

The Eynsham Heroes volunteer group was set up by Sean Grace in March 2020 to provide a safety net for the community in the face of increased isolation and confusion caused by the unfolding pandemic. Key principles were to keep things simple, facilitate generosity that already existed in the village and support local organisations and businesses.

The Eynsham Heroes have provided a platform for volunteering and community spirit in the form of 10 community WhatsApp groups. These groups have facilitated better communication with neighbours, to allow those who were isolating or in need of help to ask for help from their neighbours. It is hoped that these groups may serve the residents for years to come allowing neighbours to share news, communicate and perhaps even organise street parties when this is all over.

Representatives from each group have worked together as an admin team, coordinating with volunteers in each WhatsApp group to share information and updates with residents, fundraise for the Community Larder and deliver prescriptions, shopping, leaflets, local service information, Eynsham News and medical test kits (in collaboration with EMG). There are too many standout residents to thank for involvement and support but certainly a special mention must go to Laura Stringer for her PR and the Christmas campaign, Andy Goodwin for organising the distribution of Eynsham News and helping with the Christmas vouchers scheme, Robert Barry, Claire Phillips and Janet Stewart for their regular work in administering help requests and prescription runs, and Bob and Pam Thiele for their continuous efforts in coordinating and running the Community Larder.

The Eynsham Good Neighbour Network has also provided a fantastic service to residents responding to calls throughout the week and across the year. It has been referring volunteering requests to our admin team who have been sourcing volunteers in response. Without its involvement the response would have been far more challenging.

The Eynsham Community Larder has grown with some 35 households currently in receipt of the service, and more than 50 having been helped overall. The Community Larder has received over £14,200 in community donations plus £4,800 from WODC, as well as additional donations of £5,250 for the Christmas campaign including the Christmas 'local business vouchers'. In total, 47 adults and 68 children received a Christmas treat box to make sure everyone could have a special Christmas.

In anticipation of the end of the pandemic we are reviewing future options for the network we have created. The current preferred option is to look to integrate the group with other volunteering services in the village. We are also considering a slight readjustment to become a volunteering hub for the community, as the WhatsApp groups have over 600 members who have shown willingness to volunteer, ~~and~~ -I- this could then be a way for all organisations to source help or publicise their projects in the village into the future.

The Eynsham Heroes admin team