

Over Wallop and Volunteering during the Covid-19 Crisis

What a strange time the last month has been. We have all had to adjust to the social distancing guidelines and the elderly and vulnerable have had an even bigger challenge with self-isolation.

Kate Dixon, Chair of Over Wallop Parish Council and the council members, very early on in the crisis saw that there may be a huge need for volunteers willing to help with things such as essential shopping, prescription collection and even to be at the other end of the telephone for a chat with someone who is feeling very isolated. Wallops Good Neighbours (WGN) was approached to facilitate this as we already had the appropriate systems in place and we were delighted to be able to help.

I'm sure that many of you know of the service WGN provide to all of our villages and may even have used us before, be it for a trip to one of the hospitals, a visit to the dentist or even to do essential shopping. Our drivers receive expenses for fuel which we normally fund through the voluntary donations made by our clients. During this crisis we have decided that we don't want our clients to make any donations and Over Wallop Parish Council has very generously given us a grant to enable this.

The Parish Council organised a leaflet drop to all households in Over Wallop asking for new volunteers and the response has been incredible. We have been able to add 45 new volunteers to our current list of 26 volunteer drivers. Our thanks go to them. We have contacted all of these new volunteers to ask if they would be prepared to be DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked. They don't need to be DBS checked to help out in this crisis but if they are they can then volunteer for all of the services that we offer. Without a DBS check the Good Neighbours Network (our governing organisation) has insisted that a volunteer cannot handle money/cheques from a client, which is how some of our elderly villagers will want to pay for their shopping. I am delighted to say that we have been able to start the DBS checking process for 20 of these volunteers and that 11 of them are now fully checked and provided with their ID badges, the rest are still being processed.

WGN has been aided in producing our application packs by Stephen Baldock on behalf of St Peter's Church. Stephen very kindly printed 300 forms for us on the church printer; we had been using a small desktop printer which was a very slow process!

After all this wonderful response from community minded villagers we are ready to help as needed. Family, friends and immediate neighbours have also been doing all they can for anyone who needs help. What a wonderful testament all of this is to the benefits of living in our village.

No one knows quite how this crisis will develop but we are now in a very strong position to be able to deal with any increase in requests for help.

Please remember that we are available for requests for assistance from residents in Over Wallop, Middle Wallop, Nether Wallop, Kentsboro', Jacks Bush and Palestine.

Please phone the WGN on 0800 612 7647.

Sarah Rayner, Wallops Good Neighbours