

VOLUNTARY ACTION EPPING FOREST

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 / 2021



*Improving the quality of life for
people & communities*

www.vaef.org.uk

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Chief Officer Report— Jacqui Foile



To say we have experienced a different year may just be a slight understatement!

Pretty much everything changed in the world we knew in a matter of weeks and at VAEF we took the decision to step up to the challenge of supporting our communities in the best ways we could.

Remote working started on the first lockdown and the use of Teams and Zoom came into play. A Covid Response Partnership was developed with the Epping Forest District Council, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Rainbow Services in Harlow, Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford and St. Clare's Hospice. Together we formed the local Community Hubs. VAEF staff unable to carry out their usual duties were mobilised to cover essential tasks such as shopping and prescription collections for those required to shield. Other staff provided support logging and allocating the duties. Everybody pulled together and much was achieved to relieve many of the difficulties some of our most vulnerable residents were experiencing.

With such a huge demand for support we put out an urgent appeal for people to come forward to volunteer and were delighted to receive such a wonderful

response. Members of the public who suddenly had more time on their hands due to being furloughed or not doing the school run, signed up to help and became part of our Covid Response Community Hub. Some mentioned that before the pandemic they had never even thought about volunteering but definitely wished to continue in the future. A fabulous legacy out of something as awful as Covid-19.

During the year over 2,500 prescriptions were delivered and nearly 10,000 other interventions including advice, signposting, befriending, digital support and transport were provided.

"Thank you so much, the service I have received has been absolutely brilliant – you are all wonderful putting your lives at risk to save ours!!!!"

"I just wanted to express my grateful thanks to your team and in particular to the lady who delivered our medication yesterday – for myself and my husband."

Many communities formed their own Mutual Aid response groups also providing essential support for local people. VAEF was able to assist these groups with guidance on safeguarding, handling of money, good practice in volunteering and many other relevant topics. Literally thousands of people were supported, which against a backdrop of misery for the whole country, was an absolute pleasure and delight to do.

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“At Parsonage Court thirty three residents received some snacks and drinks, all were very grateful. It is not about what they are being given which is much appreciated but the fact that they are being thought about in these difficult times. What comes across to me is that the elderly think they are forgotten about and the fact that VAEF is keeping them in mind goes a long way.”

Funding was secured from the Big Lottery and the Essex Community Foundation to enable our offer of support and provide crucial PPE to keep everyone safe. It was a credit to both organisations that their processes were swift and straightforward. Also a huge thank you to Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council for releasing funding to support individuals and families struggling financially and to help prevent the spread of the virus. VAEF used the funding to purchase essential food and sanitary boxes packed and delivered by a local business, the Ongar Dairy. The company were amazing, also dedicating a donate to VAEF food boxes page on their website for clients which meant that even more vulnerable residents were supported with a delivery of fresh fruit, vegetables and household essentials.

“I don’t know how to thank you and your wonderful organisation for everything you have done for me. I really didn’t know where to turn for support as every phone number I was given I got the same answer – “We can’t help you, you’ll need to phone this number etc.” This went on for nearly a

week and I truly felt like giving up, my food was so low I just didn’t know how I was going to get through this awful situation until I came across VAEF’s details. After speaking with you, I felt like all my prayers had been answered, I couldn’t believe it when you said you were able to help me, and even though it was Bank Holiday Monday you managed to get someone to go and do some shopping for me. You are all angels and I truly feel blessed for all the help and support you have given me. Thank you. I would also like to say thank you for the most wonderful box of fresh fruit/veg that I received from Ongar Dairy.”

Moving out of the first lockdown and then quite quickly into the next it was very apparent that many were starting to feel extremely isolated and lonely. Telephone welfare calls were a small way in which VAEF staff and volunteers helped and incredibly nearly 10,000 were made.

“I just wanted to say thank you so much for your help at a time when I needed it most. My husband’s death came as a huge shock to me – sadly he died from Covid-19, and as you know I have no immediate family apart from my sister who herself is unwell. Your kindness and understanding meant so much, having you there to help organise the funeral car and flowers took so much anxiety away from me – I can’t



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thank you enough. I would also like to say a big thank you to your wonderful volunteer who phones me regularly each week to check that I am ok, she has been amazing too – what would I have done without you all!!!”

As we moved closer to Christmas it seemed that light might have been at the end of a very long tunnel as the media announced the Covid-19 vaccine was ready to go. Vaccine Centres were quickly established at St. Margaret’s Hospital and Buckhurst Way Clinic and clinical staff made available. All they needed now were some teams of volunteers to assist patients and steward the car parks. People yet again put themselves forward and our Volunteer Centre ensured each shift was covered with three or four volunteers often from 8am to 8pm weekdays and weekends. VAEF’s Harlow Volunteer Centre worked in partnership with Rainbow Services to do the same in our neighbouring district. Come rain or shine patients came forward and were vaccinated and day in day out, the volunteers were present to help. In Epping Forest from December 2020 to March 2021, fifty nine dates were covered with approximately 40 volunteer hours given each day.

Alongside VAEF’s Covid response our staff showed initiative in delivering some of our services in other ways and I hope you enjoy reading about this in our annual report. Trustees offered guidance and leadership and ensured good governance prevailed.

We will all have a story to tell about the time Covid-19 struck and although some of these will be very sad and painful, it will also be good to hear the positives. I will always remember how communities pulled together and neighbours became good neighbours. VAEF staff, trustees, and new and long standing volunteers took part in this slice of history in the most productive of ways and for that I would like express the sincerest of thanks. While we did not see this coming we could perhaps have predicted that the voluntary sector would play a significant role in supporting communities. It is just what we do!

Jacqui Föde



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Chair Report

Myrna Gilbert



What a year – an emotional rollercoaster both personal and economic.

The less optimistic amongst us had thought that by now we would be through the pandemic. The less optimist, or one might say more realistic, still think we have a way to go.

Looking back it is clear that VAEF has risen to the challenge in all areas. We made a decision to leave our Woodside offices in August 2020 and to move to a fully remote working model. There was much concern about this radical departure but with good technological support and a lot of hard work this has proved to be an excellent way of working. VAEF is now very much more flexible and able to respond faster to the new challenges that constantly present themselves. We look to the coming year to develop this model to include social interaction whilst retaining the benefits and flexibility of remote working.

VAEF has played a full part in Covid support and recovery whilst continuing our normal activities. We have had to be innovative in how to maintain these activities but with the support of technology and a lot of goodwill we have been able to do this within the Covid guidelines. We embraced video communication technology and have learnt how to hold effective meetings and to use this for more fun activities such as a very successful fund raising quiz. We made it a mission to make contact as personal as allowed, using video technology, telephone and doorstep

visits. We have maintained existing partnerships and formed new ones which we will develop in the future. Surprise packages were delivered as well as food and prescriptions. We are building on the experience and excellent feedback we have received about our work to develop new and challenging projects to further support and enhance the lives of the people in our community. Our website has the details of these activities and I would urge you to browse.

An objective for this year was to undertake a full strategic review of the organisation and to produce a plan for a sustainable, efficient and effective organisation that is able to respond to any crisis that may be thrown at us. We recognise that the charity world has become ever more professional and we have responded to this whilst not losing the personal touch. This review is well under way and the coming year should start to show changes and benefits.

We welcome to our Board, Lara Wing, as Treasurer. A qualified accountant she has brought a breath of fresh air to the Board as well as expertise and we are delighted to have her join us. Three trustees joined us just as we went into lockdown last year and I give them an additional mention as they have had a steep learning curve without the benefit of meeting people in person. All are now fully part of the VAEF family and by the time this report is published should have met up for the first time at our planned picnic.

I end with perhaps the most important, heartfelt thanks to our staff and volunteers, including trustees, who have given their all in this past year to support our community.

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

The focus of the Volunteer Centre this year has been to recruit volunteers to support those most vulnerable during the Covid-19 pandemic. Individuals carried out tasks such as shopping and prescription collections for residents as part of the Covid Community Hub Response in Epping Forest. Volunteers were also recruited and signposted to other organisations carrying out Covid response duties.

The Volunteer Centre subsequently recruited and co-ordinated volunteer stewards to support the Primary Care Network vaccination sites at St Margaret’s Hospital and Buckhurst Way Clinic to deliver vaccines to those shielding, 16+ clinically vulnerable and the over 50s.

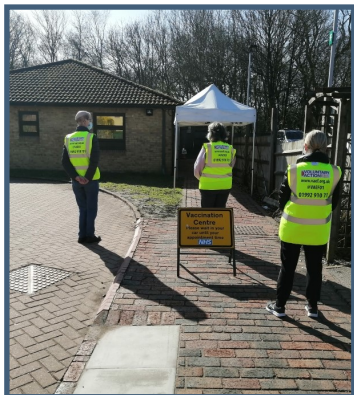
Statistics

- 308 members of the public registered with the Volunteer Centre to volunteer
- 414 introductions of potential volunteers to volunteering organisations were facilitated
- 170 people, almost twice as many as last year, confirmed that they had started volunteering

Looking forward

- Developing bite sized volunteering opportunities for those who want to support their community and have limited time available
- Supporting statutory organisations with volunteering programmes
- Facilitating a training course on Volunteer Management Skills for local community and statutory organisations
- Continuing to hold forums for organisations who host volunteers
- Developing a regular newsletter for VAEF internal volunteers
- Organising a celebratory thank you event to recognise the success of the VAEF Covid response volunteers

Volunteer Centres—Epping Forest and Harlow



Volunteer Centre Harlow

Achievements

Whilst the past year has been challenging, with so many groups having to curtail their activities, alternative volunteering roles were developed to meet the needs of the community. We were proud to be part of the Covid-19 response; recruiting so many keen volunteers for shopping, befriending and prescription collecting roles, with Vaccination Centre volunteers following when they were needed. The sense of community was massive and so heart warming.

Statistics

- 111 volunteers were placed with Covid-19 support groups during the year.

Looking forward

As the past year's volunteers inevitably reduce or cease their involvement due to returning to work, starting to travel etc. new volunteers are coming forward. As many groups have embraced the chance to provide services virtually, and intend for this option to remain even when face to face services resume, it is a chance for volunteers who don't have masses of time to volunteer to get involved in activities such as telephone befriending and virtual information sessions. We are looking forward to Employee Volunteering days to re-start and more micro volunteering opportunities to suit volunteers wishing to do one-off tasks.



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, Tesco Groundworks, Roding Rotary and Epping Forest Rotary Clubs.

Covid Response

Mid way through March Ace Activities were forced to close all on site activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, that did not stop us in providing a service to all our members. We arranged weekly phone and face time calls, a programme of fun weekly Zoom sessions, an interactive newsletter and sent out regular activity packs including gardening projects, quizzes, competitions and much more!

Achievements

Ace Gardeners

The Conservation team are based at the Grange Farm Centre (GFC) working in partnership with the Grange Farm Trust and the Essex Wildlife Trust.

Work did not stop in the community garden at Grange Farm. We were fortunate enough to receive a grant from the National Open Garden Scheme towards a poly tunnel which was put into place after the first lockdown. As our Ace Gardeners were the first to return to activities once the restrictions were lifted, the poly tunnel provided a great new space for them to build on their horticultural skills. We are now able to grow things from seed and expand the varieties of plants grown.

During the second lockdown we delivered gardening sets to all the members, including propagators and a variety of seeds. When our Ace Gardeners returned after restrictions were lifted they bought their plantings back, to be kept and looked after, ready for planting.

As well as working on the community garden the group are learning how to protect and preserve the natural environment and have been working on projects in the grounds of the GFC and in the surrounding Roding Valley Meadows.

Ace Arts

The Art never stopped during the lockdowns. We sent out lots of great art assignments and in turn our artists sent in photos of their completed masterpieces. The quality of work has been astounding and our members couldn't wait to get the next art project in the post! When our members returned they were rewarded with certificates and prizes

Ace Activities

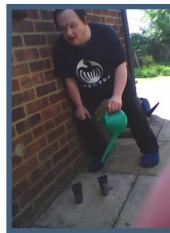
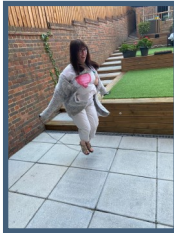
for their hard work during lockdown.

It was wonderful to be able to go back to our usual sessions after the closures. We were keen to make the most of the beautiful grounds at the GFC. Using nature as an inspiration the group have produced many stunning pieces of art work, incorporating the many plants and flowers surrounding the Centre.

Ace Hands up to Music

Another great success of our lockdown Zoom sessions has been 'Hands up to Music'. Trying to deliver music sessions by Zoom is a challenge as the timing is often out for all participants, especially if all trying to sing together. However, using sign language to sign and dance along to music has been an outstanding success and enjoyed by all. We also delivered a number of singing lessons to smaller groups. When we first returned to 'live' performances the sessions were all conducted out in the open air, some of the members said they felt as though they were at a festival!

Not all of our members could return until they were fully vaccinated but we managed to make a fab Christmas Video, using a montage of videos from home and at the Centre!



Ace Upcycling

The Ace Upcycling Project in partnership with Epping Forest Reuse and Riverside Timber Recycling Project (RTRP) has had another successful year. Based at Goss Springs in Epping, the scheme offers training and mentoring in restoring and upcycling furniture and wood. During lockdown our members continued with some upcycling projects at home and continued to investigate ideas for new projects on line.

Our ace up-cyclers are fully involved with decision making and we used the weekly lockdown face time meetings to plan and structure the new upcycling venture at Stapleford Abbots due to start in summer 2021. They used their experience over the last few years, to order tools, make health and safety recommendations and inform us what had worked well for them and how they think the project should be run.

Ace Cookery

Before lockdown we delivered a pilot cookery project with a £2,000 donation from Roding Rotary club. The pilot was very successful and we are hoping to introduce Ace Cookery Sessions as a regular activity later in the year. We were also able to deliver very popular

Ace Activities

Zoom Cookery Sessions during the second lockdown. Members got to choose a savoury dish one week and a sweet dish the next, the results were mouth-watering! These sessions were very well received and enjoyed by parent/carers and our members alike! Many of the Zoom sessions could not have taken place without the help of our members' parents and carers. The feedback from the parents was so positive, they told us that they looked forward to the Zoom sessions as much as our members.

Zoom for fun

We also had weekly Zoom sessions just for fun which included, bingo, quizzes, scavenger hunts, magic and animal shows. All a welcome distraction from the reality of lockdown and an opportunity for members to keep in touch with everyone and feel less isolated.

Quote from parent

'Thank you for your help over the past few months. It has been really hard for *** but you and Andrea have put a smile on his face' the Zoom classes has even helped me cope during these hard times.'

Ace Sports

We are very grateful to have partnered with Kate Bissell who delivered Zoom Sportability during lockdown. Kate delivered a fun sports session every Saturday and such was our members' enthusiasm we decided to introduce Ace Sports at Grange Farm as soon as we were able. Ace Sports is very new but delivers a wide range of fun sports activities for all abilities. It has now become a weekly activity; we are looking forward to developing this project further.

Statistics

- 264 sessions delivered
- 79 Zoom Sessions
- 720 telephone calls/video calls
- 961 Activity packs sent out
- 860 hours contributed by volunteer support staff in the last year

Looking forward

We want to deliver our service to a higher number of clients and make an even greater difference developing further sessions to increase the skills, well-being and health of clients supported. We are already contributing to clients' healthy living providing the physical activities in our project but would like to deliver a holistic package with clients being supported and learning from a wider range of activities in a structured daily programme including formal training.

Expansion of the Ace Upcycling using the purpose built workshop at the Riverside Timber Recycling with funding received from Essex Community Foundation.

Development of Ace Sports to reach a wider range of people.

Introduction of Ace Cookery.

Ain't No Mountain High Enough

Once again, we were delighted to receive funding from Youth Music to deliver another year of our wonderful music project. This was the fourth 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.

Achievements

We were pleased to resume our delivery in September of 2020, albeit under strict Covid protocols. 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. We masked, wiped, sprayed and sanitised in order to safely offer a number of individual/solo instruments, choir sessions and percussion groups and music technology. Our musicians made choices and we then managed to deliver our usual activities through to Christmas under these conditions.

Following the post-Christmas lockdown, we switched to online delivery of our activities which kept us in contact with our young people and maintained their interest. Although not ideal, these sessions were very popular and well-attended. We were well supported by Epping Forest College staff to make the technology work for us.

Our Facebook page continues to keep up a presence with pictures, films and other titbits to publicise the achievements of our young people.

Other achievements include:

A film of our choir performing Rocking Around The Christmas Tree, featured by Youth Music, Personal Achievement Folders for our young musicians
Pics and films uploaded to Facebook.

This has been a challenging year, both for the project staff and participants but one which has been extremely rewarding as we have worked together to overcome and to achieve great things.

Statistics

- 192 musical activity sessions including 8 taster sessions
- 22 musical activity sessions delivered online during Covid restrictions
- 3 songs produced in our song writing workshop

Looking forward

Our choir has recently been filmed by the college's Media Students and we hope to have a really professional-looking release very soon.



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

Ain't No Mountain High Enough 01992 910 701

Gardening

Looking out at a tidy garden is a great feeling. However, if you can no longer physically manage it yourself, it can become a worry, especially if you are housebound. Untidy gardens can attract interest from the wrong sort of people and invite unwanted callers. Our service provides gardeners and volunteers free of charge to help maintain gardens for Epping Forest District Council tenants who are elderly, disabled or vulnerable. We also provide a chargeable service to homeowners. Feedback shows how the work of this project contributes to independent living and wellbeing, helping to make clients feel safer in their homes and less vulnerable.

Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, it was not possible to work with our dedicated gardening volunteers during the past year. The clients have missed seeing the volunteers and often ask after them and will be pleased to see them when they return.

Achievements

- A full service was provided to clients throughout the lockdown periods in 2020/21.
- Continued funding from EFDC to tend the gardens of Council tenants.

Statistics

Tenants

- 111 Council tenants received 620 gardening visits
- 6 Garden clearances were completed

Homeowners

- 10 Homeowners received 39 gardening visits

Looking forward

We hope to be able to welcome back our gardening volunteers and to work with the VAEF Volunteer Centre to recruit more volunteers.



Gardening

Comments from VAEF Gardening clients

"I just wanted to say how hard Julie worked last time that she came and I wanted to thank her"

"Very professional. Not a bad word to say about them. I think Jina is wonderful, so kind and thoughtful. I especially want to say that."

"I can go into the garden now and feel confident I will not fall. Aubrey is brilliant. I enjoy the company."

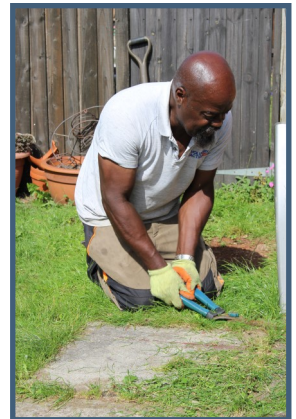
Comments from VAEF Gardening volunteers

"I've been a volunteer for a few years now. I joined because I love gardening and could see how my skills might be of benefit to those who can no longer care for their gardens. It's very satisfying to see how a bit of mowing, weeding and pruning can help put a smile back on someone's face."

"I always enjoy my VAEF gardening visits - you can see the instant improvement in the garden and the people we help are genuinely delighted by what we can do for them. It gets me out of the house, I'm part of a friendly team and it's good exercise too."

Comments from VAEF Gardening Administrator

"The service is more than a gardening project it's a lifeline for some of our clients. Not only do we tend their gardens making them accessible and safe to use, we are also a gateway to other services. We build strong supportive relationships with our clients, and they know that they can turn to us in times of need."



Community Handyman for Homeowners

This service supports homeowners in the district requiring a trustworthy, reasonable, reliable and police checked handyman 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.

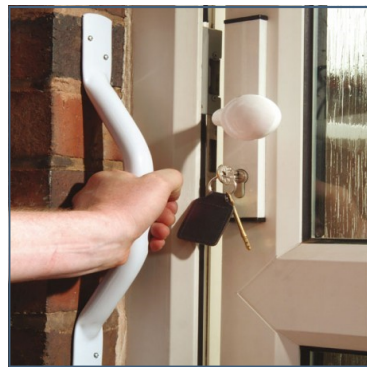
This year referrals have been slightly lower than usual due to restrictions around the prevention of spreading the Covid19 virus. Nevertheless, the Handyman has been busy assisting with the VAEF Covid Community Hub response.

Achievements

- 76 Epping Forest residents have been supported by this part time service working just 7 hours per week this year

Tasks Undertaken have included:

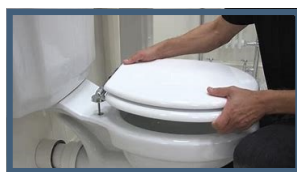
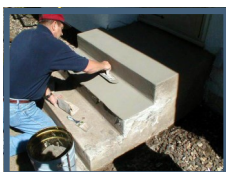
Fitting key safes, securing gates, fitting exterior solar lighting, fitting internal and external grab rails, securing carpets, jet washing, cementing blown walls, changing light bulbs, building flat pack furniture, securing fence panels, security checks, fitting door, gates and window locks, putting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



Handyman for Council Tenants

The Handyman service is a partnership between Epping Forest District Council and VAEF. The service 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.

This year was heavily impacted by the Covid-19 and the number of referrals was significantly less than half that of the previous year. Despite the pandemic, where safe to do so, urgent work such as light bulb changes were carried out with great care taken to ensure both the tenant's and handyman's safety. When the pandemic impacted heavily on delivering the service the Handyman was re-deployed within the community helping with shopping and prescription collections for those shielding.



Achievements

- Partnership work with EFDC Housing Management, 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
- All visits included an informal safety and security assessment with remedial action taken or advice given regarding falls prevention

Statistics

- Over 250 referrals received most of which were for multiple tasks equating to over 500 completed jobs
- 98% of faulty light bulbs were replaced within 48 hours
- 100% tenant satisfaction with excellent feedback

Looking forward

- To continue to explore the potential development of the Handyman service to include jobs for tenants currently outside of the remit but regularly requested such as garden pathway repairs, fencing replacement and redecoration of rooms
- To continue to seek publicity through EFDC publications, local press and VAEF social media streams to maintain our profile and ensure as many tenants as possible are made aware of the support available.

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 activity 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.

Sadly, on Thursday 12th March the decision was made to temporarily close all three of our Community Clubs within the Epping Forest district due to Covid-19. Our groups 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. During this time the Community Club staff were deployed to our Covid-19 response team to support the Epping Forest district community during the unprecedented times that were ahead of us.

Achievements

- Staff and volunteers supported the elderly, vulnerable, isolated and high risk individuals within the Epping Forest district with weekly shops and prescription collections throughout the pandemic
- Collection and delivery of between 600/700 free hot meals three times a week to individuals in the community and those in Sheltered Housing Schemes within the Epping Forest district during the first lockdown all provided by Compassion London and Food4all
- Supported 3Food4U with providing FREE essential food and household provisions to the Epping Forest district community
- Staff and volunteers supported the vaccination centres
- Additional funding from the Joseph & Lilian Sully Foundation to purchase bespoke Christmas hampers for clients
- Additional funding from Waitrose in Buckhurst Hill to purchase clients an Easter egg and hot cross buns
- Socially distanced doorstep visits have been made to many clients by project staff and volunteers

Community Clubs

Statistics

- 110 clients supported during pandemic
- 22 volunteers assisted the service
- 110 clients received two weekly welfare checks via befriending telephone calls from staff and volunteers
- 110 clients received a surprise box of cookies/cakes in October

Looking forward

- To restart the Community Club weekly activity groups and day trips
- To recruit additional volunteers to continue to enhance the project
- 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
- To continue to fundraise to further enhance the service



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.

Due to Covid-19 the service had to adapt, so all applications were completed via telephone.

Achievements

An increased number of referrals received from other agencies and health and social care professionals. These close working relationships allow us to achieve the best results for our clients.

Provided advice and completed applications for a range of benefits such as Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Carers Allowance, and Employment Support Allowance.

Statistics

231 people received advice and information on benefits from the service

102 benefit applications completed

90 successful benefit applications and awaiting news on the remaining twelve

Looking forward

Continuing to successfully secure appropriate benefits for clients which assists with improving health and wellbeing for the Epping Forest district.

Case Study

Miss T referred herself in to the project (VAEF was known to her as we had previously helped a relative with a benefit application) as she was unsure how to proceed with claiming benefits after losing her job. She was advised to claim Job Seekers Allowance and as Miss T did not own a computer, we registered her application on line and a telephone interview followed. Housing Benefit was also applied for and Miss T is now in receipt of both benefits. Miss T was then referred to our Covid Response team, she received grocery boxes for several weeks until her benefits were in place and she felt she could manage.

Personal Independence Payment - PIP

DWP Department for Work and Pensions



VAEF COVID RESPONSE



Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) quickly adapted its services from the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020 to make sure isolated and vulnerable residents in Epping Forest remained supported during the Covid-19 pandemic.

An amazing package of care was quickly organised to help residents that were self-isolating. Voluntary Action Epping Forest recruited volunteers to help with food shopping and delivery, collection and delivery of medical supplies, telephone befriending, advice and information support. Help was given to new and existing clients of VAEF with activities, regular wellbeing calls, benefits enquiries, gardening, community group support and volunteering.

As well as continuing with ongoing projects to help the community, Voluntary Action Epping Forest also managed to provide help directly in response to the Pandemic. VAEF:

- **Recruited 70 new volunteers**
- **Referred 120 volunteers to support local organisations**
- **Supported 16,749 local residents with shopping and food parcel deliveries**
- **Collected and delivered 2599 essential prescriptions**
- **Provided 922 other supportive interventions**
- **Made 9709 wellbeing calls to vulnerable clients**
- **Provided 2073 hours of volunteer support to local vaccination sites**

In addition, Voluntary Action Epping Forest were able to surprise elderly clients on milestone birthdays, (all socially distanced and in a safe way) to ensure those who were isolated and unable to share it with families continued to feel valued while remaining safe.

A number of factsheets were also created for membership groups and local organisations to give help and advice to people affected during this difficult time.

Partnerships were formed with local businesses such as Ongar Dairy, as well as ongoing partnerships with Epping Forest District Council, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and Essex Welfare Service.

Voluntary Action Staff and Trustee Board



Voluntary Action Staff

Jacqui Foile	Chief Officer
David Wright	Finance Officer
Debbie Smith	Executive Assistant and HR Co-ordinator
Charlotte Hyett	Project and Business Development Officer
Sally Panrucker	Learning Disability Officer
Maggie Gilchrist	Volunteer Co-ordinator Epping Forest
Marc Balkham	Furniture Re-cycle Project Worker/Community Music Practitioner
Diane Da Costa	Music Session Worker
Ray Harris	Learning Disability Sessional Worker
Della Nash	Volunteer Co-ordinator Harlow
Nina Gavens	Funding and Information Officer
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
Julie Graham	Gardener
Chris Bullock	Handyman
Mark Dalton	Community Handyman
Colin Rowell	IT Support

Voluntary Action Trustee Board

Chair	Dr Myrna Gilbert, Individual Member
Vice Chair	Gerry Smith, Essex Boys and Girls Clubs
Treasurer	Lara Wing, Individual Member
Jane Adair	Individual Member
Liz Went	Royal Gunpowder Mills
Olivia Maxfield-Coote	St John's Church, Epping
Sally Crone	Mind in West Essex
Margaret Emmens	Carers First
Gill Mann	Roding Rotary
Ann Haigh	Individual Member
William Ripley	Individual Member
Susi Pitura	Individual Member

Cllr Brian Rolfe

Adviser, EFDC

Our thanks and best wishes go to the following member of staff who left in 2020/21: Nicola Montague-Patel.

Voluntary Action Volunteers

Judy Adams
Jean Atkinson
Erica Alter
Howard Alter
Nigel Barber
Christine Benbow
Cliff Bissell
Alan Brett
Clare Gillian Brown
Alf Burgess
Peter Butler
Rosie Caldwell
Moirra Challen
Hayley Clark
Tim Copeman
Peter Cowup
Phyl Cowup
Daniel Craft
Evelyn Dalton
Christopher Daniel
Christine Dackombe
Samuel James Davey
Debra Davidson-Smith
Viv Davis
Doris de Souza Brady
Alison Eckley
Aaron Eckley
Andrew File
Sara Fisher
Steph Foile
Richard Ford
Janet Fox
Peter Franklin
Wendy Franklin
Margaret Gilchrist
Jeremy Godlonton
Gary Grant
Jill Green
Jeanette Griffiths
Martine Groman-Marks
Amy Hamilton

Julie Harvey
Charlotte Hay-Campbell
Anne Henwood
Vince Hillis
Barbara Hollingum
Nicola James
Patricia Johnson
Russell Joseph
Mia Kaye
Suzanne Kaye
Shane Kilcrann
Josephine Kilkenny
Laura King
Peter King
Tom Legge
Corinne Lewis
Kelly Lewis-Hall
Faye Ley
Veronica Santa Londono
Emily Lord
Joy McCann
Heather McNaughton
Lynn Mccole
Samantha McNeill-Meech
Denise Mason
Jacquelyn Matthews
Christine Janet Merritt
Alison Mortimer
Phillis Njuguna
Sandy Nicholls
Alexander Nicholls
Heather Olliffe
Lorraine Page
Nichola Palmer
Sally Panrucker
Margaret Parris
Diane Pegrum
Sharon Powell
John Price
Julie Quinn Smith
Dai Rees

Carol Richards
Phillip Richards
Linda Richardson
Lee John Robinson
Mick Robinson
Nick Robinson
Tina Robinson
Beverley Rose
Danie Rosen
Lisa Sagger
Lisa Sharp
Daniel Sharp
Bev Soutar
Sophia Smith
Susan Smith
Barbara Sweeting
Ian Thomas
Patricia Ruth Thompson
Joanna Toal
Gillian Tomkins
Glen Townsend
Pauline Townsend
Pauline Visvanathan
Ben Walker
Jon Whitehouse
Brenda White
Mandy Winter
Anthony Edward Wiseman



Voluntary Action Members

FULL MEMBERS

ACCURO

Bedford House Community Association
Carers First
Chigwell Parish Council
Chigwell Riding Trust for Special Needs
CRUSE Bereavement Care Epping Forest Client Services Committee
Epping Forest District Citizens Advice Bureau
Epping Forest Foodbank
Epping Forest Reuse
Epping Town Council
Essex Boys and Girls Clubs
Grant A Smile
Harlow Neighbourhood Watch
Headway Essex
Healthy Living Healthy Lives CIC
Lambourne End Ltd
Mind in West Essex
Ongar & Villages Voluntary Care
Ongar Music Club
PACT for Autism
Parish of All Saints with St Giles
RESTORE Community - Above & Beyond
Rotary Club of Roding
Royal Gunpowder Mills
Samaritans of Redbridge Branch
St Clare Hospice
St John the Baptist Church Epping
St Mary the Virgin Loughton
Stapleford Abbots Parish Council
Three Valleys Male Voice Choir
Tinder Sticks CIC
Waltham Abbey Youth 2000

LIMITED MEMBERS

Age Concern Essex
Hertfordshire Boat Rescue
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Leonard Cheshire Disability
Spark / Worth Unlimited

OPT IN

Active Essex
All Within The Mind
Buckhurst Hill Parish Council

Castle Point CVS
Chelmsford CVS
Christian Drama Resource Centre
Colchester Community for Voluntary Service
Community 360
Elbow Grease Co-operative Ltd
Employ-Ability
Epping Forest DC "Lifewalks" Walking for Health Scheme
Epping Forest District Council Community Development
Epping Forest District Council Community Services
The Epping Golf Course
Epping Forest Housing Aid Scheme
Epping Forest Community Transport
Essex Alliance
Essex Community Foundation
Field Studies Council
Forward Trust
Grange Farm Sports Centre
Home-Start Essex
House of Commons
Loughton Foodbank
The Loughton Lopping Endowment Fund
Loughton Town Council
Moreton Primary
National Jazz Archive
Nazeing Parish Council
North Weald Parish Council
The Ongar Academy
Ongar Primary School
Radio Forest Hospital Radio
Rotary Club of Epping
Rotary Club of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell
Roydon Parish Council
South Essex Rape & Incest Crisis Centre
South Loughton Cricket Club
Southend SAVS
Stapleford Tawney Parish Council
St Paul's Harlow Town Centre and St Mary's Little Parndon
Uttlesford CVS
Valerie Young Counselling Service
A Vision of Britain
Volunteer Centre Harlow
Voluntary Sector Training / Community 360
Waltham Abbey Town Council
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
Epping Forest College
Epping Forest District Council
Essex Community Foundation (ECF)
Essex County Council
Good Things Foundation
Grange Farm Trust
Harlow District Council
High Sheriff Award
NAVCA
NHS West Essex CCG
Jack Petchey Foundation
Joseph and Lilian Sully Foundation
Loughton Town Council
National Foundation for Youth Music
National Garden Scheme
Police Property Act
The Henry Smith Charity



Funded By



ESSEX
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



West Essex
Clinical Commissioning Group



Working together for



THE
JOSEPH & LILIAN SULLY
FOUNDATION



LOTTERY FUNDED



The
Henry Smith
Charity
founded in 1628



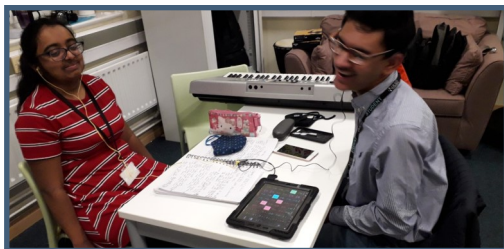
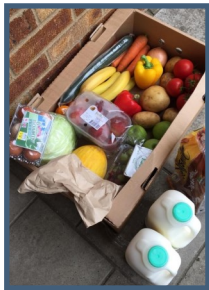
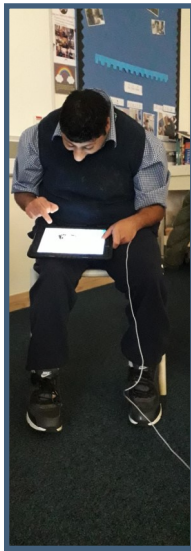
navca
local focus national voice



Loughton Town Council



Services Gallery





@vaef01



Our
community

From schools to work with our
community to causes



CONTACT US
01992 910 701

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