

The Viables Community Centre Magazine



Serving our community and adapting to change



If you have any food donations that you would like to make to our hub, please drop them off between 9.30 and 2.30 weekdays. As you arrive, please knock on the door as this will remain closed and has access control operation only.

If you yourself need help and we can support you, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01256 473634 between 9 and 3 weekdays. Alternatively, you can email us at office@viables.org.uk. Please note that if you have an URGENT request, please call us before 12 midday so that we can be sure to help you that day.

Many thanks!

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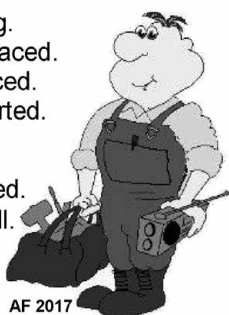
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Message from the Manager

Hello Everyone

Well...what can I say? Such strange and challenging times for us all. For those of you who have not been following us, we would just like to let you know what we have been up to since closing to the public in March.

As a community centre is supposed to be filled with people all coming together, our building was obviously something that could not stay open. Therefore, we decided to divert our attention to our community in a different way.

We have been serving the community as a support hub by doing shopping, collecting and delivering prescriptions, calling those in need of wellbeing checks or just a little comfort and distributing food boxes. Thanks to the amazing support of our volunteers, we have helped well over 400 people and continue to do so, with food boxes being distributed as I type.

Small charities, such as ourselves, rely heavily on the support of others, whether that's physical support from our volunteers who are regularly dropping things off to those in need, or financial support through donations and grant funding. We have been busy applying to those which have been relevant and am delighted to say that we have had some great success so that we can continue to keep afloat at a time where we have no form of income.

Katie has been busy doing most of the organising and deployment of volunteers to help coordinate our efforts for an area which is far larger than our usual area of benefit. I would like to say a HUGE thank you to her for all her hard work and effort. Working with Basingstoke and Deane Brough Council and Basingstoke Voluntary Action, we have managed to help a great many people, demonstrating the strengths that come from partnerships.

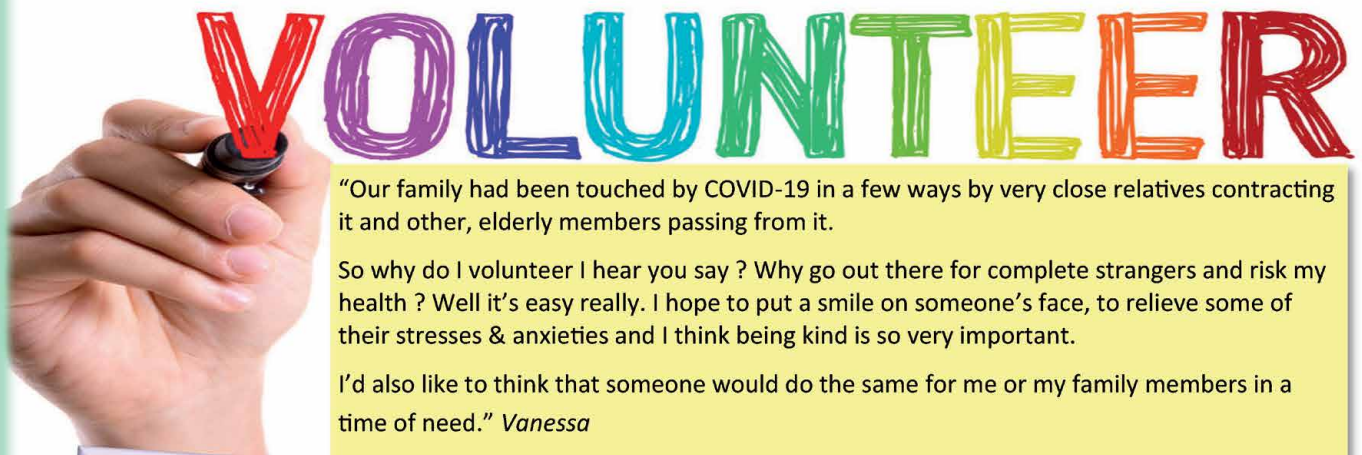
We cannot at this point say when we will be open again but we do know that it will be done thoughtfully and carefully, maintaining sensible social distancing measures to keep all our users safe. We know that everyone wants to get back to normal. We all do. We just ask that you are all patient and understanding in helping us achieve whatever our new form of normal will look like when the time comes.

Until we see you again, please stay safe and well so that we can welcome you all again to the centre once we reopen.

Best wishes,

Luan Squire

What's it like to volunteer at Viables?



"Our family had been touched by COVID-19 in a few ways by very close relatives contracting it and other, elderly members passing from it.

So why do I volunteer I hear you say ? Why go out there for complete strangers and risk my health ? Well it's easy really. I hope to put a smile on someone's face, to relieve some of their stresses & anxieties and I think being kind is so very important.

I'd also like to think that someone would do the same for me or my family members in a time of need." *Vanessa*

Dear Katie and Luan,

Thank you so much for letting me be part of your initiative to help our community.

Back in March, when my school closed to most children due to the corona virus, I wondered what I could do to help those in difficulty in my area and I saw your appeal on Facebook for people to deliver the Viables magazine.

Then I was able to help with prescriptions and food deliveries meeting people who I would never have known needed help if it hadn't been for your quick initiative to put out a message offering help to those in difficulty.

I was amazed at the figures you put out of people Viables hub has helped in the last 10 weeks or so. What an amazing achievement and still going on.

I am going back to school this week so sadly won't be able to be a part of your wonderful work now. But thank you so much for letting me be a part of Viables hub. It's been great.

Love from Alison

"As a full time mum to 3 young boys, I had the shock of having to home-school them. My husband is in the construction business so to begin with could only work when he could get hold of materials.

Therefore volunteering was the perfect solution for me. It was a respite for me away from home-schooling and a chance to give back to my local community. I couldn't commit to set days or times, as I was never sure if my husband would be home to watch the kids but I was able to do a bit of shopping or collect prescriptions for vulnerable people in the area. I also help distribute the memory club packages each week. My boys have been coming with me and will wave to the elderly residents from my car. They've realised the impact the coronavirus has had on other people. The members are always so pleased to receive their packs and so appreciative of all that Viables do to help them." *Bekah*

My name is Lucy. I used to work in busy, bustling London, but gave up the long, tiresome commute and smog and crowds of people for a different way of life. Like everyone else, I certainly didn't foresee Covid-19 and Lockdown. As soon as I received the email asking for volunteers, I signed up - I can't even remember how or when it came through, but I put my name down. I am fit, able, healthy and I have a car, so this, I thought, would be a lovely way to 'help' (having only done volunteering once in London for vulnerable families, I didn't really know what to expect). So, my first job was to do a shop for a vulnerable couple and a lovely, kind, beautiful elderly lady. What joy it was to deliver something so basic to people who just couldn't leave their homes and to see the joy on their faces. Thereby followed prescription runs, a photo shoot, collecting boxes and things to deliver to people who just are not able to get out of their homes.

Luan and Katie work tirelessly to help everyone and I can only applaud their time and commitment. The tiny things I do I hope help others, but, if I'm entirely honest, it also helps me. They help me realise how important caring for people is. How important looking after our community is. How important it is to remember that not everyone can get out and about and everyone lead different lives. How important my health is and how lucky I am to have it.

Thank you to Viables Community Centre, Katie and Luan.

Hub Community Church

As the Prime Minister addressed the nation on 20 March to communicate that places such as pubs, clubs, theatres, gyms and restaurants would close, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, also spoke outlining an unprecedented package of support to minimise job losses. He ended with these inspiring words: "Now more than at any time in our history, we will be judged by our capacity for compassion. Our ability to come through this won't be down to what government of businesses do, but by the individual acts of kindness that we show to each other."

The Churches in Basingstoke have been very keen to reach out and support our communities; to display these acts of kindness that Mr Sunak encouraged us to do. Church-led organisations such as 'Foodbank' and 'The Safe' have responded very well to a higher demand for their services to support individuals and families in need. Many people, of all faiths and none, have responded to need in their communities and will continue to do so, I'm sure, as the lockdown is eased. We all face an uncertain future, and so the need to stand with and be kind to each other is all the more important. May God bless you as you navigate these times, and please do reach out if you would like support; we would love to have the opportunity to help.

Hub Community Church Web: www.hubcommunitychurch.org



Andy Wright, Senior Leader, Hub Community Church Web: www.hubcommunitychurch.org

Special mention of a new local Facebook page set up during lockdown in this area—Harrow Way Residents—

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/658571271637504/>

Greetings from everyone at All Saints Church

What a difference a few weeks makes! When I last wrote for The Harrow Way we were anticipating our Easter services and looking forward to Easter eggs! But no! It was a sad day when we had to close the church doors on March 17th and all our usual Sunday services and all weddings, funerals and christenings had to be cancelled.

The Church is not just a building though, that's just it's visible, local form; the Church is really about the people, the body of believers that gather there to worship. Without a doubt the All Saints congregation really misses being able to come together Sunday by Sunday, especially to share in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. But we're still in touch; we're still looking out for one another, and, as far as is possible according to individual circumstances, we're still doing our best to support the local community. As we all know now, modern technology and social media make this so much easier and there are plenty of church services and talks available online.

There are so many people working together to support our local community at this time, in many different ways; there are also many people who are really struggling. We have been thinking about you all and praying for you too. If you would like to access our on line prayers and services you can either do so via our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsbasingstoke>

or through the website:

<http://www.basingstoketeamparish.org.uk/all-saints-church-basingstoke>



Short Story

IT'S A WILD LIFE ON BRIGHTON HILL

The vixen snored quietly, secure in her hideaway beneath the school's temporary classroom; born beneath a similar building five years before, this one had been her home ever since she had matured. Now she had birthed three litters of her own and for all she knew, or cared, her cubs were living elsewhere in this warren of humans, probably making as good a living as their mother, although if any of them came onto her territory she would chase them off with furious snarls and without a second thought.

She was fully aware of the human cubs thundering around above her but knew she wouldn't be disturbed as long as she continued to earn her keep. For her, this had been an easy bargain struck with looks of acknowledgement between the old human with the sweeper and herself on one of those autumnal evenings when she hunted early; before the small prey retreated into their own safe crevices.

She remembered when the old human had first spotted her. She had already been successful in her hunt that evening, snatching a large brown rat as it scurried out of the drain at the back of the main structure where the human cubs spent their days. The old human had appeared from around a corner, startling the fox. On reflex, she had snarled, flattened her ears against her head and prepared to run. The old human, however, had taken one look at her prize and, being a countryman, had simply nodded, touched his fingers to his forehead in respectful salute and quietly returned the way he came; she could stay just as long as she was useful to him.

Pickings were rich on her territory. At last, as the human warrens had settled, they had finally stopped destroying all the woodland and hedges. Wildflowers were abundant once more and home to all sorts of small creatures and birds that she could fill her belly with, and butterflies, insects and even worms that she would take if necessary although they weren't her preference. Additionally, there were always plenty of rabbits and occasionally she would pick off a particularly stupid one that had escaped from its human cage. She didn't particularly like them, they were fatty and tasted odd, but who was she to pass up an easy meal?

She twitched as she slumbered, dreaming of the days years before when food was scarce and foxes more so. Humans liked wide open spaces, but wildlife hated it. Her resourceful mother had shown her how to raid the boxes where humans left foul smelling stuff that could be dragged around until morsels of food could be sniffed out. For a while it was all they had, and she remembered always feeling ill. She had seen several of her kind running half blind, skinny and maddened with mange along the wide streets until hit and killed by the fast-moving things with wheels. Thankfully, such sights were rare now. As humans gradually stopped destroying the land, so wildlife grew numerous, fat and healthy and foxes like her had no need to raid human rubbish to survive.

Eventually, the evening chill woke the vixen and, stretching, she considered her options. Hearing no more movement in the school grounds, she knew it was safe to emerge for the hunt. As was her habit, she went first to the cracked pipes behind the building, where she dispatched no fewer than four fat brown rats in short order. She half ate one of them but left the others for the human; he always took them away and left a large bowl of water nearby for her. Refreshed, the vixen set off to patrol her boundaries, using the trees and dense shrubs as her corridors. Invisible, she took in the movements of the humans as they went in and out of the bright buildings across the hard-topped way. They were almost as nocturnal as she, but they would eventually disappear to their burrows and she would be left in peace. As she went, she hunted. Mice, voles, and a young rabbit all went to feed both her and the cubs she could feel growing inside her.

Suddenly and without any warning, a dark shape reared up snorting and stamping from the shadows in front of her, setting her back on her haunches with a warning hiss. The beast was as large as her – perhaps even a little bigger – in a heartbeat she took in its pointed snout armed with tusks, its long, impossibly slender legs tipped with tiny but wickedly sharp hooves, stamping now, furious and intimidating. Alarmingly, it displayed vicious looking horns too, which it now lowered menacingly in her direction. Never one to pick a fight with such a well-armed not-fox bigger than herself, the vixen twisted away and fled back to the safety of the school grounds.

The Muntjac, however, shook himself and considered yet again, what a good area he and his mate had found along this narrow corridor of greenery. Here was plenty of forage and the locals that were even aware of them were proving easy to scare off. Yes, he could see a fine future ahead as, contented, he lowered his head to graze.

By Pam Lloyd

Community Hub

In response to the rate at which coronavirus was spreading, Viables Community Centre decided to serve our community differently, in reaction to its changing needs. As a small charity that runs a community centre in order to fulfil its charitable aims, which primarily focus on bringing people together, we knew that an empty centre would massively inhibit how we could do this. We have diverted our attention to ensuring people can shield, self-isolate and look after themselves and their families safely by facilitating a team of staff and volunteers who could do shopping, deliver food, collect prescriptions and offer befriending calls to those who were most at risk or vulnerable during this crisis.

The response from the people of Basingstoke in becoming volunteers has been amazing and we could not do this without them. Huge thanks is given to all those supporting us. We have also been working closely with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Basingstoke Voluntary Action to become one of the community hubs for Basingstoke. Rather than serving our usual Area of Benefit of around 2000 homes, we are now covering all of Black Dam and Brighton Hill in addition to the Cranborne and Viables areas. The change in the way we are now working has been huge. Our once busy centre is now empty but the important work that we do is continuing, with staff working remotely and having to communicate with each other and the Trustees virtually to ensure good continuity for the organisation. There are many other hubs across the area all doing great work. We have been working particularly closely with Westside who are also doing an amazing job in supporting their community at this challenging time.

We have been working hard to secure grants in order to help us provide these vital services during a time where we are unable to generate any income to support us or pay our wages. We have thankfully been successful in receiving grants from Greenham Trust, HIWCF and CAF, as well as securing funding through BVA which was set aside by BDBC for hubs like ours.



Each week, we have focused on our keyworkers in the community and across the country. Our Trustees of this charity also got involved, as well as lots of our volunteers as well as staff. To see more about what we are doing at the centre, and to keep up to date as the days and weeks go by, please check out our social media sites and website.

www.viables.org.uk Twitter @ViablesCC

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Facebook: facebook.com/Viables/

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