**Date: 05/11/2020**

**Duration:** 53:53

**\*\*Project introduction\*\***

**Interviewer:** Okay, it’s working, okay. So, first of all I would like to as you some questions about the group, so what is the name of your group?

**Participant:** So, this is… urm, it’s a project rather than a group to be honest.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But urm,yeah, so it’s [GROUP NAME].

**Interviewer:** Mmm. How did it start?

**Participant:** So, urm… there’s quite a complex history, to be honest so, urm, we have a [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING SCHEME] here at [TOWN NAME]. Do you know of the [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING SCHEME] system, they’re all over the country really?

**Interviewer:** No.

**Participant:** Okay, so, the [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING SCHEME], the way they work is like a a group of volunteers who get together in a village or a part of a town and then they are there ready to help our people who need something done for them. Urm, so typically that’s elderly people who no longer drive and they need a lift to the doctors, that’s one of the most common things. For some people it’s helping people with shopping, urm… and urm in some cases it’s helping people with, I don’t know, gardening, filling out forms, all sorts of stuff, you know, it’s a whole raft of things. And there is no real limit, it’s up to what the volunteers are prepared to do and what the insurance of the group might cover.

Urm, so they’re all over the country, we have one of those groups here in [TOWN NAME] which we, well, we kind of used to run. You know. And urm… we’ve been running that for about four years and then when the, when the COVID crisis, you know, proper kicked off in the UK and we were going into lockdown, urm, we – because the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] is already doing shopping related kind of tasks and that type of things, we immediately recognised that we were the right people to come forward and put something together for our community to help people who needed, you know who have to lock down who have to go into self-isolation. Urm… so that’s how we got started initially.

What was also happening in the neighbouring village of [VILLAGE NAME], urm, there was a lady there who urm… she via Facebook set up a group asking for volunteers to come forward who could help with shopping. Urm, so both of those things were happening in parallel, and we had a meeting with that lady, she’s called [ORGANISER NAME], this was before the lockdown obviously. And she had… she had all of the energy and loads of the volunteers and she knew the right places to do things, but she hadn’t been involved in a neighbour group and didn’t really know about some of the governance side of things and some of the, urr, the urm, protections that are put in place to protect the volunteers *and* clients…urm, which we knew quite a lot about because it’s the same process for volunteering at the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] for the urr, COVID response. So, we had that meeting with [ORGANISER NAME] and we, the urm, there is also a [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] in [VILLAGE] and the chair of that group was at that meeting, but their group weren’t able to help because most of them are above seventy and most of them are therefore in the at-risk categories so they certainly wouldn’t be able to help people who need shopping done for them.

Urm, so what ended up happening was we agreed to have a merger between the two villages so, [ORGANISER NAME]’s efforts, our group that we’d already set up, put them together into a single response which is [GROUP NAME], which a kind of separate entity. And then we had a couple more meetings just to finalise our guidelines and we put together – I can send them to you if you like – we put together really robust set of volunteer guidelines which was drawn from the [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING SCHEME], guidelines. But then we really properly went to town urm, making sure that we were protected, the volunteers were protected, the clients were protected. We put, we spent a huge amount of time thinking through the different scenarios, you know, “okay what happens if somebody goes to the supermarket, gets the shopping, what do they do with it? where do they put it? how do they contact the client? urm, how is the payment mechanism done?” All of those kinds of things, we had a huge amount of discussion about that and we put together a really comprehensive sent of guidelines of the volunteers. And then we had to set up the… guidelines for the team that *run* the volunteers, so, yeah, that took a couple of weeks to put all of that together, yeah, and then we went live.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, when was that?

**Participant:** So, I think we, we basically went live the very end of March but probably sort of early April.

**Interviewer:** And when did you start to organise? You mentioned before lockdown.

**Participant:** Urr… yeah it was before lockdown… I feel it was something like the 20th… something around then of March. I can have a look on my calendar.

**Interviewer:** That’s okay, just to have an idea.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And have anything changed since it started?

**Participant:** With the running of the group, you mean?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** Yes, oh yes, a huge amount.

**Interviewer:** Even if in terms of aims.

**Participant:** Yeah, urr, in terms of aims… possible not. So, we agreed right at the start, the safety of the volunteers is paramount, and what that meant was we would do everything we could to make sure that we didn’t put volunteers at risk. So, urm… as we started off, you know, we had people sending in shopping list via e-mail, urm, or needed a phone call because they didn’t have e-mail. We were also doing prescription collections from nearby pharmacies but also we worked with the local pharmacies and we gave, urm, we gave them two or three volunteers a day to go in and pick up a hand – a box of up to, I think up to twelve prescriptions that they had to be delivered around the community.

So, urr, so they were the kind of main tasks, but urm… in terms of the change. What happened was, once the supermarkets enabled more click and collect slots because at first, you know, they were completely overwhelmed and they had no availability for deliveries or click and collect but as those started to open up, urm… [ORGANISER NAME] who was running that side of the kind of project, her and few other people, they were specifically working with clients and calling them and helping them over the phone and via e-mail to get them registered for home deliveries and for click and collect. So we went from shopping forma list to click and collect where the client – well, in most cases we were doing the orders collecting so one volunteer would do the order, and one volunteer would go to the supermarket and pick them up. Then it went to the clients doing their click and collect and us picking it up on their behalf, to once the lockdown ended and, you know, people were… I think, maybe early, it must have been about early May something like that, urm, we were in the case where urm, we basically made sure that people in the community themselves, including our own clients were self-sufficient in that they’d registered for self-delivery, or they were doing their own click and collect orders, online, and they were collecting them themselves.

In one case, what that meant was we had a lady where she was able to do her click and collect order, but she was nervous about going to pick it up and one of our volunteers went with her – in two separate cars- went to Tesco, she picked up the order, so she knew what she was doing, she’d never done it in her life, never done click and collect, didn’t know what to expect. So, the volunteer was there to give her some guidance, after that she was fine.

So, basically since… urm, since May, urm we’ve had two clients that we’ve been helping kind of on an ongoing basis. One of them dropped of in I think August and it’s just one client we have now, I think, everybody else is either self-sufficient anyway because, well, we’re only just going into lockdown again now, aren’t we. Urm, or we’ve given them the tools and the guidance that were needed in order for them to learn to be self-sufficient for themselves and learn how to do, to do click and collect and home deliveries. So, we essentially, we did ourselves out of a job – deliberately. Yeah, that was the goal from the start to not put our volunteers at risk and not put our volunteers in a situation where they’re going into the supermarkets and, you now, having to put themselves at risk on the behalf of somebody else. We’ve, we’ve, we’ve engineered that out in a sense.

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

**Participant:** So we… urm, I think… we’re still running and I think we urr, are still advertising, so we’ve put something into the news letters in both villages this month and last month to let people know. Essentially what we did was a big thank you actually, we sent a big thank you to the volunteers and everyone who was involved in everything that we did, urm, but also at the very bottom we said, “we’re still here, by the way, if you need us. But also, if you just want help setting up click and collect or home deliveries, we’ve added some information to the website, so go there and have a look.” So yeah, we’re not, well… I better, I better check actually, because that, we get no phone calls, no e-mails anymore. None at all.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Because everybody’s looking after themselves or each other, you know, within their own, their own little circles. So yeah… all good yeah.

**Interviewer:** And have you had any previous experience in organising groups like that, like this one?

**Participant:** Yeah, so the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP], is the kind of main one. Urm… yeah, I, I was the chair of the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP], not from the very start but for the, for the last four years of it running. Urr, we’ve also, the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] merged into a thing called [NAME OF COMMUNITY GROUP] , so it’s a completely kind of different outset but yeah, I’m the chair of that, I’m still the chair. So that’s my only real experience of doing things like that. But I, I was [PAST OCCUPATION] before for nineteen years. So, I’ve got a lot of experience setting projects and groups up and stuff, you know, all sorts of craziness you know. So, yeah, a lot of experience to be honest.

**Interviewer:** And why did you get involved in this?

**Participant:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** Why did you get involved?

**Participant:** Urm… in this specific project, it was needed, you know. It was… right at the start nobody knew what was going to happen, nobody knew how deadly this was, and we have, in our village we don’t have a lot of older people because it’s a new build it’s mostly younger families here. But there is [village nearby] … you know. And we’ve got a lot of people over there that we know, we also run a walking group and we’ve, we’ve met a couple of people there. Over in [VILLAGE NAME], the other village it’s predominately older people, you know it’s a well-established village – one of those villages where everybody knows each other. So, it was just like, you know, this is a very, very bad situation, somebodies got to do something, we’re the right people really, because we’re already doing this stuff so, yeah, it’s a sense of duty I think, more than anything.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and what is your role in the project?

**Participant:** My…hole?

**Interviewer:** Yes, what kind of things you have been doing in the group in the mutual aid group?

**Participant:** So… we, once we were set up and up and running we split the organising team into two parts, there was the side that dealt with the clients and the side that dealt with the volunteers. So, I was on the side that dealt with the clients. So we were receiving calls and e-mails, replying to them, urm, they would… we would have a couple of interactions with the clients and the we’d pass them onto [ORGANISER NAME] who would then identify a volunteer and then we’d make sure the volunteer dealt with the client from that point forward.

So, there was all of that. Urm, I had, I’m quite IT literate so I set up all of the databases, we’ve got a load of Excel Spreadsheets for volunteers, for tasks, for millage for the finances, urm, so I did that. I was dealing with grants, so we were able to get a grant from the [FOUNDATION NAME] of a thousand pounds and we also got some grants slash donations from the parish councils of the two villages. Urm… and so I was dealing with that, I was dealing with the payments mechanisms, so we put in place a urr, a system where, if we did send a volunteer to the supermarket to do shopping from a shopping list, the volunteer would go, do the shop, they would pay for the shopping with their own card, once they sent the receipt to us, we would send them the money, we from our bank account would send them the money back, and then we would claim the money back from the client.

So, I dealt with all of those finances as well, and \*exhales\* yeah, a few other bits, we organised getting gloves made, not made, masks made there was a lady who volunteered to make masks so had to go and meet her. She dealt with the whole thing but then we had to pay her back and then I organised distribution with [ORGANISER NAME]. We had gloves as well, so, yeah, just all sorts of little things but predominantly it was running, running the whole show at the top level. [ORGANISER NAME] actually did most of the work in terms of the day-to-day operations and di phone calls and e-mails and dealing with clients and and volunteers. She did the vast majority of the actually work it’s just because I, because I’m the chair of the group, urm, I, I did all of the kind of governance side of thing, really, as well.

**Interviewer:** Government side of thing?

**Participant:** Governance, governance. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how did the activity that you did in the group, that you did in this project relate with – how you fit these activities in your life?

**Participant:** So… I, that’s a good question really yeah. There’s a few aspects to it really, I mentioned that [TOWN NAME] as a village, it’s a new build and it’s lots of younger people and, what we have identified in our circle is that, urm, there seems to be a change in the… in the way that people conduct themselves in that demographic, now-a-days compared to what *I*‘ve experienced for my life. What I mean by that is, we don’t see that there is a lot of appetite for people to get involved in volunteering here. Urm, I, volunteering, you know… where are you from if you don’t mind me asking?

**Interviewer:** I’m from [COUNTRY NAME 1].

**Participant:** Oh, are you?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but I live, I just moved to England in the last two months.

**Participant:** Oh, okay, oh right?

**Interviewer:** Do you know [REGION NAME]? I’m from [REGION NAME].

**Participant:** I’ve never been to [COUNTRY NAME 1], it’s on my list, urr for definite yeah, it seems amazing yeah. And everyone I meet, from [COUNTRY NAME 1], seems lovely, so, I’m definitely interested.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but I think it’s the same, the same impression collating, as you were saying, the volunteering appetite.

**Participant:** For younger people, you mean?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** I don’t know what it’s like in other countries but in Britain we have an incredibly solid volunteering and kind of charity base. Urm, my [WIFE NAME]’s from [COUNTRY NAME 2] and she’s quite astonished, very often, how services that are set up in this country to help people are very often done by charities when in [COUNTRY NAME] 2 they might be done by the Government, you know, they might be mandated. Urm, so she’s quite critical in that respect and I think she’s absolutely right in many respects but also, the the whole dynamic of having these charities and volunteer work is good for the people involved, obviously good for the people the benefit, but overall it’s good for the country because we have this appetite for helping people. And I have experienced that for my whole life and now I live now and we’ve been doing this [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] for the past four year and like, it doesn’t seem that people are that interested in getting involved now.

So, the, where this project, the shopping club project kind of fits in is we, we managed to get over eighty volunteers, about half and half between the two villages, urm. We’ve been asking for volunteers for the [GROUP NEIGHBOURHOOD NAME] in [TOWN NAME] only for… over four years and I think in total, with all of the turnover, we’ve had maybe fifteen people, that’s it. So to get nearly forty people for this one village is massive and a great achievement and that’s why we’ve done the big ‘thank you’ in the newsletters to make sure people recognise, even if they only did, some people only did one shopping task, went to the supermarket once because we did ourselves out a job. But we want to make sure people feel good about what they did so they’re more likely to come forward again in future for other volunteering roles. So, it’s part of a wider, kind of, journey to inspire younger people to get involved in projects, not like this hopefully, because hopefully we won’t have any more pandemics. But you know, similar things, urm, yeah.

**Interviewer:** From the forty people that you mentioned, how many of them were active helpers?

**Participant:** I think pretty much everyone really. We, the way it works – [ORGANISER NAME], like I said, [ORGANISER NAME] ran the volunteers and what she would do was go through the list, go to the next person, phone them up, “are you available to do this person, job for this person?” “no/yes/whatever,” move onto the next and she tried to balance things out. Some people did much more than other because they’re available, some people are retired some people were furloughed from work, others, there was one person that I know of, she was asked to do a shopping task urm and urm, then her car broke down and she didn’t do it, and the next one she completely forgot about. So, she actually didn’t do anything. But, you know, that’s that’s the minority, I think nearly everybody did at least one, one thing, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how often did they do these things?

**Participant:** Yeah so some people it was, urm, so we had the rota for the, for the pharmacy so people were on there one day a week very week for about a month and half, urm, so those people were very busy and some of those people did shopping tasks as well. Urm, others, yeah, I don’t, I don’t really know in my head because, you know we’ve just got this task list that’s, you know, sequential and the names of people who did those roles are there. But it’s difficult for me to have a good appreciation for what that means on average.

**Interviewer:** And what resources do you have?

**Participant:** Urr… yeah so we had the funding from the… from those various groups. Urm, we have our… we have our own internal resources in that we had the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] already so we had some documentation there and some experience, urm, we have the bank account already. That’s it, and us.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And anybody, yeah, and skills that volunteers might have?

**Participant:** Urm… we didn’t specifically ask for anything because it was quite a simple sent of tasks, you know. But we made sure that the volunteer guidelines were robust so even those people who’d never done anything like this before would know exactly what to expect.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how did you get people?

**Participant:** Mostly via Facebook, yeah, we put leaflets, we set up a webpage on the website and asked for volunteers on there, and we put leaflets through doors, urm, I don’t think I have one to hand actually, we put leaflets through doors which didn’t specifically cask for volunteers but perhaps some people came, came in from that. But I think… more than half of the people via Facebook.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and people in need of help, how did they find you?

**Participant:** Yeah, so difficult to say again, we put a leaflet through every single door so I would expect that most people came forward from that, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Urm, so you have a Facebook and also WhatsApp perhaps, or just Facebook?

**Participant:** No, not WhatsApp, yeah, just Facebook, yeah.

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

**Participant:** No. No, I mean we registered with the mutual aid website.

**Interviewer:** Ah, you did, okay.

**Participant:** Yeah, but that was just registering, we’re not part of them or anything, so no.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and is the group in contact with others local groups?

**Participant:** No, we did offer out, because, so what happened at the start, lots of groups were setting things up, obviously in different places, some of the were done by [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUPS], we’d heard, some were just groups of people who were like, “right we need to help these people,” and some were like churches, urm, and other groups. You probably know more than me to be honest about that. But urm, what happened was once we put together our volunteer guidelines, I sent them into the borough council who also were kind of dealing with these situations. And they engaged with the [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING ORGANISATION], urm, who then reviewed the documents that were being sent in by all the various groups, and I spoke to the lady there, urr, a lady called [NAME OF ORGANISATION EMPLOYEE] who I knew already from having done a couple of courses with [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING ORGANISATION], urm, and she said that urm… our guidelines were, I mean she didn’t say that they were the best, but she kind of more or less implied that we’d done a really good job of making sure everyone was protected, that was the key point. And that they were using our guidelines to help others. I at that point said, you know, “if there are other people in other villages who need help, or who want to join with us and make a wider network, urm, of other villages, then we might be open to that.” But we didn’t have anyone come forward, I think most of the other groups were going quite well on their own, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Sorry, that was a long answer.

**Interviewer:** No, it’s good. Urm, and the, if you have any relationship with the local council, how is that relationship with the local council?

**Participant:** So, there’s two local councils per say, so there is the Parish council who, we already engage with generally anyway, they, they urr, because our group doesn’t have a lot of funding and the money that we have was already kind of allocated and right at the start we needed those leaflets that we had to pay for without, that we didn’t have any money for. Urm, so I contacted our parish council and they said, “yup no problem,” and they paid for that. And we also needed to top up our duty phone because, you know, it doesn’t’ get a lot of calls and we don’t have a lot of money, they paid for that as well.

So that was the Parish council, the borough council, like I said, we sent in our volunteer guidelines and I had a couple of phone calls with the COVID-19 team, in the borough council, urm… about funding about a couple of other things. But that’s about it really, they haven’t engaged with us, urm, to be honest. I think… yeah.

**Interviewer:** Any other relationships with any other official bodies or charities?

**Participant:** Only in terms of getting funding, yeah, the [FOUNDATION NAME], there’s a urm, in [VILLAGE NAME] there’s a urm… urr, do you know what I mean by park home? Do you know what I mean? A static home.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** Like a, yeah, there’s one of those for people who are over 55s, there’s a whole community, very nice there, they had a residence association, and they came forward and they gave us £250. Urm… but so, for funding yes, other than that no, I don’t, no.

**Interviewer:** And has the group tried to get any official recognition? For example, becoming a company or charity?

**Participant:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** You didn’t thought about that? No?

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, you mentioned your own motivation to set up the project and the group. And in, in your opinion, what is the motivation from, of other people to get involved, why?

**Participant:** Yeah, I just think that everybody recognises that there’s a time of national crisis.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, and you know, it… the, people were talking about, you know, the spirit of the war, I mean by that you know how during the blitz in London everyone came together and helped each other out. Urm… I think it’s probably the same everywhere really, but I think Britain prides itself in its, its sense of community and coming together and helping each other out in those times. So, I think that that spirit was what motivated people to come forward because it was, you know, nearly all of the volunteers we got was within that first week. Urm, after that we were still asking for volunteers but not many people came forward, it was like everyone sort of saw that there was this sort of emergency situation and I think they just felt compelled to come forward.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and other kind of motivations?

**Participant:** … No, I don’t know, you know. No.

**Interviewer:** That’s okay, that’s okay. Now I want to ask you about any problems or that the group have encountered during the process, for example has involvement in the group meant a lot of time and effort for you, for the others?

**Participant:** Yeah… I think… what we tried to do, is something I generally try to do, is make things very simple for people. So, we… urm, we set up those proves and mechanisms to make sure that people had the least amount of work to do, so, when it came to somebody having to do a shopping task it was, “right, here’s the shopping list, here’s the phone number of the client, please phone them up and let them know when you are going to go, talk about any issues.” Urm… and urm, all they had to do was that do the shopping send us a receipt, job done basically. Urm, and that meant that we did all of the rallying to fill in all of the gaps and make sure that everything flowed nicely, which meant that it was a lot of work. Particularly, you know, at that time when we had shopping lists coming through and, phone calls from people who didn’t really know the system, didn’t know how to do anything. I had one call from a chap who couldn’t believe that what we were offering, we were offering this for free even.

So, phone calls email, sorting our funding, organising all of that stuff, yeah, huge amount of work. And the initial set up, urm, I took two weeks off at work right at the start, I wasn’t working throughout that time, I was trying, because I was supposed to be on a holiday already which had to be cancelled and anyway, but… urm, yeah so… huge amount of work to be honest, huge amount of work. And then the general running , we had to organise picking up cheques from people’s houses because they didn’t have bank accounts, we then had to go to town to drop those cheques off the cash machines sometimes wouldn’t accept those cheques because the handwriting on them so we then had to go back and go into the branch itself and… yeah, just, oh, it was a massive amount of work, it really was.

**Interviewer:** How about emotional it was, emotional?

**Participant:** Urm… I think emotionally we weren’t, we were pretty good really, because… urr we had a team, I have, you know, I have a committee in my group and they’re a great… I have a really good committee and it’s very diverse, urm, different age groups, different jobs, half men, half women, deliberately. But not specifically half deliberately, but I wanted to make sure we have a good balance of different urm, different perspectives and stuff. Urm… so… yeah, I think emotionally because we work as a team, because even if we’re doing something individually, I know that I’ve got the backing of my team, you know, I know they’re behind me. I know that if I make mistakes I’ll be forgiven, and people will help us to recover from those mistakes. And because what we’re doing it for free and its for the benefits of the community, I think the emotions were generally really positive, really good. You know, we’re doing something good here for people, we’re getting lots of positive comments from people, people are very thankful - people who literally can’t leave their homes. So, very, very stressful but really that stress was massively offset by all the positive stuff coming from it, yeah.

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

**Participant:** Urm, only a few actually, yeah. Urm… I think we’ve had, of the, we had over eighty and I think we’ve still got over eighty, I think we’ve maybe lost four people, something like that. Everyone else is just accepting that they’re still on them. Because we emailed only two weeks ago to say to people, a bit of news about a couple of other things but also to say, “by they way, if you want to leave, just let us know and we’ll delete all your data from everywhere.” Only two people relied one of them because she’s moving else where and the other just because we know she’s had some emotional kind of issues so urm… yeah. Only two people then and I think only a couple of people in the preceding months.

Yeah, we’ve still got over eighty. We’re just kind of in this, you know, limbo state, if the phone starts ringing and it tall starts going crazy we’re all going to get fired up again but at this stage our focus is really v- the volunteers are there, but we don’t actually want them to do anything we want the people who need help to learn how to be self-sufficient and to register for home deliveries and stuff like that because that’s, that’s the gold standard really, that we don’ t have to do anything.

**Interviewer:** Okay, urr, any other problems that affected the group? Communication, organisation, difference in aims.

**Participant:** I think that the, most of the challenges were just right at the start because having to put in these robust mechanisms, urm, to protect people so, you know. And we’re dealing with this kind of unknown threat of COVID, like we don’t know how, urm, how contagious it is, we didn’t – at that stage. Urm, the… guidance wasn’t there, so just simple things like, how do you collect a cheque form somebody that is self-isolating? Urm, we came up with the idea that they need to put the cheque in an envelope and attach the envelope to the front door and the volunteer would come along and they’d wear gloves and they’d spray it, and it as all, it was possibly *too* much, but at that time we didn’t know what was right or wrong.

So, we had to, every single thing that we did, we had to consider what would be consequences, you know, how do we resolve those. So, they, they were the issues after that, there were problems but we… between [ORGANISER NAME] and myself I think we’re both quite capable and quire problem solving people so it was just, “right, we’ve got a problem, I’ll phone her up, let’s talk about it, move on.” So yeah, there were problems, like any project like that, but nothing out of the ordinary apart from like I say in the initial organisation and working out how to do those processes to make sure that everyone is protected, that was the big challenge because we didn’t have a clue, and we’re not doctors.

**Interviewer:** \*Laughs\* Any other kind of things that you have done that maybe have helped keep the group going?

**Participant:** \*Whistling sound\* Yeah, I think urr… we…. Because we were very keen to protect the volunteers so for example, urm, I mentioned the gloves and the masks, so we had a chap who urm… he said “oh, I’ve got a card for” – do you know what a cash and carry is? Do you know what that is?

**Interviewer:** No.

**Participant:** Wholesaler? Yeah, so cash and carry is kind of like a wholesaler for, for supermarkets, and you need to have a card to go in there, you have to have a business. Urm and he’s got a card so he contacted us and said, “if you need anything like gloves and I might be able to get some.” So, I said, “okay, yes please.” He went off and he dropped off on my doorstep a box full of boxes of gloves, so I think more than a thousand gloves he dropped off. Just dropped them off with us and then we were able to bag them up and then go and deliver them to volunteers. So, we did that and then we did the mask. And we didn’t especially care if they were used for the volunteers for this project or it they were used for the volunteers for their own personal life. It was just like, these guys are our volunteers, we’re going to look after them urm, and we’ll give them what they need to make sure that they’re happy, they’re got protection they need in their own personal life, and hopefully, that will mean that they feel good enough about the group to stay with us. Urm…I would say that’s the main thing really.

Yeah, communication is key, that’s what I learnt in my [PAST OCCUPATION] , make sure people are informed, urm, get the information out there, be factual, be open, be open for criticism as well. Yeah, I don’t know. I think a lot of these things we just generally do without thinking about them, you know.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you didn’t plan those things?

**Participant:** We didn’t plan anything really, no. \*Laughs\* The only thing that I would say that we definitely planned was making sure that the volunteers eventually, you know we don’t use them, we don’t send them, you know, it was first they go into the supermarkets, then its click and collect then its nothing. So that was the only plan from day one lets do what we can to make sure that they’re as safe as they can be, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Did you have regular meetings?

**Participant:** Yeah, all, all ad-hoc apart form once we set up it was all as the issues arose, I would phone up [ORGANISER NAME] or she phoned me or e-mail or whatever, so… other than that, we didn’t have, no, we didn’t have any meeting at all.

**Interviewer:** In the beginning of the interview you mentioned that urm, it wasn’t a group more of a project, more of a project than a group, can you explain to me the difference?

**Participant:** So, we… we, we set up the [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] nearly five years ago now, it was, and I said to you that we identified people didn’t - weren’t really coming forward to volunteer and we were looking our community and were seeing some other evidence elsewhere that the community here isn’t really strong. They’re a lot of people who had got to know each other a lot of this via social media urm, and, because of the nature of this village, like… you know there’s no pub, there’s a village hall, but its, it’s sports and fitness stuff. There’s no real cohesion. So we set up this thing called the [LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATION NAME] and the idea behind that is to stimulate that community spirit to build the community strength and cohesion and to help people make friends I guess is predominantly the thing.

The way we do that is very specifically by setting up projects and groups, so we have the very distinct difference between the two. And the only difference really is about in terms of something like this, this project is about how long it will endure for. We set up groups with the plan that they’ll live forever, so we set up the walking group because we want a walking group that will live forever, we set up a [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] for the same reason. This is a project because it has a finite end date. And that is when COVID is definitely over and we know for definite that our services are no longer required. That’s literally the difference.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so the future, how do you see the future of the project end?

**Participant:** Well, we almost, we almost shut it down actually because we weren’t getting any calls and the, urm, it seemed that the restrictions that were put in place were going to work and then at least, you know, they sent everyone back to school and suddenly it all went crazy. So, all that will happen is [ORGANISER NAME] and I at some point next year will have a conversation, will agree to shut down the project and then we’ll be going through and deleting all the data and, you know, making sure that we’ve crossed everything off. And that’s it, that will be the end of it, yeah.

What’s happened in the meantime is, I mentioned before – so we’ve got our [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP], and [VILLAGE NAME] already had a [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] going that was predominantly over seventies, urm, what we’ve identified is working together as two villages is really good because we’ve got so many young people here who are able to help, and so many older people there who need help. Urm, so… two or three weeks ago, we merged the two [NAME OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING GROUP] into a single group. So, I’m the vice-chair of that group and the chair is the chair of the original group, urm, most of the committee are from [VILLAGE NAME], most of the volunteers are from [VILLAGE NAME], but the idea is to create this, you know, we have this single kind of group that can really give a lot of help to people.

So once the shopping club finishes, that – and you know post-COVID, that Neighbour Group will still be doing these kinds of tasks, they’ll still be doing shopping tasks, they’ll still be doing lifts and stuff like that. Urm, so, yeah, that, that will be the enduring group from all of this, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, finally, I want to ask if you, whether you have learnt anything from this project and co-ordinating the group?

**Participant:** Yeah… urm… hard to say what though really because, like I said, I was in the [PAST OCCUPATION], I’ve got a lot of experience setting things up I’ve also got – because I was in a technical job [PAST OCCUPATION], I’ve got lots of experience writing documentation and guidelines and reports and things like that. So, those kinds of things, urm, I’m quite comfortable with. Urm… yeah, I really don’t know, I’m not sure that I’ll know for a long time actually. Do you know how it is, when you learn something, and then it’s five years later and you’re in a meeting or something and something get’s mentioned and your like, “oh, I know a bit about that, I remember that from back then.”

So, I expect that it will be in the future, there will be some aspect of this project that I’ll be like, “yeah, this is what happened then.” But, other than that, it, it was my first… first opportunity to run a project of this nature in that, it’s helping people, it’s getting volunteers, you know, for a very specific purpose, with a whole lot of governance and documentation and making sure that there is rules in place and all sorts of craziness like that. So, urm, I think the biggest take away for me is the fact that we… yeah we we, that we can do it, that we can do it, yeah., that it can be done, that urm… yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the other volunteers also feel that? That they can do it?

**Participant:** It’s hard to say because I’ve, I’ve met about half of the volunteers and that was literally just on their door step because we made sure that they all gave us some urm… they all had to fill in a form… which has there, we had a volunteer declaration form which you know, just had, “I will do my best to follow the guidelines,” this is in the document that I’ll send you, a whole load of stuff here. And then they had to sign, and date and we had to go along to see them in person and check their ID as well. Urm… so… other than that, we haven’t spoken, you know because we’re all on lockdown and things like that. So, I’m hoping that… urm… at the end of all of this that we’ll be able to have a, a big gathering of some sort, we were originally saying a party, but some sort of gathering get people together, invite people from the community who have been helped and the volunteers, get them together in a room. Somme of them will know each other because they dealt with the same clients on a, a recuring basis. Urm… do some thank yous, some announcements stuff like that and hopefully that’s, that feeling might come out.

You know, I think, in this… because it’s been sort of six/seven months and other that time, some of them did lots some of them did a couple of things but they had no real like… they didn’t even meet the clients, you know? For some of them they might have seen them from afar when they are dropping something off and some of the clients would be in the window waving or something like that. But for, for a lot of them they didn’t meet them, they just spoke to them on the phone and that’s not good because it doesn’t give them that, that closed loop in terms of, “I’ve done something good for somebody and I get the thank you back from it. That’s what makes me feel good and that’s what gives me that emotional, urr, need to then give me the motivation to then go forward and do more like that.” A big chunk of it is missing and I think that’s a really important part which is why we want to do that gathering at the end, and make sure people feel good about what they did, no matter now small, they can feel good about it because that will give them that dive for the next time. Not that, not next COVID but whatever it is, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay, thank you, I don’t think I have any more questions, is there anything you would like to add?

**Participant:** … Urm, no…. no I don’t think so, no. I, I’ll send you those guidelines straight away… urm…

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But no, I don’t think so, I think you’ve asked a lot of good questions.

**[Debriefing]**

**[End of Interview]**