



What a different year it has been for Neighbourcare, in what has been a very difficult year.

We started in March, asking the doctors' surgery how we could best help them with the Covid crisis. They wanted help to sort and deliver 120 outstanding prescriptions in order to reduce the footfall in the surgery. Mark and Lesley Foden got to work sorting these on their dining table and 10 amazing volunteers delivered them. This then morphed into our new prescription delivery service, set up and led by Chris Sketchley, with Mark Foden's technical assistance, and working in partnership with the surgery. This has involved a huge amount of work by Chris and his dedicated prescription team, delivering over 5,000 prescriptions and driving over 9,000 miles, initially over a huge rural area as it included Kintbury surgery as well, which provided quite a few navigational challenges.

We then also set up the Coronavirus community support management team, with the existing Neighbourcare committee as well as Christine Dale, Clive Sanders and Paul Farrington. This resulted in our starting a Coronavirus Community Support newsletter led by Mark Rand and a wonderful team of contributors. They've produced 36 newsletters of government guidance, local information and ideas to keep us occupied, which we've all needed.

When we put out the call for more volunteers, we were overwhelmed by the response having over 100 people come forward within a few days. What a fantastic community we live in.

With people self-isolating, we started a shopping delivery service with a fantastic team of 14 volunteers completing over 60 trips, frequently at short notice. It seems a distant memory now when the supermarket shelves were empty and toilet roll, pasta and flour were nowhere to be found apart from in our 2 amazing local shops, who continually came up trumps. We also helped the Foodbank with their deliveries over the summer holidays.

We were very aware that a lot of our existing clients may be isolated and vulnerable at the beginning of Covid, so we called each one of them to check they were ok and to ensure they knew how we could help them if needed. Led by Paul Farrington, we had 11 brilliant volunteers who undertook regular wellbeing calls to initially 40 clients. Paul was also great at identifying some of our new volunteers to help with legal issues and bereavement support.

Unfortunately, Lesley decided to step down as Chair and Nicole as a co-ordinator earlier in the year, after many years with Neighbourcare, we will miss them both. On a happier note, it's has been fantastic to have recruited 3 new co-ordinators – Diana Sketchley, Gayle Ashby and Lisa Banwell to work with Frieda King and Chris Sketchley.

We also took the plunge with a new central telephone number; it hasn't been perfect or without its glitches but has given us the opportunity to more evenly distribute the calls between the co-ordinators and actually, give them some days off.

After suspending driving clients for a while, we restarted this in July with our new driving policy, to ensure we did all we could to keep our drivers and clients safe when driving to medical appointments and to their Covid vaccinations. We've also helped the GP surgery with phoning patients to arrange their 2nd Covid jab and the administration of vaccines at the Racecourse.

Of course, none of the huge amount of work we've achieved over this last year would have been possible without all of the truly wonderful volunteers, who always go the extra mile. So, a massive thank you to so many in the community who have supported us in such a variety of ways.

Sarah Garland - Chair