

HAWKHURST COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP

Helping the community beat the virus

Newsletter No. 3

19 April 2020



A word from the Chair

It seems barely possible that we only started thinking about organising a response to the coronavirus a month ago! So much has happened in this last month and I am enormously proud of what HCSG has achieved. We were fortunate in having such amazing, hard-working volunteers come forward to form our Co-ordination Group who really got the ball rolling. Within a few days of launching, we were in a position to provide support across all areas of the village thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers. Thank you so much.

I know that some of you are waiting to actually be called on to volunteer. Thank you so much for ensuring that we have the capacity to respond to new requests for help. At our weekly meetings of the Reference Group, a repeated concern is how

we reduce the number of people who are visiting the supermarkets and pharmacy that really should be staying at home. We are all working together to try to encourage people to sign up for support, so hopefully, we'll have some practical volunteering for you to do soon.

In the meantime, stay safe.

Clare Escombe

Chairman, Hawkhurst Parish Council



New look Newsletter

This is our third newsletter. The first two were published for our volunteers, but it occurred to us that much of the content would be of general interest, so from now on the newsletter is produced for the whole community.

It will be published on our Website at:

www.hawkhurstcommunitysupport.com

It's good to talk

It's bad enough having to stay at home with the kids, but it's worse for those on their own.

If anyone you know is living alone, do invite them to register for our Phone Buddy scheme. We have several volunteers - male and female - just waiting for the opportunity to call for a regular chat.

True, it's not the same as meeting for morning coffee in the Kino, but it beats talking to the walls!

Call 01580 453 015.



HELP US HELP HAWKHURST FAMILIES IN NEED

We are setting out to raise £1,000 to help Hawkhurst families in need during the lockdown.

We are working in partnership with Hawkhurst CEP School and Dunks Charities to raise funds to enable us to buy hampers of food and domestic necessities for some Hawkhurst families with children struggling to manage through the crisis.

We calculate that £1,000 will be enough to enable us to support those families for another month. Dunks Educational Foundation has very kindly donated £300 to start us off.

We welcome donations, large or small. Bank transfers should be made to "Dunks Educational Foundation" sort code 20-02-62 and account number 30077712 quoting reference "HCSG".

Thank you.

Hawkhurst Community Support Group (HCSG) is run by volunteers and any excess funds received will be applied to our work in assisting people in need during the coronavirus crisis.

We now have 131 volunteers and 130 clients registered with HCSG.

Our volunteers are doing a whole range of jobs. Some are working together to manage the operation, some are working the helpline, some have volunteered as phone buddies, some are working as area leaders and, of course, lots of volunteers are out and about helping our clients.

We have introduced a change to the way we count those we serve. We have previously referred to households served as "clients" but, of course, many households have more than one client using our services. So, from now on, we are counting both numbers of households and numbers of individuals served.



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Children's VE Day Art Competition

Calling all Hawkhurst children to enter a piece of art work to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe. Credit will be given for both artistic merit and for age-appropriate evidence of appreciation of the meaning of VE Day.

Class 1: 3 - 5 years
Class 2: 6 - 8 years
Class 3: 9 - 12 years
Class 4: Over 12s

Children are strongly encouraged to research the history and context of VE Day and demonstrate this in their submission - the competition should encourage learning.

Prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in each category!

Art work to be submitted no later than 5pm on Tuesday 5th May 2020.

The HCSG panel of judges comprising Clare Escombe (Chairman, Hawkhurst Parish Council), Jodi Hacker (Head Teacher Hawkhurst CEP School) and Louisa Crispin (local artist) will review entries & make awards.

Download an entry form at:

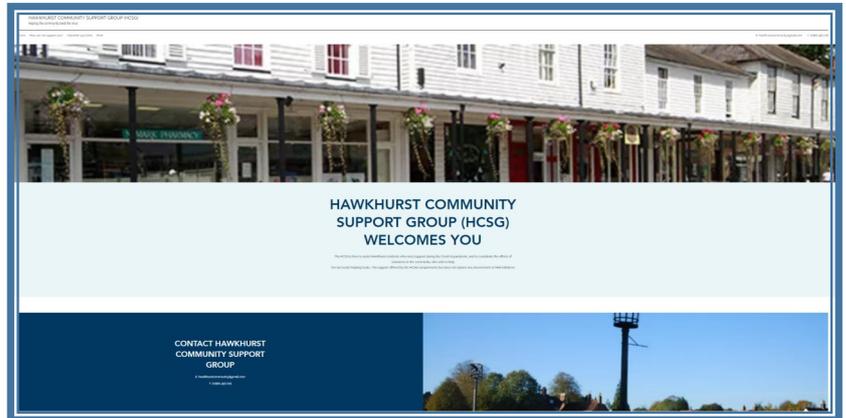
www.hawkhurstcommunitysupport.com

A mine of information

Have you looked at our Website recently? It's an invaluable resource for volunteers, clients and local residents and has had over 1,000 visitors to date.

As well as providing a link for those interested in volunteering with, or being helped by, HCSG, it contains masses of useful information. The section 'Local Businesses offering collection/delivery' is updated almost daily with details not only of food shops which deliver or offer collection, but also breweries, vineyards, garden centres and local pubs and restaurants. There is also a useful section from the GP surgeries about how they are operating at present. Plus useful guides and FAQs on all kinds of things to help with life under lockdown.

We are adding to it all the time, so if there's anything you need to know, check the Website first - chances are, it's there!



An apple a day

This week saw the second delivery of apples to our client households.

Kindly supplied once again by Stevens Farm, and collected by Phil in the Park Farm Butchers' van, 46 bags of succulent fresh local red Gala apples were delivered by 5 volunteers to 46 households. Remaining clients will receive theirs next week.

"The apples cooked lovely, took a little longer than cookers but kept their shape well and lovely flavour. I have cooked half of them."

Keeping the lights on ...

People whose energy is supplied via a prepayment meter periodically have to top up the credit on their supplier's prepayment card or risk being cut off.

Volunteers may be asked to help with this, and topping up the card is a straightforward process. Just take it to Tesco or the post office at Waitrose and buy the required amount of credit. The client should repay the volunteer using one of the methods set out in the guidance "Payment Options". This would normally be the same method used to pay for other supplies.

Clients should never buy "credit" from a doorstep seller. It is illegal, so bound to be a scam.

HCSG has prepared guidance on prepayment meters - this is available from area leaders.



Any more PPE out there?

We are still looking for items of personal protective equipment to donate to our local surgeries and care homes. We think kind people may have emptied their cupboards by now, but anyone know any local businesses that might have stocks they could spare? Contact us by email or phone using the details at the foot of the page.

Bored?

Did you know you can download free eBooks, eAudio-books, eMagazines, and eNewspapers from www.Kent.gov.uk/libs? All you need is a Kent Library Membership. You can create a free temporary membership online, without leaving your home, by completing a simple online form and creating a PIN which serves as a password to log in to the various websites.

You can borrow up to 10 eBooks and eAudiobooks at a time by downloading a free app called **Overdrive**. Simply follow the onscreen instructions and when asked to add your library, search for "Kent County Council".

Magazines and Newspapers have no limit and you can use either **RB Digital** or **PressReader**. Both are available online and as apps. Your library membership and PIN gets you access to current and back copies of many favourite magazines.

And if you keep hold of the UNREG number you are given when registering, you will be able to exchange it for a proper library card, allowing use of all the libraries in Kent, when they reopen.

Other local services

In case you are wondering how our organisation relates to the NHS Volunteer Responders scheme, here is some guidance from the NHS.

What is the NHS Volunteer Responders?

NHS Volunteer Responders is a new group that will carry out simple, non-medical tasks to support people in England who have been asked to shield themselves from coronavirus because of underlying health conditions. They will be used by healthcare professionals to make sure people who are highly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) are able to stay safe and well at home.

Is this different from helping out my neighbours and local charities?

NHS Volunteer Responders is not intended to replace any local provision. It will provide a service where informal support is not available or where health and social care professionals do not have a way to refer people into those systems. It is being delivered by Royal Voluntary Service one of the country's largest and long-standing volunteering charities.

So the NHS services are complementary to those we provide.

Just a reminder for clients looking for transport to hospital appointments. This is not a service we provide. Clients should contact the Maidstone and Pembury patient transport service on 0800 096 0211. Transport should be requested no more than 48 hours before the appointment and no later than midday on the previous day. People who haven't used the service previously will need their NHS number to hand. Further details at: <https://www.mtw.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/patient-transport/>

Stories from the front line

"I have just been handed a freshly baked loaf of bread from one of my clients as a thank you. What a joy!"

One client called to thank her volunteer for dropping off apples. She also said "you're all doing splendidly...." Reminded me of Dads Army!

"We just wanted to say 'thank you' to the support group for the help we have been receiving from our volunteer and other members of the volunteer group. We have just received a bag of lovely apples delivered by a volunteer and we were also given a chocolate egg each by another volunteer at Easter. Please pass on our thanks to everyone concerned for the donations and work involved in looking out for those of us who are housebound during the covid-19 lockdown."

"Everyone I spoke to was in good spirits and doing well and they all expressed their gratitude and appreciation of the HCSG and what we are doing, which was really nice to hear. Everyone was also really grateful for the lovely apples!"

