

VOLUNTARY ACTION EPPING FOREST

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 / 2022



*Improving the quality of life for
people & communities*

www.vaef.org.uk

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Chief Officer Report— Jacqui Foile



This year was definitely going to be better than the last, we hoped, as we now had the Covid 19 vaccine and life was starting to return to some sort of normality for most. However, we recognised that we were certainly not out of the woods yet and as such VAEF staff and volunteers continued to assist those most vulnerable who were still struggling with the effects of the virus. Shopping and prescription collections and welfare calls continued for some and our volunteers also offered support at the vaccine centres in the district. Many of our clients were reluctant to enter out again and took some encouraging to start engaging again in our project activities. They were however very reassured by the safe procedures our team followed at all times.

Our new Community Hub Responders were kept busy and in particular found numerous residents required help with digital equipment. Staff were also on hand during the weekend of Storm Eunice should anyone have required assistance that we were in a position to offer. Many people felt lonely and isolated and these feelings had certainly escalated during the pandemic. A number of men in the district benefitted from attending our new Men's Shed initiative held at the Waltham Abbey Museum.

During this year a number of VAEF staff were delighted to be able to have a weekly regular presence in the Epping Forest District Council

Partnerships Hub. This proved particularly valuable to promote services such as our Volunteer Centre and VAEF's new Supported Volunteering project to assist clients with mental health needs into volunteering and paid employment.

It was also great to work with Hub staff to collect, wrap and distribute Christmas gifts to a number of children in the area.

The Winter months were hard for many residents and thanks to the generosity of Essex County Council we were once again able to offer support to those most in need in the district. The Winter Warmth funding allowed us to provide essentials such as warm bedding, coats, school uniforms and top-up cards for gas and electric. Referrals could also be taken for the delivery of fresh food and household products. It was also great to provide business to a local company, the Ongar Dairy Group who made the weekly deliveries.

Further to funding from Active Essex we were delighted to be able to help our Community Clubs and ACE Activities clients regain some fitness by taking part in enjoyable weekly exercise classes. VAEF Voluntary Sector Forums took place via Zoom and one, held on climate change, gave some good tips on how voluntary and community groups could engage in helping the Epping Forest District Council's commitment to become a carbon neutral district by 2030.

Our West Essex Community Action Network (WECAN) entity was successful in achieving funding to support individuals with mental

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health difficulties come home from hospital. Practical support was provided such as house cleaning, decorating, fitting of key safes, food in the fridge and also befriending. Apart from the improvements to the wellbeing of the clients, cost savings were made on freeing up beds in hospital wards.

ACE Activities clients were thrilled to be visited by the High Sherriff of Essex, Simon Brice. The Sherriff stayed for lunch and took great pleasure in handing all the participants and volunteers of the project "thank you" certificates.

Certificates were also handed to all VAEF volunteers at the Community Picnic we held in the summer at the Grange Farm Centre in Chigwell. Although the weather was far from kind it did not dampen spirits and everyone enjoyed a cream tea and entertainment inside the Centre as opposed to on the lawns.

All of the VAEF volunteers continued to step up during the year in various different ways. Many new volunteers had come forward during the pandemic and continued with us in 21/22. The team of volunteers that week in week out offered support at the local vaccine centres were delighted to receive a Highly Commended Award in the Epping Forest Citizen of the Year Awards. We also had the opportunity to congratulate VAEF volunteer Peter King for winning the prestigious Citizen of the Year Award for the amazing amount of hours he had given to assisting at the sites.

Our Board stayed focused and supportive under the excellent leadership of our Chair Myrna Gilbert.

Staff worked hard and used creativity and initiative to develop, maintain and offer excellent services throughout the district. It was very pleasing to receive recognition for our efforts from the Epping Town Council who presented VAEF with their Community Award at a delightful Afternoon Tea.

We look forward to the coming year and the opportunities it will bring such as working with other charities to build their capacity by recruiting volunteers, offering guidance and promoting their activities widely. The year will bring more challenges and as we move into the next financial year we are starting to develop initiatives to support and welcome Ukraine families now residing in the district. VAEF will remain flexible, adaptable, ready to act and always dedicated to supporting those most in need within our local communities.

Jacqui Foulke



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Chair Report

Myrna Gilbert



This past year has seen VAEF move out of the crisis of Covid 19 into the management of life with Covid.

Our staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly in this past year to ensure that we maintain and wherever possible increase support to those in need. This year saw the retirement of Gill Mann, a past Chair and long standing member of the Board. We offer our very best wishes to her for the future and our heartfelt thanks for all the work and time she gave to VAEF. She will continue her relationship with us in the future.

For VAEF this has been a year of consolidation. VAEF, like most charities, has benefitted from an influx of funding to support people through Covid. It has given us the opportunity to develop some excellent teams of staff and volunteers and to step back and plan for the future. We know that the future will be challenging, funding post Covid and post Brexit will be very hard to come by and that our clientele will be suffering hardship in many ways. The year in question did not include the Ukraine crisis but as I write this I cannot exclude the effect this will have for us and our clients.

Our partnership within WECAN is increasingly beneficial to all, allowing us to develop and maintain support across West Essex. We have a presence in the EFDC Hub which enables us to network with other charities as well as providing a drop in service for those in need. We anticipate that this will develop further in the future.

We know the future is going to be a serious challenge if we are to maintain and develop our services to support a community that is facing financial hardships with the rising cost of living. Household bills will be high, driven by rising fuel costs and many who have been coping, will find themselves unable to do so. Our support will be even more important yet we will face reduced funding. We shall need to find innovative ways to maintain our funding and our services. We are planning to develop the skills and strengths of the Board with a recruitment campaign for new trustees and implementing a complete strategic review.

It remains only for me to say 'thank you' to our staff and volunteers not forgetting the trustees, for the work they do. Those two little words cannot do justice to the energy, effort, kindness and compassion that is shown by all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Myrna Gilbert', written in a cursive style.

Volunteer Centres—Epping Forest and Harlow

The Volunteer Centres Epping Forest and Harlow are part of a nationwide network of independent agencies that act as “matchmakers” for people seeking volunteering opportunities and not-for-profit and charity groups needing volunteers. We match the interests, skills and time of local people with the needs of groups operating in the Epping Forest district and Harlow area. We also encourage and support organisations to operate good practice in volunteer management.

Epping Forest and Harlow Volunteer Centres are also part of Volunteer Centres Essex network. We work closely with our Essex colleagues towards achieving greater consistency and partnership working for the benefit of our local areas and the Volunteer Centre network as a whole.

Volunteer Centre Epping Forest

Achievements

- An award ceremony held in September to thank the volunteers who helped with our existing projects and the volunteers who helped as stewards at the vaccination centre at St Margaret’s Hospital and Buckhurst Way Clinic
- Training provided to local organisations on Volunteer Management, and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers
- Regular forums hosted on volunteering subjects for organisations recruiting volunteers in the Epping Forest district and Harlow area

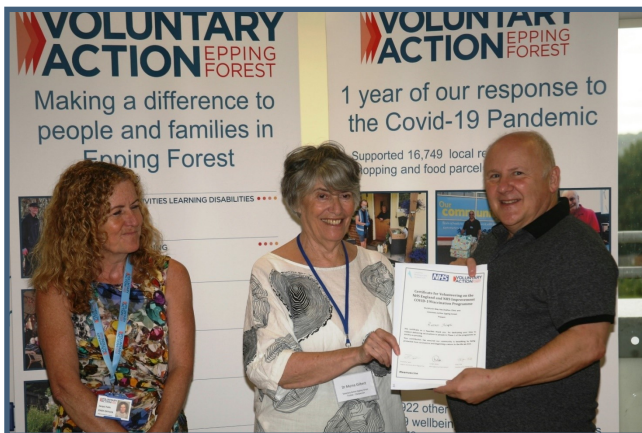
Statistics

- 257 members of the public registered to volunteer at the Volunteer Centre
- 413 introductions of potential volunteers to volunteering organisations were facilitated
- 145 volunteers started volunteering as a direct consequence of their enquiry with us

Looking forward

- Delivering a regular newsletter to VAEF volunteers to keep them abreast of volunteering issues and developments at VAEF
- Creating regular updates on new opportunities to inform volunteers registered with the Volunteer Centre
- Delivering further training on Volunteer Management topics to local organisations
- Hosting Voluntary Sector Forums
- Providing on-line training to VAEF volunteers with remote electronic access.

Volunteer Centres—Epping Forest and Harlow



My Weight Matters

These sessions re-commenced at the Epping Forest District Museum in September 2021 and we have helped nineteen clients to lose weight over a twelve week course. Referrals are received from Health Centres, local organisations and individuals.

Volunteer Centre Harlow

The year 2021/2022 was still a challenging time for us all and even when organisations and services were re-opening and face to face volunteering opportunities possible, there were still some potential volunteers who were hesitant about taking risks with their health.

Achievements

- The Hub volunteers continued to provide a lifeline to vulnerable people in the town
- The Vaccination Volunteers also continued to deliver a fabulous service to the community, supporting the safe and efficient delivery of the vaccination scheme

Statistics

- 241 potential volunteers referred to organisations

Looking forward

We anticipate taking part in many community events during the coming year and meeting potential volunteers and promoting volunteering opportunities available to them.

Ace Activities



Ace Activities provides a range of meaningful activities for adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism. Our projects are suitable for those who wish to develop work and life skills towards further training, employment or volunteering, and for those looking for interesting activities and social interaction.

Ace Activities is an approved day care provider for Essex County Council. The project is funded by Essex County Council Spot Payments, Personal budget payments, The Grange Farm Trust, Essex Community Foundation, The Jack Petchey Foundation and Roding Rotary Club.

Resumption of Services

After most Covid restrictions were lifted we were delighted to resume all services and have a year uninterrupted by lockdowns. Taking all necessary Covid precautions we were pleased to offer a full range of activities.

Achievements

Ace Gardeners

Our Ace Gardening Scheme works in partnership with the Grange Farm Trust in the grounds of the Grange Farm Centre.

Ace Activities are always striving to improve the quality of the service and in April the charity Thrive delivered a social and therapeutic gardening course that now directs our work, improving the gardening experience for all our members.

The Community Garden was officially opened in July by the Chair of the Epping Forest District Council, Councillor Helen Kane. Presentations were made by Trevor Johnson, Chair of the Grange Farm Trust and National Open Garden Scheme for Essex, Organiser, Sue Copeland, who invited us to join the Scheme, which we have gladly accepted. The garden will now be opened once a year to the public and by private arrangement.

Ace Hands Up to Music

Hands Up to Music continues to grow in popularity and size. Members enjoy a weekly session of both signing and singing to Music. The introduction of signing has taken the sessions to another level and made it a much more inclusive experience. Learning to sign to music is a fun and effective way to learn a new skill and we can really see how much the participants have learnt over time. Members also enjoy choosing and performing solos of their favourite songs.

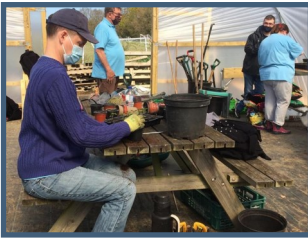
Ace Activities

Ace Hands Up to Music were the star performers at VAEF's Volunteer Thank You Picnic Event in July. Members of the audience tried to keep up with the signing but they were no match for our superstars! The performance was such a success that we are going to use the same formula of audience participation in all our future performances.

Ace Arts

Ace Arts have been working across a number of mediums producing some excellent pieces of work. Inspired by the beautiful grounds of the Grange Farm Centre and the adjacent Roding Valley meadow, members have enjoyed nature walks and collected numerous flowers and plants to make truly lovely art work with.

Our artists made two large murals depicting the flora and fauna to display at the VAEF's Volunteer thank you event. The murals incorporated over 100 handmade origami butterflies. The effect was stunning. At Christmas we 'upcycled' all the butterflies with glitter and jewels and decorated a tree for the St John's Christmas Tree Festival and it looked incredible!



Ace Upcycling

The Ace Upcycling Project in partnership with Epping Forest Reuse and Riverside Timber Recycling Project (RTRP) has had another great year. Learning a variety of carpentry skills, members have made a large array of high quality products ranging from planters to benches to hedgehog houses right through to log stores and Christmas decorations! The project is turning into a mini social enterprise selling over £2,000 worth of goods from the small showroom at RTRP, social media and local events.

In October we visited the Wizardry in Wood Exhibition at Carpenters House in London where we were enthralled to see the marvellous woodworking on display. Our members chatted to the exhibitors and were particularly interested in the work of Arturo Soto who makes work from recycled plywood. At the end of the day he generously presented them with one of his pieces of work.

At Christmas the members ran a stall at Theydon Bois Christmas Fair, selling over £300 of goods. Events like these give our members the opportunity to talk to customers and take a real pride in all their hard work.

Ace Activities

Ace Sports

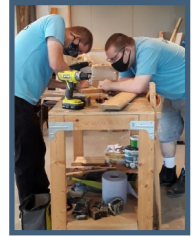
We introduced Ace Sports during the Covid lockdowns as a safe alternative to indoor activities. The sessions were enjoyed so much that we have now made them a permanent fixture of Ace Activities. We are lucky enough to have Ray Harris to lead the sessions. Ray has over 15 years' experience as a coaching assistant at Epping Forest Sportability and has ably organised a great range of sporting activities from football to badminton and rounders, improving health and fitness for all.

Hate Crime Prevention Project- High Sherriff fund

Recent reports of Hate Crime against people with disabilities led us to launch a Hate Crime Prevention Project to raise awareness amongst our members and within the wider community. The project took the shape of eight specialist workshops for our members delivered by the Essex Police Crime prevention unit, a Facebook campaign, a webinar attended by over thirty organisations and three Hate Crime prevention booklets, all written and designed in easy read format.

Ace 'Cooking with Confidence' Classes

In October 2020 we trialed six 'Cooking with Confidence' classes. Members learnt new skills whilst learning how to cook a number of savoury and sweet dishes. We also delivered a number of on line cookery sessions enjoyed by our members and families alike. We are very happy that 'Cooking with Confidence' classes have now become a new regular service of Ace Activities, delivering key living skills for an independent life.



Statistics

- 30 members
- 6 regular activities
- 885 volunteer hours
- 471 activity sessions

Looking forward

- ASDAN accredited courses
- Further improvement and development of all projects

Ain't No Mountain High Enough



This was the fifth year in which we have partnered with New City College to deliver music making opportunities to young adults with learning and physical challenges who would not otherwise have access to such life affirming activities. Our project was again funded by Youth Music to whom we are grateful to receive a further year of funding.

A change in the curriculum at Epping meant that we had limited access to students this year, reducing the musical activities that we could provide. However, we developed a relationship with Harlow College's Supported Studies Department and started delivering sessions to their students in February 2022.

As in previous years, we began with a number of taster sessions which offer potential musicians the chance to try out various instruments and activities. Eleven such sessions were delivered and our young people made choices about which activities they would pursue. These included group percussion sessions, song-writing, guitar and ukulele lessons, keyboard lessons and musical appreciation discussions.

At both colleges there was great enthusiasm for music-making and the progress made by many was inspiring to project leaders and staff alike. Three of our young musicians received Jack Petchey Awards and Diane Da Costa, our music session worker, received a Jack Petchey Outstanding Leader Award.

The project contributed to the personal development of our young musicians and helped them to build their own musical identities. They took pride in their achievements and were able to boost their self-confidence and discuss their musical favourites in a mature fashion, improving musical vocabulary along the way.

Our Facebook page continues to publish pictures, films and other tidbits to publicise the achievements of our young people.

This has been a challenging year for the project staff but we were able to adapt and deliver wonderful music-making activities which were enthusiastically received. Our young people rise above the challenges which they face to make and enjoy music with their peers. There certainly ain't no mountain high enough to keep them from doing so!

Statistics

Activities Sept 2021 to March 2022

- 302 musical activity sessions including 11 taster sessions
- 4 songs produced in our songwriting workshop



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

Ain't No Mountain High Enough 01992 910 701

Gardening

According to a recent survey, spending time in the garden is associated with better health and wellbeing. Our gardening service, which has been in operation since 2001, provides gardeners and volunteers to maintain the gardens of people physically unable to do so themselves, namely older people and the disabled across the district. They cut grass, prune, weed, sweep and generally make a garden tidier. Jina our Gardening Administrator, contacts the clients, finds out what gardening work needs doing and sends us the details in advance. She plans our route to maximise the time spent in people's gardens and minimise the journey time between our clients.

The work of this project contributes to independent living making clients feel much safer and happier in their homes and less vulnerable.

Epping Forest District Council is the main funder for the Gardening Service.

Achievements

- Exceeding EFDC targets demonstrating excellent value for money
- Extremely positive feedback from clients indicating the benefits to health and wellbeing
- The service secured funding from Essex Community Foundation during the pandemic and we used this money for our "Pots of Joy" initiative. We provided pots of flowers to those who could not access their gardens or who had remote gardens. The pots of colourful summer flowers brought the outside in and some joy to the service user during a difficult time.

Statistics

Tenants

- 112 Council Tenants received 705 gardening visits
- 3 Garden clearances were completed

Homeowners

- 15 Homeowners received 56 gardening visits
- 4 Garden clearances were completed



Gardening

Volunteers

Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, it was not possible to work with all of our dedicated gardening volunteers. However, our volunteers, Roger and Margaret Emmens, offered their time to help deliver the "Pots of Joy". By doing this they had time to stand and have a chat with those receiving the pots. Both volunteers commented on the very positive feedback given by the service users.

Looking forward

We hope to be able to continue to provide our hugely-valued gardening service to vulnerable and elderly council tenants who cannot tend their own gardens. We are looking forward to being able to welcome back our gardening volunteers in the coming months.

Client comments

As a former gardener, myself I was upset to see my garden deteriorate, thank you for getting it back in to shape. Mr G, Loughton

Aubrey and the boys work so hard I really appreciate all they do. Mrs R, Stanford Rivers

I am so glad for your help I am now proud of my garden and do not worry about what the neighbours will say. Mrs D, Epping

It is such a relief to me to have the garden done, as I can no longer maintain it myself and worried about the state of it. Thank you. Mrs G-R, North Weald

We have a great team that work really well together to provide the best service for our clients. AB Lead Gardener

The service users that received a "Pot of Joy" were all delighted and they commented on how nice it was to know that they were being thought about in such difficult times. It made them feel less lonely and isolated.

One of the pots was delivered to Mrs B an elderly person living in North Weald who receives help from our gardening service. Mrs B has no family living nearby and due to the pandemic has spent much of the past year alone. When Mrs B received her "Pot of Joy", she was delighted, she said it was so nice to know that we were thinking of her as she had felt quite alone at times. She said it had given her a real boost and she was looking forward to seeing the flowers bloom. Mrs B said that receiving the pot had made her realise that she was in fact not alone.

Community Handyman for Homeowners

This service supports homeowners in the district requiring a trustworthy, reasonable, reliable and police checked handy-person to complete odd jobs around the home. Jobs that can be undertaken include putting up sheds, cleaning patio areas to prevent falls, changing light bulbs, fitting grab rails and key safes, fixing cupboards and fitting together flat pack furniture. A small charge is made for the work completed.

Achievements

- This year 87 referrals have been actioned by this part-time service operating 7 hours per week.

Tasks Undertaken have included:

Fitting key safes, securing gates, fitting exterior solar lighting, fitting internal and external grab rails, securing carpets, jet washing, cementing blown walls, changing light bulbs, building flat pack furniture, securing fence panels, security checks, fitting door, gates and window locks, putting up curtains and poles.

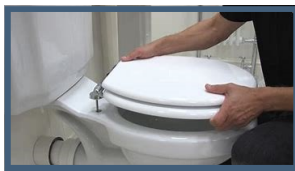
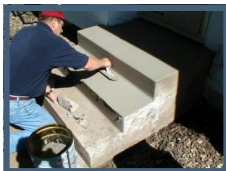


Our Community Handyman received some very positive feedback including the following:

“Just wanted to thank you very much for all of your hard work for Mom and me over the year on her home, it has been very much appreciated by me. The last job in particular, the partially fitted draft excluder has already made a huge difference to her hallway.”

Handyman for Council Tenants

The Handyman service is a partnership between Epping Forest District Council and Voluntary Action Epping Forest. It began in 2012 and is funded by EFDC. The service provides a handyman to EFDC tenants provided they are over 60 and/or have a disability and have no one else who can assist them.



Achievements

- Partnership work with EFDC Qualis Housing Management and EFDC Scheme managers continued to prosper and relationships remain strong
- We have many heart-warming case studies (accessed via our website) demonstrating the massive difference the service has made to those most in need
- We are now undertaking the provision of the Handyman service to the EFDC sheltered housing schemes. Every visit included an informal safety and security assessment with remedial action taken or advice given regarding falls prevention and security.

Statistics

- Over 280 referrals were received and completed this year
- 98% of faulty light bulbs were replaced within 48 hours
- 100% tenant satisfaction with excellent feedback
- Of the 280+ referrals received most were for multiple tasks equating to over 600 completed jobs

Looking forward

- We continue to seek publicity through EFDC publications and local press as well as within VAEF social media streams to maintain our profile and ensure as many tenants as possible are made aware of the support available
- The level of referrals from EFDC sheltered housing schemes is showing a steady increase and we expect this to continue as feedback from scheme managers has been excellent

Community Clubs

The Community Clubs service aims to provide support and friendship for those living on their own or in isolation. The service offers three weekly clubs, which provide various activities such as seated exercises, quizzes, entertainers, games, bingo, arts and crafts as well as fortnightly day trips out which give much needed stimulation to many, whilst reducing their social/rural isolation. In addition, the service can provide a 'friend' who will be able to offer companionship by forming a trusting and supportive relationship offering a smile, a listening ear, links to other services and regular visits to the client's home.

Following on from last year, Covid 19 continued to affect the Community Clubs clients drastically, as they are high risk and vulnerable and due to their age and possibility of underlying health issues, we needed to protect them all as much as possible. We continued with weekly telephone befriending, then gradually introduced doorstep visits as well as limited numbers for day trips which were gratefully received (following Government guidelines at all times).

At the beginning of March 2022, the Government lifted all restrictions and EFDC re-opened their Sheltered Housing Schemes in North Weald and Waltham Abbey where our clubs are held. This was quite an emotional time for both staff and members.

Achievements

- New venue secured for Wednesday Group at St John the Baptist Church, Church Lane, Loughton
- Recruited five new volunteers to the project
- Donation received from Waitrose in Buckhurst Hill to provide a Christmas party for our Loughton group

Trips have included:

- Canal boat trips cruising the River Stort with a buffet lunch
- Cream teas at Hunters Meet and Mulberry House
- Lunches at various restaurants, hotels and pubs within the district
- Various themed cabaret lunch events at Royal British Legion, Hunters Meet, and Mulberry House
- EFDC Stay Well This Winter event
- Visits to Van Hage and Harlow Garden Centres
- Pets Corner

Community Clubs

Statistics

- 65 - 75 clients attended clubs
- 11 clients received one to one telephone befriending
- 20 volunteers assisted with the project
- 53 trips took place

Looking forward

- To recruit additional volunteers to continue to enhance the project
- To recruit an additional project driver
- To increase volunteer skills through training opportunities
- To continually strive to provide enjoyable and stimulating activities and events
- To work with other agencies to seek clients for referral



Benefits Advice

The Benefits Advice service is available for those whose personal circumstances make it difficult for them to access services in their area or outside of their home. A home visit can be arranged and information provided on benefits available to the individual along with assistance to complete application forms. The service is available to those who live in the Epping Forest district. Referrals are received from other agencies and health professionals.

Achievements

- The project is in its seventh year and has continued to receive an increased number of referrals from other agencies, health and social care professionals. These close working relationships allow us to achieve the best results for our clients.
- We have provided advice and completed applications for a range of benefits such as Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Carers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance and Blue Badge applications
- The project had to adapt due to the pandemic so all applications were completed via telephone
- The service recruited two volunteers who will be working to provide advice, information and help to complete benefit applications

Statistics

- 341 people received advice and information on benefits
- 136 benefit applications completed
- 131 successful benefit applications (5 applications were not awarded the benefit applied for)

Looking forward

- The project is looking forward to assisting more members of the community and achieving long-term sustainability of the service
- Continuing to develop the skills and expertise of the project volunteers

Case Study

An Epping Forest Social Prescriber referred Mrs K to the project as she was struggling with daily living due to her health problems. She had previously applied for Attendance Allowance and was not successful with her application. She was upset by this and the stress was having a negative impact on her mental and physical health. I advised her that we would submit a new application, which I would complete for her. Mrs K's new application was successful and the allowance awarded. Mrs K was very pleased as receiving the allowance would help to make life easier for her and relieve some of the stress she was suffering.

Personal Independence Payment - PIP

DWP Department for Work and Pensions



Community Response Hub



The Community Response Hub was established in September 2021 to sustain and develop the Covid Response work, undertaken by VAEF at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As well as continuing to provide shopping and prescription deliveries, and other requested support to persons impacted by the pandemic; the Community Response Hub was established to react to individual support referrals and short-term community challenges (winter warmth support, Christmas poverty, storm damage, refugee resettlement etc).

Funded through Essex County Council's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the Community Response Hub had four part-time staff members from September 2021 – April 2022.

Achievements

- Youth violence consultation undertake with over 100 young people, on behalf of the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit
- Men's Shed project established in Waltham Abbey, supporting 12 people

Statistics—April 2021—August 2021 (Prior to Hub Launch)



- 550 interventions including prescriptions, shopping and advice
- 2447 Wellbeing calls made to isolated people
- 2849 Volunteer hours spent at vaccination sites
- 29,048 Covid vaccinations assisted through VAEF volunteer time assistance

Statistics—Sept 2021—April 2022

- 643 Community Response Hub interventions, supporting individuals with: shopping and prescription deliveries, emergency food boxes and essential hospital transport
- 152 referred local residents / households, supported via the Winter Warmth scheme, contributing to: fuel bills, warm clothing and home insulation
- 115 one to one digital support interventions, assisting 46 local resident clients

- 60 referred low-income family members supported by attending winter family experience events
- 52 referred children supported by fund-raised and distributed Christmas presents

Looking forward

- To continue in providing response interventions, supporting individuals still impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, or facing other personal health barriers to independent living
- To continue in providing one to one digital home support to referred clients, and develop new digital support initiatives, including community workshops and drop-in support at Epping and Waltham Abbey community hubs
- To continue to work with local voluntary organisations and EFDC in providing support and information to Ukrainian refugees and their sponsors in Epping Forest
- To further develop a programme of men's mental health work / initiatives, including a permanent / dedicated Men's Shed project
- To forward plan, and prepare how to best support vulnerable, low-income households, in relation to the anticipated winter fuel and cost-of living crisis
- To work with the VAEF Volunteer Centre Co-ordinator, to look at developing and managing more flexible volunteering roles / opportunities, to support the successful growth and development of the VAEF Community Response Hub

Supported Volunteering

This programme is designed to recruit and place people with mental health needs into suitable volunteering opportunities as part of a potential pathway back into employment. The aim is to improve clients' health and wellbeing, also focusing on involving individuals supported in community projects/roles, which reduces the need for support received by them from other agencies and improves their employability.

This new VAEF programme had its successful launch in December 2021 and is funded until the end of October 2022.

Achievements

To provide evidence of positive change for supported individuals, the following outcomes have been defined and agreed:

1. Individuals with mental health needs have good/healthy self-esteem and confidence
 2. Individuals with mental health needs have good social interaction
 3. Individuals with mental health needs feel less socially isolated
- The individuals supported attended a number of community clubs run by local organisations: Musical community sessions, Music Box (Rock School), Men's Shed, One Pot Meals cookery sessions, Park Run, Walk and Talk
 - Some individuals supported required extra support from other agencies. The support has been provided by Foodbank, 3food4u, CAB, Harlow Community Hub, Integration Support Services, Community Embrace, Ghana Union Harlow
 - One volunteer has been recruited to the programme
 - The project Co-ordinator and an individual supported had an opportunity to meet HRH the Earl of Wessex and HRH the Countess of Wessex, to tell them about the project
 - To ensure that the needs of individuals are met, an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in January 2022

Statistics

- 50% of individuals supported are now actively volunteering with Rainbow Services, British Heart Foundation, St Paul's Church, Harlow Rock School, Integration Support Services, Park Run, Age UK, Lee Valley Wildlife Centre and Epping in Bloom

- 25% of individuals supported have applied for paid jobs or started their paid posts already at Costa, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Performing Arts school, retail shops and school holiday clubs
- 56% of the individuals supported attend volunteering placements or community clubs independently
- 32 referrals received between December 2021 – March 2022 from Volunteer Centres, Employ-Ability, NEET CHOICES, Social Prescribers and Integration Support Services
- 40 outcomes were achieved for clients supported. These include increased self-esteem and confidence, better social interaction and reduced social isolation.
- 4 individuals supported attended One Pot Meals Cookery sessions run by Rainbow Services
- 7 individuals supported joined Active Essex and Park Run

Looking forward

- To recruit two volunteers to support the programme in each area (Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford)
- To receive ten new referrals every month, identify individuals support needs and secure volunteering placements
- To encourage individuals supported to get involved in the community projects/roles and become more physically active
- To expand reach to the project beneficiaries in Uttlesford
- To continue exploring the funding opportunities for the project's sustainability

WECAN PROJECTS

WECAN is a West Essex voluntary sector partnership between VAEF and our local partner voluntary organisations: Rainbow Services, Harlow and CVS Uttlesford (now known as UCAN). It is supported by VAEF staff and management, with the aim to deliver / support a number of strategically identified community projects across a wider catchment area.

This year, via WECAN, VAEF have supported United In Kind; (Essex-commissioned loneliness and social isolation reduction project), in Epping Forest.

VAEF has also led the WECAN delivery of an NHS-partnering 'Mental Health Discharge Service'; providing community support and voluntary interventions to individuals leaving mental health wards, or facing risk of admission.



west essex community action network

Achievements & Statistics

- 43 different local community groups / projects / events, set up / visited / supported by the United In Kind initiative
- 116 local people home-visited / supported by the United In Kind initiative
- 54 local people signposted / supported in attending local community groups / activities
- 12 months broadcasting United In Kind Radio, to an estimated 2000-3000 listeners, with radio adverts and interviews promoting over 50 local community services / activities
- 67 referred clients supported via the NHS Mental Health Discharge Service
- Over 180 days of hospital bed time, estimated to have been saved via the Mental Health Discharge Service

Looking forward

- To continue in providing a first-class Mental Health Discharge Service to NHS patients, through planned / agreed community interventions
- To expand the WECAN / NHS partnership programme, to also support referred patients experiencing suicidal ideation, through planned / agreed community interventions
- To establish a recently commissioned Brief Solution Bereavement service, to provide forms of open referral grief support, over the next 12 months

Voluntary Action Staff and Trustee Board



Voluntary Action Staff

Jacqui Foile	Chief Officer
Michael Tang	Finance Officer
Debbie Smith	Administrative Manager
Charlotte Hyett	Project and Business Development Officer
Sally Panrucker	Co-ordinator for Learning Disabilities
Nina Gavens	Funding and Information Officer / Finance Assistant
Maggie Gilchrist	Volunteer Co-ordinator Epping Forest
Nick Robinson	Community Hub Response Manager
Chris Seaman	Community Hub Responder
Marina Dunajeva	Supported Volunteers Co-ordinator
Della Nash	Volunteer Co-ordinator Harlow
Stuart Oakes	Ace Upcycling Project Lead
Andrea Slade	Cookery Tutor
Marc Balkham	Furniture Re-cycle Project Worker
Ray Harris	Learning Disability Sessional Worker/Gardener
Julie Bristow	Community Clubs Service Co-ordinator
Claire Marsh	Community Clubs Service Sessional Worker
Trevor Felton	Community Clubs Service Driver
Jina Symes	Benefits Advice Officer/Gardening Administrator
Aubrey Brandy	Lead Gardener
John Smith	Gardener
Chris Bullock	Handyman
Mark Dalton	Community Handyman

Voluntary Action Trustee Board

Chair	Dr Myrna Gilbert
Vice Chair	Gerry Smith
Treasurer	Lara Wing
	Jane Adair
	Olivia Maxfield-Coote
	Sally Crone
	Margaret Emmens
	William Ripley
	Susi Pitura
	Peter Crossley
	Sophia Smith
	David Tetlow

VAEF Trustee Ann Haigh sadly passed away in October 2022 and will be very much missed.

Our thanks and best wishes go to the following members of staff who left in 2021/22: David Wright, Colin Rowell, Julie Graham, John Wix, Ryan Tidd. Also Gill Mann, Trustee.

Voluntary Action Volunteers

Ace Activities

Tim Copeman
Viv Davis
Richard Ford
Hayley Clark
Christine Robson
Leah Blake
Jill Green
Alan Brett
Myrna Gilbert
Donna Castle
Gary Castle

Benefits Advice

Annie Wood
Susan Arnold

Gardening

Margaret Emmens
Roger Emmens

Epping Forest Volunteer Centre

Howard Platt

Weight Management

Carol Richards
Natalie Cole

Vaccine Volunteers - Epping Forest District

Debra Davidson-Smith
Russell Joseph
Peter Cowup
Phyl Cowup
Christine Dackombe
Diane Pegrum
Margaret Parris
Ian Thomas
Heather Olliffe
Gary Grant
Beverley Rose
Nichola Palmer
Gillian Tomkins
Sara Fisher
Pat Thompson

Moira Challen
Sandy Nicholls
Julie Quinn-Smith
Phil Richards
Erica and Howard Alter
Linda Richardson
Andrew File
Christine Benbow
Barbara Sweeting
Doris De Souza
Brenda White
Peter King
Nicola James
Mike Robinson
Tina Robinson
Mandy Winter
Sophia Smith
Lisa Sharp
Margaret Emmens
Clare Brown
Alfie Shields
Hugh Burnage
Diana Perkins
Noelle Harrington
Jonathan Fineberg
Dawn Fineberg
Jackie Sully
Donna Nicole McCausland
David Tetlow
Elaine Crossley
Peter Crossley
Andrew Dunn
Donna Edwards
Neill Woodward
Clive Seagers
Jacqueline Alison Davis
Stephen Allan Lye
Janet Leverich
Christine Janet Merritt
Jane Battersby
Anne Susan Gawne
Anita Skates
Samantha Meech
Jacqui Matthews
Margaretta Al-Shawk
Wendy Wilkinson

Noelle Harrington
Alison Davis
Jackie Sully
Jeremy Godlonton
Vince Hillis
Corinne Lewis
Veronica Santa Londono
Jean Atkinson
Jon Whitehouse
Peter G King
Nick Robinson
Phillip Merritt
Carol Anne Richards
Phillip Richards
Patricia Johnson
Lynn McCole
Nigel Barber
Pauline Townsend
Glen Townsend
Sara fisher
Christine Benbow
Mick Robinson
Tina Robinson
Julie Quinn Smith
Anne Henwood
Faye Ley
Clare Gillian Brown
Laura King
Daniel Sharp
Natasha Anne Elliott
Cleverdon
Joy McCann
Denise Mason
Margaret Parris
Peter Drabwell
Jeanette Griffiths
Samuel James Davey
Charlotte Hay-Campbell
Heather McNaughton
Patricia Ruth Thompson
Susan Smith
Alexander Charles Nicholls
Erica Alter
Samantha McNeill-Meech
Mrs Joanna Toal
Corrine Bayless

Voluntary Action Volunteers

Doris de Souza Brady
Steph Foile
Ben Walker
Jacquelyn Matthews
Suzanne Kaye
Mia Kaye
Julie Churchill
Sian Edwards

Harlow Vaccination Centres

Kitty Hubbard
Samir Bhatti
Donna Holder
Chris Vince
Revd Anthony Mayes
Emma Toal
Anthony Wiseman
Jane Winterbotham
Katie Muir
Claire Hickles
Corinne Lewis
Marc Balkham
Chris Cowdery
Valerie June Foster
Martin Minihane
Mike Slowe
Glynnis Bainbridge
Mary Schmid
Lynn McCole
Amanda Quley
Annette Lidster
Dan Powell
Nicola Bright
Tracey Jacobs
Lisa Saunders
Ruth Luker
Shelley Murphy
James Griggs
Sandra Aves
Cherith Lowry
Susan Cornhill
Neil Sjoberg
Brian Neal
Hilary McNeeney
Pat Edwards
Rose Morris

Henrietta Branwell
Ian Talbot
Thomas McNeeney
Saul Lintonbon-Baker
Michael Houlihan
Paula Robinson
Marion Howell
Mike Rees
Allyson Mackintosh
Rebecca Lehman

Community Clubs

Alf Burgess
Alison Eckley
Andrew File
Barbara Hollingum
Bev Soutar
Carol Richards
Christopher Daniel
Dai Rees
Evelyn Dalton
Janet Fox
Josephine Kilkenny
Julie Harvey
Kelly Lewis-Hall
Martine Grossman-Marks
Natalie Cole
Noelle Harrington
Pauline Visvanathan
Peter Butler
Phillip Richards
Zoe Chapman



VOLUNTARY ACTION EPPING FOREST

Voluntary Action Followers

A Vision of Britain
Active Essex
Age Concern Essex
All Within The Mind
Bedford House Community Association
Buckhurst Hill Parish Council
Carers First
Castle Point CVS
Chelmsford CVS
Chigwell Riding Trust for Special Needs
Christian Drama Resource Centre
Christian Drama Resource Centre
Colchester Community for Voluntary Service
Community 360
Elbow Grease Co-operative Ltd
Employ-Ability
Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau
Epping Forest Community Transport
Epping Forest DC "Lifewalks" Walking for Health Scheme
Epping Forest District Council Community Development
Epping Forest District Council Community Services
Epping Forest Foodbank
Epping Forest Heritage Trust
Epping Forest Housing Aid Scheme
Epping Forest Reuse
Epping Team Ministry
Epping Town Council
Essex Alliance
Essex Boys & Girls Club
Essex Community Foundation
Field Studies Council
Forward Trust
Grange Farm Sports Centre
Grow Community Garden
Headway Essex
Home-Start Essex
Home-Start Essex
House of Commons
Lambourne End Ltd
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Loughton Foodbank
Loughton Town Council
Loughton Voluntary Care Association
Mind in West Essex
Moreton Primary
National Jazz Archive
Nazeing Parish Council
North Weald Parish Council
North Weald Parish Council
Ongar & Villages Voluntary Care
Ongar Music Club
Ongar Primary School
Ongar Primary School
PACT for Autism
Radio Forest Hospital Radio
RESTORE Community
Roding Valley U3A
Rotary Club of Epping
Rotary Club of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell
Rotary Club of Roding
Roydon Parish Council
Samaritans of Redbridge Branch
South Essex Rape & Incest Crisis Centre
South Loughton Cricket Club
Southend SAVS
Spark / Worth Unlimited
St Clare Hospice
St Paul's Harlow Town Centre and St Mary's Little Parndon
Stapleford Abbots Parish Council
Stapleford Tawney Parish Council
The Epping Golf Club
The Loughton Lopping Endowment Fund
The Ongar Academy
The Ongar Academy
Three Valleys Male Voice Choir
Tinder Sticks CIC
Uttlesford CVS
Voluntary Sector Training / Community 360
Volunteer Centre Harlow
Waltham Abbey Town Council
Waltham Abbey Youth 2000
West Essex Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Service

Voluntary Action Funders

Full audited accounts are available. Please contact us if you require a copy.

Our main Core funders this year were Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council. The funding contributes to VAEF's Core work and direct services. It also enables us to lever in funding from organisations across the district. Our services and additional work were funded by:

Big Lottery Fund
The Charles S French Charitable Trust
Essex Community Foundation (ECF)
Good Things Foundation
Grange Farm Trust
Harlow District Council
Harlow Health Centre Trust
Maypole House
Mrs Smith and Mount Trust
NAVCA
NHS West Essex CCG
Jack Petchey Foundation
Postcode Lottery
Joseph and Lilian Sully Foundation
Loughton Town Council
National Foundation for Youth Music
National Garden Scheme
New City College
The Henry Smith Charity
Tesco Bag for Life
Yellow Car



National Foundation for
Youth Music

Funded By



ESSEX
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



Harlow Health
Centres Trust



West Essex

Clinical Commissioning Group



Harlow
Council
or for Harlow



THE
JOSEPH & LILIAN SULLY
FOUNDATION



LOTTERY FUNDED



The
Henry Smith
Charity

founded in 1628



navca
local focus national voice



Loughton Town Council

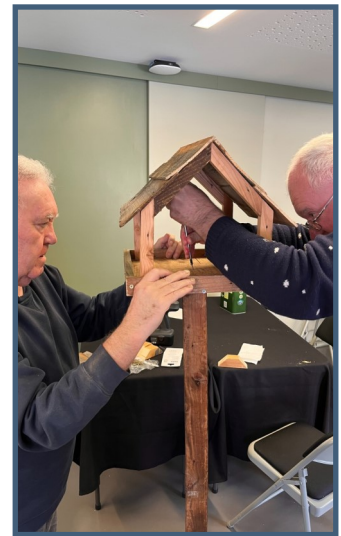
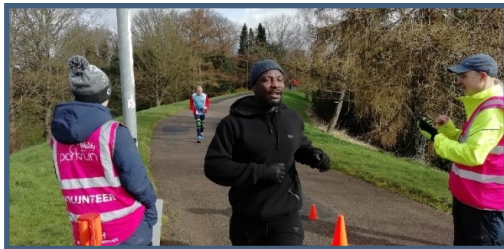
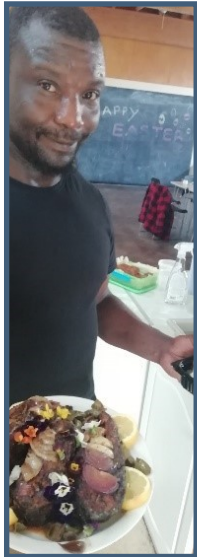
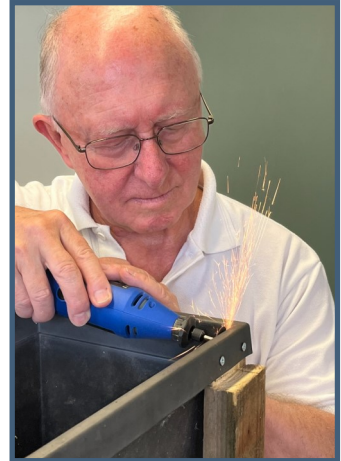


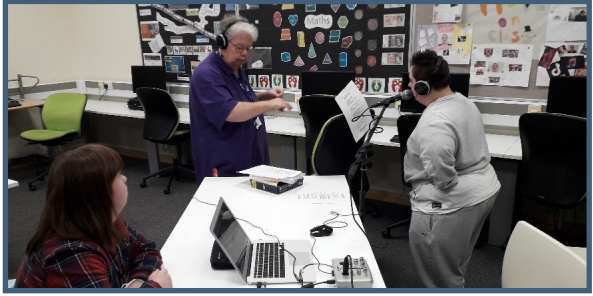
Good Things
Foundation



NEW CITY
COLLEGE

Services Gallery





@vaef01



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