**Date: 02/11/2020**

**Duration:** 58:41

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

**Participant:** -ah, before you start.

**Interviewer:** I will also put here, just to have a… back up in any case.

**Participant:** Right. Oh, one thing I need to warn you off, is I’m expecting a call which I can’t, I can’t put off it’s the doctors actually because I’m not well, urm and they didn’t give me a precise time so if we can just –

**Interviewer:** Well my first question is what is the name of your group? Urm and how did it start?

**Participant:** Well it’s [GROUP NAME].

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm and it’s now a CIC, so [GROUP NAME] CIC. It wasn’t at the beginning. Urm, at the beginning, before lockdown started it was obvious that it was going to get very very hard for people so I through we need to – and I’m, I’m a, a vulnerable in health wise so I need to be careful so I thought, “well what can I do?” So, I started a a Facebook page, and I asked for volunteers to help and also for people who needed help and had to isolate to come forward and let me know about it. So that was *how* it actually started.

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

**Participant:** The actual day I started the page was the seventeenth of March.

**Interviewer:** March okay.

**Participant:** And the lockdown I think was the twenty-fourth. So, I started the page on the seventeenth of work and really really quickly I had loads of people joining and loads of people offering to help. But it was nearly everyone offering to helps and nobody needing help. But then I realised that’s probably because a lot of isolating vulnerable people don’t have internet maybe, or Facebook. So, urm, very soon we put together a leaflet and then, urm, the volunteers helped print and also helped deliver.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, you know, and then we started to get people asking for help.

**Interviewer:** And what was the aim of the group when it started?

**Participant:** The aim of the group was just to help vulnerable people… urm and people who wanted to help bring them together. So it was to help the vulnerable people, urm, and the way that I was doing it was to try and find a way that I could bring the two together so that it could happen, and then coordinate it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Did anything change since it start?

**Participant:** … Urr, no it’s still doing that but, urr what did change was, during the lockdown, urr we found out that our local community house which is a drop in… urr food… place – I mean it’s a community place, but it was closing. And they used to give like, if they had excess food from places, they, people would drop it to them and then people could pop in. So, anyone that fell outside the the normal foodbank rules could just go in there without having to get the citizens advice. So, we heard about that and then we also heard that the [CHARITY NAME 1] foodbanks, a lot of their volunteers were vulnerable to they weren’t going to be open so a friend of mine, he actually, he’s he’s [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1], I don’t think he’s at, no he’s at [CITY NAME 1] isn’t he, urm, we then decided what can we do and with a few other people we then started a food bank.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But that’s right, that’s a different organisation, but that’s how its changed so, urr… the the the mutual aid group is still doing everything it’s doing, so it’s slow at the moment but it’s going to start getting busy again, so how it’s changed so it, I became a CIC, so and how I did that, why I did that was I reali- I’d identified all poverty and vulnerable and urm… and I realised that I couldn’t get any funding unless I was some kind of legal body. So we did get some funding which wasn’t conditional on being legal, but then that was like a small amount and anybody that was going to give any further money wasn’t going to give it to us if we didn’t have our own bank account. But to have our own bank account we had to have our own legal structure. So that was, that was why we changed to a CIC.

**Interviewer:** When was that?

**Participant:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** When you did that change?

**Participant:** I think that I think from memory it was august, early August, fifth of August, I’m not sure I’ll have to look that up. So, urm, because so, the beginning part from March up until August, I’d apply for like a small load, not loan, grant, I think it was £250, and that was from community… can’t remember if it was [COMMUNITY ORGANISATION 1] or [COMMUNITY ORGANISATION 2] I’m not sure, but it was someone that know – I’m I’m a [OFFICIAL POSITION] which I think is why they let me have the money, but that only goes so far. And then I applied to the police, they had a fund, and they gave £500. But in order to keep going we needed more, so, we could, you know, you can’t depend on that if people are needing help. So we were applying for funding to get printing, to get food parcels and once we got the food bank running, I have – I didn’t have to worry so much about the food, because that was that organisation, so yeah. I mean CIC – Community Interest Company.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, okay.

**Participant:** So, so now… I want to try and get money for laptops so that kids that can’t go to school or people with bad illnesses – can’t go out the house, so they can get internet access. You know, because people on universal credit have to apply by internet and not everyone has internet, not everyone has the technology. So, urm… also, they they don’t have money for school uniforms when the school uniforms, when they were going back to school, so, that’s so that’s, so it’s evolved in that way, started off helping people with shopping, collect prescriptions, phone calls, all of those type of things… urm, pe- urm… even people wanted help getting their letters posted.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** You know, it was those little things, but it grew bigger because the need was there. So, it, it grew because the need was there. And I’ve been a [OFFICIAL POSITION] now for two years, urm, and I never even – despite the fact that I knocked on doors and all of that… I still didn’t know the amount of vulnerability there was. You know in a… you recognise an area, but you don’t know details. And what this has done is opened up the details because people *had* to come out. You know, I, I, I was growing up, when I was growing up, I was a poor family so we had school meals and all of these things, but people are all so proud and they don’t want people to know that, you know, life is not great. And, until COVID, I think they just struggled without help now we’re finding people much better.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Which is good.

**Interviewer:** And what geographical area do you cover?

**Participant:** So, I cover, my mutual aid group started it was covering [NEIGHBOURHOOD 1] in [TOWN NAME].

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** But we actually cover [NEIGHBOURHOOD 2] and East [TOWN NAME] really, urm I don’t – if if anyone asks we help, so I don’t put a boundary on it but it it my, the main focus is the [AREA] where I’m a [OFFICIAL POSITION] and all the surrounding [AREAS] as well. The only reason I have any sort, urm, boundary which isn’t a boundary is simply because there’s not enough people and I can’t keep up, can’t keep up.

**Interviewer:** There is not enough people?

**Participant:** What I mean is in order to deal with all the calls we have, if I, I could do the whole of [TOWN NAME] for instance or the whole of [COUNTY 1], the only reason we’ve got any sort of edge is simply because I can’t – there is so many people needing help. So urm, but if anyone asks, wherever they’re living in [TOWN NAME], I will try and get them help. But I haven’t said this is [TOWN NAME]support group, because I wouldn’t be able to keep with the demand, is what I mean.

**Interviewer:** How many people are in the group?

**Participant:** So, on the page there was about, last time I looked there was six hundred and fifteen, and at the peak when we had volunteers there was nearly two hundred. But, as people have gone back to work, they can’t help so much. And also I think because there was only a few of us doing the back ground coordinating you just choose the first person you think of, you don’t go trawling through the list because you didn’t know if they’re going to be able to do it or not. So… what I really would have need help with I suppose is… keeping in touch with volunteers. Urm, making sure they don’t drift away and that type of thing, and that is because I’ve just not had the time, you know. Because we could use these more, urm, people but if you just think, “Oh, so and so will do that,” it’s so much quicker than just going through a list and, “do you mind,” explaining it all and then they might say, I’m “sorry I can’t” and all of that. So, urm… yeah. And also, a lot of the volunteers don’t want to go that far themselves. You know, so we’ve got WhatsApp groups and you say, “can someone do this, pick up this and drop it there?” Less, people are coming back less.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** You know, the offers of help are coming back less. And that’s partly because people are back at school and work.

**Interviewer:** And how many people were active? Active volunteers at the moment?

**Participant:** Urm, at the moment it’s sort of drifted down, I mean, I can’t really put a number on it because… urm… because the requests for help a lot now are just pick up a prescription or whatever, because shops are open, urr, urr, urm there is less people asking for individual little things. But there’s still an awful lot out there. So, bec – and also, I’m working on the food back. So, like yesterday I had, urr it might have been the day before, a woman was telling me that her rent had gone from £625 a month – because she took it on during COVID, and they’ve just put it up to £750, and she’s got children. And not a partner living with her and you know. So, every-urr-thing that you’re involved in takes more than just that little, you know, it goes further, so, yeah. So, I think maybe my mistake is I don’t ask for help enough \*laughs\* and that’s something I’m going to have to urr. And then one of the main helpers urr, who helped with the coordination has just had a baby, so, urm, and he’s gone back to work so you know, urr I think I’m too protective of others at the moment but I’m going to have to start asking because if we go into a proper lockdown we’re going to need a lot more help and I’m going to have to ask for volunteers again.

**Interviewer:** Uh-hmm. Just to understand you make a difference between the mutual aid group and the food bank. Right?

**Participant:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Why is that?

**Participant:** Well because the mutual aid group, *I* started it, *I* brought on board urm… the people that help like our coordinators if you like and what also happened is some people like I, say, find people in a road and put them together so they can start their own little mutual-not mutual aid group their own little WhatsApp groups for that road. So, but I’ve and I’ve lost touch with them, but it would have been nice if I’d have time not not lose touch with them and just say, “how’s it going?” Urm, because that, they’re quite good connections and when we go into another lockdown it will be helpful that urm…

Whereas the foodbank I did it with others, it wasn’t just me. Urm, and I help rather than, I’m not in charge, I don’t want to be in charge. I’m one of the, one of a, like there’s about ten of us now that run that so I take calls and urm, things like that you know, we share the rota on taking the calls and, organising help. Urm, so I, so it is separate, but it does, it takes a chunk of my time and also being a councillor takes a huge chunk of my time… so yeah.

**Interviewer:** Sorry, no you were saying…

**Participant:** Yeah, so it’s just a question of… I want the the group to do more than it’s doing, urr, one of the reasons it’s not happening is because… urr, like applying for funding for laptops or, or, or iPads or, or you know, tablets, I’ve done 95% of the form but I haven’t had time to go back and finish it, so, you know. It, it takes a lot of time and the number of things they want to do - know and yeah, and you just need to be able to focus if you’re putting in a request for lots of money.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but the company that you, is it linked with the foodbank not with the mutual aid group?

**Participant:** No, no, no, so the mutual aid group is a company which called [GROUP NAME] CIC.

**Interviewer:** It’s a company, okay.

**Participant:** The foodbank we started, we called it at the beginning East [TOWN NAME] Food Bank, but we changed the name to [TOWN NAME] Food Foundation to try and remove the stigma of ‘foodbank’ so they’re, that is a charity now, they’re that’s become a charity, I only became a CIC.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** When I applied for funding initially, I was applying for funding for the mutual aid group *and* for the foodbank. But now I, someone else is doing the foodbank applications and I’m doing the CIC applications.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and what is the situation with the Mutual Aid group at the moment? How many people are involved what they are do at the moment?

**Participant:** Well I mean there, there are, there’s 615 people on the Facebook page, but active wise, probably… maybe thirty, maybe, but I tend to actually don’t ask all thirty – it all depends… you know. So, we got four on, four on the book- I don’t know, I don’t know what they call it, directors me and three others which are named on the company documents.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And I suppose I’m the one that does all the work really to be quite honest. So urm, they, they are there to, and I’m sure if I asked them, they’d probably do more but I know how busy they are of course as well. So, I end up just doing it, but… yeah.

**Interviewer:** Are there any particular skills that people in the group have?

**Participant:** … Do you mean urr the group as a whole the 615 or do you mean the…?

**Interviewer:** I’d say the active volunteers.

**Participant:** Yeah… urm… I’m sure people have more skills than I’m aware of to be honest, I just don’t know. I mean, when it came to… designing a leaflet, you know, urm, I did one but then somebody did another one and we decided to go with that because she’s much better tat that sort of stuff – you know, she’s more used to it. Mine had a lot less information on it because I think people urr chuck things with too much information on them, I used to teach so… I know that if you don’t make it quick and snappy –

**Interviewer:** Nobody will read it.

**Participant:** - it can like, so \*laughs\*. Anyway, so there are, there are people that I, that I,… they, because we’re now doing the foodbank, I say we, I mean because I’m part of it… that is the more important job really, I wouldn’t take people away, I mean I do sometimes ask for help with stuff, but urm… that’s the other thing, a lot of our volunteers went, they’re helping a lot with the foodbank so that, that meant the actual support group has less people. But I, I think with the new lockdown it’s going to get busy again and people are not going to be able to do some of the jobs they’re doing. So, like they won’t be able to go to work, a lot of them, so I, I imagine that a lot of our people will come back. So, it’s just to… you know, volunteers, I don’t know, I mean it is it’s getting hard to keep it going just because I’m getting tired partly.

**Interviewer:** And you mentioned that you had access to short funds, and what other resources do you have?

**Participant:** Urm, only people and I’m applying for money that I apply for so urm… I think I‘ve had a thousand pound up to now, so, and urr what I did with that was in the Easter holiday and the part… I think it was Easter I was worried about people not have food over – when the school’s shut. So, I was getting food vouchers and stuff like that. So, then I applied for table sets for indoor table tennis urm, and then I applied for an outdoor table tennis table in the park. So, and I got that so… it has actually done more than actually what I think, I just forget to be honest. Urm, and now, now I wasn’t to apply – and then, the other thing I did was urm, school uniforms, we did a drive and that’s again that’s a blurred boundary because I did, I did, I did it the last few years anyway but we, this year we went to a hundred and four children we helped. Urm, but that was… it was me doing it but it was under the foodbank hat if you like. So, I found the people that needed, a lot of the people that needed help through our customers at the foodbank.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, I, I would message then or call them and say, “do you… are you finding trouble getting some of your uniform and if so what do you want?” So, yeah. So that was something else that we did and now currently doing winter coats. So yeah its… just an ongoing trying to help, really.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm. And how about the volunteers? How did you get them?

**Participant:** The volunteers at the beginning was literally from first of all it was from the Facebook group and then it was from the leaflet. So, I… the Facebook brought loads and the leaflet brought another load. So, we ended up having more people volunteering that needing help. But I think it caught up after a time. We found, we did get a lot of older people urr phoning up asking for help, yeah. From the leaflet I think, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you… how do you coordinate everything by yourself?

**Participant:** That… that is it a lot of it, it’s me, it’s mostly me, yeah. I had, what we did when the others were more involved, and they weren’t going back to work, we, so we have a google document for all our foodbank families. And I have a google document for all of the people that we help with everything else. And then I have another page for the unform and another page, well I haven’t actually started a page for the coat yet but I’m getting there. But, so, urm, my friend, one of the other directors started, urm a document for us to record all of the of-requests for help and who, who it was, what they wanted, what we did about it. And I filled that in until kept filling it in but then it started to calm down, and then I just stopped putting it in there because I just ran out of time, I’ve got it in books like this. So, only because urm… I ran out of time really, personally. And we were doing taking turns on the phone as well. But it died off a little in the last month or so so I stopped sending the phone through to them.

But I think what I’m going to have to do, going forward is I’m going to have to involve other people in the phones again, because I can’t do them all. And I’m getting really lacks in recording it on the google doc. I mean I do maybe record one or two a month; when there’s many many more than that, but that’s simply because it’s quicker at the moment. Because my computer is going so slow, to open up a page and then start writing it in, if it opened up instantly, I wouldn’t care, but it doesn’t. In which case it’s much easier to just make a note. And then I’ve got to transfer over so it’s a bit annoying actually.

**Interviewer:** Okay, is there urr… I would like to know if the group is part of a national network for example?

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah? It is?

**Participant:** It isn’t, it never started off that way.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** So, it started off just as a local thing, and then when I found out that there was this mutual aid thing and it was better known I, I don’t know if you affiliate it, but I signed us up to it because I thought I need people, if they say, “where’s my nearest mutual aid group?” They’re not going to look for [GROUP NAME], they’re going to go for a mutual aid group, so I signed up for that.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Urm, and that, it’s those types of things that help me know about applying for a CIC and those types of things.

**Interviewer:** Okay, apart from the foodbank, are you coordinating, organ-any relation, do you communicate with other support groups locally?

**Participant:** Urm, what we do with the foodbank, urm we there, the local council urr, has communi- something calls [COMMUNITY ORGANISATION 1] and they are paid to help run all the… urr, I don’t know if its all the charities or… I think it is, it’s [CITY NAME 1] urm… I can’t remember what it’s called urm… but… what they, so they get money in order to help our our groups do things and have access to knowledge if you like. So once a fortnight with the… foodbank, we have food partners meeting to find out what other food partners are doing in the area. Urm… I have I haven’t done anything like that with the support group, only because there’s not enough time. But it would probably be quite useful if I did.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** And it might be something I should do really. I mean urm… urr… so…. I… because I’m a councillor, urm… I suppose… oh I don’t know, I don’t know it if works against me or for me to be quite honest, in some ways it works for you in other ways it works against you because of your political affiliation. Because one of the things that happened with our foodbank, is two people, myself and [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] and also [GROUP MEMBER NAME 2], we’re three [POLITICAL POSITION] so we worked together to get this foodbank going. And the on another Facebook page some nasty person tried to say, “these councillors are trying to make it political,” because we applied to the [COUNCIL NAME] for money. Urm, and they were trying to say, “why are we asking for money, kids at schools urr get vouchers.” And they literally tried to make political capital out of the fact – we never mentioned [POLITICAL PARTY] anywhere, sorry, I don’t know if I’m allowed to say. But we never mentioned our group anywhere I just, “you’re [POLITICAL POSITION] whatever-you-are.” Urm… so that actually they gave us a lot of publicity because they were criticising us saying we were making political capital when we never ones mentioned our party. Because we wanted to reach everybody not just our party’s members or our parties, people that would vote for us. So, urm… that’s one of the things that was quite, really unpleasant actually to be honest that that urm… we did this because we cared and we were trying to help and… others tried to make it about something else entirely. But urm, the council now… urm, refer people to us, they refer to our mutual aid groups and they refer to the foodbank. So, urm, you know despite the fact that we are [POL we’ve been legitimised if you like, yeah.

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

**Participant:** No.

**Interviewer:** No?

**Participant:** No, \*giggles\*, I start- I used to work for local government back in the seventies, late seventies, just in housing. And then I had children, then I did a degree and then I became a teacher and then I burnt out, I, I retired and… no, so no I haven’t. This was the first I’ve ever done any – I became a [POLITICAL POSITION] just because urm… there’s so many injustices and urm I was trying to do what I could to help with that. But urr as for starting up any sort of group no I haven’t really.

**Interviewer:** And why did you create this one?

**Participant:** Because I could, I though we’ve got to do something... I mean I know that I’m… I’m I have vulnerable health so I was going to be lockdown then I’m thinking I have my son, he’s now in [COUNTRY NAME 1] but he was in [BOROUGH NAME] down the road, I’ve got my husband and I can shop online, because that’s who, you know, I’m okay with that. You know, I’ve got, you know, I suppose I’ve got the support, but I’ve also got the ability. And I also know there is an awful lot of old - elderly people who don’t have that. They don’t, either don’t have the internet, or they’re living on their own, or urm, they don’t have the personality to, to if you like get themselves out of a hole really. So, so, I did it because I was worried about those types of people. Then, there’s people that’s got cancer and they’re not allowed to go out. And you know, it was those, just thinking, well, what can we do? What can I personally do? So that’s why it started.

**Interviewer:** And how do you –

**Participant:** And even now, I can think of people in their seventies and eighties that… to get help they have to use the phone, they can’t do it any other way. Urm, and they can’t get out the house and they might not be able to walk far, they can’t do internet shopping. You know, urm, things are changing a lot, but urr, you know, I, I am on a local community association, joined the the committee and a lot of people on there are in their seventies *and* they’re not computer literate. So, urm… and I think about them too. So, they’re on the committee but they don’t have the energy or whatever it is to, to, use the group itself, urm, and then push their own selves really.

**Interviewer:** Mmm-hmm.

**Participant:** So, I worry about them, because if we could get them on Zoom, that would be easier. You know, because they’re stuck in doors and I’ve spoken to a few of them and you can tell they’re getting further and further downhill it’s sad. And when I try to put them in touch with others, you know, do a buddy-ing thing, they didn’t want to do it. Even though one of them said to me, “I used to do this when I had cancer, I was in a group,” and she would be supporting other people. But she didn’t like the thought that other people would be calling her. Which was sad. But this is type of thing that you find out that I wouldn’t have known before.

**Interviewer:** And how do you reach that, those people that don’t get access to internet?

**Participant: R**eaching them, I think, the best thing for those people is leaflets in the door. Which I had not realised because most leaflets end up in the bin in my house, but elderly – and the other thing that I did as well, on this community association, one of the committee members, she publishes a, a, small magazine, A5 size that goes in doors, and urr, I asked her to put the information in that booklet, and that goes to houses as well. So I suppose people either saw it in her magazine or they saw it on the leaflets, and then they called the number that that, I’ve got a separate phone for this, yeah, so they they phoned that number. Yeah, so it was all phone.

**Interviewer:** All phone, okay. And how does it, how does the activity that you do in the mutual aid group relates with the other parts of your life? How do you fit everything?

**Participant:** … \*Sighs\* to be honest I feel absolutely worn out which is probably why my health isn’t great. It’s hard. They’re all sort of interconnected so the council bit is to help people the mutual aid group is to help people, I mean, the [POLITICAL POSITION] is also to fight the system. But the mutual aid is just to help people, the foodbank is just to help people. So, they’re all helping people, but the councillor bit is to fight as well.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Participant:** So, what I find is the rest of my life is pushed out, to be quite honest. There’s nothing, there’s nothing left really because there’s a lot. So, this is why sustaining it, I’m going to have to urm get other people involved. But I think, you have to prioritise, and the priority had to be, at one point, it was getting people shopping and prescriptions then shops opened so that was less of a problem, people went back to work, but then you do have to feed people and that has top come before everything else. So, most of the volunteers are helping there, but urm… we’re all volunteers, none of us paid and… we are all, like, tired now. Urm… you know, and I know two people, two of our directors haven’t got jobs, well no one’s got back to work. One of them lost her job when urr the [EMPLOYER 1] closed down and she could do with a job and if we had enough money to pay her she would have her livelihood and I wouldn’t be so worn out. But it would be nice because you know, she could make her job applying for funding, you know, so we can help more people. But because I don’t have the time to do all of these things, urm, I probably should ask, urr for help rally but she is doing huge amount in the foodbank herself. So, urr, so I don’t know what she’d do if she got a job to be honest, she’d have to give up all the help that she’s doing because she’s doing too much.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you talk a little bit about your own motivations, urm, for getting involved and what is the motivations for other active participants in your view?

**Participant:** Urm… I think they’re all the say, they all want to help.

**Interviewer:** Help.

**Participant:** Yeah. One of them was a [OCCUPATION 1] who became a [OCCUPATION 2]- whatever, I can’t remember what she, she urr, became [OCCUPATION 2] sort of thing. And she, she, so she helps people and she’s a community person. Urm, the lady that lost her job was [OCCUPATION 3] that was here they used to try and teach people how to cook and so, it’s helping people. The other guy, he’s exactly the same, he was, he worked in the [EMPLOYER 2], he took redundancy because they’re trying to get rid of everyone out there in universities now, urm, and he was like a support, I’m not entirely sure but I think he was like the [OCCUPATION 4]. So, all of the people on our board, I don’t even know if it’s called a board, but all of those people are that type of people. It’s all about helping.

And then regard to the foodbank it’s all the same people. Actually, it’s remarkable how many teachers there are or ex-teachers. So we’ve got [GROUP MEMBER NAME 1] who is a [OCCUPATION 5] and, urm, he is [DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPATION 5] I think and he is [DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPATION 5] and then [GROUP MEMBER NAME 3] who is applying for funding used to be a [OCCUPATION 6] urm, there’s wherever I look there’s people of that type all trying to do things, so it’s all to do with connecting and helping people, as far as I can see. And one actually, is a, she [OCCUPATION 7] so she’s a bit outside of that, but she’s been remarkable too. So, there’s so many good people out there.

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

**Participant:** Urm, not out of the… I think volunteers have moved over to the foodbank, so, because that is a priority.

**Interviewer:** Okay,

**Participant:** Yeah, so I think if I, if we needed them, they’d probably come back and help. But if you had to choose between helping deliver food or… going to the shopping and getting, I think… the people that don’t have money for food need help first. You know, so you have to priorities and that’s what a lot of our volunteers have done. So, they’ve moved over to there. But they’re still there so… but I think, people are less motivated. Because urm, there’s been less to do, and because we’re all doing it over there too.

**Interviewer:** So, they are less motivated now?

**Participant:** Urm, they’re they’re less motivated because we have less requests for help. But also, the requests for help are all related to the foodbank now so we’ve… a lot… you know me included, we focus on that more than on the support group. But we want to do like this wrap around thing to do all aspects of life, not just food, but you have to have the time urm, and enough staff and… that’s in really. So, if I, if I could grow it and apply for staff to help for fundraising, apply for staff to help for… I’m not really sure what else.

But, you know, you can only do everything as a volunteer… we all can do volunteers it’s just that, we’re all getting tired really. I think that’s one of the big things really is we’re all really, we’re running on empty I would say. I mean I noticed a couple of the people, you you can tell when people are getting really… tired, it’s when they start getting a little bit snappy over nothing. Or, impatient with things. I mean, urm… yeah, you know, in with things not, not with each other, with systems, the anger that’s building against the systems we’re living in that’s making our lives harder, we’re getting a lot less patient with that.

So, partly I think people have to back off a while just to take some time to rest, and partly urm… it’s where where we fit in the priorities. So, if we have a proper lockdown again, we’re going to have to have all the volunteers who are no longer working going out doing the shopping. At the moment we’re a lot of people are back at work or helping in the foodbank and urm, the less people need help. So, it’s dampened down for that reason, partly.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Any other problems that have affected the group?

**Participant:** Urr… no just lack of time to grow.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, okay.

**Participant:** And lack of funds, so, we need to grow, we need to become more efficient. Urm, we need to get more help. Urm… and I suppose that’s partly down to me needing to start asking, this is what we need, can somebody help. But when you’ve got an awful lot of balls to juggle urm, you just have to keep doing that, you don’t have time then to maybe even say, think about, how can I make life easier, what can I do to sort this out. Urm, and I think that’s probably what I need to be doing, going forward.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Well you say that-have you don’t things that might have helped the group to keep going?

**Participant:** I think this is where, I mean it’s still going because we’ve still go the Facebook group, I still put out, “oh, I’ve got an elderly gentleman needing his prescription picked up, is anyone available?” So, I’m still doing that, but I haven’t done anything to keep it interesting for people if you like.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** I mean what I do, I still, I post up things like, this is the Government guidelines for this, I post up … we need to support our local businesses and put a page up, but urm, we need, I suppose we need people to make it a place, a more interesting place to come to. Urm… but at the moment I’m – it’s all about facts and also, updates – we do post pictures of the foodbank and people doing the work and and little videos and those types of things but that again, that’s the foodbank and it would be quite good to do the same on the mutual aid group as well. I do like, for instance, we we helped 104 children, so we posted up some pictures of the coats and the suit uniforms and things like that. So that, and keeping it, keeping the public involved that way.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Because if I say, “we need coats, we need school uniforms” I put a call out on the page. But I haven’t done a leaflet or… urm, any, I mean I don’t really know how else to do it, I suppose.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but –

**Participant:** I mean… hum?

**Interviewer:** You have been thinking about that?

**Participant:** I’ve been trying to think how we can but it’s urm… it all needs spare space in your head and there isn’t any at the moment. I suppose this where we do need other people to come in with a bit of energy. You know, and and ideas and less, more time on their hands. Because that’s the thing, it’s not having enough time.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, finally, moving to the last couple of questions, I would like to know if you feel that you have learnt anything from coordinating the group?

**Participant:** Oh yeah, I’ve learnt loads. Urm… I, I learnt about the legal system you need to do in order to apply for money, I learnt about how you apply for funding – you know I would never have got a table tennis table in a park before this. Urm… so I’ve learnt an awful lot and the other thing I’ve learnt a lot about is how many different urm… help groups there are around, I think. Like, there is lots of, like we’ve got a vegan foodbank, we’ve got a soup kitchen in the town. Urm, we’ve got [CHARITY NAME 2] which is a homeless place, and they do breakfasts for the homeless to go into. I learnt all of these things during the – I mean, some of it I knew partly but I just had no idea there were so many different little groups, I mean like, there’s [CHARITY NAME 3] which is a befriending service. So, telephone services, which is really nice for people. Urm… and then there’s like an autism group, you know, so there are a lot of little individual help groups so I’ve learnt a lot more about that, I’ve learnt a lot more about how the council works actually, in order to help groups. And, individuals because, after we set up our group, urm, the council themselves started to send, set up support so they… because I had my telephone number on our leaflet, so we were using that to help people. But eventually it took – they were about a month behind, but eventually the council did something similar, so they got a food depot and they they got, they got a referral firm for people to go through, and that was [TOWN NAME] wide. So, I learnt about that. I learnt about how when they started to stop helping and started refereeing people back to us, how that works. So, I, and I, I learnt that the council doesn’t have any money. So, they’re going to shut all of the help down that they’re doing and leaving it to all of us now to pick it up. Urm, without giving us any money to do it, so that was another thing that I’ve found out. It those types of things I found out. You know, because the council doesn’t have enough money from the government so they can’t afford – and all, there’s so many people unemployed who could have jobs that could be paid doing stuff to help and, we’re using volunteers for everything, it’s really sad actually. I learnt that came home to me even more during this period.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and anything about yourself? If you learnt something about yourself in the process?

**Participant:** Urm… urm, probably that I should have been doing this a lot sooner.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** Yeah, urr, because when I was [OCCUPATION 8] and I burnt out and I went, had a depression for a while and I, because I think I was [DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPATION 8 DUTIES] and I couldn’t, urm… take that home with me –

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I understand.

**Participant:** I couldn’t, having to [DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPATION 8 DUTIES]. Urr so, I took some time out urr and… and I found it hard to find my way for a while so I think this has taught me that I should have got into this sort of thing sooner, and I should have, urr, got into politics sooner as well. But, yeah, I think it’s it’s taught me that, it it’s a strength of mine I think, that I didn’t know that I had.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, do you think that it’s positive for you?

**Participant:** Yes, I think that it’s positive. I’m aware that also that I have to be careful, I ought to urr… I need to set off some time so I can just do nothing but at the moment I can’t do that, but I know that I should. So, I push myself a bit too hard, I don’t ask for help enough, is what I’ve learnt. But also, that is something that I’m pretty good at and I’m, it makes me, it does make me feel good. I suppose, they say there is no such thing as altruism, don’t they, you know? Urm… well I think there is but I can also see the other side which is that it is, it does make me feel better about myself, I suppose. Urm, that’s not why I’m doing it but that has, that, it does make me, I’m happy with myself for having done it, because I think I’ve helped people and that’s nice.

**Interviewer:** It’s a good side-effect.

**Participant:** Yeah, it is a good side-effect, I’m absolutely worn out but, yeah… I suppose that’s what I’ve learnt, yeah.

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

**Participant:** I want it to grow, I want to urm… I want to have enough energy to keep going and to help more people. So, I want to get laptops for all these people that are stuck out there and, you know, you’ve got to work from home at school, but you haven’t got an iPad. Already disadvantaged by your life circumstances, then you can’t go to school and… you can’t learn and you’re cramped in a really small place with no peace., I want to be able to help people, you know, because they’re struggling. And then, on the other hand you’ve got these very elderly people, get really lonely, get depressed and, if we could get them on Zoom on Facetime all of that, that might be nicer for them.

I just want to continue and and help them to do their online shopping so that they… because… you know, having to depend on other people that aren’t always there must be really tough. So, you need shopping and whoever does it for you gets sick and then you don’t know how to go and order an online shop, you know. There is a lot of people out there that are struggling, and I want to, our group to keep doing that, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And your role in the group, in the future? How do you see it?

**Participant:** I’m, I’m, I’m… well I started it, so I don’t know. I’d love, I’d love it – what I’m always looking for is people to have urr, to be able to take over and let me have a rest. Urm… so I I think I’ll just carry on as I am until, somebody comes along that, if I could pay somebody to do or even if they just did it because they’d retired and had the time it would be nice. I want to still be part of it, I still, I’m happy to run it, I just would like to do slightly less work.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I see.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**[DEBRIEFING]**

**[END OF INTERVIEW]**