

Help on The Narth

Report to the Village Hall Committee AGM

Help on The Narth (HoTN) was established in March by Larry Stoter and Marilyn Dunkelman, from the Village Hall Committee, and Jane Gilliard, the committee's Safeguarding advisor, as a response to the Covid-19 emergency. The aim was to act as a central support service for the village during the national lockdown, recruiting volunteers and helping residents in any way necessary to protect the village's more vulnerable residents, assist the local health services and minimise the risk to everyone in the village by reducing the opportunities for contact with the virus.

Volunteers were requested to complete an online form, and anyone requiring assistance was given a choice of methods to contact the group, by telephone, email or using a web form. A collaborative, protected work area was set up on a shared Google drive, with a dedicated email address and a spreadsheet database to record names and contact details of volunteer helpers and people requesting support.

A meeting was held with Trellech surgery, and contact made with other local surgeries. At the surgery's request, a prescription collection service was organised to be used by all residents in the village, to minimise risk to the health professionals by limiting the number of people visiting the premises. A regular, twice weekly collection was arranged with Trellech surgery, with a team of volunteers who were known to the dispensary, and collections were organised as required from other surgeries and pharmacies in the area.

A system of allocating volunteers to do shopping for residents in the vulnerable groups (the 'clients', for want of a better term) was established. In some cases, volunteers were allocated to individual clients, in other cases requests were managed on an ad hoc basis. In addition to the arrangements set up by HoTN, many residents formed private support arrangements with their neighbours. In all cases we offered a solution to the problem of residents paying for shopping done by others by using the Village Hall bank account (with the unanimous approval of the Village Hall Committee) to pay volunteers by bank transfer on submission of an expense claim. Clients who could pay online then reimbursed the Village Hall directly, and other arrangements were made to collect cheques or cash from clients without access to online banking. There was no problem with debt collection, all clients were prompt with payments and the balance of the account with the Village Hall at the end of the year was zero.

A set of protocols was established to safeguard volunteers and clients, including procedures for delivering prescriptions and shopping, financial procedures and data protection. Connections were also made with the County Council and in particular their team established to supporting local volunteer groups, who offered advice on these protocols and other support.

Another important aspect was providing information to the village, achieved through printed newsletters (distributed by volunteers to all houses in the area), frequent emails to the Village Hall's mailing list (i.e. residents who had requested to be sent village news emails) and a web site page of 'Lockdown News' which was updated regularly from a variety of sources. The community Facebook page was also used extensively. Lockdown News included details of shops that were offering home deliveries, click and collect services as well as information from the County Council on services available, news about rubbish and recycling collections, and the village bus service.

As supermarket home delivery slots became very difficult to book, and local food shops were unable to keep up with demand for home deliveries, we contacted Evans of Monmouth and Wigmore's Bakery and arranged combined deliveries of fresh food and staples (from Evans) and Wiggies' baked

goods to the Village Hall garage. These were then distributed to clients by our volunteer team. A separate Shop on The Narth email was established, and Tricia Porter recruited to run the ordering side of that operation.

The response to our request for volunteers was incredible. 58 people put their names down, and most were allocated some tasks. Sharing the workload was one of the difficulties we faced, with so many people wishing to help, organising such a large team was time consuming. The shared Google drive became an essential tool.

In July we produced some statistics which are reproduced opposite. These just cover the period to 15th July, and the numbers continued to rise after that date.

As lockdown came to an end, services were gradually wound down. Prescription collections ceased on 31st August and alternative arrangements found for the remaining clients in need of support. In one case Social Services stepped in to help, in another the clients' family organised professional carers. Many of the private arrangements between residents continue, and the infrastructure established is still in place should it be needed again.

Evans stopped their deliveries to the Village Hall when demand dropped below their minimum level, at which point we had already ascertained that the Evans customers were able to source their own supplies. Wigmore's bakery continue to deliver to the Village Hall and while there is sufficient demand this will continue, although after July customers were asked to collect their own orders from the hall's garage.

We all know that the Covid-19 lockdown was a very difficult time for the country, and the emergency continues to affect us all. Our village, however, showed a tremendous community awareness and established a mutual support network that we can all be proud of. The County Council were particularly impressed. On a request for videos showcasing volunteer effort, two of our volunteers submitted films which were used as exemplars by the Council. Daniel Starsmore filmed the process of collecting and distributing prescriptions for residents, and Sarah Pilkington showed a shopping trip on behalf of an elderly client.

Feedback from the village has been extremely positive, and we hope that this community spirit will carry us through to the end of this dreadful time.

Marilyn Dunkelman
5th October 2020



Help on The Narth Financial Statement at 30th September 2020

For the period 20th March to 30th September

<u>Income</u>			<u>Expenditure</u>		
Shopping done for Clients					
Repayments from clients	£3,943.38	<u>£3,943.38</u>	Payments to volunteers	£3,943.38	<u>£3,943.38</u>
Shop on The Narth					
Payments received for goods ordered	£2,807.69		Payments to Wigmore's Bakery	£2,536.10	
Donation towards expenses	£2.00	<u>£2,809.69</u>	Payments to Evans of Monmouth	£166.60	
			Expenses incurred (ordering system)	£106.99	<u>£2,809.69</u>
Total income	<u>£6,753.07</u>		Total expenditure	<u>£6,753.07</u>	