**Date: 09/11/2020**

**Duration:** 01:36:22

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

Okay, my first question is, what is the name of your group and how did it start?

**Participant:** Right, it’s called the [GROUP NAME 1]. I think you already interviewed [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1], have you?

**Interviewer:** Yes, I did.

**Participant:** So please tell me if I’m if I’m doubling up and it’s too much.

**Interviewer:** No, that’s okay, I like to hear your perspective.

**Participant:** Right, it basically started this way, urm, I am one of the admins on our [VILLAGE NAME 1] Community Facebook Group. And… when… COVID started we start – nobody was on post approval so anybody could just post, and the post would go straight onto the newsfeed. And when COVID started we started seeing a couple of people posting, I don’t know if you ever saw them, these letterbox cards they were putting through people doors saying, “I live in your community, if you need any shopping done then please ring me and I’ll come around.” Now, I was [OCCUPATION 1] for thirty years and I’m retired now, but I was [OCCUPATION 1] and I was seeing these posts and I spoke to two people had posted in the space of three days, these cards on the Facebook Group, asking people to contact them if they needing shopping and things done. And I’ll be honest, my [OCCUPATION 1] instinct was saying, “yeah, these might be genuine people, but I didn’t know them, they might be genuine people but also this could be a scam.” You know, and I had visions going through my head of people going around vulnerable people we’ve got over 65% of the population in [VILLAGE NAME 1] is over sixty-five, urm, going around vulnerable people’s addresses, knocking on their doors, taking cash for shopping which is what was being suggested, and then the elderly person never getting their shopping and never getting their cash.

And I spoke to the other admins on the group urr, and I said, “do you know either of these people who had posted these messages?” And they said, “no.” Now I’ve been in the village twenty years and the other two admins have been in forty years and they didn’t know them. Now don’t get me wrong whilst I say village it’s a big village it’s like two and half thousand people, but I was immediately concerned and I said, “well look, they might well be genuine people but I’m not happy with this.” So, we took the posts – I took the posts down, the two posts and I put everybody on post approval so people couldn’t do that anymore. And I said to the other admins, “right, nobody’s doing anything, the council aren’t doing anything, with the borough or the parish, we hadn’t heard anything from our parish council,” and I said to the others, “it’s going to be for us – if we’re going to stop people posting those cards, its going to be for us to do something to help the community ourselves.”

So, on March 15th I did a post on the community website and I said that we were going to start, I wanted to look for volunteers who were willing to give up their time, urr, free, to help with shopping tasks and also pharmacy collects and drop offs. And literally, within two days I had sixty people-

**Interviewer:** Sixty, okay.

**Participant:** -post replies on Facebook, quite a few were my friends, but a lot weren’t and a lot of people I didn’t even know. And I thought, “wow, that’s unbelievable.” Urm, and within those messages I had two, one from [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and one from, urr [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 2] who runs the [VILLAGE NAME 1] [GROUP NAME 2]. Now [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] runs the [VILLAGE NAME 2] [GROUP NAME 2] which I’m sure you’re aware off. Now, I’m embarrassed to say, I had never heard of the [GROUP NAME 2]s, urm, [VILLAGE NAME 1] doesn’t have any social media presence – the [VILLAGE NAME 1] [GROUP NAME 2]. [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 2], bless him he’s lovely, I’ve known him for quite a while now, him and his wife, urm, they’re they’re pensioners themselves and all but four of the volunteers in the [VILLAGE NAME 1] group are over seventy-five. So, they do everything by notebook. Literally by that I mean pen and paper- not electronic notebook and they don’t use social media. So, I’m not surprise I’ve never heard of them. And to be honest, prior to all of this. We never had much to do with [VILLAGE NAME 2]. There’s been a bit of a – I don’t know if [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] said to you-

**Interviewer:** No.

**Participant:** -there’s been a very, bit of there is quite a divide – was- between [VILLAGE NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 1]. Bearing in mind we’re neighbours. And urm, urr so I never really looked at much to do with [VILLAGE NAME 2] and I certainly haven’t heard of his group either. But [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] said, “are you aware of us, I’m very interested in what you’re starting.” And, and he said, “I’m thinking of doing something similar, I was wondering if we could have a meeting together.” And [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 2], who runs the [VILLAGE NAME 1] one he posted the same. Urm, so literally the next day, was it? Yeah, I’m sure it was the next day we met up in the local pub, urm, it was before, in it was before the first lock down so it will be about March the 16th. And three of us around the table, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] – I said, “look this is my proposal that we aim to help people the elderly doing shopping tasks and pharmacy collections,” [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] said he also wanted to help people who were self-isolating. Urm, and I said, “yeah I’m on board with that.” I said, “look, sixty people have signed up already,” and I said, “the only thing that I would say is we’ve got to vet people.” I don’t know a lot of these people so we can’t just take it on face value that they are who they say they are.

So, the way that we, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] immediately came on board, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 2] wanted to run it past the committee, but he came on board on a paper a few days later. And, I’m so grateful to [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] because, whilst this might have started as my idea it was – I think actually looking back now with hindsight, I *never* could have gotten it to where it is now by myself. Urm, and it takes more than one person to run a group like this. And [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] already had – I mean it was it was it was a huge benefit, it was easy for me to say “yes” to [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] because he already had urm, I don’t know if you’ve looked at his [VILLAGE NAME 2] [GROUP NAME 2] website but he already got all the technology set up, he’s got the website and his suggestion was that we run this community shopping club, as we named it, as a project under that group, so that we could use all of his IT side. Urm, I’m pretty good on computers but I can’t – I’m not, I can’t set things up. Urm, and it all works really well, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] set up all the urr, management documents, the, not management documents, the spreadsheets on Excel, that we use to manage tasks. And then he and I together we set up health and safety documents, and guidelines, policy guidelines. I had a lot to do with that in [OCCUPATION 1] and he’s ex-army so he’s very on top of all that so between us we got all the health and safety documents up and running.

Urm, and then it was a case of we divided the volunteers, those that lived in [VILLAGE NAME 1] and those that lived in [VILLAGE NAME 2]. [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] did house visits to all the ones that lived in [VILLAGE NAME 2] I did house – door step checks to the ones that lived in [VILLAGE NAME 1] just to check they were who they say they were before we got them on board. And you know, obviously got them to sign a consent and yeah, that’s basically how it started, and the rest is history.

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

**Participant:** Yeah, it has, I mean, that first urr… I mean literally, March the 15th from doing the Facebook group, we were up and running within four days. Urr because there was a few of the volunteers were my personal friends so I know who they are and where they live, and we were already getting requests into help. So, we were literally up and running starting with tasks within four days of that and it very quickly took off. Urm, it was quite overwhelming the need that the community had. You know the the it was mainly the elderly and the vulnerable, but we did have a few people self-isolating. In fact, on the the first jobs we ever had was a lovely young married lady, sorry single lady, single mum who… was really upset about having to ask for help, but her whole street was self-isolating. So she had, she had no friends, she’s got no family up here, no friends that she could ask because everybody was self-isolating and she said she’d been feeding her kids urm… urr shopping you know she had shopping for her kids for the first week and then the second week of self-isolation she said they’ve just eaten Cheerios on the couch and she had no fresh food. Urm, and she was so upset bless her so that was the first [VILLAGE NAME 2] job we actually ever did.

But the main the main core of it has been the elderly and the main core of that, the main bulk of that’s been in [VILLAGE NAME 1]. Urm but its worked very well. Where it’s changed is, urm, in, initially we were sort of, urm I would say, fire brigade policing it in that a request would come in, I’d find a volunteer and the volunteer would go out and do the job, so we were reacting. I would say we were reacting to the jobs coming in the tasks coming in. Where it changed is, we thought, well we’ve got to get ahead of this and we’ve got to think smarter. Things were getting quite dire in the shops. Urm, I know we all know about the empty shelves, I don’t mean by that I mean by a lot, a lot of people around here were not, were not social distancing and back in march and April, you know, when none of us really understood this virus – not that we do now, but even less then – we were really quite worried about, I was worried about the safety of the volunteers because things were getting a bit manic in the shops. Initially it started off well in the shops but then it sort of dropped off a bit and I said we’ve got to get the volunteers out of the shops as much as possible. And we need to be thinking, doing this smarter and making it easier for the volunteers and actually easier for us to manage it.

So what we did was, we moved from doing in store shops, reacting, urm we found that we had about twenty people that’s mainly single women, women in the, by that I mean pensioners and pensioner couples. There was about twenty that was our core – every week needed a shop, urm and pharmacy collections. So with those twenty, which were across [VILLAGE NAME 1] and [VILLAGE NAME 2], urm, I had myself and two other ladies who are very good on online grocery shopping, urm, and we basically taught, we found out that you can actually have two people on one account at the same time for online shopping. I’m not sure if you’re meant to be able to but we could. Urm, so we basically set up accounts for all of our isolating, I set up the accounts for all of our main twenty people that did weekly shops with us, all through [SUPERMARKET NAME 1] because they were the only ones, [SUPERMARKET NAME 1] was the only store around here that were allowing new people, new online people for home delivery. [SUPERMARKET NAME 2], [SUPERMARKET NAME 3], [SUPERMARKET NAME 4] were not allowing new customers. So, we could only register with [SUPERMARKET NAME 1] they’ve actually been very good. So, I set up the accounts, set up an e-mail account and an online grocery account for all the customers, sorry all our clients.

And then myself and two volunteers divided up all the clients and we got them up and running with online shopping. And initially we ran the accounts for them, urm so we would ring them up once a week, get their shopping order and order it. But as soon as we came out of lockdown the first time and were able to go around their gardens and sit in their gardens. We taught them how to do it themselves. Urm, some we were able to teach over the phone, urm, remotely. Urm but most needed that sort of face to face tuition. And we’re now, they’re now all running their accounts. There is only one lady that doesn’t, because she hadn’t got Wi-Fi, so I run her account and I do that every week for her still. Urm, but… the other nineteen, we haven’t heard of since really. I mean I checked in with them about four or five weeks just to make sure that they were doing it right, because a couple had a few teething problems. But haven’t heard from them for weeks now because they’re all up and running. And we’ve got eighty-five and eighty-six-year olds running their online shopping now. And one chap whose eighty-seven, he messages me quite often to keep in touch and he loved his [SUPERMARKET NAME 1] online shopping so much he registered with a load of local farm delivery people urm, and fresh meat and fish suppliers as well.

I, so, I think that’s been a huge thin, we’ve had quite a few of these people would have updated their Wi-Fi and their broadband, urm, in order to be ablet o do this better as well. So, it’s been a bit of a technology revelation. But for us as the shopping club, for the people, for the residence, but for us a shopping club that was a major thing because once we got – it was a lot of work, it was a lot of work to get there, urr everybody taught how to do it, registering them, and doing it was easy. Urm, but actually teaching them to do it themselves so they go their independence back, urm, and some of the that do the online shopping they, when it all calmed down a bit in the summer – they stopped home delivery and moved to click and collect on their same accounts. They’ve gone back to home delivery now because of lockdown.

But urm, yeah, I think it was empowering for them, but it was brilliant for us because honestly it was so much, once we got through the, we were doing twelve hour days trying to get everybody up and running, because there was a small window with [SUPERMARKET NAME 1]s when we could register everybody, it was like two weeks had to get everybody registered in two weeks. And urm, it was hard work twelve hours a day getting everything done, but once we did, suddenly, our work dropped off because of course everybody’s doing it themselves. And it meant that we kept our volunteers out of the shops as well which for me was the biggest thing. We still had a few people preferred to click-and-collect, so volunteers were doing click and collect but it me and that they didn’t actually have to go into the stores. Urm, so that for us was probably I would say, for the whole thing, the best thing we ever did was doing that.

Urm, second best thing we ever did, was [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] got a deputy and so did I, because we were doing this seven days a week. Urr probably for the first six or seven weeks, and it was hard, because it was twelve-hour days. So, we each got a deputy and it meant that we could have a day or two break from it. Urm on the phone if needed of course, but it meant that we could step away and do other things. I’ve still got my mum, who’s [AGE OF MOTHER] and she doesn’t live with me, so I’ve got care and responsibilities down there as well. So, urm it was nice to be able to get some time away.

Urr and off course [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]’s probably told you the *massive* thing that’s come out of this, urr we’ve gone from being two villages that’s, there was always a bit of a divide, a bit of snobbery on [VILLAGE NAME 1]’s side, if I’m honest towards [VILLAGE NAME 2]. [VILLAGE NAME 2] is the new town. Urm, [VILLAGE NAME 1] has got a lot of pride in it. I mean I’ve been here twenty years and they still don’t recognise me as a resident of [VILLAGE NAME 1]. Urm I run the, you know I’m one of the admins on the community Facebook group, “no, no, I’m a newbie, interloper.” Urr so you can imagine the feeling that they have towards [VILLAGE NAME 2] which is a completely new town, but I have to say this, I wasn’t sure about how it would work with the [VILLAGE NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 1] volunteers working together. Urm, I mean, obviously the way we did it, for the health and safety, they didn’t ever really see each other. Urm, but we did, we deliberately once we got things up and running we were finding that most of the work was over at [VILLAGE NAME 1] and I was urm, the volunteers over here we’re working really hard to doing multiple tasks a week to keep up with the demand and we had [VILLAGE NAME 2] volunteers who hadn’t actually done one yet. And I chatted with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] about it and we said, “right, we’ll ask them if they’re prepared to do some tasks over at [VILLAGE NAME 1].” And we started off actually asking [VILLAGE NAME 1] people to do some over at [VILLAGE NAME 2]. That went really well, and then we asked the [VILLAGE NAME 2] volunteers to help us out. And honestly didn’t have anybody say, “no” and it was, refreshing to see the response.

And urm, we also, one of the other things that we did other than community, the community the shopping and pharmacy tasks – normal pick ups was we provided three volunteers a day for sixteen weeks to [VILLAGE NAME 1] pharmacy to act as delivery drivers. Because they were buckling under the pressure and that was a mix of [VILLAGE NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 1] volunteers. Delivering to both communities, prescriptions from the pharmacy. And that worked really well as well, I mean mixing up, you know urm, helping out both communities. So the biggest thing that came out of this, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1], you know we said right at the start of this back in march, it would be great if we could future proof this and build on this something *after* COVID, well none of us thought we’d still be going and we’re looking at a year, eighteen months now aren’t we. But we didn’t know that back in March we though tit would be like a six-month thing. But we were thinking it would be nice to have some, some for to – something beyond COVID. Urm and you’ll probably know now, what [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]’s managed to do now in the quiet time, between the two peaks, is he’s now combined the two community neighbourhood groups. So, it’s literally coming under one banner now, ‘[NAME OF COMBINED GROUP].’ And a lot of the volunteers that we’ve - new people – that we’ve found through this project are now coming on board with that. So, it’s, its it is its moving forward again now. It’s so, that’s the sustainability of it, urm, is that it will all just come under one big, it will all just come under one big neighbourhood group now. A joint effort now between the two villages.

You know, pre-COVID, it’s funny how you get a silver lignin out of everything. Pre-COVID our two communities which neighbour each other, were divided. Clearly divided. Urm and the dynamic is very different, you know, they’re both geographic and also urr personal but they were divided communities and there was a bit of angst on both sides. But they’re not now. Urm and they won’t be in the future because you know, people have worked together and you know, it’s been very successful. Urm, and I think because [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]’s now bringing the two neighbourhood – the two new, sorry the two new neighbourhood groups under one banner as a joint group, that will be building on it for future as well.

**Interviewer:** What geographical area are you talking about? Urm the two village, how many people lived -?

**Participant:** I’m not, you’ll have to ask [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] how big [VILLAGE NAME 2] is, its big. I would say [VILLAGE NAME 1] is probably about 3000 people.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, I think [VILLAGE NAME 1] is probably, urr sorry [VILLAGE NAME 2] is probably, looking at the size of the, I would say [VILLAGE NAME 2] is probably double that. I would say [VILLAGE NAME 2] is not classes as a town, its classed as a village bit it is big. Yeah, so combined probably under 6000.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and you coverage all?

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And at the moment what is the situation with the group in the second peak?

**Participant:** Right, well we had a bit of a lull in the summer because obviously we got everybody all the existing shopping clients registered for online shopping; the virus went into a bit of a lull int eh summer didn’t it, so we weren’t getting people self-isolating either, so we had a few weeks off in the summer. But it’s urm, it’s obviously with the infection rate going on the rise, we gave everybody, we gave everybody a rest because the new jobs weren’t coming in, but now we’re reactivating again now. So, messages had gone out, we’re making sure that our volunteer lists are up to date, that people are still in the position that they can help. Because personally, you know, things, personal situations changed with jobs and everything. Urm so, were still going now so we’re ready, we’ve checked in with all our existing clients they’re all set up still with home delivery and happy, so it’s just a case now, we’re ready if people need out help. So that’s where we’re at really.

**Interviewer:** Okay, but you are not doing any help at the moment?

**Participant:** Well we haven’t had any new jobs come in, but everybody knows we’re here. But we are very lucky here in that, we’re central, we’re classes as central [COUNTY NAME]- we come under [BOROUGH NAME] Borough but we’re kind of central [COUNTY NAME] and the cases are low here.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So – and when people say here ‘lockdown,’ they lockdown. Even the children, you don’t her in this village see gangs of kids. When people are asked, ‘rule of six’ or ‘lockdown’, you don’t see people disobeying that here. They, they you know the government asks once they do that here, they respect that and they do it – might not love it, but they do it. We have seen, we’re not seeing problems with infection rates here. So, I think that means that we’re not getting the problems with people having to self-isolate. But we’re here if it happens so we’ll see, we’ll see.

**Interviewer:** And how many people were in the group?

**Participant:** Do you mean volunteers?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** By the end of it. But the time we’d gone through the whole recruitment there was eighty-five volunteers.

**Interviewer:** Eighty-five, okay. And now at the moment also?

**Participant:** I would say it’s urr sixty-five.

**Interviewer:** Sixty-five okay. Urr so some people have drop out?

**Participant:** Yeah, I think… what we had in the beginning, I think it was a case of, I mean you always get that on Facebook don’t you, people say they’ll do something and then they don’t. there was a couple of those, not very many but there was a couple. Probably about five who said they’d do it and then actually didn’t follow up, you know when I tried to go around to arrange the home check, they didn’t want to do that. Urm, and… and then after it started we also had a few volunteers, after it started – when we, when I actually set the group up on March 15th, whilst, we hadn’t had the lockdown yet, the lockdown hadn’t come. The infection rate was rising but it wasn’t dire, and it certainly wasn’t dire here, so people were quite happy about generally going out and doing stuff and being in shops, they were quite happy to do that. But as the infections rate rose, some people got more and more concerned, especially when we were doing indoor shops at that time, still. Urm, and it, a few of them – of course they were always told if at any time you don’t want to continue you just have to tell us. And a couple of them had a couple of bad experiences in the shops. Urm, you know with people not respecting social distancing. Urm… and they just basically said they didn’t want to do it anymore.

Urm, so a few dropped off for that, I think we probably lost about five or six from that, and then the rest were all people that, during the lockdown we had the highest numbers of people helping us during lockdown. Because it was a legal way for you to be out on the street. Urm, because you had the permission of the government if you were a volunteer, you could be out. Urm, and if you were stopped by the police, produce your proof that you were a volunteer and you were allowed to be there.

So, I think during first, during actually lockdown that’s when we had the highest numbers of volunteers. Because they loved it, we had great weather, particularly with the pharmacy delivery runs, I mean sometimes, we had three volunteers a day doing that and sometimes one route for one volunteer took two hours. And they were walking around, and we had one girl who’s only sixteen urm, who was a volunteer permission of Dad of course, she didn’t drive of course, so she had a peddle bike and she would bike around the village. And she would do it for like two hours and she loved it because it got her, she would just stand and chat to people on the doorsteps. Urm, and it was a way of people getting out and the weather was lovely. We didn’t – I think in the whole summer of lockdown we only had two days of rain. The rest od it was all dry, so people were, honestly, were just loving it. Urm, it was very weird. Urr so that was when the number were highest.

When lockdown came off, urr, they said, the government said they wanted people to go back to work actually *in* work. So, some of the people, where we lost the most people that was, people who were told by their employers, “you can no longer work from home.” So, they weren’t here, were no longer physically here. Because the, we had a lot of volunteers who were full time working but would take a few hours off during the day, to help with volunteering when we had a task. Because we never gave a volunteer more than one task a day. So, at most we’d ask them, if they weren’t on the pharmacy run – people were regular people I had a rota for that, urm because that was quite a big commitment, it was a daily commitment and it was two hours a day. But the full time workers they were just, they were really there to do, to help with shopping and pharmacy pick-ups, so they would maximum be asked to do one hour a day., So they were quite happy to go and do that.

**Interviewer:** Everyday?

**Participant:** Whenever we needed.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And they would work a longer day at home. You can’t do that when you have to go back to work, so we lost a lot of people after lockdown when the government said that had to go back to work.

**Interviewer:** Okay. What resources do you have? Or did you had?

**Participant:** Well, when we started when I came up with the idea, apart from myself, I didn’t really have any resources. But what [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1], urm getting involved with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] that was the biggest help because apart from the website set up already it was easy then to just out the project that our group under the project as a main banner, main banner. Urm, we started getting donations, we never asked for donations, but we started getting them, urm, one of the main areas in [VILLAGE NAME 1] where we have the elderly is a place called [AREA NAME], it’s basically a bit… it looks like a holiday park with static caravans on, urm, got they’d kill me if they heard me call them static caravans. Urm, they’re static homes. Urm, but urr yeah, they came up and said, “can we give you a donation?” because we were helping a lot of people on [AREA NAME]. Urm, I mean the average age there is probably about seventy-five and there’s over 250 homes on there. Urm and they offered a donation and then a couple of other people did. Urm, they’re only small then but like [AREA NAME] offered us £250 and then but we were getting small donations from other people, because like obviously we didn’t take money, we you know or or travel money, so a couple of people gave in donations. And then [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] applied for a couple of grants. You’ll have to ask him the ins and outs of that but OI know he got one from… urr [BOROUGH NAME] Borough Council and I think he got another one – he did defiantly get another one from somewhere else. We, a lot of that money was unspent, and we returned actually, urr but some of it we did spend.

So, financially there was never an issue because where we needed money, like for leaflets we did a leaflet drop across both communities. Urm, I mean that’s thousands of houses, we literally went to every house on every street in both [VILLAGE NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 1] and dropped a leaflet, a [GROUP NAME 1] leaflet. So, we had to get them made, had to get them printed which had to be paid for because those people didn’t donate, so the donation money helped pay for that. And… urm… urm and then the volunteers delivered them. The two parish councils – because that’s just reminded me – because I remembered who paid for those leaflets, the two parish councils [VILLAGE NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 1] also gave a bit of money, couple of hundred pounds each, that paid for the leaflet drop. So, yeah, [VILLAGE NAME 2] paid [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] their money first and then [VILLAGE NAME 1] came on board and equalled. Yeah, but we ended up with money left over so a lot of it got sent back.

**Interviewer:** Okay and in terms of skills that the people in the group have, apart from you already mentioned some skills from [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and urr, anything else?

**Participant:** Well, it was interesting because we talked about vetting. Because obviously you’ll be aware that normally anywhere – if you’re having any sort of contact with the vulnerable you normally have to be DBS cleared. Now that only when we looked into it its only if you have, if you’re going into their homes or if you’re putting if you’re taking them a lift in your car or something. Now in this case, that unusual sort of volunteering is in that actually we want to be social distancing, so we were only going on people’s doorsteps and we weren’t doing visits, they weren’t coming in our cars. The [GROUP NAME 2] still do all of the hospital and doctor visits we don’t do that as the [GROUP NAME 1]. So, we didn’t need people to be DBS cleared but it’s always a good indicator and its really interesting because of the initial eighty-five volunteers, over sixty were DBS cleared. Because when I would go around, or when I was communicating with them to arrange the home check. They would say, “oh by the way, I’m DBS cleared if you want to see my certificate.” I said, “ah, yes, I’ll see your certificate,” thinking it would be a few of them, but actually, like I say, over sixty of the eighty-five were DBS cleared. And I had been in [OCCUPATION 1] mine had, they don’t really run out, but they say you should re-new them ever three years and mine had expired so I, I said because I’m in the role that I’m in and I’m seeing all the client information, *and* all the volunteers information I said I better get mine re-done. So, [VILLAGE NAME 1] [GROUP NAME 2] agreed to do mine as well and get mine done, but that was interesting thing. So, lot of… a lot of people already had that accreditation.

There was a few of the volunteers were already volunteering in other ways for other organisations and charities. But because of COVID, they’re work had stopped, so for example, two people sued to volunteer for [CHARITY NAME]. And when the first lockdown happened, they were told they weren’t wanted anymore because the shops weren’t opening. So, they said, “we’d like to come and help you, because we can’t do our normal voluntary work.” Urm… and I think what it was, I think its… we did have and welcomed people with no experience of volunteering before and we had quite a few of those like that sixteen-year-old girl. But the majority by far were people who had done this type of thing before. Have volunteered in some capacity, a lot off the volunteers, a lot, working in schools or in care home situations. Urm… I would say urr at least a third of the volunteers work in schools. Urm, and the first time around of course, all the schools were shut, and we were in school holidays for a lot of this as well, so they were available. Yeah, I just think the way… it it just sorts of attracts those types of people.

Urm… skills, as far as skill sets were concerned, I mean my deputy I made sure I picked somebody that plugged the gap that I had around IT, urr, because I’m not totally au fait with a lot of the modern stuff. I mean I’d never used Zoom before this.

**Interviewer:** Oh, really?

**Participant:** No, never used Zoom. And when [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] sent me, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] was setting me up, I mean even my excel and Microsoft package was out of date. Urm, you know, it worked for me, but he said it wasn’t compatible to do the spreadsheets that he needed for us to do. So, he tried to send me electronically the information and I couldn’t set it up on my laptop. And then it was quite funny I was knowing doing a home check somebody had asked to be a volunteer, and he said, “is there any other help you need?” I said, “not unless you know somebody who’s really good at IT because I cannot set this thing up on my laptop.” He said, “I’m really good at IT.” I said, “you’re not!” he said, “yeah yeah.” So I literally went back the next day with my laptop and urr, it was before, just before lockdown so I was allowed to go in his house and we literally sat there and he set everything up and he got me up and running with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and then he became my deputy. Now he’s only seventeen. He he’s got the soul and the mind of a forty-year-old. But he was seventeen years old and – he is seventeen years old – and he’s been furloughed from [BUSINESS NAME], so he wasn’t allowed to go into work and he is a [VOLUNTARY ROLE]. Urm, yeah there’s quite a few from the [ORGANISATION NAME 1] and [ORGANISATION NAME 2] and things like that, [ORGANISATION NAME 3] as well. And he was a [VOLUNTARY ROLE] and urr, again that mind set I think, it just attracts that kind of people.

And, oh my God, he’s brilliant at IT and he ended up becoming my deputy even though he’s seventeen. And he just gave me a couple of days off, but he just can do all the things that I can do. Urm, and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] urm, found a deputy that urr was able to be, because he works, he was able to find somebody that could work around the hours that he wasn’t available.

Urm, yeah, so… I think really as far as the volunteers were concerned… it’s brought a lot of people out of themselves. Because going around, you know, I I I was mainly managing once, after the initial set up, I was mainly managing this, and and setting up the volunteers and tasking them out. Urm, so I I wasn’t doing the tasks face-to-face, but I was hearing all the feedback from the clients, but also from the volunteers and they just loved the social interaction. And I think it just brought a lot of people out of themselves. It helped grow their confidence. We have a lot of shy people and it just helped, just going around talking to people on the street, on the doorsteps in the sunshine, urm, I think that just, I just helps people grown a little bit, on a human level. Urm, so yeah, good communicators really. And you got to be pretty organised as well. I mean there’s no doubt about it, between – I mean that is probably one of the attributes that I have definitely [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] has, and you’ve got to ah, got to be super organised to be able to do anything like this. Urr, it’s quite a lot to take on.

**Interviewer:** How did you organise everything?

**Participant:** Umm, everything was done basically, urm, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] set up the [GROUP NAME 1] e-mail account. Urm and everything was done, urr we asked people to either e-mail in their requests that they needed, or they would phone the the [VILLAGE NAME 2] [GROUP NAME 2] urr phone number. Urr which was dedicated to this project at the time – and still is. And, once the tasks come in, it then goes on a task database which is an excel spreadsheet which are all shared documents between me and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and our deputies. And so [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] would – the way that we divided the workload up is that [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] would deal with the initial contact with the client, so he would answer any e-mails coming in requesting help and the phone calls, urr because he had the phone. He would then put a task on the task database, and at that point I pick it up, I review the tasks, make sure we’ve got all the information that we needed, and if we didn’t get back to [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and say, “can you get this information.” Urm and then I would go through the list, I would ring around all the volunteers, and find somebody suitable. And as time went on, I mean we had an excel spreadsheet with all the volunteers contact information on and a separate one for all the tasks and as time went on I soon got to know the volunteers and when their – you know I made sure I was aware of their availability, you know I made a note on the excel sheet when they were available so it was easier then to target people. Urm, and when you got to know them a bit better, it was also they had preferences to what they liked to do, so shopping or pharmacy so that helped sort of, as time went on it became quite…a smooth machine I would say.

Urm, you know initially I was ringing around quite a bit particularly because, you know, some of the people particularly at [VILLAGE NAME 2], they work still. Urm a lot of people over here are retired or at home, urr at [VILLAGE NAME 1] but at [VILLAGE NAME 2] a lot of them were still working. And I was, you know sometimes having to ring five volunteers just to do one task, urm, to find somebody available. But yeah, like I say, as time went on and I’d rung around and got everybody’s availability – you sort of perfect things as you go along, don’t you? Urm and updated the spreadsheet it was just much more, yeah, yeah. A bit more business-like, I think. Urm, urm, and then – you know we were busy you needed to improve things as we went along because we were busy. Urm, you know we didn’t have time to, I didn’t have the time to make ten calls just to get one volunteer. So yeah, find a better way of doing things really.

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

**Participant:** Well the [GROUP NAME 2]s are so I suppose you could argue technically yes because the [GROUP NAME 1] is a project under the [GROUP NAME 2]. And they are definitely part of national, urr national set ups. But [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1], I don’t, urr I’ve only just joined the [GROUP NAME 2], having done this now, I’ve actually joined it officially. But I don’t know a lot about the national set up of that.

**Interviewer:** And the group had any connections with other local group?

**Participant:** You mean other local volunteer groups?

**Interviewer:** Yes, or charities or… any type of groups, political groups?

**Participant:** Urr, I suppose… I think, I mean [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] did most of all of that, the networking – that’s really [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]’s thing. Any like for example your e-mail coming in, we, the e-mail address the [GROUP NAME 1] e-mail address that you e-mailed in is a shared e-mail address and we both see it. Urm, but the way that we divide it up is he does all the client’s stuff and all the networking, you know, if the mayor e-mails in [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] deals with it. So, I just blue flag it. If it’s, if I put a blue flag next to it, it means it’s for [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1], and if it’s something to do with volunteers, he orange flags it for me.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, so you know you’d have to probably you’d have to ask [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] a little but about that. The only thing that I could really add that is that I’m as I said I’m community admin for our local Facebook group in [VILLAGE NAME 1], but I’m *in* all the other village Facebook groups so [VILLAGE NAME 3], urm [VILLAGE NAME 4], [TOWN NAME 1], and [VILLAGE NAME 5] as well which is next door to us on the other side. And everybody was doing a little version of ours. Not on this scale, for sure because we had two villages combined and it was actually quite a big thing. Urm, but they were all doing their own little versions, they were all popping up, they were popping up quite, urm, responses weren’t there? And… some didn’t have a clue of how to do it, they wanted to do it but didn’t know how to do it, urm, so I was basically contacting them saying, “if you need any help,” because we’d already been running for four or five weeks by this point. Ur, and you know we knew the pit falls but we knew the things that worked. Urm and we had already set up our policy documents and our health and safety documents, and so we shared all of those. And in fact, I know that the borough council contacted [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1], urm and asked to have our documents to send on to other groups –

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Participant:** To use as best practice. Urm, so yeah so [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] sent the borough council our all of our police and health and safety documents and they were sending them on to the, other groups like ours. Urm, and I had a a a friend, I was [OCCUPATION 1] as I say and I had a friend who was [OCCUPATION 2] who doesn’t live – she lives in [COUNTY NAME 1] but no where near here, and she was setting up a group, urm probably about two months behind ours and she didn’t know how to do it either. So, I sent her all of our documents as well. So, it was easy for them to mirror, on a smaller scale, what we were doing. Urm… but have a framework of how to work. You know, because I sent them the spreadsheets as well, so it was easy then for them just to set things up and be up and running. Urm, yeah.

**Interviewer:** How was the relationship with the local council?

**Participant:** Urm… by local to you mean parish or –

**Interviewer:** Both.

**Participant:** Both.

**Interviewer:** The parish and also the county.

**Participant:** Right, urm… if you if you if you want me to be really honest –

**Interviewer:** Yes, I do!

**Participant:** To be really honest… I think that they’ve all been really slow. And I think slow to react and slow to help and I also think that they were very happy for other people to take on what they should have been doing. And they’ve been very happy to to let groups like ours and others… do the work that they should have been doing. I mean, this is one of the reason – like I said to you at the start – you know, you have these people dropping these, talking about dropping these cards you know, who could have been scammers and fraudsters and the parish council members are in our community group, so they would have seen those cards as well. Yet nobody, I tried contacting the Parish council before I started all this and you couldn’t reach anybody. They wouldn’t answer and they still don’t answer their e-mail address from their, from their e-mails.

Urm, and… I think [VILLAGE NAME 1], I think [VILLAGE NAME 1] parish council are shocking, shocking. [VILLAGE NAME 2] is a lot better. Urm probably helped by the fact that two of the people that really needed help with their shopping, are on the parish council and hold the purse strings. So actually, the way that that worked was, it worked out really well because when we had no money, and we needed these leaflets doing which was really important, really important those leaflets. Because a lot of us are on social media, but a lot of people over seventy are not. You know a lot don’t even have Wi-fi, so… it was important we did a door to door leaflet drop and cover, and put a leaflet through every persons door to say, “we exist and we can help, and this is your community helping you, not some stranger.”

Urm, and we had no money for that and urm, we were lucky that a couple of the people had already asked for help shopping, sit on [VILLAGE NAME 2] parish council, and they were happy then to gear up and they were the first to cough up any money to us. Urm, and they paid for the leaflets for both villages, [VILLAGE NAME 2] parish council paid for [VILLAGE NAME 1] as well. And [VILLAGE NAME 1] parish council – because everything in [VILLAGE NAME 1], I don’t know what it is about [VILLAGE NAME 1], everything is done so much slower here. Urm, you know the Parish council takes another four weeks to make a decision that the will donate money. They did, but they take another four weeks to do it. And it was the same with the [VILLAGE NAME 1] [GROUP NAME 2], [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 2]’s lovely but he took another several weeks after [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] signed up, [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] said, “yeah, I’m on board with it,” on the day that we had the meeting. And the [VILLAGE NAME 1], the [VILLAGE NAME 1], [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 2] for [VILLAGE NAME 1] said I’ve got to go back and speak to all the committee members and we’ve got to have a chat about it, and it was about three weeks later they came on board. Urm, I think it’s just a little bit more of a Spanish mentality in [VILLAGE NAME 1] where it’s you know, you know, in the afternoon, you know, another day, another week.

Urm, but yeah I think, and the borough council, I mean they did give [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] a grant, I don’t know the ins and the outs of that, but I’m aware that they did give a grant. But there was no real practical help. Urm… by anybody. There was no, none of them offered any help either, whether it be practical, yeah, they gave some money and donation which was lovely, but it wasn’t really that that we wanted. You wanted actually them to get involved and none of them every did that. Neither the parish councils nor the borough council ever did that. Urm… but I don’t think that’s new, if I’m honest. Its…it’s just what it is.

I mean the government food boxes that they – are you aware of the food boxes, the government food boxes?

**Interviewer:** No.

**Participant:** Oh, its so funny. When the first lockdown happened, urm there was a big, urm public furore about the fact that urm, its all well and good locking people down, but some people don’t have Wi-Fi and online shopping facilities and mainly the elderly we’re talking about here and vulnerable people. And so, they couldn’t get shopping, they were told to stay home, couldn’t get shopping, they were the most at risk, so should be staying home. So, the government, urm, organised food parcels. Now by food parcels – I saw these food boxes, and it literally was a weeks’ worth of food. And they were delivering these to a lot of the people, I don’t know what register or list they had. But they would deliver them to a lot of people, and that was another thing that helped us as well because there was a lot of people getting those food parcels so they didn’t necessarily, once lockdown happened and they were getting food parcels, a lot of the vulnerable people were getting those boxes. But other people were, people on those lists were getting those boxes who didn’t wan them. Urm, and this is the, this is where bureaucracy goes a bit nuts really. There was one chap particularly in [VILLAGE NAME 1], urm, who I know because he’s ex-[OCCUPATION 1]. And he was getting one of these food boxes every week. Three times he tried to cancel it and they just kept turning up every Tuesday would be delivered on his doorstep and left there. And so, every Wednesday I would go over and pick it up and then dish it out to the needy in [VILLAGE NAME 1]. And urm, I mean these were really, they were huge, huge food parcels because it was a weeks’ worth of food.

Urm, but you know, that, the government, but you know that came very very late in the day. And I, this was, I’ll be honest I’m not a particularly emotional person, but I’ve been, at the start of this I was in tears a few times. I mean a couple of clients, God I’m almost tearing up thinking about it now, a couple of the clients that first contacted us that wanted help, one of them hadn’t eaten for four days. She lived on, she lives on [AREA NAME], that park I was telling you about. She had not eaten for four days. And there was another chap over at [VILLAGE NAME 2] who hadn’t had a food delivery for seven days. And he was living off scraps and a couple of times that he had. I mean that is shocking. And this was before the government parcels, government food parcels came in after that. But this was right at the start, everybody was really slow to react to this, I think.

Urm, I, don’t get me wrong I think the government, I felt quite sorry for the government the first time around because you know, none of us knew the scale of this or or how to deal with it and it’s hard. You know there’s a lot of expectation that the government should have done better. But you know, I’ve been in [OCCUPATION 1], I know it’s not that easy. But, you know, we’re not doing any better second time around are we, let’s be honest. Urm, you know, nothing’s been prepared this time around either. Urm, but I don’t think, I think both the parish councils and the borough council’s been pretty poor. I don’t think, I think they’ve been very happy to leave it to everybody else.

And look at the foodbanks as well that have continued to operate. The foodbanks in [TOWN NAME 2] for example. They’ve been given no help either.

**Interviewer:** No.

**Participant:** And they’ve been really stretched. And they don’t get any help either, so. But we’re just getting on with it to be honest. I think this what this has brought out in people, is urm, we just, we know we just have to do it ourselves. And you look after your own community and that is the ethos that has come out of this, for sure.

**Interviewer:** I see.

**Participant:** And it’s easy to do in a village, because this is the other sad thing, is I was on, I’m in a couple of other [TOWN NAME 2] Facebook groups, and urm, it was really sad to see that they didn’t have any kind of community responses in [TOWN NAME 2]. Urm, and they were getting quite upset that they were seeing that we were doing this here, but of course we had to have a limit a geographical limit to what we could cover and we could only really cover [VILLAGE NAME 1] and [VILLAGE NAME 2], which is actually quite a big area. And so, we weren’t we couldn’t go into [TOWN NAME 2] of course. And they were quite upset that there was no community response in the town of [TOWN NAME 2], across that whole town, not one of these sprung up – hello baby, sorry my dog.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** He’s been asleep on the sofa and he’s just woken up. Urm, but urr, yeah. You want to come say hello? You want to come say hello, yeah? So, I think that was urm, its interesting the difference between the towns and the villages.

**Interviewer:** What is the difference?

**Participant:** Yeah. Well, there’s more of a community spirit here, I think.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm and that’s probably why they didn’t see the shopping, you know these sorts of similar set ups springing up int the towns. I mean… in theory it should be easier in the towns because you’ve got more people, and younger people, urm should be able to do it. But nobody was actually just organising it and getting it done. Urm, and you know, I was quite surprised that none sprung up in [TOWN NAME 2]. The villages all had one, you know, they looked slightly different, but they were doing a similar thing. All the villages – every village around here had one of theses. But not the town, not the major town that we, that we have. Yeah, very strange that.

**Interviewer:** And did you, did you try to get any official recognition? For example, becoming a charity or a company. Did you thought about that?

**Participant:** I spoke to [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] about that because one of our volunteers, urm he actually put the idea in my head. Because one of my volunteers said, “you know you can get some sort of credit for this, if you become registered.” And I had a very brief conversation with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] about it. Urm, and there was a reason why he said we couldn’t do it, and I can’t remember exactly what he said now, you’d have to ask him. I think it was to do with the fact it came under the [GROUP NAME 2], which is already registered in some way as a national group. So, and because we were a part of that entity, I don’t think we could. Urm, but I did, yeah, I did think about that. Urr, but we weren’t actually an independent body so yeah, you’ll have to speak to [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] about why that was but I did, I did raise that with him and he said, “no.”

**Interviewer:** Okay, you have talk a lot about the group, I like to understand a little bit more why did you get involved in the first place? You, you – yeah.

**Participant:** Well, it, it it was because of the, literally I can, I can pin it down to seeing those Facebook posts of those two cards and the fear that I had, being an ex-[OCCUPATION 1], of total strangers going around to the elderly and vulnerable – they might have been genuine people but I, none of us knew them. But the fear was that they were scams and unfortunately you do see at times like this, you see wonderful people doing a lot of great work at times like this, but it also brings out an awful evil side of some people, and opportunity to do something not good. And I saw those cards and I thought, “oh this is so worrying.” You know my Mum is [AGE OF MOTHER], she lives in a town, in [TOWN NAME 3], but she’s got me anyway. But it was, God, if that was my Mum and somebody was putting a card through her door. Because my Mum would be naïve enough to say, “yeah, thanks for the help.” Urm, and I just through we’ve got, we have got a lot of people in [VILLAGE NAME 1], living alone, elderly and I thought there’s a lot of people are going to take that up as an opportunity and that filled me with dread. You know, they are on very limited budgets and they are going to hand over cash to these people for shopping that they’ll probably never see. And that honestly, that, that was the sole reason that I did it. Because we were stopping those, we ah, we decided to put everybody on post approval, delete those posts and stop people from putting those cards out. And of course, they could have been genuine people, and in which case we were stopping them helping people.

**Interviewer:** You don’t know.

**Participant:** So, if you’re going to do that, you’ve got to do something in its place. And, which is what I’ve said to the others, I said, “right, we’ve stopped this, potentially stopped, you know a criminal but it could have been stopping a genuine person from wanting to help. Urm, but we need to do something, and at that point there was no response form the parish council or the borough council. There wasn’t even anything on there – I mean the parish council here, at [VILLAGE NAME 1], has pretty much no social media presence. Urm, they’ve only just created their own website. They haven’t got a Facebook group or a urr, a Facebook page of anything. Urm, and there was nothing had gone out, we have a village newsletter, but of course, which is posted to everybody once a month. But of course, that stopped during the most crucial time – that stopped as well. Because they weren’t being delivered, they weren’t being printed and they weren’t being delivered.

So there was no message coming out from the parish council, there was nothing being done by the borough council at all, and I said, “right, we’ve got to do this ourselves, and we’ve got to do this now,” because people weren’t – you know I was in [SUPERMARKET NAME 1]s, that was the second that’s the other thing, that actually was the other thing. Urm, the same week, I went into [SUPERMARKET NAME 1]s because tat that point, I was still doing in store shop, just to do my own shopping. And I went down the aisle and… it was like out of some sort of a a – I can never say this word, apocalypse film. And all the shelves were empty and I’ve I’ve seen a lot in [OCCUPATION 1], over my thirty years in [OCCUPATION 1], and I can honestly say that shocked me. To see in 2020 empty shelves in a, a major supermarket, it was in [SUPERMARKET NAME 1]. And I saw this old gentleman really upset and I said, “are you okay?” And he said, “I don’t know what to do, we’ve got no food.” And I said, “do you know what, come with me,” and I took him to a member of [SUPERMARKET NAME 1] staff. And I said you need to help him get some food. And she said, “don’t worry, we’ve got food out the back, urm, we’re just not putting it on the shelves because it just… goes, but we can get him what he needs, don’t worry.” And I handed him over to the [SUPERMARKET NAME 1] member of staff, and it all happened within a space, all this was happening within the space of two or three days. So, we had the cards being posted on the Facebook group, the councils weren’t doing anything, and then I saw that chap in [SUPERMARKET NAME 1]s.

And I thought this is going to be worse for [VILLAGE NAME 1] because… urm, we don’t have in this village, it’s quite a big village, we’ve got a take away Chinese, a take away Indian, we’ve got two pubs and a post office, which is brilliant our post office. But we’ve got no grocery shops. [VILLAGE NAME 2] has got a Budgens but we haven’t got anything. And people, elderly people that don’t have cars, there’s no where you can walk to to get food here. Urm, the post office do stock some limited items – actually they’ve been very good since all this happened, they’ve actually increased their range and been very good, urr but It’s quite pricy. But there’s certainly no grocery shop here. So, they’re reliant, you know, they’re reliant on being able to get on a bus and go into [SUPERMARKET NAME 1]s. And I just thought, jeeze this is bad for people like me, but I can go to Morrisons down the road, or Aldi, you know, and shop around for bits. You, you know a lot of elderly people just reliant on the bus can’t do that.

So, I thought if somebody is going to be walking around, traipsing around loads of shops trying to find things, it has to be someone of my age and younger, because I’m fifty-four and not people over seventy-five. You know it filled me with dread the through that my mum might have to do this. Not that she would because she’s got me. But you you know she’s in that situation and I didn’t like that. Urr, so that was really the impetus behind it.

**Interviewer:** Have you had any previous experience of organising groups like this one?

**Participant:** Urm, I’ve never done any volunteering before because my job… urm, I was I was a sort of middle management within [OCCUPATION 1], obviously a [NAME OF ROLE]. Urm, and I investigated serious crimes, so I’ve managed teams. Urm very… a lot of teams. And I’ve dealt with at risk, people at risks, a lot of them, because I dealt with serious crime, a lot of the people, the victims I was dealing with, were on the at risk scale and vulnerable. Urm… so I dealt with the people side of it, and I’ve managed teams of people, but I’ve never done any volunteering or charity work. Because my job was… my last shift in [OCCUPATION 1] was twenty hours long. And two days before that I’d worked twenty-four hours, straight through I mean, no break, no going home. Urm, my job was very very intense and I only retired in 2016 so I haven’t been retired that long. So urm and I had rest to be honest, I had a rest when I retired, I got a dog, and urr, had a rest. And then urm… seemed like this just happened overnight didn’t it. Urm, and I just through – I just think I’m a a a I think having had a rest I think, but I am instinctively one of those get up and go people. Urm, and when you – I’m not really one of those people that when I see that something needs doing, I’m not really one of those people to say, “leave it for somebody else.” Urm, and particularly when nobody’s stepping up, I’m just get in there and go and do it. Urm, which doesn’t, it’s not always a good thing, urm you know, me and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] we got on very well but we did have, you know, you, you have to come… we’ve got different personalities, urm you know, and he’s much more measure than I am. I’m just much more… get on with it. Urm, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, and how does the activity of the group relates with other parts of your life? How did you fit everything?

**Participant:** Ooh, that was the biggest challenge, without a shadow of a doubt. Getting the volunteers was easy, people wanted to help. Urm… the time management of it all was the biggest challenge without a shadow of a doubt. And urm, in in and and and was worse than the IT issues that I had. Yeah, because…initially it was, not now because and not even once we got after about two months – that first two months I was literally working seven days a week, twelve hours a day. I was on my laptop twelve hours a day, seven days a week. I mean there were days when I didn’t even walk my dog. Urm, because I just couldn’t spare the time to walk my dog once a day. Urm, so my friend across the road was walking him for me. Urm, but… it… it was very very urm time intensive. Because you’re setting up anything, whatever you’re doing, you’re starting something and there was a lot of think about. I mean, this was a big responsibility, whilst we weren’t going in people’s homes, we were delivering shopping and prescriptions on their doorstep, we’re still asking volunteers that – a lot of them that I didn’t personally know tat that point, to go around vulnerable people’s addresses and and and with that comes a massive responsibility. Both to the client, to make sure they’re protected, both from COVID but also anybody… a bit unscrupulous. But also, to protect the volunteers again, form COVID and to protect from any complaints or allegations that might come their way. And… because with a positive there’s always a negative side of things as well.

Urm, and it was the time management of it I think was the biggest challenge because it was just so busy. Urm, I mean we were getting my, the e-mail, [GROUP NAME 1] e-mail address was just pinging on my phone ever few minutes, it was just pinging with another task coming in and another task coming in. And initially of course, there was a bit of a lag between whilst we ended up with eighty-five volunteers at the height of lockdown the first time around and it was, I mean now it’s obviously a well-oiled machine, it definitely is a well-oiled machine, urr now. In those first few weeks – I mean we were up and running within four days because I was using my friends as the volunteers to go do the initial tasks, and running them ragged while I went around and home checked everybody else and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] was doing the same with [VILLAGE NAME 2]. Urm, but of course we weren’t letting people who hadn’t been home checked and vetted, to go out and do tasks, yet the tasks were coming in. So, it was, you know, a bit stressful. I would say that those first couple of weeks were really hard. Urm… and probably the first four weeks was tiering, I mean I’ve gone through working you know, very very long hours in [OCCUPATION 1] where you just sort of got on with it, to being retired and then suddenly was thrown into working full time again and it was a bit of a shock to my system I think. But urr… soon as we started getting really properly organised and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] got all the spreadsheets setup and, you know, we just found better ways to do things. Urr and I got to know the volunteers, got more people signed up, and that was the big things was getting around doing the home checks getting people signed up so that I could have a bigger pool of people to call on.

Urm, and and I can honestly say, I think this is the biggest surprise for me, is of all the volunteers that signed up and all the tasks we did and all the clients we had, had and have, we never had one problem. We didn’t have any… dodgy volunteers – I’m shocked at that if I’m honest. Didn’t have any dodge volunteers, no problems with the volunteers. We didn’t have any problems with the clients. Urm, and everything has really gone really quite smoothly and and with… when you get to build relationships both with the volunteers and the clients, and you get to know them, it makes doing this job a lot easier. Because you can predict… what the client wants, how they want it, you know their shopping list part from anything because they have the same thing week-in-week out. It just makes things so much easer to do. And urm, and you know, it, honestly, it’s a doddle now, I can honestly say it’s a doddle. Urm, because urr everything’s so well organised now. It takes a lot initially, it’s a lot.

**Interviewer:** So, do you feel that you, the group didn’t encounter any challenge or problem?

**Participant:** \*Sighs\*… honestly, no. Not really. I think I think the only problem – the group didn’t. I think the only problem hat [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and I had was the time management initially. Because [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] was working as well and, urm, I was just finding it intense, that first few weeks because I was trying to do a little bit more than [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] was because he was working, he was doing his jobs as well. Working from home but still had to do his job and put his hours in. But once, I would say once we got through that first month, urm and a lot of the home checks had been done so I could go down from doing, I don’t know doing ten a day toa couple a day, urm and we got a base of volunteers, it just sort of, got a lot easier. Urm, and then when we got everybody onto urm online delivery, home delivery I mean, that was just the best thing we ever did. As a group that was the best thing we did. It was a lot of work, getting everybody signed up and… and a few of the people, a few of the elderly people did not want, urr weren’t keen on it, let me say that. A lot were happy to go along with it, because they understood we didn’t want people going into the shops so much. But there was a few that were very resistant and – clients this is I’m talking about. And we had to… I had to really and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] had to really talk them into it, now they all love it but at the time it was quite hard work. People of that age you know, they’re quite… like they’re own way of doing things. It was a big enough step for them to ask for help to go and get their shopping. But it was another, it was another level it seemed to get them to accept online deliveries. Urm, but they, yeah, once they, they all love it now, it’s weird isn’t it. Urm. But urm, yeah that was probably the biggest thing.

Urm, but again, what helped me and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] was getting more smart about the way we work, even more organised and we were pretty organised but even *more* organised, you know. And and and just… working things. You know, just making small changes as we were going along, see what works and went with that and if things didn’t work, we changed it. But also getting the deputies because you need a break. You cannot do this twelve hours a day, seven days a week we did, for weeks and weeks and weeks and not have a negative urr urr side affect from that. And actually, just getting the deputies just to have one day a week off was just brilliant. You know, go and do, hike with the dog and just urm urm, you know, loose a bit of mobile phone contact every now and again. That was probably the biggest thing we, for our mental health, mine and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]’s, that was a good thing, I think.

**Interviewer:** And about, how about things that you might have done that helped the group of volunteers to keep going?

**Participant:** Well I set up a … urr it’s probably the one thing I didn’t mention, because I thought I was going to start this by myself, when I did the Facebook post on March the 15th, at the same time I set up a Facebook closed group called, urr, [NAME OF FACEBOOK GROUP]. Urm and now initially that was how I was going to run this; I was going to run it through Facebook through a Facebook group. I thought we’d have about twenty people volunteer, \*laughs\* and you know a few tasks and I’d run it through Facebook and, “who’s available to do this, yeah I’ve got a shopping task anybody available?” And I thought that was how it would be, like really quite small because it was meant to be just for [VILLAGE NAME 1] to be fair. But actually, when [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] came on board, I’d already set up the Facebook group and [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] came on board. So, what I said to [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] was, “right, we’ll run the, actually run the shopping club through the community e-mail address and also through the task databases on excel. But I need a way to talk to urm….” Because it was a bit of a weird volunteer set up in that the volunteers because of COVID we don’t want them all seeing each other. And urm… but you also need a safe place where they can talk, and I can talk and disseminate messages. And I, whilst [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] can do big group e-mails, I’m more a Facebook, I do like Facebook. Urm, so I kept that Facebook group and I changed it into a volunteer discussion group.

So, urm, not everybody, not all of the eighty-five volunteers were on Facebook but there was probably only four that weren’t. And everybody else joined the volunteer discussion group and I used that to disseminate messages, so say we were doing a leaflet drop, “right, who’s available on this date to do a leaflet drop on [VILLAGE NAME 2] and [VILLAGE NAME 1]?” urm and then everybody just posted their availability. You know, we would put the zoning maps for the leaflet drop on there and say, “here’s the map, we’ve divided it into zones and in the zones you can each see how many houses there are to deliver to, can you each pick a zone that you want to do and maybe just do a tag line on a comment line as to which zone they wanted to do.” So, it was really easy to do things like that on Facebook.

But we also used it as a group – because it was a closed group, the only people in it are volunteers that have been checked, vetted. We used it as a safe place for support. Because we were working in isolation. It was the one place where everybody can get together and have a chat – and still do, the group, that that Facebook group still runs, and we still chat. Urm, so you know you can have a bit of a post and a bit of a laugh, but also talk about the work. Urm, so but it covered that side of it as well.

Urm, and I would also, once we got organised, and I got the deputy I made sure that I was also occasionally ringing around the volunteers to check in with them. Just to make sure they were okay. Urm, because this does take a burd- this does take a toll, does take a burden on you. Urr and you know they saw some upsetting things. Urr there’s no doubt about it there’s some, there’s a lot of highs, far more highs than lows from what people experienced but there were some upsetting things for some of them.

**Interviewer:** Like what?

**Participant:** Seeing how people were living and the isolation, I think that shocked a lot of people, a lot of the volunteers at how isolated some of the clients actually were and this COVID thing has just brought that out that they were… coping by themselves and had been for so long. But when you’re in your eighties and your nineties it’s very hard to do things by yourself, as much as you might want to. And I think, you know, that was… people need to have a safe place to talk. Urm, and that group is it.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, urm, did you plan this things that you did, or they were just ad-hoc?

**Participant:** Things, like what things do you mean?

**Interviewer:** Things that might have helped the group keep going.

**Participant:** No, it was,no not planned, defiantly instinctual. I mean, occasionally I would urm, see the volunteer side of it, I run the volunteers. So, I would tend to just do stuff, have an idea, and just post it and do it. And that, that Facebook group urm, the discussion group the support group – which is what I call it. It’s actually called [NAME OF FACEBOOK GROUP] group on Facebook but it’s actually a support group. Urm, that’s why we have it. Urm, that is my baby because I look after the volunteers and I task the volunteers and I’m worried about there mental health as well and their wellbeing so that’s sort of my area naturally. [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] is the clients and the networking, and I don’t really want to be dealing with the councils. I’m very happy for [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] to do all of that.

Urm but there were a couple of things that we… you just sort of instinctively know the sorts of things you need to have a conversation with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] about. Because [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] and I co-run it. We both consider that we co-run this and sometimes you do have to run things past each other. He does with me and I do with him. So, there would be things that I wouldn’t just go ahead and steam roll and do myself. I would just have a conversation with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] first and then see what his input is and then he or I would post in that group. But more often than not, it was very instinctual, and I’d just do it. Urm, yeah.

You know you go to bed don’t you and you think, “well what can I do there.” You know you hear feedback; you chat to the volunteers and you hear something, and you think, “oh, I really should do something about that.” And you just think about how you do it and then you just go and do it, don’t you?

**Interviewer:** And why do you think, why do volunteers urm, got involved in your opinion, what were the motivations?

**Participant:** Funnily enough I’ve never, I’ve never really thought about it in quite those terms. But I have thought about it in general terms. I would say… there’s a lot of good people. And lot of good people. Because that’s what it comes down to, it comes down to… there was nothing in it for then. There’s no kudos in doing this. There’s no money it, it’s volunteering your free time and in fact you loose money because you’re driving around in your petrol… urm, running around doing shopping and all the rest of it. And you now, the delivery drivers, I mean as well, for example doing the pharmacy, they probably used the most petrol, there was one volunteer doing three days a week. He wanted to do three days a week and there’s a couple of people doing a couple of days. And they’re driving around using their own petrol delivering prescriptions, in their own time. The time is one thing, but then to add financial costs on top of that is a is a bigger thing. And one of the chaps that was on that rota, he’d lost his job, he was furloughed so he was not only giving free time and losing, you know losing money on the petrol, he was actually on a reduced income as well.

We had quite a few volunteers who had been furloughed, that’s why they were available. Urm… and… urr, yeah quite a few, the majority were working from home but quite a few were furloughed, a few were furloughed. And you think about why they would do it, because they’re good people. Because they want to help and that is simply what it comes down it. And its…you know, I think we shouldn’t be amazed that there are good people out there. There’s a lot of good people out there but they don’t always find a way to help. I think that’s the thing, there’s not, there doesn’t seem to be a lot of this going on. And if there is, it’s just not being advertised. Like I said, I’ve been in this village twenty years and I didn’t even know we had a [GROUP NAME 2]. I would have signed up for that as soon as I retired if I knew that they existed. I’m in I’m in it now because of this, I know about it because of this and I’m in the official group now. But I… you know if you don’t hear about these sorts of things existing, if it’s not publicised then - a lot of this sort of thing is done under the radar. But of course, then… you don’t get the help then that maybe that you need. And the people that want to help aren’t aware of its existing. I just thing, yeah, I think it just comes down to people, there are good people out there a lot of good people out there.

Urm and a lot of people particularly over there, [VILLAGE NAME 2] is a different demographic, [VILLAGE NAME 2] is a lot of families a lot of young families, they do have some elderly there, and of course they’ve got the big retirement villages there, but that’s a self-contained sort of domain. But they don’t have a lot of elderly independent people living at [VILLAGE NAME 2], we do at [VILLAGE NAME 1] we’ve got a lot here and I think we were a lot more concerned, like I was, about the state in the shops the empty shelves and the fact that people couldn’t get food. We were all hearing stories that of people who could just not get food here. Urm, and were… were in dire straits and I think it was, it was a bit like a call to arms, I did that, it just needed one person who just happened to be me. If I hadn’t have done this, I have got no doubt somebody else would have done, I just perhaps co-ordinated it a bit a head of time because we were one of the first groups set up and as I said I started this on March the 15th and we were up and running within, you know, within four days we were up and running. Urm, and I think I probably was a little bit ahead of the game, looking at some of the other villages around here. But I’ve got no doubt that if I hadn’t done this, somebody else would have., because I think that’s just sort of the area we come from here. That we help our community here, personally.

**Interviewer:** What have you learnt from coordinating the group and this experience?

**Participant:** What I have learnt is is that… it is… I think the biggest thing for me is, I’m [AGE OF PARTICIPANT] now, and my Mum is, like I say, is [AGE OF MOTHER], and I’ve got to think about my future and I’m alone, I’m not married I’ve got no kids. You know I look after my Mum but I’ve got nobody to look after me when I’m that age. And I realised through this that actually you need people. You do need people. You know the worst thing that you can do when you’re an elderly person and vulnerable is to be home alone. And it’s the hardest thing to do, and I know it’s the hardest thing to do to ask for help or support. But it’s the worst thing not to. And I definitely will not allow myself to get in that situation where, when I’m that age if I ever get to that age where… I’m in that situation where I’m on my own and isolated. Because once you become isolated it’s very hard to come out of that. We found that with a few of our clients who have… urm… who live in total isolation, they struggle even with the contact with is. Urm, let alone with anybody else, and they’ve overcome that with us and actually are very happy with us. But it’s trying to get them to integrate more with the community.

Urm… and I would say also, I think that the shocker for me, if I’m honest, I think has been the response, I think. Because I knew we would get a few people would, be willing to help me with this. I knew I would get a few people because I’ve got a lot of friends in this village who are my age and quite a bit younger. A lot of my friends are in my forties so quite a bit younger than me, and I knew I would get a few dynamic people willing to help, but I think I was shocked at the response. Urm… that you know, the amount of love out there really. Urm, and people willing to help, it was amazing, it is amazing.

**Interviewer:** And finally, how do you see the future of this group?

**Participant:** Urm, only positive to be honest. I mean we’re… ready for round two. We’ve had really little drop off in the number of volunteers. They’re… you know I’ve been ringing around over the last two weeks, because we knew, I knew lockdown was coming. I I though it would be in November, I though lockdown would be in November back in September I thought it would be in November. I perhaps didn’t predict it quite as early as this, but I thought it would perhaps be nearer the end of November. But I knew it was coming so I already started ringing around everybody. Because situations change, don’t they, with work and personal situations, urm, so I was started to ring around volunteers to see who might still be available. And we’ve had very little drop off, I think we’ve only lost two people. Urm, because of work. Urm, and urm… so yeah, I think, you know as far – we’re ready urm, you know, we’re here, we’re ready and, you know, operational.

Urm, but I think the biggest thing is the fact that now, this is going to – once we’re through this second lockdown, now that [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] has combined the two [GROUP NAME 2]s officially, and that’s official now, it’s only been official the last couple of weeks that they’ve joined groups. So, it’s the [NAME OF COMBINED GROUP] now. Urm… not that they’ve done that, I think this is going to be morphed into that, and they are going to continue this service, forever now. So, this is not a COVID response anymore. This initially when I set this us in March was COVID response. This is no longer a COVID response, this a community response. So, if anybody at any point in next month, in a year or in two years, needs their shopping down, needs a prescription, needs taking to the doctors, the [GROUP NAME 2]s will do it. Because we will now have the volunteers -this is the big thing that’s come out of this, because we found all these volunteers, they all want to continue to help, a lot want to continue to help, they’re able to sustain that, urm and continue to provide the service.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm. And how do you see your role in the group?

**Participant:** Me? Funnily enough this I have discussed with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]. Urm, and he’s discussed his with me too, because at the moment, he runs the [VILLAGE NAME 2] [GROUP NAME 2], and I didn’t even know the groups so I’m not, I’ve only just joined as a member. Ur, but I’ve, I will continue to run the community shopping club, this group, as it is, with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1]. But once we’re through the pandemic, whenever that might be – I’ve got no idea. I don’t see it before next summer, I think we’ll be running this until next Summer, I think. Urm, but once it’s finished, urm, I’ll be stepping, and this will morph urr, this will morph into day to day business for the [GROUP NAME 2] then, urm, once that happens, I’m just going to become a member, I am a member of that group. And I won’t be taking an organisation role urm… running this.

However, one thing I have talked about with [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] is, one thing we didn’t urm, manage within this group was looking after peoples’ mental health within the community. Which we all know now has been a massive factor. And we could see it, as I say, with some of my clients, that already had mental health issues and it’s been exacerbated with COVID and the isolation has made that worse. And I, funny enough just before lockdown [NAME OF GROUP MEMBER 1] came over to drop some things off for me, and we had a chat on my doorstep and I was saying, the really – the one thing we never did was we never really helped the mental health side of things with the community. Urm, and he’s now looking at starting a new group, under the [NAME OF VOLUNTEERING SCHEME], to help with that side of thigs. So, I’ve said to him, because we’re we we’re going to be slowing down this, once this is over and setting that up, I’ve said I’m going to help him set that up. Because it’s… they’re transferable skills, aren’t they? So, I said I’m going to help him set that up. And I know all the volunteers as well, so I know out of all my eighty-five volunteers, I know exactly who is ideal for that that can – you know, has got the social skills, and the caring and is DBS cleared and can go around and del, and help people.

Urm, so I think it’s, I’ve got I’ve got the bug now. You know, I’ve had my couple of years off from work, and doing nothing apart form walking the dog. And I’ve got to find, I’ve got to find other things to do. I had, funnily enough, when I retired, before I retired, I was thinking about volunteering. But I thought I’d volunteer, if I’m honest, in like a dog rescue place or something like that. But then ended up actually getting a dog, urm, so, urm I wanted to be with him more than anything. But I’ve got this volunteering bug now. So, when the [GROUP NAME 1] stops, urm, I need to find something else to do, so I will help set up this new arm. Urm, which will be another project under the [GROUP NAME 2], but I’m going to have to find other things to do.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And who knows what that might bring.

**Interviewer:** This is just the start.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Well, thank you, I don’t have any more questions, urm, I did a lot, sorry about this.

**[Debriefing]**

**[End of Interview]**