

# Inspiring Hope

---



An insight into the inspirational  
work of some of Dorset's  
charities and towns from  
The High Sheriff of Dorset 2020/21



# Inspiring Hope

At my High Sheriff Declaration on 27th March 2020, I summarised my ambition for the year as being to “seek out and promote those organisations and individuals that have been, and are, inspiring hope in those that are struggling.”

During the pandemic I have visited, or zoomed, parts of Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to which many would not normally go. I have learnt and seen things about which many of us have no idea and found untold stories which should be told.

There are three practical things I have been able to do:

1. Thank people for the extraordinary work and commitment they do
2. Publicise that work
3. Bring organisations together for mutual benefit.

I have travelled across the county to thank individuals and groups, teams and organisations who have been just amazing. However, my opportunity to publicise this has become more limited and restricted to social media, the website and press-releases; personal contact has been harder to achieve.

I want to share what I have learnt with others and to make people aware of some of the issues facing those that are struggling in our society. I also wish to highlight the importance of volunteers to our communities; not that we in Dorset receive social welfare on the cheap, but what they do underpins our fabric.

This booklet gives space to a few of the charities and organisations which I have had the pleasure and privilege of meeting in 2020. It is not intended to be anything like a definitive list of charities in Dorset, but they are the ones which, as High Sheriff, I have met and with whom I have been hugely impressed by what they do, how they work and the needs they fulfil in our community particularly over the past year and during the pandemic; I am well aware there are many more.

In addition, I have included a selection of Dorset’s towns’ Covid Response groups to highlight what our communities achieved to help themselves during the pandemic. They are far from the only ones but represent the huge effort made by the entire county. Tied in with the towns is just an incredible story of how the catering department of Thomas Hardy’s School excelled themselves feeding students during each lockdown.



It must not be forgotten that supporting all the work that charities and our towns do, are the primary agencies including Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance. This was brought into sharp focus by a conversation I had with Mark Holmes, the Police Lead on Modern Slavery. This crime cuts across almost every aspect of the work covered here. It is an ‘uncomfortable’ crime which most of us do not wish to admit occurs on our doorsteps – but it does, and is seen as the third largest threat to society by Dorset Police.

I am extremely grateful to Martin Clunes for his compelling endorsement of this booklet: his role in the county as a Deputy Lieutenant and his work with Dorset charities brings him into contact with the issues raised here. It is so important to highlight them and to increase our community’s awareness. If we, as a society, do not know of the problems, how can we hope to support those working so hard on the front line to resolve them? The organisations I write about are inspirational and do demonstrate the hope that those most in need are able to receive both practically and mentally. Please absorb them and if you feel inspired by any, make contact and become involved.

George Streatfeild  
The High Sheriff of Dorset, 2020/21

Acts Fast	4	The Footprints Project	18
Bournemouth Food Bank	5	Future Roots	19
Bournemouth Town Pastors	6	Home-Start West Dorset	20
The Bus Shelter Dorset	7	The Lantern Trust	21
Christchurch Activities for Young People	8	Dorset Mind	22
Christchurch Food Bank Plus	10	The Pilsdon Community	23
Circles South West	12	Routes to Roots (Poole) CIO	24
Countrymen UK	13	Relate Dorset & South Wiltshire	25
Dorset Community Foundation	14	The Rendezvous	26
Dorchester Community Church		Sexual Trauma and Recovery Service (STARS Dorset)	27
‘Food Share’	16	Thomas Hardy School	28
Escapeline	17	Dorset’s Towns	30



## Acts Fast

We stop and listen while the world carries on

Supporting the families, parents and carers of children who have been affected by sexual abuse

*“I called in on Mandy Gulliver in Poole who set up and runs Acts Fast (Abused Children’s Trauma Support, Family Advice & Strategy Team) to relieve the distress of families whose children have been affected by sexual abuse. During lockdown, Mandy almost single-handedly continued to support families, many of whom were suicidal and needed a high level of care. It was because of this huge dedication; I was privileged to present her with a High Sheriff’s Award.” GS*

Acts Fast evolved from providing a volunteer counselling and group support service at ‘From Hurting 2 Healing’ into the organisation it is today. Realising the enormity of the chronic lack of support for non-abusive parents/carers and families after their child’s disclosure, Mandy recognised the need to support families within Dorset.

We are a small group of qualified and experienced child sexual abuse trauma support specialists, caring for families across Dorset. As many as 1 in 4 adults have experienced some form of sexual abuse before they turned 18 years old; so, there is a huge demand for our care and support.

Society can often fail to recognise the importance of supporting the non-abusive parent and the critical role they play in helping with the child’s recovery. We exist to alleviate the trauma and distress for non-abusive family members and carers, by providing professional support in both times of crisis and the years to come.

By providing the right sort of care and support we can help shorten the road to recovery by empowering families as they move forwards. This approach helps the individual, as well as the collective family unit, by preventing and reducing long term damage. We offer a range of professional support by holistically caring for individuals and families in a sensitive and non-judgemental way so that they can move forwards as a family and grow stronger together.



### Acts Fast

Studio 8a The Greenhouse, Manning’s Heath Road, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4NQ  
01202 797217 www.actsfast.org.uk Reg Charity No.: 1157675



Giving hope to anyone who is experiencing a crisis and cannot afford to buy food for themselves or their family

*“Debbie Coombes is such a bundle of energy with so many ideas for the future: online cooking courses, veg growing opportunities, a hub for the homeless, and other plans.” GS*

We support anyone who is experiencing a crisis and cannot afford to buy food for themselves. We aim to enable them to move out of poverty and into a sustainable life by giving basic practical support, a listening ear and signposting them to other agencies who can work with them to move them towards this goal. We also offer voluntary work in a number of areas for those that are unemployed, the objective being to enable them to return to work.

Life in the pandemic has been incredibly challenging – mentally and physically – for many, resulting in a big increase in the need for our services with people struggling to make ends meet financially. We have issued almost 9000, three day food parcels to people in our local community, often supplemented with personal and home hygiene products, toys, and fresh produce. Our Hub volunteers have done an amazing job to support people whilst keeping everyone physically safe.

Our most successful and exciting project in 2020 has been moving our basic cooking and budgeting course online. This has helped many people to learn to cook healthy meals inexpensively. During the 6-week course, the participants receive basic equipment and the ingredients. A coach supports them online to do the paper exercises around budgeting and shopping as well as answering any questions they have. It has been really rewarding for us to watch and see them progress into confident cooks.

From testimonies, we know that our service can bring hope, relief and support changing the lives of many people who reach out to us via their support agencies, as well as helping to prevent crime. We will continue to do this until we are no longer needed.



### Bournemouth Food Bank

118 Haviland Road, Bournemouth, BH7 6HW www.bournemouth.foodbank.org.uk  
01202 394505 admin@bournemouth.foodbank.org.uk Reg Charity No.: 1143446

Ensuring that people get home safely after a night out in Bournemouth.

*“We spent an evening with Chris and Gary and were inspired by the care, dedication and professionalism with which they interacted with the ‘night-time economy’ of Bournemouth. The way they ensured the safety of a girl who had ‘enjoyed’ her 18th birthday was most impressive and, as a parent, comforting.” GS*

We are an independent group of Christians who patrol the town centre of Bournemouth at night during the weekends from 10pm – 4pm, to help anyone in need, whether that is sickness, confusion, distress, lost, lonely, worse for wear or simply just needs to talk. Our aim is to ensure that people get home safely and to show the love of Christ by being His hands and feet on the streets at night.

All our Town Pastors are DBS checked and undertake training before joining the patrols. We patrol in groups of 3 or 4, mixed genders, wearing Hi-Viz jackets. We carry rucksacks containing such items as water, foil blankets, flip-flops, hair bands, maps, information leaflets, and a portable defibrillator. We also dispose of bottles and broken glass found on the streets as these could be used as weapons if a fight were to occur.

In addition to our night-time walks we have been asked to provide patrols at such events as the University Summer Ball, Air Show and Freshers’ events, etc. We sit on the Town Watch Committee, who voted us “Unsung Heroes 2019”, Purple Flag Committee, and are part of the Community Alcohol Partnership. We go into schools and talk in assemblies around the pitfalls of not being fully prepared when on a night out.



Our ambition is to provide a “drop-in” room in the centre of the town (adjacent to the Square) to allow those who are ‘unfit’ to get home by taxi/public transport, to have some time to recover, that may mean resting in a quiet area, or even a sleep on a mattress for an hour or so. This would complement the Safe Bus provided by the Council.

## Bournemouth Town Pastors

c/o Faithworks Wessex, Heron Court Road, Bournemouth, BH9 1DE  
01202 299062 [chrismcdermott@bournemouthtownpastors.org.uk](mailto:chrismcdermott@bournemouthtownpastors.org.uk)  
[www.bournemouthtownpastors.org.uk](http://www.bournemouthtownpastors.org.uk)



A converted double decker providing rough sleepers with a safe place to stay, along with non-judgemental practical and emotional help and support to access specialist services, so they can begin to integrate or re-integrate into society.

*“Providing people with their basic needs of sleep, food, water, warmth and safety net, will be the first step towards achieving their goals and improving their future. The Bus Shelter also works with the Lantern Trust. I am impressed to see how many local charities, county social providers and businesses are working together to ease the pain of those on the streets. In November 2020 I visited the team at the Riviera Hotel to present a Community Award to Liz Durden and her team to thank them in person for the generous way of supporting and sheltering those most in need.” GS*

We work alongside other agencies to encourage guests on the bus to move into suitable accommodation to help them break the cycle of homelessness and integrate back into society.

We are richly rewarded by witnessing growth, observing kindnesses by guests and the public alike or by simply enjoying humour and recognition.

Grateful guests have said:

*“The Bus Shelter has been a real lifeline for me, thanks to the kind, caring nature of Emily, and the other staff at the bus, I have been able to get my life more on track.”*

*“They have helped me with everything from job interviews to when I’m struggling personally; there are no words to correctly represent what the bus has done for me, they quite honestly saved me from myself and a life on the streets. It means so much to me.”*

During the pandemic, the Hotel Riviera in Weymouth took in those who used the ‘Bus Shelter’ in Weymouth and the homeless from the area. In 2021 we are excited to be moving into self-contained ‘pods’ at the Mount Pleasant car park site, which as well as giving us increased capacity will enable our guests to have more privacy whilst accessing person-centred support.



## The Bus Shelter Dorset

Weymouth, DT4 9XJ [facebook.com/thebusshelterdorset](https://www.facebook.com/thebusshelterdorset)  
[thebusshelterdorset@gmail.com](mailto:thebusshelterdorset@gmail.com) Reg Charity No.: 1171882

A safe and welcoming environment for young people where they can access affordable out of school activities designed to improve emotional wellbeing, social inclusion, a reduction in anti-social behaviour and enhanced life opportunities

*“What an inspiring visit we had to meet Jae Harris, founder and friendly despot of this community centre in Somerford. With his team of trusty volunteers, several who have been with him for years, he is keeping kids active, organising a food bank ‘The Food Pantry’ as well as running the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme locally.” GS*

We support those living in the Christchurch area who live in situations of poverty and deprivation. This usually includes families on low income, families on benefits, families who experience life changing and restrictive medical circumstances including disabilities and mental health. We focus particularly on young people aged between the ages of 8-18. We are also a youth specialist service where we provide activities, support advice and guidance to young people under the age of 25.

We aim to help people improve their life opportunities by providing them with resources and services that they may not otherwise be able to access. The services we provide are often free or low cost to be affordable to our communities. We strive to empower people so that they can learn to help themselves and be less reliant upon other support services. In our work with young people, we also work on developing resilience so that they learn the skills and ability to bounce back and carry on.

Unlike other charities, we support a need that is not always apparent: supporting children and young people who are low in mood, have poor self confidence and low esteem is less ‘appealing’ than more upfront issues. We are passionate about early



intervention, preventative and long term work – a young person who we have worked with since he was 11 has just got a first job at the age of 20 even though his life experiences could easily have drawn him into either a life of violence and crime or where he could have ended his life. These three examples show the critical nature of our work:

*“We had regular contact with a 13-year-old boy. He had difficulty living at home with Mum and her partner, so lived with Nan for a while. Whilst there, he had the trauma of regularly seeing his Dad come and steal from Nan and threaten her for money so that he could buy drugs. The boy just wanted to end his life as he could not cope with everything. School had excluded him for disruptive behaviour but as there were no evidenced child protection issues then there was no reason for Local Authority intervention. In this case we spent time with the boy doing some mentoring and engaging him in our on-site gym which allowed him to have his time away from all the stresses that life around him was throwing at him. This may just have saved his life.”*

Last summer we did save a life. *“A mum contacted us having just found 3 suicide notes in her 20-year-old son’s bedroom. She was able to bring her son in to us and as a result of the mental health training we have here we were able to engage with him. After an hour he allowed us to take him to A&E where he was able to get a mental health assessment from the psychiatric team.”*

*“Over Christmas we supported a family with food and gifts for the children. The mother had tried to sell her furniture so that she could buy presents for her children but had not raised very much. We were able to provide food for three weeks for the family and gifts for the children. This allowed the family to readjust having lost employment and access Universal Credit.”*

This is just a snapshot of the work we do everyday and highlights the range of need there is in our community. This is the core reason why we are here and why we do the work we do. Our driving force is our passion to help those who have been left behind.

### Christchurch Activities for Young People

Somerford Youth and Community Centre, Bingham Road, Christchurch, BH23 3AH  
01202 476882 / 07785 935928 info@christchurchactivities.org.uk  
www.christchurchactivities.co.uk Reg Charity No.: 1167135

More than just a food bank; it is a furniture bank, a Homeless drop in; it offers Money and debt advice, CMA money management and a 'Cooking, shopping and eating on a budget workshop'

*"We made an inspirational visit to Christchurch Foodbank Plus to present awards to the team running the charity and its Project Manager, Tracy Blick who has taken it to another level. As well as supplying three days' worth of food to families and other essentials such as nappies, cleaning items and fresh fruit and veg, Tracy has set up a Furniture bank which can be used by families fleeing domestic abuse or being moved to temporary accommodation, debt and budget coaching, a homeless drop in, healthy meal recipe bags to encourage cooking at home and over the summer school holidays over 1000 children received Holiday Hunger bags!" GS*

Our aim is to serve those in need within our community and walk alongside them on their journey 'out of crisis', until they are ready to go it alone. We have a team of 36 volunteers and rely totally on the generous donations given by the local community, churches, schools and organisations to enable us to do the work that we do. All our clients are referred to us after being assessed as in need or struggling. Once we have given them their initial foodbank parcel we begin to build relationships, enabling us to walk alongside them through our other projects.

*"A young man called K with obvious mental health depression had been visiting us for food for about 6 months. His mother passed away when he was young and he became a sofa surfer. He ended up on a sofa in a dysfunctional home where he was not able to use the kitchen and would spend nights outside sleeping in the park, or just riding around and around. The Foodbank+ staff became his family. He would come for food and in return help out; he trusted them and when it was time, they talked about getting him into a permanent home and moving forward. Working together, a house share was secured, and Foodbank+ helped move K into the home providing the furniture and white goods throughout the unfurnished property. We helped set up bills and balance his money and together started to look for work for him. K has a love for bikes and working on them; after stripping down his own bike in the bike shop (using their tools) and putting it back together, he amazingly was asked 'would you like a job?' We purchased him some shoes and trousers, transported him for the interview, and supported him while he waited to hear back, continuing being his 'family'. K arrived back with a big smile on his face, he'd got a job working part time fixing customer's bikes; this job is now full time. In his first month K received 'employee of the week' twice and a bonus of £50. What a journey, his mental health and self-esteem has improved immensely. K pops in to see us at the Foodbank+ on his day off each week and still refers to us as his family. We are all 'proud parents' when he tells us about his week."*



During the pandemic in 2020 we have given food to over 9,547 mouths  
 4,437 + Parents and children have benefitted from our School Holiday Hunger Scheme  
 2,014 + Hot meals delivered to the isolated  
 391 + Meals in a bag – all the ingredients and instructions for the family to cook a full meal  
 95 + Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole emergency food parcels  
 9 Rough sleeper/sofa surfers housed and furnished (7 now in work)  
 226 Households benefitted from the furniture bank. Anything from a cup and bed to a full home-equip pack and all furniture.

**Christmas extras:** 192 Reverse advent parcels/Hampers delivered; over 300 new toys and gifts donated and gifted; 52 families received a full turkey dinner with all the trimmings; 74 Adults and 147 Children received Goodie bags.

The support, generosity and community love we have received really highlights the valuable work we do in supporting individuals and families in need. Our work is both humbling and rewarding.

## Christchurch Food Bank Plus

St Joseph's Church, 67 Purewell, Christchurch, BH23 1EH  
 07587 371088 christchurchfoodbank@gmail.com  
 www.faithworkswessex.org.uk/projects/foodbank/christchurch  
 Reg Charity No.: 1108714



A community-based programme which works closely with statutory services, helping individuals who have sexually offended live offence-free lives.

***“One of the essential roles of the High Sheriff is to support the work of those working to successfully integrate back into society those who have offended. Circles South West is at the forefront of achieving that as well as keeping our communities safe.” GS***

Circles South West is the local charity that uniquely provides Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA), an innovative community approach to preventing further sexual abuse by reducing the risk of sexual reoffending. Working in close partnership with the police, probation and prisons, CoSA engages local volunteers to provide an additional layer of risk management in the community.

Our volunteers make an essential contribution to creating a safer community and preventing sexual abuse by helping reduce the risk of further sexual offending by a known perpetrator. They come from all walks of life and commit around 2-4 hours per week for 12-18 months.

Groups of 4 or 5 local volunteers are trained and supported to work directly and intensively with an individual convicted of serious sexual offences who has been assessed as high risk of reoffending or high risk of causing serious harm. CoSA meet regularly (initially weekly) for 12-18 months, supported by a professional coordinator. This strengths-based approach holds the individual ‘core member’ to account for their behaviour and supports their safe integration in the local community.

Does the CoSA approach work? In 2020 Research in Practice reported that:

- 90% had reduced their general risk (of reoffending/causing harm)
- 90% had improved wellbeing
- 79% were better integrated into their local community
- 78% were making more careful decisions
- 76% were better managing their sexual thoughts and behaviour
- 72% had increased involvement in hobbies/activities
- 71% were more engaged in education, training and volunteering
- 70% were less isolated
- 60% had increased appropriate relationships outside CoSA

The Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner is the main funder of CoSA supported by match-funding from Charitable Trusts.

**Circles South West**

07738 947988 volunteering@circlesw.org.uk  
www.circles-southwest.org.uk Reg Charity No.: 1138726



Offering male adults who find themselves isolated because of deteriorating physical or mental health or changing circumstances resulting in loss of independence, a day on Rylands Farm with cattle, sheep and pigs to look after.

***“As a farmer and countryman, I have a natural affinity for the work done in this Club. We watched members being totally relaxed and immersed in what they were doing in the workshop. It was allowing them briefly to return to their old way of life.” GS***

The club enhances the well-being of older people by providing them with help to meet the challenges being faced. Typical conditions include Dementia, Parkinson’s, Stroke, Isolation, Injuries, Anxiety, Depression, Post-Traumatic Stress, Chronic Pain, Cancer, Heart & Lung conditions and others.

*“Those people who enjoy the Countryside should never have it removed from their life.”*

The ‘original’ countryman, John Stockley, had Parkinson’s and needed to have some form of stimulation away from the home whilst providing respite for his wife. There were no day care venues that offered a work setting with other men. The concept of providing day care to suit people who enjoyed the outdoor and work environment was spawned.



Rylands is a working farm where the men have their own workshop and can do a range of activities and use a variety of tools with which they are familiar and enjoy using. The men are very often from farming backgrounds but also includes ex-servicemen, builders, even past footballers. Stockmanship activities are most enjoyed – feeding the cows, pigs and goats and checking the bird feeders.

Countrymen UK has 12 sites across the UK and 8 more in the pipeline. Our objective is to develop more opportunities for men to be active, have meaning in their lives and gain access to the outdoors. Ideally day care will offer the option of being outside in order that men (and women) can live a fulfilled life when they lose their independence, and not just exist.

**Countrymen UK**

Rylands Farm, Boyshill Drove, Holnest, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 5PS 01963 210789  
admin@countrymenuk.org www.countrymenuk.org Reg Charity No.: 1184921

DCF raises funds for those most in need in Dorset. We do that by responding to that need and equipping the amazing charities and grass roots groups with the means to provide the assistance they know is needed on their doorsteps.

*“As the pandemic exploded, it was very apparent that the Dorset Community Foundation was exactly the right vehicle in the right place to ensure funding was quickly cascaded down to those small charities in the front line providing care and support to all those struggling to survive. They brought in extra experienced staff and worked every hour of every day to make it happen. The DCF became the natural organisation for me to support.” GS*

The Coronavirus emergency created a huge demand for support from hundreds of charities and groups, both established and emerging. Within days of the lockdown starting we set up our Coronavirus Community Fund and corresponding appeal which attracted donations from local companies, generous local individuals, charitable trusts and national funders. We have never been more relevant, acting fast and responding when Dorset needs it most.

Every community has people who care deeply about their neighbourhood and the people who live there. They are the hidden heroes who roll up their sleeves, metaphorically and often physically, and do something to help. They might join a voluntary group (or even start their own) that could be helping people at a time of crisis, such as in the pandemic, or working for the longer term, but they all have the same end result – they make their communities a better place to live.

Over the last year we have awarded more than £1.2 million in grants to charities, groups and individuals across the county.

We are able to do this because we work with a variety of donors and funders with whom we have built up a relationship of trust and co-operation over the last 21 years. Generous and community-minded individuals, companies, bequests, trusts, statutory bodies and specific campaigns all combine to provide the funds that improve peoples’ lives. We have built trust in us to use their money in the areas where it can make a difference. It’s a perfect partnership that is benefitting the people of our county who really need help.

Some donors set up bespoke funds aimed at specific geographic areas or areas of need, others trust us to use their money where it is needed the most. After two decades of working with the voluntary sector, our expertise and knowledge of where that need exists in Dorset is unrivalled.



Just one example of the work our funding inspires is at Somerford Youth and Community Centre, where we have awarded grants to help young people develop key life skills that have helped them into employment and prevented them from getting involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour. We have also funded the centre’s community food project for families in food poverty.

Youth worker Jae Harris told us: *“Without support from Dorset Community Foundation our job would be a lot harder to do and we would not be able to help as many families and young people as we do.”*

But it is not just groups who benefit from our funding – individuals are helped with education bursaries and hundreds of older people living in fuel poverty are given grants each year for heating from our Surviving Winter campaign, which has raised more than £350,000 over the last decade.



### **Dorset Community Foundation**

The Spire, High Street, Poole, BH15 1DF Reg Charity No.: 1122113  
01202 670815 admin@dorsetcf.org www.dorsetcommunityfoundation.org

# FOOD SHARE

Food Parcel Deliveries to those in need

Food Share's mission is to provide fresh fruit and vegetables, bakery and eggs to those facing financial hardship in and around the Dorchester area while also reducing food waste.

*"It was amazing to hear from Manager Liz Meech about her dedication to detail and concern for those to whom she provides food. With her son Jon, she prepares the food parcels into family portions. It takes incredible commitment to do this week after week, and she knows personally all those on her list each week, and even selects special goods for those she knows are vegetarian or gluten free." GS*

As with all food banks, they accept referrals from Health Care professionals, Schools, CAB and Charities working with families. Once received they will deliver a weekly food parcel for up to 6 months.

Food is donated by local supermarkets. The nutritional value of the food parcels is then improved by donations from local allotments as well as purchasing additional seasonal fruit and vegetables and eggs. The Fresh Food Bank and local businesses such as The Brace of Butchers and The Watercress Company have been very supportive as has the local community, who have made donations to Food Share.

Food parcels are delivered all over the DT1 & DT2 postcode area. Some of the villages are some distance from Poundbury, but all the more important to include, as the families are more isolated. At present regular deliveries are made to over 90 households a week. This is enabled by a strong delivery team of over 30 volunteers, who willingly give their time and energy to see every family receives their weekly parcel.



*"Liz is a shining example of someone who goes about their day with compassion and a willingness to help anyone, without question or judgement. Food Share has excelled with its support of local vulnerable people as a result. This award was thoroughly deserved, and I congratulate her wholeheartedly."*

## Dorchester Community Church 'Food Share'

Liscombe Street, Poundbury, Dorchester, DT1 3DF Reg Charity No.: 1163128  
01305 267171 / 07918 877498 contact@dorchestercommunitychurch.org.uk  
www.dorchestercommunitychurch.org.uk/ministries/food-share



Preventing the criminal and sexual exploitation of young people between the ages of 10-18 years old.

*"I was really proud to present a High Sheriff award to Escapeline who are operating in an arena about which most of us have no concept. The team is working tirelessly to prevent the exploitation of children, especially focusing on county lines where young people become trapped. They identify young people who are on the cusp or in the early stage of grooming by county line gangs. At the same time, they help parents to recognise the signs and support children at risk of exploitation. Their parental telephone support service to parents has been a lifeline during the pandemic." GS*

Escapeline has developed an extensive, practical knowledge and hands-on experience of how county line gangs and child exploitation operate in the South West. This has resulted in the charity having a good understanding of the needs and support required for vulnerable young people on the cusp or being groomed by county lines.

Our services include workshops with young people between the ages of 10-18 years old, raising awareness of child exploitation and grooming, teaching them what to look out for and protective strategies. We also provide training to professionals in education, health, social care and police on exploitation by county line gangs.



Escapeline offers parent awareness workshops and 1-1 telephone support on county lines and exploitation, and how to keep their own children safe. We provide targeted support to vulnerable young people identified as exploited, or at risk of exploitation, by county line gangs, assisting them out of a path of drugs and crime.

County lines gangs are growing at such a rate across the South West including Dorset, into rural and coastal areas, resulting in a significant increase in the demand for our services. During COVID, both the police and schools have reported an increase in vulnerable young people being exploited by county lines and drawn into criminal activity and unfortunately, we do not have sufficient funding to meet the high demand for our services.

## Escapeline

07707 897008 enquiries@escapeline.org.uk www.escapeline.org.uk  
Reg Charity No.: 1184475

Working with ex-offenders to bring a sense of community, hope and increased self-worth to socially excluded people, reducing re-offending and building stronger communities across Dorset.

*“At the start of the pandemic, as funding started to dry up, CEO Dr Caroline Stevens saved Footprints by fearlessly seeking new sources of funds and managed her resources to keep assisting those leaving prison and endeavouring to turn their lives around. This was not just going the extra mile, the lengths Caroline went to were extraordinary enabling the Charity to not only survive but deliver effective support to those that really needed it while locked down. Of particular worry were vulnerable women, many at risk of domestic violence and suffering drug and alcohol problems.” GS*

The Footprints Project delivers through-the-gate and community support to adult men and women in Dorset and Hampshire, most of whom have complex needs and are caught in the revolving door of offending. It also delivers an Out of Court Diversionary Scheme, in partnership with Dorset Police and the Dorset PCC, in which vulnerable women who have committed a first offence receive a conditional caution and work with Footprints for 16 weeks.

- A quarter have grown up in care (compared to 2% of the general population)
- A third have suffered abuse in childhood
- Almost half have been permanently expelled from school (compared to >1% of school pupils in England)
- Half have no formal qualifications (compared to 15% of the adult working age population)
- Two thirds were unemployed before entering custody (compared to 7.7% of the economically active population)
- 15% are homeless
- Up to half of female offenders and quarter of male offenders suffer with anxiety and depression (compared to 15% of the general population)
- Half of people released from prison will re-offend within a year of release. For those serving short custodial sentences and those under 18 years old this raises to over 80%.



Our staff and volunteers provide person centred support, developing an action plan and meeting people once a week enabling them to lead purposeful, fulfilling lives, contributing positively to the local community. Footprints successfully brings together the voluntary sector, police, prisons and probation to identify and fill gaps in services, meeting the needs of those who are currently under-supported.

### The Footprints Project

Parkstone United Reform Church, Commercial Road, Poole, BH14 0JW  
07789 937637 info@footprintsproject.co.uk www.footprintsproject.co.uk  
Reg Charity No.: 1110916



Uses farming, animal therapy and the countryside to provide solutions to health and social problems in people aged between 8 and 18 years.

*“A visit to Future Roots quickly turns into an overwhelming experience listening to the passion with which Julie runs her farm and the work she does to inculcate her young people back into society. It was amazing to hear how she managed to maintain support for young people at risk of exclusion, poor health or grooming throughout the period of lockdown... last September they had more young people than ever – over 90 a week.” GS*

Future Roots was founded 13 years ago by Julie Plumley, a passionate social worker and farmer’s daughter, with the aim of developing a safe environment for young people to develop and learn using farming practice and the natural environment. Its values are based on the belief that young people are inherently good and want to learn and take their place in society, but for this to be possible educational establishments need to offer opportunities outside of the traditional model.

Young people who benefit will be aged 8 and above and be finding life challenging due to the range of adversity that they experience both in and out of education. Many will have poor emotional or mental health, undiagnosed learning difficulties, neglectful or abusive families, or experiencing troubled relationships.

We aim to engage and inspire young people to want to learn through a practical skills-based approach and nurture. We provide around 80-90 sessions a week; the motivation and attendance of the young people is incredible, especially given that many of the young people have not attended school for a year and many have been excluded.

Young people often return to what they call their ‘happy place’ showing us their achievements and sharing their experiences. Many have successfully gone to college, others have become nurses, secretaries, care assistants, shepherds, dairymen and chefs. Importantly, we see how they are able to manage relationships so much more effectively and become caring, loving parents.



### Future Roots

Rylands Farm, Boyshill Drove, Holnest, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 5PS 01963 210703  
office@futureroots.net www.futureroots.net Future Roots is a Social Enterprise Business

Supporting parents of young children and babies as they learn to cope, improve their confidence and build hope for better lives for their children.

*“With four children of my own, I can quite understand the need for home visiting volunteer support. Even before the pandemic, young families, especially single parents or those without supporting relatives, faced huge challenges: learning to cope with post-natal depression, isolation, physical health problems, bereavement and many other issues, and all the while struggling to build better lives for their children. When lockdown started, that support must have been a life-saver.” GS*

We are a local independent charity offering friendship, advice and practical support to families who live in West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland. We help parents, with a child or children under 5, discover or rediscover the joy of parenting. We believe that every child deserves the best start in life but recognise that difficult family circumstances, ill health, physical, mental illness and deprivation often prevent this from happening. 71% of parents supported request help around their own emotional wellbeing and mental health.



When a family says *“I will always be grateful to my wonderful volunteer for patiently allowing me to find my confidence again and give me hope for the future”*, you know you are doing something right and making a real difference. This is shown in our evaluation of the support provided: 97% of parents reported improved parenting skills, 96% saw an improvement in their personal wellbeing and improvement in family management and 93% of families reported improvement in their children’s wellbeing.

Our volunteers will spend around two hours a week in a family’s home supporting them in the ways they need. We support parents as they learn to cope, improve their confidence and build better lives for their children. We also help them access local services, playgroups and to attend medical and social appointments. 30% of families are supported for more than 6 months.

**Home-Start West Dorset**

Dorchester Youth and Community Centre, Kings Road, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1NJ  
01305 265072 / 07805 507161 office@homestartwestdorset.co.uk  
www.homestartwestdorset.co.uk Reg Charity No.: 1122122

Helping vulnerable and marginalized people in the Weymouth & Portland area. Their aim is to bring a lasting change in people’s lives through offering a dedicated service meeting people’s practical, emotional and personal aftercare needs.

*“When I first met Mike Graham, he was teaching his son to build a ‘Discover Farming’ model barn and showing great patience. When I remarked about the patience, his wife said, it was because of the job he does. Having visited the Lantern Trust on several occasions, I see why. His team provides fantastic wrap-around support for those most in need in society.” GS*

We provide a unique, established, community based, locally accessed support service providing peer-led practical and emotional support for people affected by homelessness, physical and mental ill health, addiction, social isolation and all personal crises. We offer frontline practical assistance, housing and welfare benefit advice, support with forms, financial assistance and specialist guidance relating to sickness and disability, comprising:

- Advocacy • Crisis response • Support into housing and accommodation
- Pre and post tenancy support • Coordination of referrals into local services via interagency communication and joint working • Assisted Rent Deposit Scheme
- Programmes and courses • Budgeting and financial assistance • Peer mentoring
- Physical and mental health referrals • Direct access to our own GP service
- CAB benefits / debt adviser • Access to a DV worker

We know that to start living again people need to be able to see a better future. We believe every person should be given the opportunity to be heard and understand the importance of listening which is why we have stories of people who are living their best life yet!

Our ethos throughout our work is to empower the individual and always encourage personal choice and responsibility. The building of lasting trusting relationships with our clients are the foundation on which all our work is built on, the Lantern continues to be a place where laughter, friendship and hope are very apparent.



**The Lantern Trust**

2 Ranelagh Road, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 7JD 01305 787940  
info@lanterntrust.org.uk www.lanterntrust.org.uk Reg Charity No.: 1114979

Supporting people with mental health problems in Dorset for over 70 years – we won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect.

*“The number of volunteers who became involved during lockdown, brought new skills and talents to the Adult and Youth services team. It was to David Sutherland that I was honoured to award a High Sheriff Community Award for leading his team of all ages during the pandemic and increasing the opportunities to reach out to the community in need of mental health support during the extraordinarily tough time.” GS*

Throughout the pandemic, we have supported Dorset Residents who are vulnerable or at risk of developing mental health illness due to the impact of COVID-19. Our wellbeing services are available for all, but we also offer targeted support to minorities and communities at risk such as BAME and LGBT+, people who live with eating disorders, carers and young people.

Our Adult Services offer 1-2-1 and group support and interventions – counselling, active monitoring, mentoring and coaching, befriending, peer-based support groups and alternative social prescriptions.

*“...the online meetings have proved vital to my mental wellbeing as I live alone. It's not just about the serious stuff though, we have fun sharing good news, creativity, quizzes and games...”*

We work closely with schools countywide, providing support for students, staff and parents. For vulnerable children or young people, we provide 1-2-1 counselling, a wellbeing check-in service and wellbeing support groups.

*“I've really missed being at school because I don't get to see my friends, and it's boring working all day on a computer at home. I'm anxious about going back but I have a really nice person from Dorset Mind I talk to every week about how I feel, and it helps me think that I'm going to be OK.”*



Additionally, we provide workplace wellbeing training programmes to support employees and employers of local businesses in the workplace with consideration for home working.

### Dorset Mind

8 Stratfield Saye, 20-22 Wellington Road, Bournemouth, BH8 8JN 01202 315329  
www.dorsetmind.uk Adults: adultwellbeingservices@dorsetmind.uk  
Young people: dmyh@dorsetmind.uk Reg Charity No.: 1108168

Offering hospitality to those who find their way to the door, in all kinds of need, and to live in common with them.

*“Relying on God to provide takes huge faith: the previous warden was pondering how to finance a new sewerage system with its £17,000 cost, contemplating the impossible when the post arrived – in it was a cheque from an unknown donor for £17,000. As an observer of the community over many years, it is clear that faith achieves wonders for the guests often with troubled backgrounds – ex-offenders, recovering drug and alcohol addicts, those with mental trauma or even ex-servicemen with PTSD.” GS*

Captured in our strap line ‘Prayer, Hospitality, and Work’ the early community lived out and actively practiced ‘loving our neighbour as ourselves’. To the best of its ability the community, of between 20-35 people, has continued in this way offering a safe space to thousands of people over its 62 years.



No one individual who is resident at the community can break agreed boundaries of no alcohol or illegal drugs, verbal or physical violence or an unwillingness to seek mental health support for a deteriorating illness. Our “guests” may stay as little as a weekend (in normal times we welcome Wayfarers for one weekend in six), or some months, or for many years. Each will (where able) contribute financially but we depend on donations and legacies from our supporters to stay out of deficit each year.

Sharing each other's lives at Pilsdon we learn we are not that different from each other. Our 10 acre smallholding with cattle and sheep (often pigs and chickens too), the dairy, gardens and kitchen keep us occupied and the ‘garden to table’ creative cooks bring us all to our dining room when the bell rings.



Our Church and chapel bell rings four times daily reminding us the word ‘Love’ is a verb and within the practice of forgiveness for ourselves and each other we can live together encouragingly.

### The Pilsdon Community

Pilsdon Manor, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 5NZ 01308 868308  
pilsdon@pilsdon.org.uk www.pilsdon.org.uk Reg Charity No.: 1153924

Providing rough sleepers and vulnerably housed people (sofa-surfers) in Poole with hope for the future.

*“It is awe-inspiring and quite humbling to hear Revd Pat Southgate’s passion and determination to transform a rundown building into somewhere safe, warm and welcoming for those struggling in today’s society – and not just because of COVID-19. She has created an amazing team of volunteers to support her vision and make sure it happens; I cannot wait until March to see the completed work.” GS*

Currently, we have three lunchtime and two evening drop-ins at the United Reformed Church in Skinner Street, Poole, where we provide basic necessities, such as showers, hot food, clothing and sleeping bags, and assist clients to engage with agencies such as the addictions team, health workers, mental health workers, St Mungo’s rough sleeper outreach team, housing advisers and Job Centre. We also offer temporary supported housing for verified rough sleepers at our three-bed Amos House, working closely with the local authorities to move them on into independent accommodation, and a fortnightly Sunday lunch.



By providing one-stop access to outreach workers as well as offering other support services we can develop long-term outcomes for our clients enabling them to become more rooted in the local community.

In 2020 we acquired the former Hill Street Baptist Church with significant help from The Talbot Village Trust and a grant from Help the Homeless. This ‘Place for Change’ has two large halls, suitable not only for our drop-ins for hot breakfasts and lunches but also to accommodate SWEP (the emergency cold weather shelter) and a more permanent cold weather shelter. Additionally, there is enough room for us to install showers, a laundry, and create areas for clients to access the various outreach services in privacy. We are undertaking exciting and substantial refurbishment, which will include a new heating system, ceiling insulation, kitchen, showers, laundry room and office space. The target is to complete by the spring of 2021.

#### **Routes to Roots (Poole) CIO**

c/o Skinner Street URC, Skinner Street, Poole, BH15 1RQ 01202 667880  
office@routestoroots.org www.routestoroots.org Reg Charity No.: 1155945

Helping to understand and overcome relationship problems in the family, at work or in school.

*“Most people, when I ask them about Relate, assume it is all about Marriage Guidance. Though this is an important part of their work, the Relate team spend 50% of their time working with young people under the age of 25, counselling on family issues, bullying, relationships both at school and at home, behaviour, and increasingly grooming. Therefore I was delighted to present Sian and her team with a High Sheriff Award because they recognised the need to support young people at risk of mental trauma during the lockdown period – and did something about it.” GS*

Relate Dorset & South Wiltshire is not only relationship counselling, but children and young people’s counselling as well. We work from our centres as well as schools. Our services are of benefit to many in the community, reaching individuals and families who need support and a positive way forward with the difficulties they are facing in their lives.

Throughout the pandemic we have been able to provide all counselling via zoom and phone reaching the same number of clients. In these unprecedented circumstances this is a great achievement for everyone concerned. Being able to reach individuals, couples and families and providing support, help, communication and some structure to their daily lives, has been a lifeline to many.

We are so pleased to have been able to continue with our much-needed counselling service, reaching those clients who otherwise would not have received any support or help in these very difficult times.

Our funding comes from grants, fund raising and from hiring out our conference centre in Dorchester. The challenges we face in the immediate future are being able to continue with these services and working to find ways of promoting our centre and its facilities, all of which will provide us with the means to carry on with the provision of these essential services into the future.



#### **Relate Dorset & South Wiltshire**

Inspirations, Poundbury Business Centre, Middle Farm Way, Poundbury, Dorchester, DT1 3WA 01302 380900 centre.manager@relatedorset.org.uk  
www.relate.org.uk/dorset-south-wiltshire Reg Charity No.: 1079585

Improving the lives of young people (13-25) in the Sherborne and Gillingham area.

*“Standing in a tranquil garden in the heart of Sherborne, it was difficult to imagine the issues with which the Rendezvous team was having to deal especially during the pandemic.” GS*

We help young people grow and develop, become resilient and optimistic for the future, and gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to transition to adulthood. Our delivery team of six trained part-time staff and 30+ volunteers provide the specialist help and support young people need through targeted one to one mental health support, advice and guidance and English/Maths tuition or small group work programmes such as our Young Parents Support group.



The need is great. Life has become increasingly challenging for young people in recent years. Many struggle to find their place in a world that places increasing emphasis on academic achievement to the exclusion of all else, where there are fewer entry level jobs, families are more complicated and where social media can both be a blessing and curse.

During the pandemic we have learnt to work remotely. We even managed to make a small film with young people in Gillingham to find out what they thought about life during a global pandemic (Covid & Me can be found on YouTube). Examples of our work:

- Stanley was referred to the Rendezvous by his GP with high levels of anxiety. He was becoming more withdrawn and was afraid about going back to college in September. He had regular 1:1 sessions and we helped him successfully start term in the autumn. With the help of ongoing telephone support he is still there, still anxious but continuing to learn and think about his future.
- We worked in partnership with Mia’s social worker to help her escape her abusive partner. She joined our young parents’ group and made friends which increased her confidence and has built her own peer support network. Mia now smiles. She has become more self-reliant and her young children are beginning to thrive.

## The Rendezvous

Under Cheap Street Church, Cheap Street, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 3BJ  
01935 814496 office@therendezvous.org.uk www.therendezvous.org.uk  
Reg Charity No.: 1162722

Free of charge support for anyone of any age or gender in Dorset who has experienced any form of sexual violence such as rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or domestic abuse at any time in their life.

*“I was hugely impressed with the work of the team when I first visited in September and felt that I had to come back to present this award not only for the resilience they showed during lockdown, but to celebrate the continuing work STARS is doing. I hope they will continue to get the funding they require to do this incredibly valuable work. They have around 770 clients and are also working with schools.” GS*

Sexual Trauma and Recovery Service (STARS Dorset) offers one to one support, free of charge, for anyone of any age or gender, who lives works or studies in Dorset and has experienced any form of sexual violence. We provide several different types of support including an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service which can support a one to one Counselling service, a Children and Young People’s Service and a Support Line.

We have two centres, one in Poole and one in Dorchester but also see clients in the community, such as at work or at school. We also supports clients online and via the telephone. Throughout the pandemic, we have continued to support anyone who needs our help; during the first lockdown we increased the hours of our Support Line and continued to offer support through our Counselling Service and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service both online and by phone.

From the 1st April 2020 until the 30th September 2020 the charity supported 1033 adults and 272 children and young people across Dorset.

At the end of 2020 we launched two new projects: a 20-week counselling project specifically for anyone who has suffered domestic abuse, and a project to support children and young people across Dorset who have witnessed and experienced domestic abuse.



## Sexual Trauma and Recovery Service (STARS Dorset)

PO Box 7697, Poole, Dorset, BH15 9GN 01202 308840 07771 986920  
info@starsdorset.org www.starsdorset.org Reg Charity No.: 1178308



## The Thomas Hardye School

“An outstanding school providing a first-class education for all students” Ofsted

*“It was an absolute pleasure to present a High Sheriff’s Award to the Thomas Hardye School’s catering team. Weekly through the lockdowns and summer, they provided food parcels to over 100 families at the School (one pack per child) and around another 30 to other local schools. What an amazing achievement and service to the community. Many congratulations to everyone involved.” GS*

Thomas Hardye School has spent the last 450 years helping young people in our community. With this heritage it was only natural that the catering department stepped up to the plate and supported the community during the pandemic lockdowns.

Since March 2020, Head of Catering Lou Thompson and her team have prepared and distributed healthy and generously sized food parcels to those students in need including all who would normally receive free school meals, so far (up to mid-January 2021) this is over 3,150 parcels.

Each parcel contains: 2kg washed potatoes, 1kg carrots, 800g tin of tomatoes, 185g tin of tuna, 4 bananas, 4 apples, 2 onions, 500g pasta, 500g meat (minced beef, pork or 4 chicken legs), 6 handmade pork sausages (500g approx), 400g mature cheddar cheese, 125g sliced ham, 10 free range eggs.

The parcels are designed to support the whole family rather than just lunches for the child. Each pack provides the following meals: 4-6 portions of pasta bolognese, 3 portions of sausage and mash, 4 jacket potatoes with cheese and beans, 2 tuna sandwiches, 2 ham sandwiches, 2 egg sandwiches, 4 portions of savoury rice and 3 cheese omelettes

Where necessary, parcels are delivered door-to-door by the THS site team whether it is for pupils of Thomas Hardye School or for other schools in the Wessex Multi Academy Trust and Dorchester Area Schools Partnership.

The school has received lots of positive feedback from both students and parents who have benefitted. All those involved are very proud of their contribution to the service they are providing.



### Thomas Hardye School

School Queen’s Avenue, Dorchester, DT1 2ET  
01305 266064 www.thomas-hardye.dorset.sch.uk



## Dorset's Towns

*“When Volunteers unite, they create a movement: some of the amazing stories and actions from around the Dorset Bailiwick.” GS*

### What every town and community achieved:

As the pandemic struck, many town and village councils were amazingly proactive in reaching out to the vulnerable and supporting individuals and businesses. However, it was the Volunteers that gave unconditionally their time and efforts to keep towns running. They were supported by their Town Councils and a range of businesses from taxis drivers to supermarkets. The ‘services’ offered were just amazing:

- Delivery of the Coronavirus Support information leaflets to every household
- Grocery shopping
- Collection and delivery of prescriptions
- Facilitated lifts for hospital appointments
- Assisting shops with their deliveries
- Delivery of the donated local home-cooked meals
- Providing comfort to the lonely
- Assisting or even creating Food Banks with deliveries and collections
- Taking and making Wellbeing calls through the Phone Buddies initiative
- Answering and logging the calls for help at the Town Council
- Coordination of the volunteer teams
- Critical communication and the provision of regular updates via local websites and social media
- Keeping residents updated on available support throughout the town
- Linking in with and signposting to various support organisations like Dorset Council, the WI, Age Concern and Help & Care
- Joining up with and supporting similar initiatives to cover the wider Dorset area
- Creating fruit & vegetable parcels and delivering them to residents in a variety of ways
- Gardening help for the less able
- Working with local press to spread the message further
- Keeping business up to date on support available from the Government in terms of grants.

### Beaminster Town Council's Community Resilience Team

The team, which has been in existence since 2009, was able to provide a fast and co-ordinated response to the pandemic and the Beaminster community stepped up; immediately there were responses from well over 100 individuals all offering their time and help. The Resilience Team identified key areas of support required: self-isolating residents, assisting businesses facing unprecedented pressures and individuals needing advice and someone to talk to.

The chef in the Saw Mill cafe at the Mapperton Estate was furloughed: he volunteered to cook wholesome homemade meals, all at no cost. The volunteers distributed over 100 meals a week within Beaminster and the surrounding area to extremely grateful residents.

Nothing was too much effort for the new band of volunteers. The way that this incredible team of people rallied together to make sure that Beaminster functioned has been representative of a community truly coming together to look after one another. It was inspirational to see how tasks were completed efficiently, positively and with very infectious smiles. Their first remit was to ensure that everyone in Beaminster felt safe and looked after.

### Blandford Forum COVID-19 Volunteer Community

The team started with a Facebook page to support people who were unable to collect prescriptions. This quickly evolved into a full menu of support. There were some very special performances:

- Jane Reed set up and funded ‘Meals for the vulnerable’, cooking and delivering the meals. Supermarkets and the community quickly started to help by providing food and money to keep it going.
- The Blandford School's Design Technology Team and Bryanston School made face shields for local businesses, care homes, funeral directors and NHS services including Poole Hospital Radiography Department. Both schools also led fundraising efforts for the Foodbank.
- Darren Burns bought two 3D printers so that by May 13th he had made and delivered 642 face shields free of charge to NHS, care workers and frontline staff.





## Lytchett Minster and Upton

Upton Together was created specifically to address the many issues faced by the pandemic. Working alongside the Town Council they were led by council members, Cllrs Pipe and McKell. They immediately sent out over 5,000 flyers to let people know that they were there to support them, seeking volunteers and raising funds to enable things to happen. To help create awareness of the group they provided over 630 elderly and shielded residents with promotional Cornish cream teas.

They've built wheelchairs and mobility scooters, fixed broken glasses, fitted hearing aids and provided a washing machine service. In addition, they paid particular attention to young people: they supported 70 young people to get Bikeability certificates in Level 1 and 2 and enabled 80 children to attend school holiday summer/autumn sports camps and offered 80 children the chance to Zoom with Santa at Christmas. They also worked with local schools and the community with a 'Care to Share' programme, with gifts for children and adults being provided by those that 'have' for re-distribution to those that were struggling.

## Bridport Coronavirus Community Support

Bridport's economy has weathered the COVID storm remarkably well, thanks to the efforts of businesses, volunteers and Bridport Town Council, who have together provided a 'shop local' campaign, social distancing measures in the town centre, and an extended market to accommodate both social distancing and fairs/markets that could no longer operate indoors. Over 1,500 of the most vulnerable local residents received help, with the support of 170 volunteers, many of whom had no previous involvement in volunteering. A supporting leaflet was delivered to 11,500 addresses.



Alex and Carl Lewis, who had no organisational links, stepped up to recruit and manage Bridport's volunteer 'army' of 170. They launched the Bridport Coronavirus Community Support Facebook page with the aim of helping vulnerable people in the community. The Lewis's said *"When we set up the Facebook pages the response was huge: it just exploded. It just goes to show, in the face of the horrible situation that we were heading into, the sheer number of people who wanted to help."*

Sophie Mears made around 4,500 meals for vulnerable people between March and June. Her free food parcels were delivered to those who could not leave their homes during the first lockdown period. Organisations and firms volunteered to do deliveries for her, including the Soup Kitchen, the Community Fridge, Jurassic Reclamation, Boilerman and a self-employed worker.

There were two groups of needleworkers, the West Dorset Scrubbers (WDS) and Eype Scrubbers Sewing Group, who between them made over 8,000 scrubs and other items for local hospitals. The WDS brought together over 200 active volunteers, mainly through social media from across the county.

The same partnership and community approach has maintained Bridport's reputation as 'Dorset's Eventful Town', with two socially distanced mini music festivals in the summer and in the New Year helped Bridport to become one of the country's first vaccination centres, with the Town Council setting up outdoor shelters, and a helpline for volunteers marshalling. One vaccinee said *"It was a very smooth operation from start to finish. Lots of people in hi-viz coats showing cars where to park and special places for people who couldn't walk. Helpful volunteers with directions, taking temperatures, hand sanitizers, then, when in with the health worker, a few questions followed by the vaccination and then out. All within ten minutes. A happy experience."*





## Gillingham Town Council COVID-19 Community Volunteers

Within a week of the lockdown announcement in March 2020, the Town Council Community Emergency Management Team had created a database of streets and number of properties, registered volunteers and allocated a named volunteer to all 247 streets in the parish.

- Packs were assembled containing a high viz jacket, disposable gloves, an ID card and contact cards for volunteers to post through residential letterboxes.
- Volunteers supported residents by shopping, collecting prescriptions, befriending and even walking their dogs.
- A lot of time was spent queuing at shops and pharmacies, so a centralised prescription delivery service was set up to reduce the volunteers' workload.
- The Town Council developed a good working relationship with the local Social Prescribing and Wellbeing Lead, who took over where there were concerns about wellbeing/safeguarding.

The service not only provided vital support for residents, it also helped the wellbeing of volunteers at a time when many of them were furloughed. A volunteer garden was created with individually named wooden hearts, in recognition of their hard work and commitment.

Quote from a volunteer:

*"Thanks to you I think a good number of volunteers have been able to feel they are doing something useful in a time that has been difficult and I am convinced that the volunteers have benefitted as much from volunteering as those who have been helped by them."*

Quote from a resident:

*"My wife and I have already used the service and we wanted you to know how much we appreciate both the Council's foresight in setting up the scheme and the kindness and altruism of the volunteers who are making such valuable and valued contributions."*

## My role as Dorset's High Sheriff in 2020

The role of the High Sheriff is to represent the Queen's interests in the county, in particular matters of criminal justice and the welfare of those who work within it and who work to maintain the Queen's peace and the safety and security of her citizens.



Traditionally, as a High Sheriff, I would have been invited to many events across the Bailiwick from civic days to award ceremonies. I was lucky to be able to fulfil an invitation from the Wimborne Mayor, Councillor Shane Bartlett, where we were particularly impressed by the Minster and the Walford Mill Education Trust which promotes education and training in the Arts and Crafts to young people. However, this year almost all the customary invitations were cancelled which gave me the opportunity to seek out organisations doing fantastic work especially as a result of the pandemic. This has created an insight into many parts of Dorset, but it has also provided surprises: at Beaminster's Foodbank I met the amazing Paula Tuff who runs their Youth Club and learnt how she was supporting youngsters by visiting them in their rural locations – an unexpected bonus.

As High Sheriff, one should interact with the key institutions of state such as the Police, Fire and Rescue, courts, H.M. Prisons, Border Force and Probation service; it is a key area of involvement. I have been able to sit in court for a few days and also meet a reduced number of key members of the primary services. However, most of my interactions have been seriously curtailed and reduced very often to Zoom. Through the use of modern technology, I have at least been able to achieve some communication and attend award ceremonies to thank them all for their part in maintaining the Queen's peace and the safety and security of her citizens.

It has been a huge honour and privilege to fulfil the position and in this challenging year, it has been immensely rewarding.

George Streatfeild  
[www.highsheriffdorset.co.uk](http://www.highsheriffdorset.co.uk)

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to all the featured charities and towns for their input and photos, also photographer Tim Russ and Gillingham News.

From **Martin Clunes** D.L. ...

In these uncertain times of the global pandemic it is very easy and understandable for any of us to hunker down, close all doors and keep close care of those nearest and dearest to us. When you read this, you will see that some of us in Dorset are not only doing that but are setting their sights beyond their own families and investing time and care to help others who are or might be struggling. Just because there is a pandemic doesn't mean that the old and existing problems go away they just become harder to deal with. What you will read in this booklet is not the whole story – there are a great many other charities and organisations making sure that life in Dorset can carry on against all odds including the hundreds of individuals volunteering to bring food, medicines, transport and much needed company to those who might be in need. All in all we are very lucky indeed to live in such a caring county... but we knew that, didn't we?...



MC