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Community Christmas Tree Festival in the Year of Coronavirus

The opening of One Community's Annual Community Christmas Tree Festival at Eastleigh Museum was delayed a couple of weeks by the second lockdown. In the meantime a You Tube film of some of the trees was released:

<https://animoto.com/play/QRi95YD1blYm812dvMX4SA>

With lockdown lifted, the actual Festival opened on 4 December, and has been warmly welcomed by visitors, with comments such as, "At last something Christmassy we can go to!" and "It's nice that lots of different people helped to make this a really special place in Eastleigh."

The theme for 2020 is the community response to COVID-19, and local voluntary and community groups have produced some wonderfully creative trees representing themselves and what their year has been like during the pandemic. Pictured here are trees from Dentaaid and Bishopstoke, Fair Oak and Horton Heath Street Pastors.

The Festival runs until 2 January 2021.



Produced by Hampshire Councils for Voluntary Service, who would be delighted to have your feedback. Please contact Julia Allan 023 8090 2457 jallan@1community.org.uk

Featured articles represent the views of the contributing CVS



**HAMPSHIRE
CVS Network**
Supporting the voluntary and community sector

Action Hampshire, The Flash & Communities Against Cancer



Claire Vincent (Project Officer) recording at The Flash

When Claire Vincent was invited to speak about Action Hampshire's *Communities Against Cancer* on community radio station The Flash, it had to be a "Yes".

This project is about helping communities become more aware of cancer risks and the importance of contacting their GP as soon as they notice a symptom unusual for them. So Claire was keen to spread the message.

Despite her nerves, Claire was quickly put at ease by the station manager Martin and presenter Ed. During the live programme, Ed and Claire spoke about the project and how it was so important that people are cancer aware and know to seek help as early as possible. If

someone does have cancer the earlier it is found the better, to increase the likeness of treatment being successful.

The programme went well, and Claire agreed to go back and record another show and an advert to promote the *Communities Against Cancer* project. From this, The Flash and Action Hampshire started working together and thinking how they could help tackle health inequalities—cancer is more common in deprived areas, as is smoking and obesity, both leading causes of preventable cancers.

As The Flash had been so enthusiastic about the *Communities Against Cancer* project and supported Action Hampshire to promote the grants, Claire was pleased to hear they had been successful in obtaining their own grant, with which they planned to record adverts and create programmes to promote cancer awareness and have live events in their local area.

Both Martin and Ed attended Action Hampshire's free *Communities Against Cancer* workshop held in Leigh Park. This gave them lots of ideas for planning their project and enabled them to feel confident in the messages of cancer awareness and prevention they would need to promote in their work.

Just as Martin and Ed were getting started with their great plans, lockdown arrived. Suddenly collaborations and guests in the studio weren't possible. Their small studio was not a safe environment for more than one person during this time so they and their band of volunteers pulled together to keep the shows running and learnt to broadcast from home.

The team at The Flash continued with the *Communities Against Cancer* project, despite many challenges, and have had great success in talking to listeners via telephone and zoom as they continue the cancer conversations. They heard from listeners who had experience of cancer themselves and could highlight how seeking help early was so important. The audience engagement has been fantastic and shown how the *Communities Against Cancer* project has really taken off at the station and it now often features in their regular programming. This is really what the *Communities against Cancer* project is all about – reaching out to the community with simple messages to improve health outcomes and tackle health inequalities in engaging and creative ways.

COMMUNITIES *Communities against Cancer* provides fun, interactive training sessions, and grants to help communities spread messages in a way that suits them. To find out more about Communities against Cancer, please email claire.vincent@actionhampshire.org or visit the [website](#).



Activity & Food Parcels Bring Cheer to Gosport Residents

Gosport Voluntary Action's (GVA) Close Encounters Project, in partnership with Age UK Portsmouth, delivered 50 Activity and Food Parcels for some of the many socially isolated older local people currently



supported by GVA in a variety of ways, including befriending and, via Age Concern Gosport, help with securing a range of benefits.

Age UK Portsmouth provided the boxes and various activities/items including paints, seeds, books, and puzzles. The food came from three local sources. Some was donated by Tesco; pasta and pasta sauces were donated by the Fareham & Gosport Basics Bank. Morrisons vouchers (funded by Hampshire County Council) were also provided by the Gosport Food Partnership—GVA is a partner. This enabled a selection of healthy food to be purchased, alongside a few festive treats.

The first parcel delivered was to an older person living in food poverty. The very next week (with their consent) a referral was made to the Basics Bank and a week's worth of food was subsequently provided. A

light touch/informal food-poverty check is made with every parcel delivery and further help or referrals are made as appropriate.

GVA has received some really positive feedback, including a thank you letter from a lady who said she'd planted the seeds and was looking forward to watching them grow. Another lady mentioned how much she enjoyed using the art materials in her parcel, and sent a photo of the painting she'd produced (see above).

BVA Plays Go Between for Donated Goods



Basingstoke Voluntary Action has recently found themselves acting as the middle man for redistribution of donated items. The Co-op in Tadley donated more than £1,500 worth of pots, pans and kitchen goods, following a refit of their store. Working with the You Trust Domestic Abuse Service, the items were packaged up for delivery to those who had experienced domestic abuse and were starting again in new homes. From another source BVA acquired colouring and quiz books. The colouring books went to a local charity called [The Safe](#) and the quiz books will form part of Christmas bags going to clients of [Age Concern](#) based in the Basingstoke and Deane area.

Photo: (left to right) Mary Robinson and Charlotte Ware from Basingstoke Voluntary Action with Izzy Kalloo and Callum Young from Southern Co-op

Exciting New Future Planned For Clanfield Centre

Plans are taking shape to breathe new life into Clanfield Sports and Community Centre, which is to re-open at the beginning of April 2021. The Parish Council was pleased to share this good news at its recent meeting, that agreement has been reached with Community First to take over as the new operators of the centre. Community First will shortly be publishing a User Survey inviting residents' views on a number of topics and outlining more information about their plans including considering suggestions to rename the centre.

Commenting on this news, Parish Council Chairman, John Bannell, said: "Following the excellent news of a Covid vaccine, this is another positive message for residents as we look forward to a better year ahead. Our talks with Community First have been progressing very well and, behind the scenes, we have been getting the property ready for handover to them at the beginning of February, a couple of months ahead of the provisional opening date. Everything is on track for that to happen."

Community First's Chief Executive, Tim Houghton, added: "We are delighted to be working with Clanfield Parish Council and are excited by the opportunity to create and manage a vibrant hub on behalf of local residents. We would like to thank the Parish Council for their cooperation and considered approach to partnership working. We look forward to welcoming you all to the re-opened centre and



would very much like your thoughts and views on what you would like to see at the centre. We'll keep you all informed as our exciting reopening plans develop in the months ahead and will be reaching out to the community to further ask for your help and support with a number of volunteer roles."

The Centre will continue to be offered, when required, to the Local Resilience Forum as a Covid Mobile Testing Unit until the handover to Community First takes place.

Expanded Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service Across Mid and North Hampshire

Community First and Basingstoke Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre (BRASACC) have announced their intention to merge on 1 April 2021. BRASACC will be amalgamated with Community First's Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling service (RASAC), creating a new service which will operate across Mid- and North-Hampshire. RASAC already provides services in the north of the county where BRASACC operates and bringing the two organisations together will create the best chance of long-term sustainability, whilst offering greater service capacity to clients.

The merger will have no impact on clients in counselling on 1 April 2021, with counselling continuing as normal, with the same counsellor, until their sessions come to an end. The enlarged organisation will continue to deliver counselling from bases closest to each client, currently in Winchester, Andover and Basingstoke, with plans to provide a facility in Rushmoor in the coming year. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, both services have moved their counselling online using secure technologies, and are now able to serve a wider geographic area. Online counselling has been very successful and will be available to clients going forward, in addition to traditional face-to-face counselling.

Trevor Lewis, Vice-Chair of Community First says: "This is an exciting opportunity for both RASAC and BRASACC, we look forward to the enlarged service working for the benefit of our service users, staff and volunteers, focusing on reducing waiting times and broadening our service offerings."

Kathy Wilson, Chair of BRASACC, says: "Both BRASACC and RASAC have been providing specialist counselling services in a very complex area for many years and we have shared ethical and professional values which make us a good fit. BRASACC joining Community First gives us a better opportunity to sustain this much needed service for the long-term."

New Befriending Scheme for Community First



When lockdown first struck earlier in the year we all found ourselves working in a very different way to normal. For the Community First team this also meant fielding and dealing with calls from local residents who needed help with a huge variety of tasks, everything from shopping and collecting medication to dog walking and DIY. It

quickly became apparent however that there was another, large unmet need. People were lonely. For those who were vulnerable, shielding, or unable to see loved ones the prospect of spending months without contact was, quite understandably, a dire one. It was an issue for staff too who desperately wanted to help clients make that connection but had nowhere to refer them to.

Whilst some local befriending services were operating these tended to be area or age specific. What was needed was a scheme that didn't have those restrictions and that had well trained, supported volunteers.

Lorraine Lambert from Community First's Volunteer Service said, "We did what all good organisations do, we decided to start one. In the initial pilot, we took on 4 befrienders and 6 clients. A successful funding bid to the National Lottery Community Fund then enabled us to incorporate the telephone befriending into the remit of our 3 Wellbeing workers Kath Fletcher, Helena O'Shea and Sharon Austen. Under their care the service has blossomed and is now supporting over 15 befrienders to provide regular calls to lonely, isolated clients across the whole of the Community First area.