

Devizes Rough

The Newsletter of Devizes Opendoors
Autumn 2020

Volunteer Meetings

Unfortunately due to the Corona Virus outbreak we have had to postpone all volunteer meetings for the foreseeable future.

It is uncertain when we will be able to restart in the format that we were used to, but we hope before too long to be able to invite you all to an online meeting.

Volunteer Training

Regular training has been on hold until now, but we hope to plan in some essential volunteer training sessions for the autumn.

We will update everyone once some firm plans are in place.

Once more we have been amazed by the support and generosity of local people in this very challenging time and a huge THANK YOU GOES TO:

The many individuals who have donated food, clothing and household items.

Sue Elks and various family members and friends for dropping off surplus food once a week.

The Wyvern Monday Zumba Group for their recent donation of £100.

Jeannette von Berg for her very generous donations of food and drinks for our guests.

Calne Town Council for donating 100 face masks to us, at a time when it was extremely difficult for us to obtain them.

Update from Hilary

We are pleased to say that following a meeting with the Parish Rooms Committee, and undertaking the necessary COVID-19 risk assessments that we are now able to operate from outside the Parish Rooms, giving out hot food, takeaway food items and clothing. At the moment we are making rough sleepers our main priority, but the surplus that we have from supermarkets is available to a wider group. We can also once again give out clothing and bedding, and continue to offer our postal service, laundry tickets and use of the mobile phone for contact with Turning Point and Probation, for example. Angie is on hand for advice and guidance and assistance with universal credit claims, PIP assessments, court hearings and debts. The Housing Options Team from Wiltshire Council attend regularly and Turning Point are now able to bring their van over and park it in Devizes Museum Car Park, so a big thank you to them, as this is a great help. Obviously, the safety of all is absolutely essential and so we have to make sure that correct PPE is used, and all equipment is sanitized at the end of each session. It is a step in the right direction, and we hope to be able to use inside the hall from the beginning of October, albeit with a broadly similar service.

Despite the difficult circumstances, there is some heartwarming good news about a number of our guests from Angie:



Since the beginning of lockdown we have been able to assist three of our guests to gain their own tenancies, two in a house together in

Devizes and one in Westbury. Another three guests have moved from their supported housing in Devizes and have gained tenancies in Trowbridge. Some of these are being supported by the tenancy sustainment officer. He contacts them on either a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

We are working closely with members of the Housing Options Team, Rough Sleepers Team and outreach workers to assist several guests with their Housing issues. One guest who has chosen to live a life on the water has been able to upgrade his boat and couldn't be happier.

We have also supported guests in the following ways:

- ◇ registration with a local doctor's surgery
- ◇ opening bank accounts
- ◇ court hearings
- ◇ benefits and debt management (in conjunction with advisors at the Job Centre)

New Member of Staff

Following a recruitment process and interviewing four candidates, we are delighted to say that we have appointed a new part-time team member, Heather Serjeant, who joins us on the 1st October. Heather's role is that of Befriender Coordinator. She comes to us with a wide range of experience including that of volunteer chaplain with young people at Alabare, and within the prison service. We look forward very much to Heather joining our team.



Team Contact Emails

For information on any of the items in the newsletter please contact us by email.

- **General Volunteer Enquiries:**
volunteers@devizesopendoors.org.uk
- **John—Chair of Trustees**
admin@devizesopendoors.org.uk
- **Hilary—Coordinator**
coordinator@devizesopendoors.org.uk
- **Angie—Deputy Coordinator**
info@devizesopendoors.org.uk



Other Useful Numbers

County Housing Options
01225 718005

Impact (Turning Point)
01225 341520



What We Do

Devizes Opendoors runs sessions three times a week at St. John's Parish Rooms, Long Street, Devizes. With no statutory funding it relies on grants, donations and fund raising. It serves more than 50 hot takeaway meals a week, provides a safe meeting place, friendship and support for homeless and vulnerable adults.

In Other News...

It has certainly been a challenging time for our guests, but let us not forget the impact on volunteers too. I asked Caroline Reid, a regular contributor to Devizes Rough, how things had been for her, and this is what she had to say:



So yeah, this pandemic and me. I'm not a medical person and I don't have any special insights on this extraordinary experience we are all sharing. And I'm not a political wonk, so I don't have much to say about the various controversies bombarding us. I've just thought a lot about my own reactions.

For one thing, I realise I love a quiet life. It was bliss in March and April to hear silence in the village where I live close to a busy main road. Silence and bird song. Wind in the trees. Laughter from the neighbour's kids playing in their back garden. Cows mooing in the farm across the road.

And I love having unscheduled time. Being available for whatever comes up. Like a phone call from a friend. An email needing a quick reply. Texts. Skype or Zoom calls. And, oh! the reading! Cups of tea on the back deck. A sudden urge to make bread. Or soup.

And yes, all those things were part of my life before Covid-19 arrived. But they were ringed around with scheduled commitments, squashed between to-dos. And they were becoming a pain in the neck. I had forgotten how to enjoy them.

What I miss most is hugs. And handshakes. And I notice how ingrained is the habit of leaning forward for a hug or holding out a hand for a handshake. Conquering those habits took time. I wonder at what point hugs and handshakes will be as natural as they were in February.

Being available for whatever comes up has also meant being available to listen. Not just to the sounds of the countryside around me. But to people. Friends, family, people who post on Facebook, the radio. There's a lot of pain in people's voices these days. The pain of grief, frustration, anger, anxiety. What do I do? I pray. A lot. Very often at 3am. Strange what happens when I don't have to be up before 8am!

Strange. Now there's a word! Everything is strange these days. Though going into Devizes is a lot less strange than it was in April, when I might be the only person walking up the Brittox. The only car driving through the Market Place. How long will it all remain strange? I don't know.

Privileged. Another word loaded with meaning these days. I'm acutely aware of how privileged I am. My heart goes out to people who live in high rise blocks, in city centers. I marvel at how young families must adapt, how people with chronic health problems suffer in these times, at how our key workers keep going under great pressure, at how many suffer in fragile financial and housing situations. Circumstances are difficult, challenging. But people are creative, adaptable, resilient...

Thank God for people! And thanks to you Caroline, for sharing your thoughts with us.

Play Boules with your Bubble!

We are very grateful to Nicola Sage, who previously came to our assistance when we had large quantities of clothing that needed to be moved on, for organising a boules match, with the proceeds coming to us.

The event will take place on 26th and 27th September, with booking by the hour at £10 for 2-6 players.

- ◆ SLOTS 10am—4pm each day
- ◆ UMPIRE & EQUIPMENT provided
- ◆ No previous experience required
- ◆ Players must be over 18 years of age
- ◆ PRE-BOOKING ESSENTIAL
- ◆ Spectators @ £5 per head : BYO chair and refreshments



BOOKING: Email sagesarum@btinternet.com
ENQUIRIES: Nicky 07887 684420

We hope to see some of you there!