



Volunteering:

Learning from today,
prepared for tomorrow.

CONFERENCE 2021



THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER 2021

Volunteer Wellbeing

Community Projects – Volunteer Now (funded by BHSCCT)

Community Projects delivers a number of volunteer led services:

- Befriending
- Driving
- Shopping Support (a service developed at the beginning of Covid)

These services support people aged 60+ living in their own home in Belfast.

We also support a network of volunteer led older persons groups:

- West Belfast 50+ Forum
- Greater Shankill Senior Citizens Forum
- G6 (represents 6 forums across Belfast aims to improve the wellbeing & lifestyle of older people in Belfast)



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On 14th March 2021 we stopped all face-to-face activities except Volunteer Driving.

- Our Befriending service moved from face-to-face visits to telephone befriending (where appropriate).
- Our driving service stopped all drives except essential medical appointments. We had 2 drivers who continued to drive a small number of service users to cancer and dialysis treatment.
- All Forum meetings and activities ceased.



How did we look after our volunteer's wellbeing during this time of fast change and worry?

- Fast effective communication explaining our decision to stop or change activities
- Ongoing updates as the situation developed
- Regular volunteer updates to our befriending, driving and shopping volunteers (also a newsletter was sent every 3 weeks to service users with information regarding the situation but also some lighter stories and pieces to try and lift their spirits)



We provided guidance to our shopping and driving volunteers regarding keeping themselves and those they were supporting safe by:

- Information on how to clean their car appropriately before and after each drive.
- Wearing a mask while driving or shopping.
- Using hand sanitizer before and after any contact with service users.
- Providing LFT kits and encouraging volunteers to take a test within 24 hours before contact with service user.
- All relevant PPE was provided, masks, wipes, hand sanitizer, gloves antibacterial spray, disposable seat covers and LFT kits.



Our Forum members are all older people and therefore fell into the vulnerable category due to age and a number of them then fell into the extremely vulnerable category due to health reasons

- We identified those older volunteers who we believed were more vulnerable due to having to shield because of health reasons and lack of family support.
- We initially developed our shopping support service with these people in mind.
- We began weekly check-in phone calls to those older volunteers that we had identified as more vulnerable.



As time moved on and we realised that Covid was not going to be short lived we looked at other ways of supporting our volunteers.

- We were successful in a grant application to purchase tablets for the members of West Belfast 50+ Forum and Shankill Senior Citizens Forum
- A Zoom wellbeing programme was developed including - fitness classes, flower arranging, memory lane historian talks, genealogy talks and cookery classes
- When restrictions began to ease a series of socially distanced walks were arranged in local parks and supported by a member of Volunteer Now staff



- We also were successful in a funding application to purchase Volunteer Tee Shirts which were distributed during Volunteers week to our Befrienders, Driver and Shopping volunteers along with a bar of chocolate and certificate.
- And recently we received a grant enabling us to purchase Community Projects Volunteer Fleeces. We hope these items allow us to make these lone working volunteers feel part of the wider team and give them that sense of identity when carrying out their volunteer role.



We were very lucky and grateful to have received some funding from fundraising activities with the staff at Diageo Ireland

We used this money in February/March of this year to distribute thank you/Wellbeing gifts to our volunteer befrienders, drivers, shoppers and service users.

These packs included a Little Book on Mindfulness, aromatherapy candle and sachets, fluffy socks, hot chocolate sachet, chocolate, thermal mugs and a box of large print cards and suggested games for one for our service users to keep their minds active.

However, we feel no gift can truly show the depth of appreciation we have for those volunteers who supported and continue to support us to deliver our services during the Covid19 Pandemic.



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For more information on Volunteer Now, Community Projects please contact:

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Thanks for listening!



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THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

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