

HALE, FARNHAM

Report on the Activities of the Opportunities Community Project as at 4 November 2020

The present Covid situation has impacted on all of our lives. As a Project we are concerned for the welfare and wellbeing of our members and our community, this impacting on the Seniors Group and also the Craft Project, previously meeting at the Community Centre. Many of our students are seniors and most of whom who have health issues and are therefore shielded, we have had to look at ways of keeping them in contact with us and their friends. Initially we contacted the members of the groups as to whether they would come back to sessions at the Centre, but they were all very concerned for their well-being, hence we then suggested we met in the open air with appropriate social distancing. For the last 6 weeks we have met on the Village Green, everyone bringing their own seating and refreshments, enabling the members to sit and chat with each other, if it has been wet we have moved to the verandah of the scout hut. This idea has worked well, they can chat and exchange news, equally it gives me an opportunity to support members who might need a little help or just someone to listen to various issues.

From the above meetings, we decided we needed to do something about exercise , so we have been out walking for the last four weeks or so, either in the Farnham Park, or over the Hale Common. This walking has given us the opportunity to chat at a social distancing, to look at the beauty of the countryside, with all the lovely colours and beautiful plants, thus picking up our spirits, appreciating the natural surroundings we have locally and keeping us fit at the same time as well as looking at well being techniques.. I have also been giving the students some seasonal recipes, to keep them busy during quiet moments. The Craft group is making 12 Christmas gift bags for families or people who would benefit from a Christmas bag, thus giving our members something to think about and also fill in time. We have had our own Christmas Card printed, which was painted by one of our students – here again keeping people occupied.

The first group will have to stop due to the new Covid restrictions, but the walking may continue, the students have selected a walking partner, and they will be in contact with each other, and any problems that they may need help with, they have my contact details.

In addition, my husband has set up for some of the Seniors and Craft Group members, a daily quiz via the internet. This has been really successful and keeps more of our students in touch with each other as well as giving them something to think about. This also enables us to check that our members are ok and coping with the present situation.

Some of our students continue to work with their crafts. Our connection continues with Watts Gallery via Zoom. At present we are working with clay. Last year we went on a weekly basis to the Gallery. For many of the students this was a big issue, but with encouragement and support, they are now happy to go on the mini-bus to the Gallery when sessions restart. It is good to see how their confidence has grown. At present there are no sessions and the students miss the company of each other

All of the students have my contact details if there is an issue they need some support over, or for some, it is a daily chat to prevent loneliness.

I hope this updates you on the activities of Opportunities. I could see you all on Zoom last night, but could not get any volume at all, either on the desktop or laptop, so thought it best to give you a written update report.

Carol McFarlane

November 2020