



Covid-19: 1 year on... and counting.



INTRODUCTION

@TheGrange is a community hub on the Grange Park Estate in Blackpool managed by Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside in partnership with Blackpool Council. Like many community hubs across the UK @TheGrange has played a pivotal role in supporting the COVID emergency response. This report looks back on the last 12 months and details some of the key activities delivered by staff and volunteers to keep people in our community connected and support some of our most vulnerable individuals.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD

Corona Kindness Hubs – the importance of a coordinated approach

Very quickly, at the start of the first national lockdown, Blackpool Council created a network of 13 community hubs that had the resources to support their communities with emergency provision. At the community end of the Corona Kindness Hub programme support focused on emergency food provision and welfare checks with vulnerable residents. With local authority partners we also created a comprehensive list of local shops that were able to deliver shopping without limitations on spend.

During the first lockdown @TheGrange delivered in excess of 3000 food parcels supported by a team of 30 community volunteers. Most recently the centre has been given delegated responsibility for the distribution of discretionary food parcels improving accessibility to emergency food for those in need.

Meals On Wheels

With an onsite café the team @TheGrange launched a meal delivery service supporting people across the estate. This was launched following the scaling back of emergency food provision at the end of the first national lockdown. The Meals on Wheels service was developed in consultation with local people as a direct response to concerns for those people who were shielding or at greater risk of ill health if they left their homes.

The programme provides a hot meal each lunchtime to vulnerable people and to date we have distributed 1953 meals, including meals on Christmas Day. Meals are both affordable and nutritious, cooked freshly on site each morning.

“I don’t know what I would have done if it wasn’t for the staff @TheGrange”.

Local resident.

Click image below left to see Meals On Wheels recipient feedback video:



School Holiday Hunger

To support efforts to combat school holiday hunger @TheGrange has been a key partner in the provision of food to children on free school meals. Funding has come from Blackpool Council as well as a community donation scheme built on the pay-it-forward principle. We have used this funding to not only provide nutritious food, but to also improve family meal time.

In February we launched the Traybake project that took a whole family approach to school holiday hunger and focused on improving mealtimes through linked family activities. Since the October 2020 half term we have distributed 1040 meals under the school holiday hunger programme.



SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

Having a trusted and embedded community hub within Grange Park means local people often turn to us in a time of crisis. With funding secured through Groundwork's Green Doctor programme and additional grant sources we were able to appoint a full time Community Support Officer in September 2020. This appointment created the capacity within the team to support people with complex needs and be a key link between community and wider statutory services.

We established a referral system for identifying and assessing need that focused on health and wellbeing. Referrals for support came from established partners including the local GP's surgeries, the neighbourhood police team, the fire service, third sector and faith organisations, housing associations and Blackpool Council Public Health. We also identified those not linked into these services through outreach provision.

Within the last 6 months this programme has supported residents with combatting homelessness, escaping domestic violence, accessing healthcare and mobility support, managing mental health problems, tackling fuel poverty, linking into employment support programmes and supporting victims of crime. It has supported residents in completing UC and housing benefit claims and provided emergency support after hospital stays and flooding. It has also helped elderly residents who are not online to book covid vaccinations and worked with GPs to identify residents to receive vaccines at home. To date we have:



1953

MEALS ON
WHEELS
DELIVERED



3000+

FOOD
PARCELS
DELIVERED



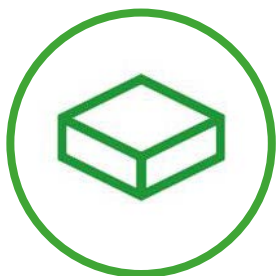
1040

MEALS GIVEN
OUT DURING
SCHOOL
HOLIDAYS



3500

VOLUNTEERS
WELFARE
CALLS



300

WARM HOME
PACKS
DELIVERED



20

HOUSING
REPAIRS
ACTIONED



142

GREEN
DOCTOR
VISITS



£12.5k

REDUCED
HOUSEHOLD
ENERGY
COSTS

STAYING CONNECTED

With social mixing restrictions in place for the last 12 months a key role that @TheGrange has played is to keep local people connected. Although the hub has been closed to the public for the majority of the year when the easing of restrictions allowed we were still able to offer a number of face to face. We've also provided some key outreach activities that continue today.

BLACKPOOL COMMUNITY FARM

The team working on the Farm launched a 'Foster a Plant' scheme providing local people with all of the equipment they needed to grow at home. This was supported by a weekly Facebook Live session to provide tips and ask questions.

The team also organised the Grange Park In Bloom competition celebrating the fantastic gardens across the estate.



LIBRARY BOOKS AND QUIZZES

Throughout lockdown the staff have produced a weekly quiz or puzzle which has been delivered to residents as well as posting on social media.

As the library within the hub has been closed for a year, we also launched a book delivery service in partnership with Blackpool Libraries.



RESTRICTED OPENING

When lockdown measures were eased we were able to reopen the hub in a COVID safe way. We restarted small volunteer sessions on the Blackpool Community Farm, launched an alfresco dining offer from the café and started some youth focused support groups including a mental health support group and a music production group. Projects like Bubble Bingo meant household bubbles could come together and engage in a community activity outside of their homes for the first time in a long time.





Due to ongoing limitations on social mixing the Groundwork team working in Blackpool took on the responsibility for a town wide Summer of Fun campaign. Linking to partner organisations across Blackpool we created and shared 88 videos with ideas of free, fun and local activities families could do together during the school holidays.

Videos have been viewed over 100,000 times and included family activities linked to arts and crafts, exploring the local environment, sport and physical activity, cooking, drama and music. The feedback from families accessing the resources and partners involved in video production has been excellent and the project provides a platform for continued use and expansion in 2021.



SUMMER OF FUN STATS

6 WEEKS

OF SUMMER FUN



890+
facebook
Followers

100,000+
REACHED

ARTS AND CRAFTS
SPORT • EXERCISE
NATURE • GAMES
COOKERY • MAGIC
MUSIC AND DANCE
LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

**MOST VIEWED
VIDEO**

HOW TO
MAKE A
BOUNCY
EGG

3.9K
REACHED

**POSTS WITH MOST
ENGAGEMENT**

CRABBING AT
FLEETWOOD
&
BEACH WALK
WITH DAVE

52
REACTIONS
COMMENTS &
SHARES

**“THANK YOU
FOR SUCH AN
INTERESTING VIDEO. WE’VE
LEARNED SO MUCH.”**

PARTNERS INCLUDED:



Blackpool Council
Park Rangers
& Active Blackpool



Blackpool Adult,
Community & Family
Learning



OUTREACH ACROSS THE ESTATE

With so many people staying at home to protect themselves and their families over the last year we have provided a range of outreach activities to ensure that people still feel connected within the community during periods of extended isolation. Some examples include:

- An Easter Egg competition where children placed pictures of eggs in their windows in exchange from a visit from the Easter Bunny. 755 eggs were distributed across the estate.
- A VE day celebration encouraging homes to dress their windows in red, white and blue. 100 cream teas were distributed to elderly residents and families were encouraged to have a picnic in their garden.
- A 100th birthday celebration for local resident Marion. With no family living locally we set up a birthday celebration with the local school. Cards were made for Marion by students and a cake was provided by the café @TheGrange. A small number of local children delivered these to Marion's doorstep and due to the limitations on singing they used sign language to say happy birthday. We also set up a video call with Marion's family who were able to see her virtually for the first time in months.
- A virtual Remembrance Day service hosted within @TheGrange in front of a special remembrance wall that was designed by a local resident and veteran.
- A virtual Christmas Light switch on that was broadcast on social media and was the first time the centre had a sustainable living Christmas tree.
- A Santa Clause tour of the estate to spread some Christmas magic amongst children in the build up to Christmas. Santa toured in the Save Our Story spaceship bus lifting spirits and brining smiles to lots of people.

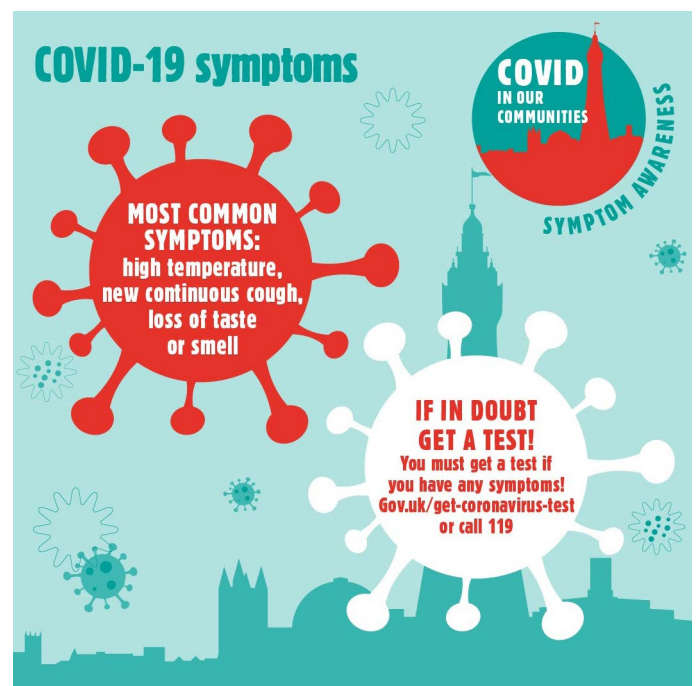


LOOKING FORWARD

COVID IN OUR COMMUNITIES

In partnership with Blackpool Council Public Health we created the COVID in our Communities group aimed at creating and sharing accurate messages to minimise virus transmission and raise public confidence in the vaccination process. Messages reinforce national guidance but include local images, faces and voices from across the town. The group is chaired by Groundwork and includes representatives from NHS, Public Health, Third Sector organisations, Faith Sector organisations and Education providers. Future messages are informed by feedback gathered from community organisations that continue to provide direct support to residents across the town. Digital content including videos from across Blackpool are developed each week to reinforce key guidance and combat misinformation that is often shared on social media platforms.

Since January the COVID in our Communities group has been supporting a wider communications strategy led by Blackpool Council under the Get Blackpool Back



REBUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

Within our community this pandemic has seen prolonged periods of social isolation for many individuals which has had a clear impact on mental wellbeing, whilst a reduction in physical activity for some has impacted physical health.

@TheGrange, and community hubs like ours, have an integral role in the rebuilding of community wellbeing through reintegration of services and support offered.

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