**Date: 27/10/2020**

**Duration:** 01:11:11

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

Okay, so, first of all I would like to ask you some questions about your group, the group that you are participating in, urr, what is the name of you group?

**Participant:** It’s the [GROUP NAME].

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urr and when did it start?

**Participant:** Urr, it was probably formed maybe four, four and half years ago, under the umbrella of the parish council.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so, one year and a half ago?

**Participant:** No, four and half.

**Interviewer:** Ah, four and a half, okay. Urm, and how, how did it start? Urm.

**Participant:** Urm, one of the Parish councillors, urm, who has a lot of experience with the [CHARITY NAME] and also the [COUNTY NAME 1] urm resilience forum urm approached, urm… put to the parish council that urm, we should have an emergency resilience group within the village to be able to urr get volunteers to respond urr in the event off a major emergency to help out local people. Urm, the council accepted that there was, you know, a need for this and she, another one that you’ll be interviewing, [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1], urm, she urm started to put posters around the villages saying about this local resilience group. And then there was some meetings and urm, I went along to one of the first meetings.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so-

**Participant:** And urm, there was probably twenty or thirty people there, along with urm, urr a gentleman from [COUNTY NAME 1] fire and rescue and the very first question was really, “has anybody had any experience dealing with emergencies?” to which I stuck my hand up, because unfortunately I have.

**Interviewer:** You have?

**Participant:** Urm, yeah, I worked on the [TYPE OF INDUSTRY] for forty-one years and I was on call and I responded to pretty much every major accident that’s happened on the [INFRASTRUCTURE] on, what we would call the western region, so, urm, major accidents like the [ACCIDENT NAME 1], [ACCIDENT NAME 2], urm, [ACCIDENT NAME 3]. Lots and lots of these so a lot of experience in attending major incidents and then that led on to me doing a lot of training, for a lot of managers on how to respond to a major incident. So, I kind of like fell into [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]’s lap really and she thought, “oh, I’ve got a bit of a helpful person here!” But of course, then I happened to join the parish council as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, it all kind of morphed into one. That’s how it came about.

**Interviewer:** Okay, but urm, have you had any previous experience in organising groups like that? Like this one?

**Participant:** I hadn’t no. I don’t know whether [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] has, because everything with in the [TYPE OF INDUSTRY], obviously, is organised and set up anyway really,

**Interviewer:** And what did you get involved? Why did you decide to go to that meeting, for example?

**Participant:** Urm… one of the reasons we moved down here was for retirement. But I’m very fortunate in that I’m able to retire very early. Being in the railway for so long with a really good pension scheme allowed me to retire when I was fifty-nine. But I didn’t want to stop using you know the old brain cells, I didn’t want to go stale, I wanted to be involved in something and I thought, certainly on this, because of my experience, I could probably bring something to it. What with training… urm, the experience that I already had, and also it, it it just felt like the right thing to do.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urm… and so, and how did the group have changed since it started?

**Participant:** Well it’s grown, we’ve had a number of meeting and we keep, we we routinely advertise for new members. Urm, and we probably had around about forty odd people come forward, urm, the vast majority of them I would say, in the older age bracket, because alto of them are retired themselves and they’ve got time on their hands and you generally find that they’re the only people who want to help their neighbour, \*laughs\*. Yeah so, we we we went to around about forty-odd people and we stayed there. We, up until COVID we were holding training sessions every… three months on various things, you know, and… the, the forty dropped a little because, like with a lot of things you get people who show some initial interest and then they sort of peter away but you end up with a bit of a hard core of people that you can rely on. So, we, we probably ended up with about twenty-five/thirty people that we can call upon. But then when COVID kicked off, we first re-activated those people, urm… but then we also had more people coming on board as well because more people said that they wanted to help. So, we’ve gone back up to about forty I would suspect.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm, so it changed with COVID?

**Participant:** We had a few more come on board because I think… I guess because people could see that we were doing things. And one of the frus – it’s not a frustration but when you form a group that will respond to an emergency you are kind of forming a group that you never want to do anything. Because you never want an emergency, if that makes sense?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, sure.

**Participant:** So, trying to keep people interested and trying to keep the training relative is is the challenge because you might have someone who’s been a member for two or three years and they say, “well you know, we haven’t done nothing!” And you say, “yeah, well, we’ve bene lucky, we haven’t been called out to anything.” Urm, so trying to keep that enthusiasm going is, one of the challenges. And then, of course, when COVID came in they could see we were doing things and started to see that we’d put posters around saying, “we’ve set up an emergency resilience group, we’re here to help, telephone numbers to deliver medication, click-and collect shopping and everything else,” we had a number of people ringing saying, “oh, can we help? Can we help?” So, our list grew again.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** And it stayed pretty much the same now since we started to respond to COVID, which was, well I think about the second week in April. So, we’ve been running ever since.

**Interviewer:** Until now?

**Participant:** Urm, the only that’s changed is a number of the volunteers have now actually gone back to work, either part time or full time so they’re availability is a bit less. But we’ve still got plenty to do what we need to do.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urm… and what is your role in the group?

**Participant:** What is what sorry? My role?

**Interviewer:** Yes, your role, yeah.

**Participant:** Well I’m [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]’s right hand man if you like. She’s the leader, I’m the… I do all the raining, I do all the running around, I, I’m the one who’s always pushing, I always want things to happen and get things done. [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1], I mean… she’s got the background and the knowledge and the contacts but as… you’re interviewing her in a few days I think?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I hope so, yeah.

**Participant:** But she’s… she…well…I… I’m a bit more dynamic than she is shall we say, I’ve got a bit less patience. If I want to do something, I want it done now, \*laughs\*. Urm, so, there’s that and you know I do the training, urm, and urm really just a support. And with COVID what I’ve been doing is I’ve been producing regular updates, like little newsletters for the volunteers to see what we’ve been doing, how many calls we’ve answered, how many people we’ve helped, what we thing is going to be happening over the next few weeks, so just trying to let them know that even though maybe it’s gone quieter, and they’ve not maybe had a call for several weeks, or maybe months, we’re still there because there could be a second spike or a sudden rash- rush of, urr, infections down this way. So, you know, I’m the dogsbody I run around and do everything else, \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Laughs\*, and your role hasn’t changed at all during the, during these years?

**Participant:** No, no, no.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** I’m very conscious that this is [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]’s, you know, baby, it’s her, she set it up, she’s the one in charge and even though I might run around and make a lot more noise than she does, I, I’m very conscious that it’s hers and not mine.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I see. You already talk about this a little bit but can you explaining a little but more about how the activity you do in the group relates with other parts of your life?

**Participant:** Well, as I say, within [TYPE OF INDUSTRY] I was urm, on call, which means I responded to all manner of accidents whether it’s urm, you know [VARIOUS TYPES OF ACCIDENTS], or, or, or anything that required a managerial response. Urm, and… dare I say it because I got, I was probably the most experienced person in [REGION] [TYPE OF INDUSTRY] in dealing with it they also then asked me to start running training courses for managers coming into the industry, you can imagine with privatisation, we started having a very big turnaround of people coming into the industry who had no background experience. You know… I would say… for instance, if you joined as a, a [ROLE NAME], urr at [CITY NAME 1] and you ended up with a massive [EXAMPLE OF ACCIDENT], you wouldn’t have a clue what to do to start with, would you?

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** So, I put together a training course to try and help people understand what they should do and shouldn’t do and that training I brought to the resilience group. I had to down-down grade it a little because, with the resilience group we’re not going to be on the front line. We’re not going to be in amongst where all the dangerous stuff is happening, we’re going to be on the second line if you like, taking the workload off the front line responders so they can do what they do, and we can go and do all the less serious stuff. You know, knocking on doors, telling people to move out, making arrangements for transport, that kind of stuff.

I always say to people when I’m doing the training, the best way to describe it is if you’re got a massive fire, and you’ve got fifty firemen turn up to fight that fire, you do not want twenty-five of those fire men knocking on doors telling people to move out, you want fifty firemen fighting the fire. Because that’s going to reduce- you know, get the fire under control, it’s going to reduce damage it’s going to make the place safer. There’s other people who can do the knocking on the doors, and that’s us.

That’s, the training is all aimed at telling people what we will do, but equally what we won’t. You know we won’t put them in positions of danger or risk, and that’s when I say people like [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] and myself, we make the decisions on that. When we get a phone call, “will you do this?” we do our own little risk assessment and say, “yeah, we’ll do that because it’s not dangerous,” or “no, we’re not going, that’s too dangerous for us to do.” Yeah?

So it’s that training background, its that front line experience, it’s the experience of having emergency services respond and their command and control structure which urr, we’ve introduced within our group, like… it was always known as gold, silver, bronze, but then they changed it to strategic, tactical, and operational – I tend to think gold, silver and bronze is a lot easier to remember, particularly If you’re not doing it for months on end. So, so, that’s where I try to fit in, try to make it really realistic in-interesting but at the same time saying, “I hope it’s something that we never have to do.”

**Interviewer:** Okay,

**Participant:** Which is a challenge.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thanks, now I want to ask some basic factual stuff about he group. For example, could you tell me… the area the geographical area that the group had covered?

**Participant:** Sorry, you broke up a bit there, could you repeat the question?

**Interviewer:** Sorry, yeah, sure. Urm, urm, I was asking about the geographical areas that the group has covered? Urm.

**Participant:** Okay, well obviously [VILLAGE NAME 1] \*laughs\*, because we are the [GROUP NAME]. Urm, although, working with [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council and the [COUNTY NAME 1] Resilience Group and the two guys within [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council, urm [COUNCIL EMPLOYEE NAME] and, the other guy, urm they have actually called us to see if we would help out, for instance in other areas, because they know we’re the only group around in this area. So, we have responded to incidence in [VILLAGE NAME 2] which is like sixty/seventy miles away; urm, because they don’t have anyone who does what we do. Urm, likewise in the COVID response, when people are ringing up about prescriptions and stuff like that, we’ll cover all of the outlying villages, urm, you know [VILLAGE NAME 3], [VILLAGE NAME 4], [VILLAGE NAME 5], [VILLAGE NAME 6], [VILLAGE NAME 7], [TOWN NAME 1] itself, you know…, our, our mentality if you like ifs that the phone call is for somebody who needs help. So, we’ll do it, you know, and because they don’t have an organisation like it themselves, they… we’ve been routinely held up as the, as the leaders in our area for this kind of organisation and [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] and myself have regularly gone to other Parishes to give a talk about how we set up and what you need to set up. Unfortunately, they have been revery slow in trying to, to do something themselves. You know, they’re very keen when we do the presentation and everything else, but it always then seems to stall after that. So, but that’s something for them to iron out, not us. You know, we’ll just keep doing what we got to do for as long as people pick up the phone.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and what kind of things did the group do during the urm coronavirus outbreak for example?

**Participant:** In the COVID itself, well 95% of what we do is urm… receiving phone calls usually from the resident themselves who is either isolating or it genuinely unwell, they cannot get to pick up their prescription from the local pharmacy so we task somebody within the group to go to the pharmacy, urm, collect the medication and then deliver it. The other things that we’ve have done, and that people are told we can do, we’ve done click and collect shopping, you know we’re very clear, we will pick up pre-paid shopping. So, if you want to do click and collect but you can’t collect it, we will go and get it and then deliver it. Urm, we’ve also, urm, taken things from people’s homes maybe to urm, other addresses or post offices because maybe they’ve had to go into lockdown. You know you get someone’s who’s a nurse and urr, in a hospital and they suddenly find that they have to go into isolating themselves and they had a big parcel that they wanted to take to the post office, you know, they simply can’t do it. And obviously when you go into isolation so does the partner in the house.

You know, because of the risk. So, done that a few times. We’ve had a number of people who have felt lonely or isolated that we’ve provided, urm, telephone support to, just ring them up have a chat every now and then. One or two who’ve had slightly more serious, urm, issues with isolating and we’ve been able to provide a bit of support for that. So really, I mean, it it just depends on what people want, if they ring up, if we can do it, we’ll do it. It’s as simple as that.

**Interviewer:** How about dog-walking? Have you don’t that?

**Participant:** We’ve not had to do that yet, and certainly I’ve not I don’t know… because what we’ve done with our volunteers, we’ve split them into teams.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] has half and I have half. And the reason we did that was we wanted to make sure that we kept the amount of work between the groups equal. If we’ve have had them all in one big group, then you might have found that those towards the top of the group would have had all the calls andeverybody at the bottom would have got forgotten. So, we tried to make sure that we were spreading it… that everybody at least got a number of calls and felt part of the resil- you know, the responding group. Urm…

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, so yeah, that… but not dog walking yet, although I’m sure there’s a few that we’ve got within the group that would do it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how often to people within the group do these things? The things that you just mentioned.

**Participant:** Urm… well since April, if I said to you, we probably had about three hundred calls. We probably delivered well over 15000 prescriptions, urm,… click and collect probably a dozen or so, and the phone calls – I don’t know, most of the phone calls urm, go to [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]’s team because she has people who are ex-social workers and councillors within her team so they are better skilled at being able to do that. So, in the early days of COVID, urm… I mean it’s difficult to say, ten or twelve, ten or twelve, urm, a day maybe and then it tailed off and now maybe, we get maybe, I don’t know, maybe ten or twelve a week. But that’s on top of some people that have now, that have now become regular. We’ve got some that you know, like I know next week that I’ll get a phone call from a gentleman that every month on the same day, I know he’s going to ring up and say, “it’s time for my medication again, [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2], any chance you can go and get it?” And I’ll be waiting for it, I know it will come in. So, there’s actually quite a lot of bonds been made, quite a lot of friendships because we try and use the same volunteer to go to the same person -

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** - so it’s a familiar face on the doorstep. Urm, and the hardest thing that some of volunteers have had to do to be honest is to say “no thanks” when they’ve been invited in for a cup of tea. Because obviously we’re saying you’ve still got to keep your distance because of any potential risk.

**Interviewer:** And how many people were reg, regulars? Urm, how many of the volunteers were active helpers, urm…?

**Participant:** Well we’ve got a list of probably up to forty.

**Interviewer:** Forty.

**Participant:** And what we try and do is we try and share it out. You know, urm, so, you know on, on, on my list I work down if yesterday I, I called [RECIPIENT NAME] and then somebody calls me today for help, it’s the next one on the list. So, I keep working down because I want to keep everybody involved.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and who does the co-ordination? You and Gl-

**Participant:** [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] and myself. We do it between us. Whichever of us gets the call, we delivered notices to the pharmacists we gave them two mobile phone numbers, one’s [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]s and one’s mine. And urm so what they do is the person rings one of those numbers and you know which ever one gets the call is the one that deals with it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how did you get the volunteer- the members the other members?

**Participant:** Well, as I say, the vast majority of the current volunteers are the ones who were apart of the original resilience group. But then I think as, as it became aware that we were doing these deliveries a few people sort of contacted us to say, “can we help as well?” You know? So, it, it people, it was to do, people ringing us to offer their help as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and people who need help, how do they do to contact you?

**Participant:** Well, like I say, there’s two telephone numbers, we have a notice that’s posted all around the village-

**Interviewer:** Okay, sorry.

**Participant:** -there’s a monthly magazine that every house in the village gest called [MAGAZINE NAME 1]*,* there’s an article in there that has our poster on it that also has our telephone numbers and it basically says if you need help, ring one of these numbers.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And all the shops have it as well, have the poster as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, it’s spread in all the village, okay.

**Participant:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean there is some discussion as to whether we should do leaflets and everything else, but, I, I guess the point was made that if you’ve got it in the, in the, in the magazine that goes to every house anyway, you know, they’ve already got the information. We’ve done a couple of articles in the local newspaper as well, so, it’s been in there. Urm, we’ve, we’ve been mentioned on the radio, so we’ve had that. And as I say our notices are all around the village, in all of the shops, the chemists, you know we get phone calls from the chemists asking is if we’ll go and deliver some medication for them, you know. So, they know as well and the… the… things like that. And also of course, urm… a lot it on social media, it’s shared, shared on all the Facebook pages that cover [VILLAGE NAME 1] and the surrounding areas.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Routinely shared on Facebook just to keep it in the people’s, you know minds so to speak.

**Interviewer:** And you have other social media groups, WhatsApp for example do you use it?

**Participant:** We don’t use WhatsApp no, but obviously Facebook has a pretty good reach because we’ve had phone calls from people as far a field as [CITY NAME 2] and the [DISTRICT NAME 1] who have obviously seen it and are ringing up for us to do something with potentially there relatives who live in [VILLAGE NAME 1]. I had a phone call from somebody in the [AREA NAME 1] that said, “my Mum lives alone in [VILLAGE NAME 1], you know, could you, could you just, could you deliver her medication?” “Yup, fine, leave it with us, we’ll get it done.” And once we made that first contact, and that person has our details it becomes a regular connection then. So, we’re doing as much as we can to get it out there.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm, what resources do you have? It can be any type of resources, urm, access to funds for example, do you have?

**Participant:** Well, yeah, I mean… for the, in in terms of the COVID response, it’s just the volunteers. You know, and what we’ve tried to do is we, we… even through we’ve split the team into two, so [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] has half, I have half,… our own respective teams we’ve obviously then broken them down into those that can drive , those that can’t, those that have other skills like, I said the social workers that can be on the phone. So, we try to, so, so whenever a task comes in, we try to allocate it to the the most appropriate person.

In terms of everything else, we have, because we set up under the [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council resilience urm, organisation, and we had a little bit of training from the, they provided us with some kit, so we have… urm, some… you know riad cones, snow shovels, road closure signs, you know, some some basic stuff and that…. We have a very small budget that we get allocated by the council, and when I say small it’s £2000 a year, so it’s not a lot. But what we’ve done is we’ve managed to buy radios so we have, urm, a radio base station at our council offices and then we have another set of radios that we can issue to any of the – so if for example we got called out to an incident within [VILLAGE NAME 1], the person in control of the group would be in the council offices with a radio and also telephone, so they would be in contact with the leading agencies, you’d have a team leader on site who’s have another radio so them two could converse. And then also all the volunteers working underneath that team leader would all have individual radios as well. But they would only connect to the team leader not to the go control, that’s how you keep the separation so that you don’t flood yourself with too many radio messages. Urm, and we’ve done radio – we’ve done training on radios, I mean for some people, people are scared of a radio, you put it in their hand and it almost becomes a hot potato -it’s just a glorified mobile phone, really - you know?

We’ve got a gazebo, we’ve got, urr HV clothing, urm we’ve got little orange rucksacks that people can put their stuff in. We’ve got, urm, [unclear 28:21] … handbook which I can show you one here, he says. I’ll put that up I don’t know if you can see that.

**Interviewer:** Ahh, not really.

**Participant:** Oh, oh, I’ll stay still… maybe I’m too close.

**Interviewer:** No, yeah, but I can not see it, maybe you can send me the name after?

**Participant:** It’s a, it’s a, it’s a guidebook.

**Interviewer:** A guidebook.

**Participant:** The reason it was put together is because… it’s likely to be many, many months in between getting call outs and trying to remember what to do after twelve months is not like the fire service because they’re doing something every day, it becomes routine. If I ring somebody today and say we’ve got to respond to, it’s like, “oh, what is it that I’ve got to do?” So, it’s more of an aide-memoire, than anything else, so, so that’s the reason for it. But I will try and e-mail a copy of it, it is quite big, but I’ll try and e-mail a copy of it to you.

**Interviewer:** Yes, thank you, that would be great. Apart form the skills that you already mentioned, are there any other skills that you see in the group of volunteers that were important for the group?

**Participant:** Well, we’ve got people who are ex-service people as well, either police or army or navy or something like that. So, they do bring some skills although, certainly with the emergency service personal, again it’s very much a case of managing their expectations about what they’re going to be doing. Because they’re used to responding at a certain level and now we’re responding down here if you like, you know, it’s very different. Urm… we’ve got people who’ve got all sorts of individual skills, people who are trained in, I don’t know, chainsaws, people who have 4x4’s we’ve got a heart nurse, we’ve got several nurses, we’ve got people who’ve been care home managers, we’ve got a professional councillor, urm, we’ve got a few other people who are around urm… ex-social workers and people like that. You know, so there’s a range of individual skill and, and I guess when you consider that our role… is really about engaging with people, you know if we get called out it’s to deal with people, you know, that’s the the the main skill you need is that empathy and that ability to be able to talk and sometimes persuade people that they’ve got to do certain things. We won’t be doing the front-line stuff like fire fighting and rescuing people and stuff like that, this is more about looking after our residents.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you already talk about this but can you explain a bit more about the connections that the group have with national network?

**Participant:** Yeah well what we do, one of the training sessions we do is how we get activated. And this can work in two different ways. The *normal* way that we would get activated is that either [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] or myself would get a phone call from… either [DISTRICT NAME 2] district council, they’re our emergency co-ordinator, or from the likes of [COUNCIL WORKER NAME] from the [COUNTY NAME 1] Country Council urm, emergency resilience group or whatever, and ask us if we are able to respond. We would say, “well what is it you want us to do?” and based on that discussion we would then turn around and say, “yeah okay, we will mobilise some troops, give us ah half an hour and then I’ll call you back and let you know what we’re doing.” And in that time we would then try to start calling a few people to see who we’ve got available and and if you like formulate a response team.

The other way it could happen of course is if *we* identify something that is not necessarily an emergency, in the sense that you and I might call it an emergency, you know you don’t want the fire-brigade, police or ambulance, but it’s still an emergency. For instance you have a major power cut that is going to result in, urm, an old peoples home having no electricity for a week – that’s not an emergency where you get lots of fire-men running down the road. But it’s an emergency for them. That is something we might become available – aware of first, and we might activate our own group and then feed that up the chain. Does that make sense?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** So, you know, if it’s an emergency it comes down, if it’s a local incident, but not an emergency it can go up.

**Interviewer:** Urm, and you were connected with the COVID mutual aid network?

**Participant:** With the what, sorry?

**Interviewer:** COVID mutual aid network? The national network?

**Participant:** Not really, I mean we’re… we’re, we’re connected with the [COUNTY NAME 1] county council hub.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And the [DISTRICT NAME 2] District Council Hub, they know we exist and they do sometimes feed people down to us, but likewise we sometimes feed people to them because there are things that we sometimes get asked to do that we cannot do. Urm, for example, we might get a phone call from somebody saying, “go and do my shopping and I’ll give you a cheque.” Or whatever, well we, we categorically will not do anything that involves handling money or cash. If people are that desperate, they can go to [COUNTY NAME 1] Country Council to the Hub and the Hub have a process for dealing with that.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But we won’t. Because… we don’t want to put any of our volunteers in a position whereby, you know, dare I say it, and it’ll probably never happen, any allegation might be made about money going missing or anything like that and stuff. So, you know… urr. But that’s really the only, urr links that we have. Obviously we have [COUNCIL WORKER NAME], urrm within the [COUNTY NAME 1] County-County Council Forum Resilience Group, and they, they get our updates as well, so I make sure it gets shared with them, and [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council get our updates so they all see what we’re doing. Urm, so, I suppose, the only national recognition I guess you could say is that we’ve had, or I’ve had a telephone conversation with [LOCAL MP NAME], our local MP. Urr who’s also the schools minister, urr, who rang up to thank us for what we’re doing and to say what a great group we are and everything else. Which is always nice to here, but you know, it’s there, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay. With other local groups, do you have any connection?

**Participant:** As far as we’re aware there are no other groups in our area like us.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Like I said to you earlier on, we’ve gone to other Parish Councils urm, and done our presentation and said, “look, you really need to form a resilience group, this is how we did it,” and that’s as far as it’s got.

**Interviewer:** And other types of groups? Community groups, political groups?

**Participant:** Urm, we, we, we do a little bit with the community first responders. Urr, we do a little bit with the [CHARITY NAME] but that’s purely because of [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]’s connection with them. Urm… but other than that not, nothing, urr, no other sort of emergency organisation or thing that you might call like that no. We urr… I’m just trying to think about what we’ve done… urr… no, no that’s about it really.

**Interviewer:** Okay, but why not?

**Participant:** … \*sighs\* Well I don’t know why other local parish councils in the area have not set up something like us, I can’t answer that, I mean… whether they’ll do it now following COVID because they’ve suddenly realised there’s a need, I don’t know. I hope they would, because… what we’re trying to say to them is, “look, we don’t have to be a lot of individual groups. If we can set up groups, we can actually become a much larger group together.” You know, because there was always going to be the op- the incident that crosses over parish boundaries, so if that happens, who takes over? You know, who who is the group that’s leading? It’s much better if we can work together and form a larger response group because that will improve our skill base and everything else. But it’s very, very… it’s like wading through mud, honestly… I do not know why there is such a reluctance to it – I just don’t get it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Just to clarify, do you have urm, a kind of official recognition as a group?

**Participant:** No, no, not in any, we’re not registered in any kind of, urr, organisation other than with [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council and you know, that they know of our existence, they know to use us. We are just a group of volunteers.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm. And you want it to continue like that? Have you felt?

**Participant:** Mmm, because I think… there’s a fine line, I think with people, when they volunteer, in if it all starts to become too structured and too official , sometimes you’ll find people say, “oh, this is all getting a bit too, a bit too serious,” you know what I mean? They quite like the informal, relaxed way that we do it now. I mean what we’ve said is once all this is over, we’re going to have a tea and cake evening down the hall. And we’re going to invite all the volunteers down you know big, big thank yous, big hugs, you know, recount a few silly stories that have gone on and everything else, make sure that we try and recruit properly those that have joined us that are not formal members. But actually, make people realise that what they’ve done has made a difference. Urm, and that, that’s what I think people want to know, they want to know that they can make a difference. And they don’t want to be – as I say a lot of them are retired, they don’t want to be within anything too formal, too structured, you know, if we turned around and said, “right, we’re now, a, a formal organisation you will attend training every month. I suspect a lot of people would disappear.”

**Interviewer:** Okay, you start to talk about my next question, urm, in your opinion what are the motivations for other people to participate in this, in your group?

**Participant:** I think it’s just a community spirit. I think they seem urm, that here’s something that they can do that’s not overly demanding, but actually makes a really difference. You know just turning up on the doorstep with a parcel of pills, you know, the comments that we’ve had from people that have had the medication has, it’s been so moving sometimes. You know, you get a lady that opens the door that, you know, is ninety years of age, she lives alone and she’s got tears streaming down her face through sheer relief that somebody has just taking the trouble to deliver some medication to her, and to see that she’s okay. You can’t beat that. That, there’s no measure for that, that means everything you’ve done is worthwhile.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm,

**Participant:** If that makes sense?

**Interviewer:** Yes, completely. Yes. And how about for example, urm… helping the neighbours, do you think this was a motivation for some of them?

**Participant:** I think some of them, yes. I, I think what, what you will find is a number of the people that are, that are the regulars within the group, they were already members before COVID they also happen to be members of other things, like WIs, or other –

**Interviewer:** WIs?

**Participant:** You know, Women’s Institute? The WI organisation? It’s a national organisation every town and village has them, you know, it’s women only, urm, urm and they have get togethers as well, and you’ll find a lot of them go to that together, a lot of them do other things together. So, these people they want to be part of something. So, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urm, do you think that some of them might feel that the authorities weren’t doing enough? Doing-

**Participant:** Oof… I don’t know. I mean, I think… we, we’ve not encountered that within our urm… our little remit of activities. Urm… I think the only thing that I would say… urm, is that… when COVID kicked off and it became clear that people were going into lockdown, it did take quite a while for the [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council Hub and the [DISTRICT NAME 2] Council Hub to get organised and set up. We were ready two weeks before that to go. But we held off because if we’d have said, “right we’re here now,” we would have detracted people from going to [COUNTY NAME 1] because they’d have seen us first, and not gone to the hubs, because the resources that the hubs have were a lot more than ours if that makes sense. So, we waited before everybody could go live at the same time.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So everybody was aware then that there was this range of help out there from the, you know, the [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council hub and everything they could do which was very high level you know, delivering food parcels, you know, that kind of stuff. Things that involved money and big organisation, right down to little ol’ us that would just turn up with a little parcel of pills on the doorstep. So we, we felt a bit restricted to start with, but felt that if we were to have kicked off when we were ready, if may have confused people because, lots of people that we’re dealing with are elderly, you know, they don’t necessarily have access to internet, or even if they do they don’t understand it. And that is something that we have seen quite regularly through this. That, you know, internet is a great thing for the likes of you and I and doing this, but you know, bless their little cotton socks, you get somebody who’s seventy-five/eighty years of age, lives on their own, the internet is something which a lot of them don’t have and those that do, they don’t understand it, how to use it. And same with mobile phones. There’s a lot of [people that we’ve gone to that don’t even own a mobile phone. You know elderly people, because they call us on their landline. You know, so there’s a whole thing.

So, we didn’t want to confuse the message so when everything went live, all the information went out together. Urm, two weeks ago… I contacted [COUNTY NAME 1] county council and said, “I think there’s an element of, I call it corporate memory loss, that because things have eased off so much, people might have forgotten that the [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council Hub, and the [DISTRICT NAME 2] Council Hub are still up and running, are still there if people need them. And even if they haven’t forgotten, they may have lost contact details.” You know, they know we’re still running because we’re routinely putting it out there every week, every month and everything else. And [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council took that on board and within the last week, they’ve been reissuing the fact that they’re still up and running for people to still contact them. So, I think that was just, that was the only thing that really sprang to my mind, you know.

**Interviewer:** How did you, how od you see the relation with the council during the process?

**Participant:** With the [COUNTY NAME 1] County council? Urm… they, I think initially it seemed a little frustrating, you know because… there was stuff that I think they could have quite easily passed down to us, urm, that just seemed to take a long time to come down. Urm, but I think as time moved on and they actually realised how useful we could be, I think we started to get a few more calls from them. Urm… and certainly once I started sharing our weekly activity updates and bulletins and everything else with them, I think they certainly thought, “hang on, these guys are doing quite a lot, they’re, they’re, they’re a really useful resource,” urr, urr and so it would not be uncommon for us to get a phone call from them saying, “I’ve got a gentleman next week that needs something doing, is there anyway you can allocate someone next week?” And we plot it into the diary sort of thing.” So, it got better towards the end, but yeah, like everything else I suppose, when you’re dealing with something you’ve never done before, it takes a while to iron out the little wrinkles.

Mmm. Urm, just going back to the question about the motivations for other people. Do you think that, urm, there were also some more individual motivations, for example skills development or a way of coping with the situation, these kind of things?

**Participant:** Urm… I’m not sure, I mean I’m I’m, I do try to make the training fun, I try and say to people, I mean we did a a an evening session on first aid when we had all the dolls out so they could do face-to-you know, mouth-to-mouth, you know chest compressions and everything else, and regularly, you know, we walk around and say, “well, you killed that one,” \*laughs\* just having a bit of a giggle with them. But you know, first aid training is something that I think everybody would like to do one way or another. We’ve done stuff on radios, we’ve done stuff a little bit on risk assessment and personal safety, you know and a little bit of banter when I start of saying, “how many people in this room are expert risk assessors,” and no body puts their hand up, and I say, “well, you’re all lying, because you’re all expert risk assessors, because you carry out hundreds of risk assessments every day.” I said, “you go to the edge of the pavement, you look left, you look right, to see if there’s a car coming, that’s a risk assessment. Because if there’s a car coming, you’re not going to step out.” You know, that’s a basic risk assessment. And you do it hundreds of times every day, all we’re going to do is try and give the tools to try and recognise when those messages might mean something different.

Urm, we’ve done… urr, we’re trying to get the environmental people in so they learn a little more about flooding which might be interesting because obviously this part of the coast is is known for flooding and has a risk in the coming years for flooding. I don’t think there’s a… I don’t think there is a, a big self-development element to it. I think it’s more of a case that they just want to help.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah, I see. Okay, urm… has the involvement in the group meant a lot of time and effort for you?

**Participant:** Urm… it takes time writing the training courses obviously. Because you’ve, you … urr and this is… what you’ll find is, when you get a group of people in a room, maybe sixty, seventy years of age, the last time they had any classroom instruction was maybe… forty odd years ago, and trying to deliver something in a way that means something to them… can be quite challenging so you have to do a lot of it by PowerPoint, and just leave it there for them to read it as well as you talk about it as well, does that make sense.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** You know, normally with power point you have a few key words and then you just talk about it and expend on it. But with people who are not used to being trained, sometimes you have to leave it up there a bit longer for them to digest it not only by hearing it but also by seeing it and reading it. It’s the old thing, you know, you can hear things – do you hear it or do you listen to it? You know, do you look, do you see it, or do you take it in? You can see things but you’re not really taking it in. You can hear things but not listen. You know, we hear hundreds of things all day long, but we don’t listen to a lot of things. Not in depth.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** So, when I used to do a lot of training there’s a lot of ‘S’s that I use. There’s ‘show them’ what they need to do, then ‘share’ the experience with them, and then you ‘supervise’ what they’re doing. So if you show them what they’ve got to do, “you got a bit of kit, this is how it works, right, you seen that, yeah, right, over to you, we’ll do it together now. Alright, do this, do this, do this, alright, brilliant, now it’s your turn.” That way they’ve got it three times, and each time its going to step up the ladder. And with people of that age group, that seems to work.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** They seem to get it, as long as they’re routinely doing it, \*laughs\*. As for, as for running the group, it’s not, in COVID, its not overly time consuming I mean it takes – one phone call generally generates four or five phone calls, because we’ll get the phone call from the person requesting the mediation for example, we’ll then identity somebody so make a phone call to our volunteers… we then very often ring either the chemist or the person who’s made the request to say, “I’ve got a volunteer, that person’s name is,” so they’ve got the name of the person that’s going to turn up. You know, and we do that purely from a safety point of view, so if there is somebody strange turn up on your door you can turn around and say, “well, who is it?” and if they say, “oh, well it’s Fred Bloggs,” that’s the person they were expecting, you know. And then they usually ring us back to say, “all done” and we can tick it off our list. You know, and that’s the way we do it.

You know, I’m keeping a running log of every call that we make, and every action that we take, and I think I’m on about page… twenty-eight or twenty-nine, so you know, it’s the time of the initial – time and date of the initial call, who the call’s from, what the call is about, who we action it too, and then a few details about what’s the address we’ve got to take it, who’s the person, any special information that they need to know, telephone number of the person just in case, you know, the person delivering it gets lost or whatever. Because the thing we’re not allowed to do is leave any medication on the doorstep.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm.

**Participant:** We have to actually see someone pick it up, we leave it on the doorstep, we’ll put it on the ground or put it on a table what’s by the door and then step back, but if no-nobody came to the door to take it, we would take the medication back to the chemist, you can’t just leave it there.

**Interviewer:** I see, and in terms of emotional effort, for you and for the others?

**Participant:** I think the the the emotion is satisfaction?

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** You know, like I said to you earlier on, when you get that little old lady open the door who is just so, so pleased and happy and and grateful to to see somebody that’s taken the time to do this for them, you know, you just come away from there thinking, “God that was just so worth it, that was just so, so worth it.” And a lot of our members have said, you know, when they come back and say, “it’s done [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2], it’s done, and what a lovely bloke he was, what a lovely old lady that was,” or whatever, “that was smashing I enjoyed that one,” you know because there is a lot of enjoyment, its bizarre, a lot of enjoyment as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, have people drop out of the group?

**Participant:** Urm… woop!

**Interviewer:** Is that you’re dog?

**Participant:** Sorry, that’s the dog. You alright mate? The only ones that have dropped out, they’ve not, not dropped out fully are the ones that are not able to give the level of commitment because they’ve gone back to work.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm.

**Participant:** You know, I’ve got, when COVID kicked off, nobody was working, as you know, and you could ring anybody on the list virtually any time of the day and you’d get them. But gradually as people were going back to work – those that did, they might turn around and say, “I still want to be involved [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2], but I can only do evenings and weekends.” Or “you know, I’m back working Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday so I’m available Thursday, Friday,” or, or, or something like that. So, interestingly, even though they’ve gone back to work, everybody still wants to be involved.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** \*coughs\* Excuse me.

**Interviewer:** That’s okay. Any other problems that have affected the group, if you can recall?

**Participant:** \*Coughs\* urm… no I don’t think so. I mean we, we’ve had one problem with one chemist, urm, and and and I think we’ve resolved it. \*Cough\* sorry, got a little tickle.

**Interviewer:** That’s okay.

**Participant:** Whereby they were refusing to give our number out. Urm, and and we think that’s because they’ve got their own delivery people, you know, and they get paid I presume for delivering stuff. But as we kept saying to them, “you know if you’re – why would you stop somebody from access to their mediation? Just because \*coughs\* you’ve got your own person to do it?” But I think we’ve overcome that now because they have started to call us, but that was the only real… hiccup that we had and I don’t think anybody was put at risk because of that because we always managed to resolve it one way or the other.

**Interviewer:** Not any problems in terms of organisation, coordination issues, communication?

**Participant:** No, no, no, but of course I guess, the other thing of that is there’s – neither [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] or myself have gone away on – well, tell a lie, I went away for a week up in [COUNTY NAME 2] so it all fell to [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] for a week, but that was only a month or so ago so the level of calls were, are much lower now. So, it was easily manageable. So, not really had a problem at all.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urr, and in terms of the kind of things that have helped to keep the group going. Do you have, as you have been involved in the organisation, coordination of the group, did you did something to, that might have helped the group urr -?

**Participant:** Well like I say we do, I, I, I do a urm, urm a news update or just a , a one sheet thing that I e-mail around urm, during the early part of COVID when we were really busy it was probably every two or three weeks, but as it’s got quieter it’s dropped off to maybe other six weeks. But we e-mail that to all the members just to let them know that, where we are, what’s happening and everything else. And then… urm… about a month or so ago as well as sending that out I also then rang everybody on my team, really just to personally thank them even though we’ve done it in a news item but also to check that they’re okay, urm and see if there is anything that they want to say about the volunteering, are they still available, are they still happy to help out and everything else. But, and to let them know that we are still operating and even though they might not have had a phone call for a couple of months we are still there and operation. So, that’s that’s what we’ve done, and I can, if you like I can try and end you an example of one of those – it’s only one A4 sheet of paper that just basically says, you know, you know, just to basically keep you in the loop of what’s going on, I can send you one of those as well if you like?

**Interviewer:** Yes, I’d like to see it, thank you.

**Participant:** But that’s shared with [COUNTY NAME 1] County Council, the Parish Council and [DISTRICT NAME 2] Council as well so it’s it’s not like you’re your seeing something that nobody else’s seen.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, and how about meetings? Do you have meetings?

**Participant:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** Do you have regular meetings with the group?

**Participant:** We, we, before COVID we used to try and have a training session every three months and we were discussing at the time whether we ought to try and reduce that to every two months and maybe not always have it as a training evening, maybe just have it as a… bit of chat, maybe a quiz, just to keep the group, like the nuclei of the group going, so, but obviously COVID’s overtaken that at the moment. So, I suspect once it’s all finished, we’ll have a bit of de-brief that tea and cake evening and then we’ll we’ll pick it up from there maybe and see where we go.

**Interviewer:** So, you haven’t met since COVID?

**Participant:** No, well we can’t really, can we? We’re more than six people.

**Interviewer:** Okay. You could use Zoom for example?

**Participant:** Yeah, a lot of these people they don’t, urr, understand zoom, you know it’s urr, especially there’s the once that are working during the day and thing like that so, the phone call seems to be helping urm, so yeah, we haven’t used zoom yet, no. And to be honest I wouldn’t know how to use it. Everything we do is on teams, but that’s that’s different.

**Interviewer:** It’s very similar, as well. Yeah. Urm, but you say about, you talk about the information that you send very often to the group members, urm, can you tell me a little bit, how do you decide – what kind of information, urm, goes in?

**Participant:** It’s, it’s nothing much, it’s really usually about, urm, how many calls we might have had how many prescriptions we might have done, might relate to a particular, one particular incident. We might say, you know, “we appreciate that a number of you have not had any calls for a period of time but you know, please rest assured, part of the reason for doing that is because, you know, a) we know you’re back in work and some of you have got families and you’ve been out at work all day long, the last thing you want when you get home is another phone call although we appreciate the fact you’re willing to do it, we want to give you your family time and everything else.” So, it’s that balance between trying to make sure we don’t become intrusive on their own time, and so we put that kind of stuff in there. I mean you’ll, you’ll get a flavour of it when I e-mail, I’ll email I’ll try and find a couple that I’ll – one of the early ones that it was very much more statistical, of how many calls we’ve had etc, and then one of the more later ones which is much more about, I call it ‘hearts and minds’, it’s about trying to make sure people are still on board with being a volunteer, trying to make sure they’re understanding how much we appreciate their efforts and that kind of stuff. You’ll see the subtle difference between them.

**Interviewer:** And those kinds of things that you do, urm, they were strategic, did you decide to do it as a group?

**Participant:** No, well we discussed it with [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]. The news, the news urm thing was something we said we’d do from very early on, urm and the phone calls are things that we’ve we’ve discussed that we would do as well. So you know it’s – like I said earlier on we’ve been very conscious of the fact, we’ve been very easy for me to go charging off doing things and everything else, but, I’m, I’m mindful that actually it’s [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]’s group in in so much that she set it up so it’s it’s, so she’s the person in charge.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Even though I’m, I’m the chairman of the Parish Council and she’s the vice chair, I bully her around and boss her around in that, in this I let her think she’s in charge \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer:** But you feel that you have learnt anything from co-ordinating the group, or co-coordinating with [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1]?

**Participant:** No, I don’t think so, I think it’s worked out as we expected it to and as we wanted it to, so I don’t think we’ve had any… urm, unexpected surprises, you know I think we’ve just been tankful from people coming forward and volunteering.

**Interviewer:** But perhaps you learnt something about yourself?

**Participant:** \*exasperated sound\* … I’m not sure really… urm… I suppose you do get to realise that there is a good – you know there is a community and there are some good people out there that are prepared to go above and beyond their usual life - cycle if you like to do somethings for people. So that’s always nice to see. But in terms of myself, I mean I’ve always been that kind of person anyway.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So if you look, if you look at the sheet that we’ve got for the number of deliveries that people do, you’ll see that I do far more than most other people because, you know, I’m retired I’ve got the time on my hands, you know… so, so yeah.

**Interviewer:** And how about organising?

**Participant:** Oh well I enjoy that, I enjoy organising things and and and urm trying to make sure that we have a process in place that works and works well and again I’m, I’m, I’m a firm believer in the simpler you can make it the easier it will be for people to do it, you know. And particularly when you’re dealing with, I know this sounds like I’m having a bash at older people, but I’m not, what I’m saying is, you know, if you make it too complicated, sometimes some people will say, “I’m not having any of that, I just want it to be nice and simple, you ring me up [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2] tell me what you want me to do and I’ll go and do it.” You know “it’s not like I’m going to send you an email you have download this link to go do X, Y, Z and then can you upload this and download this and do everything else,” they’ll go, “woah, woah, woah \*laughs\* no, no, no.” So, pick up the phone, “can you do this?” ‘Yeah” “thanks very much.”

**Interviewer:** Mmm, and if you’ve learnt something about how local government works? The local government works? Or even things outside the context?

**Participant:** Urm, well I think being Parish council chairman anyway, I think I already had a fairly good insight into that, I think that it was interesting that, urm, when we kicked off the response, the COVID response, not every-not many parish councillors were members of the group. But a number of them turned around and said, “if you need any help just let me know,” you know, so, they kind of immediately stepped up. There’s one or two that haven’t, urm, and I can understand that because one or two of them have their own health problems which probably means that they wouldn’t wouldn’t be suitable for it and everything else. But I think that our, our parish council urm, in the early days when [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] was setting up, fair to say there might have been a few doubters about the need for a resilience group. I think that’s gone out the window now, anyone that was a doubter now is turned around and saying, “no, no, this is an essential, you know, this, this, if this group hadn’t been in existence, there is a lot of people who might have found things very very different and very difficult.” So, yeah, I think from that, and that gives you a nice warm feeling yourself, you know, it it it allows you to look a few Parish councillors in the eye and say, “I told you so!” \*Laughs\* Which I quite like doing every now and then.

**Interviewer:** \*Laughs\* And how do you see the future of this group?

**Participant:** Oh, I mean, obviously we want the group to carry on. And I hope once COVID is through and we have our tea and cakes and have our debrief and, and I plan to get a few people to come along to the debrief that can share their thanks because, it’s all well and good me and [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] saying Thank you all the time, but actually it’s nice sometimes having somebody with a bit more clout maybe pops in and says they just want to register their thanks as well because, that’s all you want sometimes is just somebody to say think you. You know, for your effort. So, we’ll carry on, we’ll carry on and we’ll be there if we’re needed next time for whatever it might be.

**Interviewer:** And how do you see yourself in the group in the future?

**Participant:** Urm… very much carrying on the same I guess. Urm, you know, you can never stay forever, you know I can never say… touch wood, I mean at the moment I’ve got nothing, as far as ai know, that would restrict me from doing what I’m doing, I’ve got no intention to stop. I mean my colleague [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1], she’s… alright she’s shes quite a bit older so you know, what what what I would hope is she’s – if you see us stood side by side it’s little and large. She comes up to probably my chest, because whenever we do the delivering of the training and everything else, we always play on the fact its little and large and I turn around and tell [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] to sit down and she says she already is. \*Laughs\* you know, it just breaks the ice with people. We bounce off each other fantastically well. And we do think so much alike. I will ring her up and say I’ve had an idea and she’ll say, “that’s weird I was only thinking about that!” So, we are very much on the same, on a similar wavelength on a lot of things. And I’m sure, knowing what she’s like, she will keep doing it as long as she can.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, I don’t think I have any more questions, is there anything that you will like to add? Urm

**Participant:** Urm, I don’t think so, I don’t think so. You know, I think you – we’re just a group of people that are trying to do the best we can for the people that we live with. We’re it’s not, it’s not rocket science, you know? Urm… it’s it’s it’s not some, something that ends a bit urm dominate organisation to be in charge of – because sometimes, you know, the little groups, the little man if you like, can get just as much done as long as they know that support is behind them if they ever need it.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** You know, so, yeah, I just hope that other areas maybe learn from this, and maybe start, do start to develop their own groups and realise that there is, you know, a real benefit to people, to communities being able to help themselves, if that makes sense.

**[Debriefing]**

**[End of Interview]**