

THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS

Rotherham Heroes volunteer helps vulnerable resident receive her first Christmas presents in a decade



The Rotherham Heroes Volunteer Programme, coordinated by the Rotherham Community Hub, was launched in March 2020 to support vulnerable individuals to get the help that they need during the pandemic, and to help those volunteering get the information and advice needed to operate safely and effectively. Since then, many stories have emerged of residents going above and beyond to help out in their local community by using their skills, kindness and community spirit.

One such story was shared by **The Rotherham Advertiser** and **Voluntary Action Rotherham** in December 2020, detailing how the efforts of a kind-hearted Rotherham Heroes volunteer helped a critically vulnerable resident receive her first Christmas presents in over a decade. Volunteer Madeleine was partnered with 80-year-old resident Wendy through the Rotherham Heroes scheme, and the pair soon formed a close bond through regular phone calls before eventually being able to meet in person for the first time.

Christmas 2020 was to be Wendy's 13th Christmas alone and without gifts, and her critically vulnerable status meant she had not been able to leave the house since March. When Madeleine posted to the Brampton-en-le-Morthen Facebook group asking if anybody wanted to buy Wendy a Christmas present, she was overwhelmed to find that the presents 'came rolling in' as the village pulled together to help out.

On Christmas Day, she surprised Wendy with three sacks of gifts from the local community, along with festive video messages from Wendy's neighbours and a Christmas dinner.

An emotional video of the exchange was shared by The Advertiser.

Instead of doing housework on Christmas Day, Wendy was opening presents from the local community until 2pm. Among the gifts she received were toiletries, bed socks and slippers.

Wendy told The Advertiser she will never be able to thank Madeleine enough: "Christmas Day to me has always been an ordinary day and then the council arranged for Madeleine to ring me once a week to make sure I'm all right, and for a shopper, Alison, too... Without these two, it would be one hell of a struggle... She's been a lifeline over the phone to me and so has Alison. I have had my down days, we all have, but it's just somebody to talk to. I look forward to the phone ringing and hope to God it's Madeleine. This is a friendship for life now."

For more information on volunteering with the Rotherham Community Hub, including information on the support provided and how to become a volunteer, please click **here**.

BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

State of the art respite centre opens its doors ‘Conway Crescent’

The adult social care reset and recovery plan aims to ensure that adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions of the pandemic, and an integral part of this plan is the offer of respite facilities to support carers and service-users. On 4th January, the Council opened a new state of the art respite facility for adults with learning disabilities and autism in Conway Crescent.

Conway Crescent replaces two out of date properties at Maltby and Wath. The older properties were not fully accessible and could not provide the services needed to meet peoples’ range of complex needs.

Being purpose-built, Conway Crescent has lifts in both houses meaning all eight en-suite bedrooms are fully accessible. One house is fitted with ceiling hoists and the other provides an autism-friendly environment.

The decision to develop this new offer is part of the Council’s wider plan to transform services for adults with learning disabilities, providing increased choice and opportunities for greater independence through the My Front Door programme.

Rotherham Council Cabinet member for Adult Social Care Cllr David Roche said: “The new houses at Conway Crescent will bring the Council’s respite service right up to date with brand new facilities equipped to serve a wider range of people’s needs.

“Our carers are there for their loved ones 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This new respite service will give more opportunities for carers to have a much-needed short break, in order to carry on their very important caring roles.”

Conway Crescent has already welcomed a number of people through its doors, who have started to benefit from the facilities at the centre. Early feedback has been extremely positive, and staff will continue to work with carers and service-users to support their independence and wellbeing.

For more information about Conway Crescent, visit Rotherham Council’s YouTube page, [here](#).



CASE STUDIES

BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Promoting key messages through a digi-van

The current COVID-19 pandemic has presented the Council with a number of challenges, including ensuring that all communities understand the latest advice and restrictions, as well as how to access any support that they need. In a world where an increasing focus has been placed on digital communications and social media, the unique and urgent nature of the coronavirus emergency has challenged the Council to think outside of the box when it comes to communicating key messages.

With the aim of connecting with all audiences, innovative work has been carried out in the form of a video campaign displayed on the side of an LED display truck. The truck travels around the borough, particularly in areas of high footfall, displaying a mixture of static images and video content. Early feedback in the project indicated that this should include 'trusted local faces' so that the campaign felt like it was tailored to the local area, rather than being fed down nationally. The Council has therefore worked with key community influencers on the campaign, such as Paul Warne and David Seaman, to share the latest guidance and key messages.

The success of this communication channel is based largely on its mobility; specific audiences can be targeted and there is an ability to focus communications on harder to reach communities. As the van shares messages digitally rather than through a traditional display board, messages can also be updated immediately, giving the Council the ability to respond quickly, which has been essential given the ever-changing nature of the pandemic. Since the current lockdown restrictions (which came into force in January 2021) the van has been utilised in areas such as supermarkets, retail parks and other areas where footfall has remained high due to shops being open.

The innovative use of the digi-van has been acknowledged among colleagues from other local authorities, and recently, learning has been shared with the Cabinet Office, including a presentation given to the Scottish Cabinet Office. Due to the unique nature of the pandemic, the Council has looked for fresh ways to connect with communities, and in some cases, such as the digi-van, this has relied upon more traditional and grassroots forms of communication, particularly to connect with harder to reach communities and with those who are digitally excluded.



ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Town Centre 3 Sites Project



The Town Centre 3 Sites project was approved by Cabinet in October 2019 and features the development of 171 high quality, mixed tenure homes across three strategic gateway sites in the heart of Rotherham's town centre:

- **Westgate Riverside** (formerly Sheffield Road car park)
- **Millfold Rise** (formerly Millfold House commercial units, scrapyards and Eastwood Domestic appliance shop)
- **Wellgate Place** (formerly Henley's garage site)

The scheme comprises homes for outright sale, shared ownership and affordable rent, with a variety of housetypes including apartments, family houses, modern back-to-back houses and bespoke waterside homes with terraces overlooking the River Don. Access to the riverside will be improved by construction of a new riverside path that is hoped to link back to Main St in future.

The Council's contractor Willmott Dixon Construction has been on site since starting on schedule in February 2020.



Progress has been excellent with site remediation completed across all three sites and construction up to first floor level at Wellgate Place. We are on track to see the first homes completed in Autumn 2021 as planned, with properties due to go on sale in Spring 2021.

When completed in summer 2022, these schemes will broaden the residential offer within the town centre and help build the platform for a sustainable new urban community. However, the benefits of the scheme are already being felt during the construction period thanks to the various social value initiatives that have been put in place:

- Working closely with Rotherham College on ways they can support the students, including the first work placement starting in November.
- Delivering careers talks and mock interviews at Wickersley, Rawmarsh and St Bernard Schools, plus donating leftover materials to the construction department at Wickersley.
- Ongoing support – on funding bids and architectural plans – to Rotherham Town Cricket Club with their refurbishment plans to create a community hub for local people.
- Three apprentices and a work experience student working on the complex remediation of these post-industrial sites.
- Supporting local charity Lighthouse Homes during lockdown – donating DVD players, activity books and TVs as well as food supplies, winter clothing, toiletries and sanitary products.
- A Virtual Work Experience Week during February 2021 half term, which has stimulated huge interest in participating.



WAYS OF WORKING

Adapting to new ways of working and celebrating the outstanding achievements of staff 'Big Hearts, Big Changes Awards'



In March 2020, some services were suspended, face to face services closed and the Council moved to home working, in line with the Government guidance.

To ensure that critical services continued to be delivered the Council worked hard to ensure that new ICT infrastructures were quickly implemented, with limited/no disruption.

Around 3,500 staff are now able to work from home at one time, in comparison to 300-400 previously and Council staff and Members have quickly adapted to the new ways of working.

Council meetings currently take place online and new digital online solutions have been created to make it easier for customers and businesses to contact the Council to get the help and support needed, especially during the pandemic.

To celebrate the outstanding achievements during 2020 the first virtual 'Big Hearts, Big Changes' Awards were celebrated on 15th December via Microsoft Teams.

The awards are a way of showing the Council's appreciation for the hard work employees do every day and an opportunity to say a big thank you to well deserving colleagues.

The awards saw a record 236 nominations and finalists were recognised in 10 categories during an uplifting celebration. The judging panels were made up of Strategic Leadership Team members, Cabinet Members, and representatives from our various partner organisations. Many of the judging panels commended the high-quality nominations received.

Despite not being able to gather in the same room, the event was made extra special with 4 guest videos played through the ceremony, each celebrating the hard work that had taken place through the entire organisation. These included: David Seaman, England Goalkeeper, Dame Louise Casey, Paul Warne, Rotherham United Manager and Rahul Mandal, Great British Bake-Off Winner. Each guest spoke of how valued public services had been during 2020.

The Council were delighted to welcome the Mayor and Mayoress of Rotherham, Cllr Jenny Andrews and Cllr Jeanette Mallinder to the event, who announced the winners for each category.

The afternoon was extremely positive, and it was inspirational hearing the different stories about our winners and finalists doing the best work of their lives and going the extra mile.

WAYS OF WORKING

This year's winners included:

- Apprentice of the year - Devon Ferns
- Safeguarding Star - Jacqui Clark
- Outstanding Innovator - Diane Clarke
- Support Service Hero - Joanne Bettridge
- Rising Star - Ashleigh Wilford
- Inspirational Leader - Elizabeth Anderton
- Community Champion - Mark Ryalls
- Frontline Hero - Beverly Rennie
- Top Team - Reablement Team
- Best Employee - Deborah Thomson

The Council are very grateful to the event sponsors **Simply Health, Sheffield Credit Union** and **Tusker** (in partnership with CPC Drive) as the Awards could not have happened without their support.

This Best Employee award was presented to Deborah Thomson from the ICT (information and communications technology) service. The award celebrates



someone who goes above and beyond their role, demonstrating outstanding performance and an optimistic, enthusiastic attitude. Those nominated set a great example to colleagues and are role models to others. They are true ambassadors for the Council values, and their positive outlook shines through in all they do.

Deborah was recognised for her work to ensure the rapid and successful transition of the Council's new 8x8 telephone platform which has been critical to ensuring that services could be delivered from home successfully.

Deborah's nomination stated that she has 'repeatedly demonstrated commitment, dedication and 'can-do' attitude and is a true inspiration'.

With the support of staff like Deborah the Council has been able to continue delivering high quality services to support Rotherham residents.

HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

Rotherham Together Creative Programme

Rotherham Together, was launched in September 2020, a creative programme developed to respond and support recovery from Covid-19, highlighting events and activities across the borough.

The programme has three core themes:



Joy – The ability to make people smile, to lift collective spirits. It aims to: reduce isolation encouraging residents to safely venture out again; stay connected with those who continue to shield; celebrate the diversity and creativity of every day; reintroduce people to their local community with fresh perspectives.



Gratitude – To give thanks to so many who worked behind the scenes to keep Rotherham going. People who put their world on hold so others could carry on through lockdown.



Hope – To date Rotherham has lost 714 residents to COVID-19. Contributing to their own corners of the town, the world is a poorer place without them. In speaking to those living with grief, some wanted a place of contemplation to help manage their pain, whereas others wanted an opportunity to remember and celebrate their loved ones.



In September 2020, the headline event was Wildflower Park, which was a great success. A large-scale land art mural in Clifton Park, with mazes and trails that people explored, socially distanced at their leisure as they had been exploring parks throughout the first lockdown.

October's headline was Women of Hope. A series of four 'in conversation with' sessions with women with aspirations to become the first black, female astronaut in the UK to media trailblazers, artists and activists from across Rotherham communities. The event was streamed through the Council's social media channels to mark Black History Month.



HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

Sitting behind the ‘headline’ events are a series of scalable and flexible activities that are either online or self-led or could be easily adapted if regulations changes.

No Leotard Necessary, is a theme that has featured in most months of the programme. Sharing various activities across the borough to help people get active, walking groups and trails, men only fitness classes and even a social media movement **#MovingRotherham**

In the region of 120,000 people have engaged in over 30 online activities and targeted events to date, delivered by Culture, Sport and Tourism, these figures don’t include any activities or events delivered by partners. Other events and activities in the programme, were delivered by event partners; REMA, ROAR, VAR, RotherFed, RUCST,

Rotherham Friends in Deed, Artful, Grimm & Co, WE Great Place, WOW Foundation, Wentworth Woodhouse, Artworks, 64 million artists, CYPF Consortium, Rotherham CLC, Your Place Comedy.

Rotherham Together will culminate in March 2021 with the opening of a memorial garden at Thrybergh Country Park – Hope Fields. Hope Fields will create a dedicated place for people to pay their respects to those who have passed, to remember the keyworkers, front line staff, volunteers and emergency services who worked through the Pandemic. A space for wellbeing where people can recover from the trauma of the previous 12 months, whilst also being a place of joy where loved ones are remembered and celebrated, a place emphasising nature, play, wellbeing and exploration. Further information regarding the programme is available **here**.

