



Lifesavers: Volunteer Cledia Mastel is among those preparing food for local people in need.

Hundreds of volunteers help their neighbours through the lockdown

By Janet Maitland

All over East Finchley people are responding to the pandemic by helping their neighbours... people they may have only said hello to before... by going to the supermarket for them. And hundreds are volunteering their services through the support groups that have blossomed across the community.

If you are struggling to cope with food shopping, picking up prescriptions, dog walking, or just plain loneliness, there are people out there who want to help.

"We have 288 volunteers who live in East Finchley," said Sophia Acton, from the Barnet branch of **Mutual Aid**, one of thousands of groups that have grown organically all over the country since just before the lockdown started. "When people us ask for help, we put their postcode on our map to find the volunteers who live closest to them. I'm so thankful to our volunteers who find the time to help us even though many are looking after families and working full time themselves."

Alison Roberts of **East Finchley Covid-19 Support group**, which has nearly 500 volunteers covering the whole of N2 urges anyone who is stuck

at home for whatever reason, whether self-isolating or maybe alone with small children, to contact them for assistance.

"Our volunteers are able to do grocery shopping, walk pets, collect prescriptions or just offer a friendly chat to enable people to keep in touch with the outside world", she said. "We've had some lovely feedback from the people we've helped and hope that lasting friendships have been made along the way."

The **Finchley Covid 19** support group offers shopping services, prescription pick-ups, cooked meals and moral support, and twice a week delivers 60 meals to Homeless Action Barnet. Organiser Pravashini Ramsamy has 170 volunteers covering Finchley and surrounding areas, including East Finchley. "We don't know what the future holds, but what I know is the volunteers have

shown limitless generosity and kindness and my faith has been restored in humanity," she said.

WhatsApp groups are also providing a lifeline for local residents. Ask a neighbour if there is one for your street.

Pings of the group chat fill the silence

By Hamish Hallett

In unusual times, the people of East Finchley have stepped up. Their closeness, togetherness and tight-knit bonds have all been reinforced by the coronavirus crisis.

And it's been made much easier to keep in touch by mobile phone group apps like WhatsApp. The Beech Drive chat group is just one example of dozens around N2 and it has contributed to people's lives in so many positive ways over the last few weeks.

Beech Drive neighbours have organised donations to the Royal Free Hospital and to the Finchley food bank. Contributions include non-perishable items and offering a baked cake to the hospital workers.

It didn't stop there. Many of the residents have provided help to those stuck in quarantine by collecting vital medicines and keeping an eye on households that may already be prone to loneliness. There are people who are by themselves or cannot reach their loved ones for long periods.

Sharing of information has soared. From links to food companies who deliver essential items, suggestions of plumbers, sharing news of

Lockdown advice for the elderly from Age UK

By Daphne Chamberlain

Age UK say they will be monitoring any changes in care for older people following the recent Coronavirus Act. The Act allows local authorities to prioritise care needs, in order to ensure that the most urgent and serious are met.

This may mean changes to care provision and/or delay in some assessments. However, local authorities must still do as much as they can to carry out their duty to meet care needs.

Age UK say that the Government has already listened to their concerns by introducing six-monthly reviews to the new rules.

Keeping in touch

Anyone worried can ask for advice on 0800 169 6565, but be warned that this line is always busy. Age UK are aware of this, and ask you to keep trying. The line is open 8am to 7pm.

If your main problem is isolation, they recommend the Silver Line on 0800 470 8090 for "a cheerful chat, day or night".

Meanwhile, the advice for families, friends and local contacts includes finding time for that cheerful chat. Make a check-up call friendly as well as practical.

There is also advice on the Age UK website about introducing older people to technology, including a guide to video calling.

Obviously, that will not be possible or feasible in many cases, but don't forget a good old-fashioned letter, home-made cards, postcards and small gifts.

Campaigns

Regarding the friend in the corner of the living room: no action needs to be taken on television licences until August. This follows an Age UK campaign.

There is another petition, one for care to be free, fair, and available to everyone when they need it. This gathered over 100,000 signatures, but is not being presented until the present crisis is over.

For more information, please see www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns or @ageukcampaigns on Twitter.

First line of defence

Plastics firm Talbot Designs, in Long Lane, N3, has been racing to meet demand for its clear counter-top screens that can be installed to help protect shop workers who are serving customers.

Child/Adolescent counsellor
Hannah Grossmith-Dwek BACP

I am an experienced, accredited counsellor offering support for young people and their families. Based in East Finchley

Please contact me on: 07855601335
Hannah@gdwek.com
<http://www.hgd-counselling.com>

Support and assistance in N2

East Finchley Covid-19 Support (whole of N2)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/EastFinchleyCOVID19

Email: efcovid@gmail.com

Helpline: 0843 886 5900

Finchley Covid 19 (Finchley and surrounding areas)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/657957791673470

Email: finchleycovid@yahoo.com

Helpline: 07951 044 702

Mutual Aid (UK-wide, organised by ward)

For help: helpme.mutualaid.co.uk

To volunteer: signup.mutualaid.co.uk

Answerphone: 020 31 377 488

Email: admin@mutualaid.co.uk

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