

Volunteering News from



New Members

A big welcome to all those new members who have joined RSVP West since the last edition of Volunteering News. We hope you are enjoying your chosen activity.

Personnel Changes

We are delighted to announce that **Karen Gill** has joined us as our new **Schools Organiser** for North Somerset.

We are sorry that **Mina Malpass** has had to step down as one of the Bristol Schools Organisers after being elevated to be **Chair of Age UK**, Bristol. Mina has been an outstanding member of the Schools Organisers team for many years, always highly professional and a source of good advice for all of us - hopefully she will return!

We are delighted to announce that **Monica Berry**, who has been a West Bristol schools volunteer, has kindly agreed to take on the **Schools Organiser role**.

We also welcome **Pam Eastley** as the new 'Volunteering News' Editor - Pam is our South Gloucestershire Schools Organiser. Pam is joined in the editing team by **Mary Duval** and **Tim Davies**, both **schools volunteers** - we are very grateful they have agreed to take on these additional roles.

Please send your copy and photographs to newsletter@rsvp-west.gov.uk

Recruitment

Please keep telling your friends and family about RSVP. Many new members join via our own website and others, but we know that word-of-mouth is still by far the most effective recruitment method.

Newsletter Distribution

Please let Office Coordinator Hilary office@rsvp-west.org.uk have the names of people (with their email addresses) who are happy to be added to our Newsletter External Contacts list.

Covid-19

Most of our normal activities have been suspended during the crisis but we are looking forward to getting back to them as soon as is safely possible. In the meantime, many of you have been involved, with other local charities, in trying to maintain contact with clients via telephone and video-conferencing. Please let us know of any issues regarding Covid-19 where you think we may be able to help.

Happy Volunteering!



Bob Maggs
office@rsvp-west.org.uk
Regional Coordinator

Are you hoarding junk?

Junk email, that is.

Occasionally Hilary (our Office Coordinator) sends a mailshot out to RSVP members using something called Mailchimp. An example is an email which will allow you to download this very newsletter. These emails have a sender of bob.maggs@rspv-west.org.uk who is our Regional Coordinator but there is a chance that, if you do not ordinarily receive emails from Bob, they may end up in your "Junk" or "Spam" folder. Please check and, if this is the case, could you add Bob to your list of safe senders? You'll then be sure not to miss any important information or news.

By the way, you can always opt out of receiving emails from RSVP West, either by clicking the "Unsubscribe" link in the email or by dropping an email to Hilary at hilary.roberts@rspv-west.org.uk.

Fundraising

Our fundraising efforts are almost entirely concentrated on the private sector and Trusts and Foundations. Please let Bob Maggs know of any person or organisation that would like to receive a polite begging letter. All donations are made to our charity 'Friends of RSVP West Region'.

Care Home Lay Assessors and Lockdown

As will be obvious to everyone, our Lay Assessors have not been able to visit care homes since lockdown began.

However, the problems associated with care homes in lockdown created a national scandal when the consequences of care home residents not being protected came to light.

From our many many visits to care homes in Bristol we are only too aware of the very worrying plight of many care home residents.

We have been meeting regularly with Lay Assessors by Zoom over the last few months and their continuing commitment and involvement has been inspiring.

All the current team of lay assessors have joined these meetings and have shown a strong resolve to carry on with our work until we can visit care homes again.

Whilst needing to ensure our volunteers and care home residents are safe, we know that our visits are important for oversight of care homes is badly needed.

We have also been talking with the Lay Assessors about our efforts to meet and work with Bristol City Council social care managers to try to bring the need to do more about the appalling quality of life for many residents who face isolation, boredom and have severe anxiety.

Ken Dolbear



No visits by Lay Assessors



Zoom meetings with Lay Assessors



We want to find ways to improve the quality of life in care homes



Thoughts from an imagined care home resident

"They say it's the virus.

Everything is different. The staff are kind, but very busy so I don't see them much.

They say it's the virus.

My best friend Betty has gone; I don't see Henry, Irene or Jean any more. I am in my room nearly all day.

They say it's the virus.

When I go to the lounge I sit alone with one or two others across the room. My son

and daughter don't visit me anymore. I saw them through the window last week.

I haven't seen those nice people who used to come to my care home to sing and dance, and others to help us exercise and have fun, for quite a long time.

They say it's the virus.

The staff here seem very busy and worried. They try to reassure me. I can't see their faces. They wear plastic coats

which cover them all over, and wear masks and plastic shields so it is hard to know who is who. When all this started the staff sometimes said they didn't have the special clothes and they seemed very worried and anxious. They said it was the government. I am bored and frightened."

Ken Dolbear

Bristol Support Hub

RSVP West is a member of the Bristol Support Hub that now has 30+ charities and voluntary agencies all working together to help older people in Bristol to

cope with the impact of Covid-19.

It has been inspiring to be part of the Hub and to hear of all the innovative ways that

the four different agencies have developed, to provide support and to keep in contact with their members and older and vulnerable people living in Bristol.



A way of bringing older, lonely and isolated people together.

Many of the activities developed during lockdown are only available via the internet. **Meet up calls**, have been set up for older people who use the telephone to take part in group conversations. Currently the calls are free.

Each telephone group has a call leader, one of our volunteers, who welcomes everyone when they phone in to join the call. The conversations can be just chats or topics can be agreed for example; 'books I read as a child'.

Feedback from existing groups is amazing: 'it has been a life saver, I was so lonely before'; 'it is the highlight of my week'. Also, many have really enjoyed speaking to a group of people rather than just one to one calls.

Jan Snook

We received 55 responses from school volunteers across Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Most volunteers listen to children read but others help with numbers or foreign language practice.

We were delighted to hear that volunteers continue to find a lot of enjoyment from working with children: 98% of survey respondents said they gained satisfaction in helping children develop and 91% felt the children benefited from increasing their confidence and social skills.

All respondents said they would recommend volunteering with RSVP to others and everyone who had attended RSVP training sessions for reading volunteers felt they were useful.



Jon Mulkern with Sue Andreson, Bristol South Schools Organiser, at a recent RSVP recognition event

Jon Mulkern (pictured), a volunteer at a primary school in Hengrove, said "I must say how much I have enjoyed my time with the children. They are a joy and a delight to be with. I love their company, their conversation, their perceptions. It has been for me a truly life changing experience and even an education. I hope I have made some small difference."

We are sure that Jon, along with all our other brilliant school volunteers, have been making a big difference!

The Schools Organisers Team



Schools Volunteers Activities During Lockdown

Some reflections on lockdown from Bath and North East Somerset volunteers.

We have all had to find ways of coping with changes to our lives but here is taste of what some have been doing.

Susan Parker had been busy making a quilt for her youngest granddaughter who is about to go to university and is now making quilts/covers for the Royal United Hospital special infant care unit.

Chandra Agashi has kept himself occupied with reading and his research into ancient weight systems of the Bronze Age civilisations.

Angela Geoffrey has been putting her volunteering experience to good use by having a weekly FaceTime session with her 8-year-old god-daughter which she says has been great fun.

She says "I am thoroughly enjoying this lockdown situation. The countryside around here is beautiful and the variety of wildflowers and blossom have been a joy, to say nothing of the peace and quiet of little traffic and the most amazing birdsong in the woods every morning. "

Others have been busy tending their gardens, but many have said how much they miss their weekly visits to school and are keen to return.

Let's hope it is soon safe to do so.

Joan Whitehead



Susan Parker's quilt that she made for her granddaughter



Meanwhile in Bristol.... Judy Harris' Lockdown sewing group

In early April a neighbour received a request to make 'scrubs laundry bags' for NHS staff.

A shout-out to our street WhatsApp group soon assembled a group of home needlecrafters keen to help. Sewing machines were dusted down and generous donations of fabric (mainly from curtains and bed linen) were received. We were also lucky to be donated 800 Glastonbury tea cloths by the 'Festival T-Towel' company.

Our group ranged in age from a needlecrafter in her 80s to young family members who ferried material and bags up and down the street.

The scrubs bags were offered to all staff in hospitals throughout Bristol and Weston, a local care home and a nursery for the children of key workers. By mid-May, we had completed 785 bags and were told that demand was now satisfied!

Then followed our next challenge – sewing headbands with buttons for attaching to face masks to prevent rubbing behind the ears. More needcrafters joined the group and more donations of colourful fabric were received, including men's shirts to provide a more masculine look for the headbands designed for men! We have now made 740 bands (and rising...), distributed to appreciative

hospital staff in Bristol and Weston. Some have also been sent to hospitals in Leeds, Cambridge and (through a family link) Italy.

As always with volunteering, we volunteers have benefited too - through knowing that we are making a small contribution at this terrible time and through the camaraderie and friendships formed.

Other volunteers have been helping with homeschooling, collecting prescriptions for those shielding and Sheila Lally has been keeping busy writing a book that helps people who are looking after older relatives and friends. It's great to hear that Sheila's book is going to be published.



NHS staff with their scrubs laundry bags made by the lockdown sewing group

Life in Corona Times: Update from our Surgery Volunteers and Driving Groups

As around the world, normal life for most of our Surgery Volunteers has come to an abrupt, but hopefully temporary, standstill. Until March 2020, our volunteers were affiliated to and supported about 28 Surgeries in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, and RSVP West also proudly supported 12 separate Driving Groups in North Somerset.

Before Lockdown, our drivers ferried patients to medical appointments and took them home afterwards, whilst our Wellbeing Guides befriended lonely and isolated patients, providing them with physical and emotional support. Whatever our volunteers decided to do, they were very much appreciated and gratefully supported by their Surgeries and RSVP West Organisers.

Many befriending volunteers have tried to maintain client friendships through regular phone calls, but sadly this was impossible for our drivers due to social distancing rules. Volunteering Matters and RSVP West are currently working on a Risk Assessment and a Health Checklist for our volunteers and their passengers.

As soon as these are finalised, we will send them to all our Surgeries and North Somerset Driving Groups and hope that volunteering will then be able to recommence safely.

We are so grateful to all our drivers and befrienders for your commitment and support over the last months and years. Please continue to be patient as we do all we can to ensure you and your clients are safe.

Like you, all of us at RSVP West are looking forward to life slowly returning to normal, and we hope to see you again in the near future.

Sylvia Carpenter

Thank you to all our volunteers



Congratulations

To all those who have reached long service milestones as volunteers with RSVP West:

Tina Andrews
Judith Cains
Michael Chinn have completed 15 years service

Edyth Dougan
John Hayter
Doreen Robinson
Lynette Sims
Carol Vernon
Robin Warry have completed 10 years service

Stop press: Stop press: Stop press: Stop press: Stop press:

Take a look at our new improved website (same name: **www.rsvp-west.org.uk**) which has recently been launched thanks to the heroic efforts of Sue Silvey and Hilary Roberts. Please notify Hilary, our webmaster: **hilary.roberts@rsvp-west.org.uk** of any updates/changes you recommend including for the Stop Press and Vacancies slots on the home page.

And finally, many congratulations to Bob Maggs and Jan Snook who recently celebrated their civil partnership.



Contacts for RSVP West projects

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VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) is a part of Volunteering Matters. Charity number 291222.

RSVP West is on Twitter

