies that you put in to help keep – increase engagement, to help keep it going all the time.

**Participant:** Urm… yeah, it was kind of natural I suppose, we do stuff like this anyway, part of our role as organisers is, basically, motivating people to do stuff, it is like what it is. So, whether that’s motivating people to join the union, or motivating members to take action… urm, it’s more effective. So, like you send an e-mail out to get people to do stuff, some people respond, most people don’t. You ring people up and ask them to do something and you can like frame it in a certain way, you know, to find what motivates people and make them realise why it’s important to do stuff. So that was kind of stuff we’re used to doing anyway. So…

**Interviewer:** What do you think is the most effective way to frame things, when you… talk to people?

**Participant:** Urm… I think just letting people know how important it was and making people feel that they were part of something that was really useful, really productive actually saving lives and really helping people out. And part of like a bigger thing as well, so I think that was useful in the kind of updates we’d post, to be like some of the feedback we’ve had has been like, life-saving potentially in some cases, and we’ve so far helped x amount of people. Urm, so like “amazing work everyone” and I think that really motivated people and made them feel really good about themselves and felt really part of it. So I suppose a lot of the – one of the things you asked before – some of the volunteers that we’d spoken to *did* feel that they were part of an organisation, even if they weren’t a member because they did feel that they were part of, you know, this bigger, this bigger things. What we, I suppose what we try and do with a lot of our campaigns – well, if you have a campaign that *is* a big thing you want people to feel that they are part of a team but their role is valuable in that team. So, yeah, yeah I think generally that worked really well.

**Interviewer:** So finally, last little question. Have you learned anything from co-ordinating the group, personally?

**Participant:** Urm… what have I learnt? Yeah, I learnt that… ur… we can like achieve like, really, really good stuff when we want to. Urm... I think...what I found like, I, I, I found it really enjoyable, like, well, in a weird way, like in terms of my job generally, like… motivating people to do stuff, like everyone kind of recognised the need already. So, I didn’t have to do what is a really hard, difficult part of my job –

**Interviewer:** Sell, yeah.

**Participant:** -kind of like, have these kind of organising conversations. Because there were loads of people who recognised the need already and were keen to volunteer. So then I just got to do the bit that I enjoy which is like actually logistical planning and coming up with a good plan and people… like it worked really well because people were motivated to carry it out. So, that then allowed us as organisers to be like be ambitious with our plans because we knew we had an activist base who were able to carry it out. So, it think, yeah I think what I learnt is that… we do have active members and people who are willing to kind of, join and take on a lot of responsibility, if they think it’s something that they think is important. People are ready to give a lot of time to things that they do really care about. Urm, and also… and they will carry on doing that if they feel valued and that… they can see the affects of it, they can see that what they’re doing has a difference.

And… just in terms of like the scale of what we did it in some of the cities, [CITY NAME 1], that was my experience, but the scale that made us realise that we are kind of a … a big player in the city now in terms of the relationships that we’ve got, and what we can achieve, and we were kind of like leading the way, there wasn’t like any other organisations that were responding as quick as us. Loads of other third sector organisations were actually referring people to us and we were miles ahead of the council in terms of actually getting support out there. Urm, so that’s something that we learnt and part of that is through being – well, all of that is through being an organisation that’s owned by our members who are ordinary working class people from, you know, the community, so they know what’s good for the community, well, they have an idea of what’s good for the community rather than a kind of top down, they know what’s needed they can speak to their neighbours and they’re willing to do stuff, so. Urm… yeah, I think what I learnt is our kind of model of community organising is really effective and in times of crisis… kind of it was kind of like a stress test, and we came out of it, kind of, as a much, much stronger organisation.

**Interviewer:** Definitely, definitely, definitely. And do you think you will apply that to [GROUP NAME 1] work outside of Coronavirus as well?

**Participant:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. So, we know that if there is like a big crisis that needs like a big response, we’re hoping that we can lead the way on that. Urm... so... yeah… it’s had somewhat effect with our building our community protection team for the eviction ban, I think… it’s kind of a different crisis, well the government keep delaying it so it’s made it a bit difficult to kind of, really kind of keep… keep the people…

**Interviewer:** Keep people engaged, yeah.

**Participant:** Yeah, the eviction crisis hasn’t properly happened yet, so when it does, then we’ll kind of start to see it. So, what we’re doing at the moment is laying the foundations for that which we didn’t… we didn’t get to do with the Corona support – well, we did in terms of laying the foundations of building the organisation over however many years – but now we’re trying to organise like a big community response to another crisis but we’ve got time to kind of, lay those foundations before. But we are trying to organise it in a community – in a similar way.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** And you know, we may be able to take this into… there’ll be more floods happening in the UK, the way that the UK is being affected by climate change.

**Interviewer:** Definitely.

**Participant:** And we’re confident that we’re, if we do start fighting on those issues that we are able to do it in a similar way. Urm, and… you know, what ever is going to hit, things, thing, things change and move fast -

**Interviewer:** Yeah, they really do, don’t they? Yeah.

**Participant:** So, like these things are going to come up whatever they are… get a meteor…

**Interviewer:** Yeah, God knows, isn’t it?

**Participant:** Yeah, get a meteor hitting Barnsley. But we’re confident that we’re able to kind of… by building… we’ve got, we’ve got, we’ve got branches and groups in about twenty-five different town and cities now and even a year ago when I started as a staff member, when I started as a member we were like the fourth or fifth and a year ago when I started as a staff member I was the seventh person to be employed, and now we employ about twenty-five people, most of those organisers in different part s of the city and we have branches and groups in loads of other places, loads of people getting in touch, so the more that we kind of can respond on these things… you know, our members voted to kind of respond in the way that we… you know, and kind of meet the need that there was at the time. But as an organisation we’re always using these to kind of build, develop leadership amongst our members, develop the skills of our members, boost our profile, get more members and kind of build… so like, if there was something similar that kind of happened we would now … instead of doing corona support in ten places we had it, maybe less, we would now be able to do a similar thing in over twenty places. And we’ve got a tried and tested model. So, yeah, absolutely, it’s kind of big, big level organising, city wide level organising, I think we’d definitely try and take on in loads of different campaigns.

**Interviewer:** Urm, finally, was there anything else that you wanted to add?

**Participant:** Urm… not really… I suppose like… kind of a key… a main thing, I suppose, in terms of like our organisation, what we believe in is that key thing of like… found… when there was a big thing, there was loads of people wanted and other… you know, using things for certain political ends or whatever. Urm… the reason that we build an organisation that we do in terms of day-in-day-out building, speaking to people day-in-day-out, having conversations about why people should, should be part of an organisation like [GROUP NAME 1] is why we were able to respond in the first place. And having this organisation, whatever the threat, whatever the issues is, we’re able to now respond because we have these existing networks, we’ve got structures, so we can respond and respond quickly and effectively. And it kind of really reinforced, for me… why, why we kind of do things the way that we do so that we’re really able to… kind of, take the lead and respond in… you know… as our political leaders often fail us… we’re developing like leaders from our communities who are able to kind of, do what’s needed. So yeah, that’s something that… really reinforce that for me personally, urm, as someone who’s been involved in [GROUP NAME 1] for about three years now, that really kind of… the hit home the like… the potential of what we’re building.

**Interviewer:** Fantastic, that was a great answer. I’ll just de-brief you now.

**[End]**