**Date: 16/11/2020**

**Duration:** 59:54

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

**Participant:** I was just interested when you said “sustained” I was thinking, “ah, I hadn’t actually thought about the financial side of it.”

**Interviewer:** Well, I’ll ask if you have some funds and those kinds of things-

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But not really about the money and those things.

**Participant:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so depending on your answers, the interview will last about one hour. Urm, okay, first of all I would like to know the name of your group and when did the group start?

**Participant:** Urr, so our specific group is the [GROUP NAME].

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, is the name, and it started, I believe, three weeks before I started approximately, so, I want to say really early March.

**Interviewer:** Mmm. So, before the lockdown?

**Participant:** I think before the actual lockdown, yeah, that it was starting to be…

**Interviewer:** Okay, so how did it start? Who was involved?

**Participant:** So, I was, sorry, I’m not there form the very very beginning. So, I know that on social media there were mutual aid groups, urm, nationally that were coming together. Urm, but then on the [BOROUGH NAME] side – so we are a borough that’s made up of twenty-seven wards… urm, and… there were, ideally going to be twenty-seven, I believe, mutual aid urm groups, in each of the wards, and I don’t believe they were all started up or all maintained. So, [AREA NAME 1] urr was really just… I believe it was started on Facebook and reaching out from two or three people to the community saying that we are here if you need help – support I should say.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and were you, how did you start to be involved? You said that you weren’t from the beginning.

**Participant:** Sorry, just sort of on that, I’m thinking of wards, so then the way to sort of reach most people was to flyer so making little posters. And then to put them urm in all of the streets and all of the letter boxes in all of the streets in [AREA NAME 1].

**Interviewer:** In [AREA NAME 1] okay. Yes? So, the goal, the goal at the beginning was to provide support, what kind of support?

**Participant:** Urm, neighbours helping neighbours, community to support the community.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm. And has anything changed since the group start?

**Participant:** On, on, on that sort of overarching aim and level, no.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** I think everybody who I’m aware of, I urm, know quite a few who’ve who’ve been involved urr joined for that reason.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Yeah, to be able to support the community and we’re trying, I suppose to make it as sustainable as possible, we’ve always been interested in neighbours helping neighbours as closely as possible. So, you know, if your next door neighbour is someone who’s asking for help then we’re most interested to get someone who lives as closely to that person, urr, just to enhance the relationship on a neighbourly basis.

**Interviewer:** Um-hmm, so urm, and when did you get involved? How was the first –

**Participant:** So, I got involved a little bit later so when all my work – I work in events, so when all my work disappeared in pretty much a week or two for the whole year and I urm, put my own little flyers around my neighbourhood – which is randomly not in [AREA NAME 1], but that’s the way that happened – and urr looking on social media so on Facebook, Instagram, little bit Twitter, but I’m not massively active on Twitter, I think it was on Facebook I found that in my local area people were looking to help and looking for people to get involved for people to facilitate the help in the community like I say. And I sent a message and a few people said, “oh, I think maybe this ward doesn’t need it where you live now, but there’s somewhere, there’s somewhere very close” – maybe it takes me twenty minutes to walk there, urm –“and they’re looking for people to help set up elements.” So, that’s how I got involved with the the two or three people who were already doing.

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

**Participant:** Urm…organising groups like this so, super simply: no.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and other types of groups?

**Participant:** Urr other, urr other charitable urr situations yes. Worked with – tried to help grow others as well, tried to help put processes in, but nothing urm, sort of starting from the earlier parts with a picture to - we don’t know how much this is going to grow, so definitely kind of the guy that I was paired up with, we’re both project managers work in events, we have the same kind of vision with – just with the side that we were doing, urm, of of the mutual aid was to - it might only be two people asking for help now but in a couple of months in a few weeks there might be two hundred people, a thousand people, so to try and put a strong basis and process and processes in place so we could help ourselves to help the people.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, okay. Can you tell me a little bit more about your own motivation to get involved?

**Participant:** Urm… yes, several fold. One, I’m very bad at doing nothing.

**Interviewer:** \*Laughs\* It’s a good motivation.

**Participant:** Urm, and and as I explained so I… I I literally got a friend to print of some little messages, like I know thousands of thousands of people did and I just said my name and my telephone number and that I was, if anyone was feeling scared and lonely and needing anything at all then give me a call, I’m their neighbour. So, I send – put in about four streets by me and urr I got maybe maybe fifteen responses and fourteen of those fifteen were saying, “oh, that’s amazing that’s so lovely, that’s so lovely, blah, blah, blah,” but no body actually needing anything at all. Urr one guy said, “oh that’s very kind let you know *if* we need something.” Urm… so that was great, but it was very… it’s it stopped there. Urr and so I wanted… I’ve always wanted to have more time to be more involved in any - several different types of volunteer work. And I thought that this was a great opportunity, I took it I called my – what did I call it? ‘Embracing my Enforced Sabbatical,’ is is the decision that I took so then I decided that if that’s what I’m going to do then I’m going to find something, I’m going to look up, something that isn’t just… urr knocking on the door and speaking to people and making phone calls because I wanted to do more. I wanted to use my own skills and discover if they can be transferable and work with them, working with people with my my neighbourhood and my community and I wasn’t interested in knowing after the fact that anybody was suffering unnecessarily when people are next to them for example and not being supportive when the possibilities were there.

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

**Participant:** Urm, so my role – which is typical for me – is kind of quite a lot of changing roles, but predominantly, so easy way of doing it, was to urm, myself and another guy managed the food group and then that morphed into the street – managing the street team. So, the height, at the height we had urr, we split [AREA NAME 1] into several different colour areas.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, from pink, to green, to purple etc, urm and then we had about – I think at the height about two hundred people max who wanted to know wanted to help out so they wanted to help their neighbours too, we had like a google form – just a sheet that they could fill in, say who they were, and that was also on a slightly safeguarding element so that we would know who was helping ad if they were willing to say that they lived down the road then that was a positive. Urm… and we, so we took all of that information we split people out into the groups depending on their geography, urm… and we also with that set up urm like a – I don’t know, did you know what a ticketing system is? Like if you – if you have a problem with your IT –

**Interviewer:** Ah yes.

**Participant:** -and you have to make a request, then they say, “don’t e-mail, send a ticket!”

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** So the back end of that is, there are lots of different systems that manage requests coming in so they all come into one kind of data base and then you can assign them and you can follow, you can track how that’s working very easily. So, I, we were very interested in doing this – this is part of the thing that I said we were interested in, something that’s going to grow exponentially, potentially. We wanted to have a good system in place to take that forward. So, we had an IT guy who was with us from really early on and he was willing to find the right platform and we did – we got thar for free and set up that, set up all the different groups and then briefed all the different groups, did some documents to be bale to explain to people what they were doing. Urr, had weekly meetings if people wanted to ask us any questions, we let them know what was going on. And then requests came in for shopping, for prescriptions, for all different things.

**Interviewer:** What kind of things did you do?

**Participant:** Urr, so shopping I would say is mainly. Urm, but we even did redistribution of – so there were care packages that the government that the councils were given to urr people who were – not isolating – shielding, so mainly for shielding people. Urm and if they – we had a few who received the flyer through the door and they were loke, “there are only two of us and they’ve given us two boxes and we’ll never use enough, so please take to the foodbank or to people you know,” so, re-re-using food, re-constituting food. Urm… hospital appointments – not many but taking people to hospital appointments, prescriptions – a lot of picking up of prescriptions. Urm… then it became, and I mean people are doing it it now, really helped with people who are struggling urr… to get food at all. So quite a lot of people who don’t didn’t have the means as well to to support themselves foodwise. Most people were absolutely going to do shopping on behalf of people who just couldn’t get out and do shopping for different reasons. But then support from people, vulnerable people who need and getting – someone needed a cooker or a television or a bed, for example.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how often do people in the group do, did, the did the things, for example shopping it was every day? Or how was the distribution?

**Participant:** Was it every day? So, this is only on our ward, yeah? And our ward is not – because I did a lot for another ward, [AREA NAME 2] and definitely their requirements, urr were quite a lot greater. So… I say something daily.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** You know, not necessarily shopping daily but, maybe we shopped for ten people a week, for example, yeah, something like that. And for some people that just carried on and some people only needed a couple of times because their neighbour couldn’t do it because they were isolating, or family members weren’t around during lockdown.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and what is the situation in the group at this moment?

**Participant:** Urm… volunteer wise, the active volunteer numbers have gone down massively. The situation of the group is very much active and alive and urm a couple of people are very interested in reaching out – kind of not re-inventing the wheel. So, reaching out to other charities for example [CHARITY NAME 1] or [CHARITY NAME 2], [CHARITY NAME 3], [CHARITY NAME 4], and [CHARITY NAME 5] and try and see how… we and a community can help them to help our community as already existing charities. And we get donations for example for a, a baby charity – prams, children clothes, stuff like that, collections. Collections of plastic bags – carrier bags for foodbanks, food for foodbanks. Urr, started a gardening glub, *club*, gardening group, a group, because for people who haven’t been able to have a gardener in or for the leaves now, urm… and that’s that’s one of the – that’s quite a successful one at the moment, people interested in getting out and urr doing that.

We did a festival, a little mini festival sort of on the streets, urm and one of the girls is a dancer and she had quite a few artists who were willing to give their time and to come. And we did, I think five different locations around our ward, urr, where maybe three or four acts came to each place and then some rotated across whole - maybe, four or five hours. Urm, fortunately the weather was amazing, and it was all – that was very positive.

And we’re looking to do Christmas hampers, so collect urr... collect and then put together and then distribute, We were looking to do also, urr urr a wave through the window so to just go, now in second lockdown to go around and – contacting them before but see if they wanted to do a chat from the street, and stuff.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yes, please have your coffee.

**Participant:** Ah, yes, it’s a bit hot.

**Interviewer:** Sorry I’m just asking questions. Urm, so how many people are in the group, at the moment and in the past – just to have an ide and how many of them are –

**Participant:** I can have a look because it’s all WhatsApp groups, so if I look at urr – oh sorry, that’s not the right one… I always, I always mute and archive so [AREA NAME 1], I think it’s this one. Yeah, so [GROUP NAME] currently has… participants – a hundred a thirty-three, currently in the mutual aid. And I believe there was – I *think* that was up to two hundred at the height.

**Interviewer:** And all of them were active helpers? No? how many?

**Participant:** No, but maybe… you know its very hard for one person to say how many people were active. I mean for me I don’t believe that more than fifty percent were ever active of any of the numbers. I think a lot of people are… interested for different reasons and in different ways.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and in terms of geographical area that you covered, because you mentioned that you did something for your neighbourhood, but also outside?

**Participant:** Yes so I, well I personally, I don’t live in [AREA NAME 1], that’s a ward, I think there is one ward between me and [AREA NAME 1], and I, I’m more involved in [AREA NAME 1] because that was where I could be more involved in helping to set up and that was what interested me because I knew that there was more that I could get my teeth into and work with and I enjoyed working with the people that I was working with and we all seemed to have a similar goal, so that’s what I did. And like I say it’s twenty minutes’ walk – it’s not far. Urm, but on my doorstep what came of me putting for example, me putting my little notes through the door, is one of the people on one of the roads just around the corner from us, said, “oh, we have a group just for our road, do you want to be, do you want to be part of it, we have some elderly people that we’re trying to find out if they want us to be good neighbours and to talk to them,” and then at Easter time put together like little Easter packages for to feel a little bit happy.

Actually literally, just now, I have come back from my walk around the block with an eighty year old, who is [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] who lives on her own, who’s daughters try and come and see her when they can but she’s very, been very active, urm, so we have like a rota that we out up around the neighbourhood - I think there are three of us, who during the weeks we take different days like, in height when I was not working at all we – we went maybe three times a week for a couple of hours each time, but now its probably maybe only an hour, and hour a week and then just messages and telephones calls and the like. But we’re still doing it, we’re not, not stopping at all.

And in [AREA NAME 2], so [AREA NAME 2] that was a lot of food support, food delivers.

**Interviewer:** Food deliveries, okay.

**Participant:** Food deliveries every, every day, every single day of the week for six months that was going in [AREA NAME 2] and we had people driving and walking and just taking and delivering to urr, to people who needed who were isolate for all different reasons.

**Interviewer:** And how did you get the volunteers?

**Participant:** How did we get what sorry?

**Interviewer:** The volunteers, people to volunteer themselves?

**Participant:** I think it was, so that’s social in the same way that I did. So social, word of mouth, urr the flyers as well, also spoke to some local, local business and asked the to put it in their, asked to put the flyer in the window so I suppose when you’re offering help, just as much as people would ask for help, people would say, “oh, do you know how to get involved with that?” and you know, we had the same e-mail address and telephone number.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and in terms of resources, what kind of resources do the group have?

**Participant:** So, do you mean funds now?

**Interviewer:** Could be funds, but it could be any other type of resources.

**Participant:** So, resources I mentioned this sort of system that we put in place -

**Interviewer:** Okay

**Participant:** For me I see that as a very strong resource because we were very particular of not having the knowledge of safeguarding but being very aware that – dealing with vulnerable people but also asking other people to help us to help other people. So, we wanted everybody to urr, stay safe and there always be a very clear urr way of tracking. So, we had a tracking system as well as a ticketing system. So, anybody could go int our system and see… everything that we’ve helped with and who was helped, and how they’ve helped and what the resolution is or if it wasn’t resolved. So, for me that’s that a very strong resource.

Urm… sometimes we’ve had the local electrician said, “well I’m not working so much at the minute so I’m going to get my guys to be able to drive the van,” and then van will be able to do deliveries or pick up bed and deliver beds or fridges. Urm… and there’s been a little bit, not a lot of funding. You’d… so to ask for donations like around the festival that I mentioned, there was a bit of a fundraising that went on around there. And then otherwise they’re a gentle plug for that but I would say – oh I think we’ve just actually from the council, just just just got a grant in for the council.

**Interviewer:** Now? Okay.

**Participant:** Yes, now, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And [BOROUGH NAME] wide and I’m not, definitely not the pro on this set up something called [NAME OF INITIATIVE NAME], and [NAME OF INITIATIVE] is a no-questions asked amount per month that is given to people in need.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urr.

**Participant:** Not no questions asked.

**Interviewer:** Sorry? What did you say? I didn’t hear.

**Participant:** Not – when I say “no questions asked,” that’s like anybody could say, “give me fifty pounds now,” and it’s not like that, there are systems that you don’t need to prove like if you were getting money from the government.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Urr… and how did you coordinate everything? How did you organise all the -?

**Participant:** WhatsApp groups.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, WhatsApp groups, so… mainly WhatsApp groups, I think WhatsApp groups has probably been the biggest – it’s probably exploded. Urr so the tracking system again, back to this system, it’s called [SOFTWARE NAME] by the way that we got but we’re using the free version, urr so [SOFTWARE NAME] is the ticketing system and that’s how urm... when a request would come to the call centre or soon does – so a request comes into the call centre it gets logged on the system and then it gets assigned to the group and then the team leaders, as such, would see it, would get an email from the system and then would then be put into the groups. And when we were busy busy with all of the seven, the seven different colours of the area because we were busier enough. They would just be just the message for just what was happening in those streets.

But maybe two and half months ago it was getting much much quieter or in the summer there wasn’t even that much volunteers, so we put all of those seven groups into one group. So if a request comes in, the process is exactly the same, call comes in, that gets logged, you get advice of what the request I, is gets put out on the WhatsApp group urm, as a very generic - someone needs shopping, someone needs gardening, someone needs prescription, and then that person is responsible to say, urm, “please direct message me,” so the volunteer direct message so only the personal information is just between then responsible parties rather than hackable WhatsApp groups.

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

**Participant:** So mutual aid I believe is a natural – national network. So, yes but as far as I’m aware not in anything more than by name.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and-

**Participant:** We’re not a charity, as such.

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

**Participant:** Absolutely, urm, so, there’s a we call it a ward rep – representative, and I think there might be two of them now for our group and they have – at the height I think they had weekly calls and they also have a WhatsApp group of [BOROUGH NAME] wide mutual aid so that, you know, different learning s could be can be shared amongst.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and is the group connected with other organisations, political organisations, community or-?

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** No, okay. And how is the relationship with the local council?

**Participant:** Urm, very good. I personally don’t have the contacts, but the the girls have been – so the ward reps have been talking to council throughout. I can’t I can’t say how regularly, it was mostly regularly. Urr the council… not stupidly were *very* happy to talk to urr the reps and to support at least verbally if not in any other way, urr to… yes, to support. But sometimes even for certain – if there were people, for example so we would say that if someone, for example of someone was worried about going to evicted and we know that we don’t have the power to be able to do anything or knowledge as such, then we would urr speak to the council or our contact at the council to understand the process and how to, how to, I don’t know fast-track – but how to get that person help as quickly as possible. And that I I know that that worked well a couple of times for people who needed.

**Interviewer:** And any other local organisations, local resilience forum?

**Participant:** Yes, so literally like I say, so [CHARITY NAME 2], [CHARITY NAME 5], [CHARITY NAME 3], urr, [CHARITY NAME 6] so that, so one, so one of the reps is very particular she sort of sees her role as kind of partner liaison partnerships. And because… we want to… we see it as helping our community as helping what’s already established and working in the community so there are some foodbanks and food support networks that already have been going for several years that have got, that are working from properties, established properties in the area and we try to support them and ask them what they need from the community and to try and help the community to help them as well. And to help raise their profiles, so. Because we brought in urr, a friend of mine for example who was – is – a public relations professional but she lost, she was on furlough and then she lost her job so, I was like, “come in and help with the socials,” so she kind of builds up, built us up on Instagram as lot so we’ve got lots of followers, and to try and support local businesses. Urm… to to keep them going in the way top, yeah – just to keep them going, or to *help* them to keep going, sorry.

**Interviewer:** And has the group tries to get official recognition? For example, by becoming a company or a charity? And why not?

**Participant:** As I explained, everything I just said.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you mentioned, you talk a little bit about your own motivation for getting involved, and how about for other people? What do you think, what are the motivations of other active participants?

**Participant:** Urr, I’d say most people… similar, the people out out of work people, very similar to me. They don’t want to sit around doing nothing and believe in their community. Some people meeting people, I think for their own urm, for their own need to meet people and to not feel lonely themselves and see it as a social thing – definitely. Urm, and some people who’ve also been super busy, so busy with work the whole time still have wanted to be involved, again in that sense of community. Urr… I I feel particularly living in a big city its urr, you know even if you’re a family it can be, it can be a very insular experience, and I think at times at times like these – just as in our human nature we think it it - there’s a feel good factor in helping. And you can see it in you know a friend in need is a friend indeed, because it gives to give. It gives me something to give to somebody else. And I think that’s just, I don’t know, for me that’s just inherent in our human nature, is, you get something from giving something.

**Interviewer:** And did you notice those motivations when in contact with people?

**Participant:** Yeah, definitely, the feel-good factor I think people had super massive feel food factor. Urm, when they’re involved and when… particularly when, like I say we had the weekly calls so we would always try and talk about success stories, you know people who came together and name the people out and say, look, you’d, urr, you know [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2], [GROUP MEMBER NAME 3], [GROUP MEMBER NAME 4], you all came together and you know, [RECIPIENT NAME] now has a bed and she’s getting regular help and she’s not lonely and she called the call centre to say, “oh my God, it’s been amazing,” and, you know people are like, “okay, and that’s exactly why I do it.”

On another level – ego, is something that I’ve been very interested to notice. Its not something I see as very pretty but if that’s what helps people to help others. That’s fine as well.

**Interviewer:** It was very common, or?

**Participant:** No, not very common and I try and steer clear of that because that, of no, not something that interests me but in the example of somebody who urm… wants to be the boss so what’s to say, you know make a very tiered system so other wards have been very, there’s the boss and then people who have their roles – but the boss needs to decide. Whereas that’s, that’s absolutely not the way [AREA NAME 1], you know, like I say the admins and the reps and the people who started who thanks to them this has continued morphing to things that makes it sustainable and it really is sustainable. Urm… so so that’s and that show I’ve manage to stick with this one rather than others that I was helping because… it’s just a lot of personally, it’s not the way that I want to help or just live my life to be honest.

**Interviewer:** But you mentioned – what’s the difference between this group and the others that you saw?

**Participant:** So… urm, if one person says, “I am the leader,” and gets angry because other people are helping in different ways and maybe feels that things aren’t going exactly the way the leader wants it to go, or feels it should go. And then that causes friction so then maybe people aren’t getting help or there is more discussion that there needs to be rather than in the group, in the [AREA NAME 1] group, you know there are definitely people who *lead* the discussions but would never not – would never been unhappy that people have gone and helped [RECIPIENT NAME] five times during the week without anybody knowing about it. Only on a safeguarding point of view we would say, “okay it would be great to know just so we could update as its great that we have the bigger picture if anything happens positive or negative really.”

**Interviewer:** Okay, and have you faced any kind of problems in the group? Challenge? Problems?

**Participant:** Urr, I suppose certain questions but one girls who’s just amazing and talks to the council loads is… people with big problems that we can’t necessarily help. Urm, but a couple of us have just managed to reach out and find help that I think it’s incredible and I wouldn’t have expected. And problems, like I say, more just that – more just trying to come together and between the wards, again that’s egos and personalities more than – you know the word “problem,” I see that as a really negative thing and… challenges more than, more than problems you know, you say, “okay well we’re doing this and if we all did it together then we can all be – it can maybe be wider reaching and maybe simpler for everybody,” but I think that’s everything- any organisation that happens.

**Interviewer:** And has people drop out of your group?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Participant:** Like I say, I don’t know! Like I say two hundred people, to a hundred and thirty, and then those hundred and thirty, I mean I would say now maybe twenty percent are even at all active. Urm… but in the same way as I am, I’m on different groups to be able to see what’s happening in other groups to either facilitate – to spread the word of the kind of general need or a great initiative that I think can happen in others. So, I don’t know, people, okay predominately people that were working with us very actively that stopped working were mainly because of work urr coming, coming back.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Yeah, people getting to work again.

**Interviewer:** Nothing else? Okay.

**Participant:** And then, and then no time.

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

**Participant:** Yes, but that’s completely down to me. That’s my fault, no one else’s.

**Interviewer:** Okay, emotional effort or just time? Emotional?

**Participant:** Emotional? Yeah, for sure emotional involvement, for sure. You know, yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer:** And for others? For the others as well?

**Participant:** Well for others, for others I believe so too, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Positive and negative.

**Interviewer:** Can you -?

**Participant:** I believe more positive otherwise none of us would be doing it if its too, you know, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Can you explain why, in what sense?

**Participant:** If I was so, at other times if I was in other areas going delivering food to people weekly, daily however often I could and you go to the people that you see in circumstances that you think, okay this is not just because of the current situation but this is because of their situation in society for whatever reason, it doesn’t make you feel good that people on your doorstep are potentially suffering or going hungry or very lonely. Urm, so to try and do something about it is great but I think almost – like when you learn more you become more ignorant or you realise that you’re more ignorant and I think that when you see more you feel - sorry this is very personal – I feel more urr… or, less able to help, helping more shows that you have less ability help as much as you think you’re helping, and then questioning that help. So that and that’s so that, that that emotionally that I think that definitely at different times has weighed on me and I’ve tried to either, worked to doing more or doing differently, so I’ve tried to mix it up if I was feeling like that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urm, what kind of things have you done that might have helped the group keep going? For example, you mentioned meetings, could be something else, urr?

**Participant:** Yes, so regular, regular meetings, definitely.

**Interviewer:** With all the groups or just for your group?

**Participant:** No so, urm, so for example just shall we say, the street teams was, so hat was seven groups of all of the volunteers and then what we did, we had team leads, so that was people that were going to be responsible for twenty people and then like I say, for the request and then putting the request out, so that would be a week, a weekly meeting urm, just for everybody to be bale to check in, just for us to be able to give information and be able to just ask how everybody was doing if there had been any issues at all that for any reason we hadn’t known about. And then, you know, it also, it becomes a feel good as well, urm, and for anybody to suggest any changes. And then more recently I got involved in, it’s called the committee but only because I was more available to be and up for doing lots of different things that I was kind of like invited to be joining that call and that’s something that’s been going throughout. So, the girl who kind of chairs that she does a one to five how’s everybody feeling – every time. And different people share different things which is also quite entertaining. And that, I think, having that in the diary, you have to actively say, “I’m not going to join,” so I I think something like that is a great test for people to know. So those, those weekly meetings for the street teams, we’ve super recently just gone, “you know what, there are four of us, or two of us even who are on these calls, we need to make them less regular and we need to work out… if it’s not worth it anymore. Because if there’s no one engaging, and we don’t have enough people that we’re helping.” Just needs – the value.

**Interviewer:** But do you have people asking for help at the moment?

**Participant:** Urr yes, it’s come up so we just did a flyer, new flyer went out I think there’s been four flyers all together, urm, and there’s now flyers gone out and yes urr… different sort of help, people urr… people who need foodbank referrals urr… people needing a bed… because beds collapsed, people with garden stuff like I said. So yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Should you say that less people are asking for help than the first lockdown.

**Participant:** Urr... yes, yeah. There are less, yes, in my mind there a less people that are in their homes than there were the first lockdown to be perfectly honest.

**Interviewer:** So, the needs are different. Do you mentioned a committee or a kind of like –

**Participant:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** -so, what’s the goal of that group?

**Participant:** So there’s so each of us so there’s the urr ward rep who I mentioned, there’s the girl who like chairs it, does the whole administrative side who deals with partnerships, so that’s either with local local businesses or particularly local charities to be able to support local charities. Urm, and then there’s us who deals with the food and the street team, who update there – there’s social, the person so the PR, the PR girls on there, and then we also do a newsletter so the girl who’s responsible for the newsletter. Urr…so that’s so that’s, to come together, see what’s happened, what should happened to be able to sustain it or is definitely part of sustaining the group, without that I don’t think it would sustain it, there would be nothing to sustain. Because it’s probably the heart, the heart of [AREA NAME 1] mutual aid is probably the committee – definitely when I think about it.

**Interviewer:** Urm, were any of these strategic - the things that you mentioned that you done, or others did to keep the group going? My question is were they strategic or just ad hoc?

**Participant:** Huh… to to so to keep the, so to keep the group going?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Urr early on was probably more ad hoc, more reactive but like I said we tried to be proactive to be able to react well. Urm, and in busiest times we were reactive but right now or in the last couple of moths it’s definitely been proactive, yeah. Strategic to keep people interested, keep people involved, get more volunteers because nobody’s picking up, so if we say, “somebody needs shopping now,” and nobody in a group of fifty people says I will do it, it’s like, what do we need to do to keep people involved to get people to feel like they would like to be more involved and say, “yes, I will go do more shopping for my neighbour down the road,” for example. So yeah that’s definitely strategic – working on a strategy to keep it going.

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

**Participant:** Gosh I don’t know if I personally should answer this. Urr… I’m going to think more in the line of the people who started this, I think. Urr… existing continuing, continuing to support other existing initiatives and groups urr and … do I think… I I would like to say I think it would continue. I I believe it will continue out the year no problem at all – I couldn’t say this time next year. Yeah, I mean… yes different people I think priorities, priorities change, urm… but but the idea is definitely to maintain it, for sure.

**Interviewer:** In the same…?

**Participant:** In the same, yeah, in the same way going on now so like I say there’s gardening but there’s even someone’s started a walking group, like I say, just for people just for the sociability, people who are volunteers also for them it’s very important on a social front. For some people, not at all, but for others yes. So, I think maybe they’re the people who are more urm, incentivised to keep it going.

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

**Participant:** Urr, for me I am very happy that I would stay in a very similar role. I’m interested in the food element and urm… in yeah, just that, the friendly the friendly neighbour support. Urm…

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how about urm, if you learnt something from coordinating the group?

**Participant:** Urr, yeah. I learnt loads, well I learnt a load because another thing that the girl who does the partnerships is there’s - so the charity called [CHARITY NAME 3], the lady who runs it, urr… manages conflict resolution and she is, probably coming to the end, she’s just got an MBE she’s done twenty-five years of it and she is from our community and she wants to urm… educate people who want to be educated in helping with conflict resolution, so we have some talks sometimes and she teaches really, how to do this which is fascinating, really, at times. Urm… then there’s [CHARITY NAME 1], you know the homeless charity, so they, we’ve had talks from them. Urr, we’ve learnt safeguarding from people from [BOROUGH NAME]. This ego thing that I told you about, that was quite telling; I mean I’m very interested in people so that was, peoples egos intrigues me, and getting the best out of people, so learn-learn-learning that. Urr and learning to communicate, you know you can be any age and I think you can learn to communicate better with people for yourself and for others. Urm, and that it can be very rewarding on a community level and on a person level, to help yourself to help others.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, and how about things, related to how the local government works? Was something news for you?

**Participant:** … I must admit – I’m not a-political, as in I do vote. Urr, I suppose disappointment but not surprise. And and then on the flip side, suppose and elation at urr… individuals in local government, urr, being really good eggs as we say and urm wanting to help and making a promise and then fulfilling that promise. And I know in every role and every job you sort of, shouldn’t over promise because you can’t always deliver, but so… that that’s when promises have been delivered on that’s been a great thing to see.

**Interviewer:** But you mentioned disappointment in the first -?

**Participant:** Sure, when they say, when someone says, “you know e-mail me, or call me, or write to me, I can help with that!” And then they don’t.

**Interviewer:** That’s very common?

**Participant:** Yes exactly. But this isn’t something just new that I’ve learnt, because I say on the flip side almost more new - I’ve seen individuals pick it up and stick with it and deliver. But, yeah, I I mean in life empty promises are not worthwhile, so. And that’s not just local government that’s individuals as well but you were asking specifically.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I don’t think I have any more questions actually. So just maybe, just to understand a little bit more about the current situation with the group, so urr, did it decline over the time but not, you are still active, just to understand a little bit more how is the group at the moment?

**Participant:** So, so it grew as in the number of volunteers and the organisation being built grew and the requirements grew urm… let’s say between March and June… and then even in July it was pretty high and… then into, after July 4th and August and September when plenty of people were taking their holidays, urr there was definitely a decline there and then I suppose to September people really going back to work, and then really back from holidays again really the volunteer and the active volunteers declined, and that kind of fitted with the requirements as well by that time in September. August we were a bit like, err we still had quite a lot of requests but we just all of a sudden didn’t have people that were helping. Urm, and then now… its very hard to say the numbers of active people - because we have a hundred and thirty people because I said on a group… but there are no more than twenty people absolute maximum who are speaking out on, on the group. So therefore, I believe also not active.

**Interviewer:** And why do you think that is happening?

**Participant:** Like I said, I – just in the same I know I’m on other groups… if I can help at sometimes, you know, I mean that’s there personal reasons I couldn’t explain, yeah.

**Interviewer:** I actually have one more question, how do you fit the – how does the activities that you do in the group fit with other parts of your life?

**Participant:** Urr… how does it fit? It it fits better now that I’ve checked myself from going, “I can do, I can do, I can do, I can do, I can do,” to “okay, you need to prioritise.” Urr, so now I’d say it fit quite comfortably, but I did have to check in with myself and… prioritise you know your family, your life, a bit of work’s come in. So, so, it fits okay, it fits okay and I wanted I wanted, that’s why the priority, prioritising is so important because I am interested in continuing and not loosing what we’ve created. Understanding that it will do this, you know it will shrink and grow and that’s absolutely fine but if there’s something that people in the neighbourhood know it exists, and they know they can come back to when they have time, and then go away from, and that it’s fluid, I think that’s a super positive thing.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah, thank you. I don’t think I have questions. Do you have anything that you want to add?

**[Debriefing]**

**[End of Interview]**