

## Linda's Story

Linda, a Macmillan Community Navigator based in Cornwall, has shared how a small, south coast Cornish village has adapted and provides 'acts of kindness' for people who need a helping hand.

## A Village in Lockdown

The 23rd March 2020 will be remembered as COVID-19 lockdown day with strict limitations on where, and if, we could venture out, depending on our living circumstances and health.

The freedom many of us were used to was taken away, temporarily, to slow the spread of the pandemic and keep us safe. Whilst that's a good thing from a health perspective, it has created isolation for many of us in many ways. You may have heard this heavily used quote **"we're not in the same boat, but we're all in the same storm"**. **It's true.** We all cope differently.

So, how does a small, south coast Cornish village adapt to this new world?

## How did it begin?

A Facebook post from Becky Wass, in Falmouth planted the idea. She created a simple form that a resident could complete to confirm what sort of help they needed whilst isolating. Ian Lobb (Lobbs Farm Shop) spoke with Michael Bunney (local resident, coordinator of help scheme & St.Goran Parish Councillor) and other local parish councillors, and the idea to use it took off!

A week before lockdown, a social media invite went out asking for volunteers in the parish (circa 1,400 people) and 80 people arrived on GH beach to find out more. Residents were allocated roads and delivered helpful leaflets across the parish, including remote hamlets and farms. Existing and new FB pages were updated. Michael also collaborated with Alex Williams in Mevagissey with daily updates & sharing ideas of good and effective practice.



Just some of the thank you cards and gestures since the project started.

Over 100 residents have volunteered aged from 13 – 94 years old. **Not only did this help those in need, shielding & isolating, but prevented isolation for the volunteers too.**

**Local residents and volunteers (one of whom works in Tanzania) also raised an incredible £9k.** This has helped to fund food parcels and leaves a legacy for community projects in the future, under the guardianship of the Parish Council.

The Parish Nurse, Sarah Male-King, coordinated prescription deliveries & owners of a village business, the hot meals to support people in need.

*"I am proud of the community and the positivity it's shown. It's practical help like prescription collections that takes away the anxiety and has meant we've donated 50+ meals each day. There's no means testing, a decision made from day one. The community have been so quick to respond. It's given people the excuse to ask and offer help"*

**Michael Bunny, coordinator of help scheme & St.Goran Parish Councillor (picture right)**

### What's next for the village?

As COVID-19 eases, some of the services are being reduced as volunteers return to work and school, but support is still available and the infrastructure is in place if needed again.

*Help/activities included in this scheme:*

- a)** Free hot meals cooked by the local primary school and delivered to those in need (including on horseback by a 13-year-old!)
- b)** Telephone box converted to a food bank
- c)** Community Whatsapp group
- d)** Voucher scheme – a gift for recipients to spend in either of the 2 local shops; Cakebreads or Gorran Stores
- e)** Donations to help anyone in need (financial & essential goods)
- f)** Teddy bear hunt
- g)** Daily WhatsApp or Messenger updates with news and reinforcing the rules & restrictions for residents and businesses in a fun and encouraging way.

- h)** Easter eggs delivered to every child in the parish, donated by National Trust, local churches and the Old School Rooms.



**Sharon Trew, a GH resident said,**  
*"the appreciation shown by those that have been supported is heartfelt ....we have been helping our neighbour's, even climbing on their roof to temporarily fix a roof tile before the storm came. I put out a plea to help (a 2 person job) and within minutes there was an outstanding amount of help offered"*

**Mavis Taylor, a GH resident and beneficiary of local support said,**  
*"it's nice to see people to chat to during our isolation.... We valued the ability to have groceries delivered...we are blown away by all the support that has and is still being provided by all the volunteers in our village and feel sure that this will continue long after this pandemic is over".*

## Kindness Matters

There are many definitions of kindness – “the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate” for example. **For me, it’s about doing something without expectation.**

It can be the smallest gesture like smiling at the person you pass in the street, starting a car for someone who’s shielding, picking up litter or a grander scheme like those in Goran Parish. It’s good for us too. It makes us happier, it’s good for the heart, slows ageing, improves relationships & it’s contagious!

### The Five side effects of Kindness

So, as a starter, if you want to help where you live, or want to find out what help there is for you, take a peek at :

[www.cornwall-link.co.uk](http://www.cornwall-link.co.uk).

Anyone can add to this directory, so please spread the word if you are offering services or activities that can support your local community.

**Perhaps you could even offer a single act of kindness before the end of this very day, at home or at work. I’m sure you’ll feel better for it.**

## Age UK Cornwall & Macmillan

Age UK Cornwall has a unique partnership with Macmillan in the South West.

Our Macmillan Team can offer anyone directly or indirectly affected by cancer information and signposting to bring them the appropriate support they need, whilst also having the time to be that all-important listening ear.

**To contact our team please call the Community Helpline on 01872 266 383**



A Telephone box that was converted to a food bank & information stand

We will all likely have our wobbles and challenges as we face shifting changes day to day. **Especially for people living with cancer, directly or otherwise, these may be increasing now.** We’re looking at how our team of Macmillan Community Navigators can help in our local areas especially as we are usually a physical presence in our communities.