



# WARWICK DISTRICT SHIELDING HUB

*the Experience*





See the Shielding Hub in action by watching a video at [www.warwickdc.gov.uk/shieldinghub](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/shieldinghub)



# Welcome



People often say that Local Government is too slow to do things; involves lots of bureaucracy; and yet in responding to the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown staff at Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council and the other Borough and District Councils created a new service to deliver food and other essential supplies from nothing in a matter of days.

The word for it – amazing! How about that Amazing Local Government?

**Chris Elliott,  
Chief Executive  
Warwick District Council**



When help was needed by the most vulnerable in our community, our extraordinary team of council officers stepped-up, without question of hesitation to create and efficiently operate vital Shielding Hubs. In perhaps the finest hour for this Council; these selfless acts of love, large and small, demonstrated the very finest qualities of first-rate local government. Putting our residents first has always been at the heart of our service, but never before has our efforts to make Warwick District a 'great place to live, work and visit' been more telling than in the outstanding response given by our brilliant officers in the first weeks of this pandemic.

**Andrew Day,  
Leader, Warwick District Council**



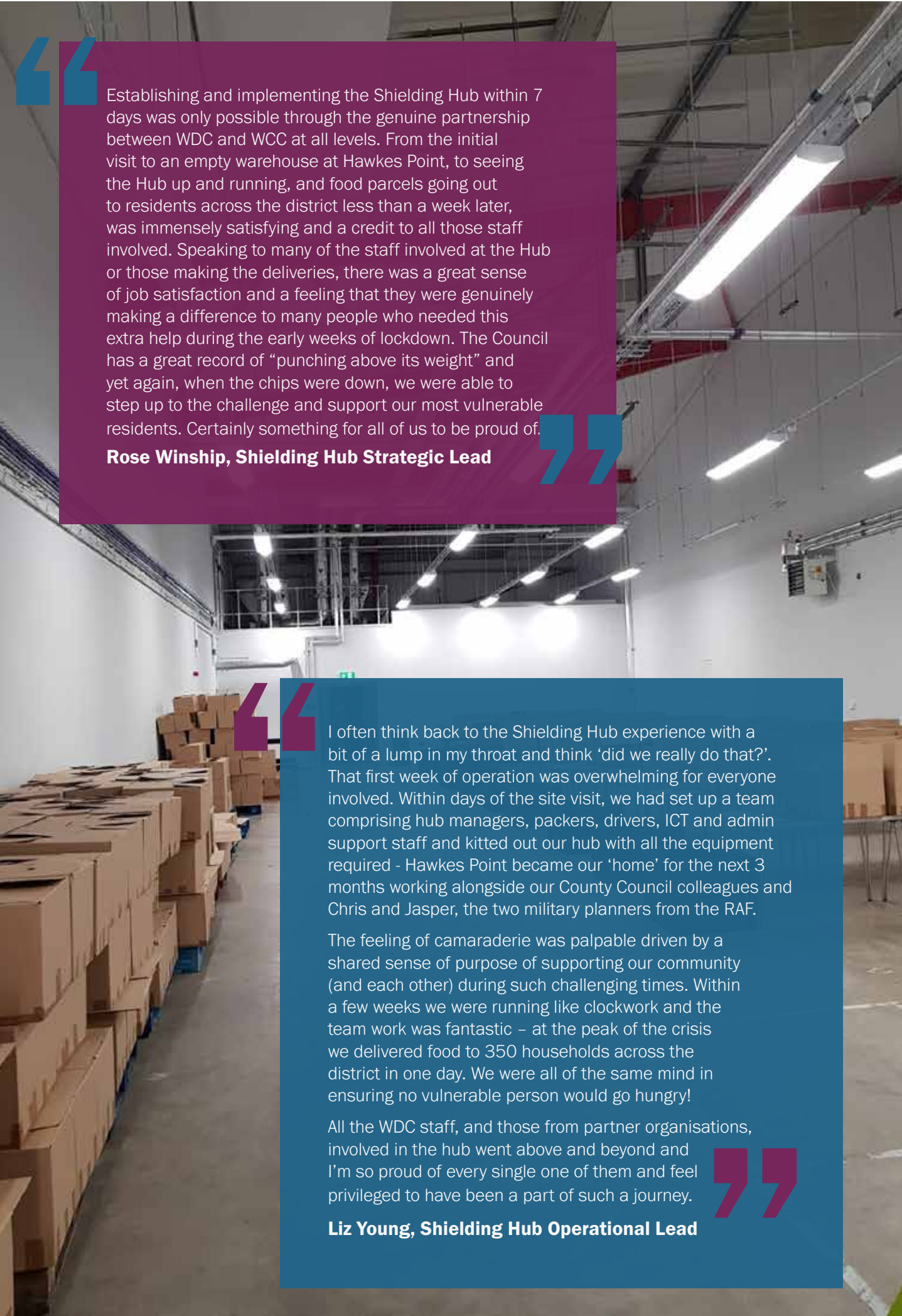
# Hub Leads

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Warwick District Council (WDC) recognised the need to set up a shielding hub to help residents in the district with food deliveries, prescription pickups and further support. Within just one week the hub was up and running, in partnership with Warwickshire County Council (WCC). As the weeks went on we developed a great routine, packing boxes alongside the WCC Team on a Monday and delivering to the residents in the district on a Tuesday, with emergency deliveries throughout the rest of the week, including weekends. The shielding hubs operated for a total of 15 weeks and helped a huge number of residents with various needs.

I was astonished that the Hubs were set up so quickly. A building was needed, staff and volunteers to run it had to be identified and food deliveries had to be organised and health and safety practices put in place for the Hub to be ready to start on what was already becoming a great need. A good working partnership was needed to achieve this and that is what happened. Residents needed support with both food and other issues and this was all provided. I was so proud of all the staff and volunteers, many doing different tasks than normal, who worked tirelessly to make the Shielding Hub work, whilst still undertaking some of their normal roles.

**Councillor Judith Falp,  
Portfolio for Health &  
Community Protection**





Establishing and implementing the Shielding Hub within 7 days was only possible through the genuine partnership between WDC and WCC at all levels. From the initial visit to an empty warehouse at Hawkes Point, to seeing the Hub up and running, and food parcels going out to residents across the district less than a week later, was immensely satisfying and a credit to all those staff involved. Speaking to many of the staff involved at the Hub or those making the deliveries, there was a great sense of job satisfaction and a feeling that they were genuinely making a difference to many people who needed this extra help during the early weeks of lockdown. The Council has a great record of “punching above its weight” and yet again, when the chips were down, we were able to step up to the challenge and support our most vulnerable residents. Certainly something for all of us to be proud of.

**Rose Winship, Shielding Hub Strategic Lead**

I often think back to the Shielding Hub experience with a bit of a lump in my throat and think ‘did we really do that?’. That first week of operation was overwhelming for everyone involved. Within days of the site visit, we had set up a team comprising hub managers, packers, drivers, ICT and admin support staff and kitted out our hub with all the equipment required - Hawkes Point became our ‘home’ for the next 3 months working alongside our County Council colleagues and Chris and Jasper, the two military planners from the RAF.

The feeling of camaraderie was palpable driven by a shared sense of purpose of supporting our community (and each other) during such challenging times. Within a few weeks we were running like clockwork and the team work was fantastic – at the peak of the crisis we delivered food to 350 households across the district in one day. We were all of the same mind in ensuring no vulnerable person would go hungry!

All the WDC staff, and those from partner organisations, involved in the hub went above and beyond and I’m so proud of every single one of them and feel privileged to have been a part of such a journey.

**Liz Young, Shielding Hub Operational Lead**



# Community Support

A total of  
**2,204**  
FOOD BOXES  
DELIVERED  
within the  
Warwick District.



**3377**  
PRESCRIPTIONS  
AND DOCTORS'  
APPOINTMENTS



**1420**  
RECEIVED FINANCIAL  
AND SOCIAL SUPPORT  
FROM WDC



**109**  
EMERGENCY HOUSING  
REPAIRS



**2040**  
RECEIVED MENTAL  
HEALTH SUPPORT  
within the Warwick district



**924**  
WARWICK DISTRICT  
RESIDENTS WERE HELPED



**The Shielding Hubs started on Monday 30 March and operated for 15 weeks until Monday 13 July.**

**6**  
**WARWICKSHIRE**  
**SUPPORT HUBS**



**HUBS OPERATED**  
for  
**15 weeks**



Over  
**5,000**  
**PHONE CALLS**  
to Warwickshire County Council hotline



**10,500**  
**FOOD PARCELS PACKED**  
by Warwickshire County Council



Over  
**11,000**  
**WELLBEING**  
**PHONECALLS**  
to vulnerable residents



**500**  
**VOLUNTEERS WORKING**  
**WITH WCC**



# The Support Team

The Shielding Hub Support Team were tasked with following up on all calls made to the 0800 Hotline / WDC Contact Centre. This involved clarifying what additional support those residents asked to shield may require. Staff involved in undertaking the follow up work felt that they were doing their bit to support the pandemic effort. The response from residents was overwhelmingly grateful with them feeling appreciative of the calls and as one resident said; 'Thanks for going over and beyond the call of duty to provide assistance' while another local resident rang to say thanks for the food parcel; 'I get a food hamper from Harrods as a Christmas present and the food parcel received from the Shielding Hub was by far superior'. It seems to me the follow up calls uncovered the extent of how lonely and isolated some people are in the District and at times it was difficult to get off the phone as we were probably the only person that some had spoken to all day. Although in the early days it was extremely stressful as you felt such a burden of responsibility to ensure the support was provided, it was an extremely rewarding piece of work and I would like to particularly mention the COVID Support Group made up of volunteers. Without their support it would have been difficult to provide the timely support that local residents required and I would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to them.

**WDC Shielding Hub Support Team including Berni Allen, Jo Dagg, Kath Bannister, Meg Smith, Stephen Falp and Harry Saysell**

Just wanted to say thank you on behalf of my Mum for the Shielding Hub food parcels. My mum was placed on the shielding list due to her age and the fact that she suffers with Asthma and C.O.P.D. As a family we were very worried about having any contact with her as myself and my husband were still out working in the community so we had to limit any grocery handovers to reduce the risk to her. Having those food parcels was a god send and very much appreciated.



“ We feel extraordinarily privileged to have received the food parcels delivered to our door. Due to an illness I have a reduced immune system causing me to be housebound. My wife and I (82 and 81 years old) would like to express our thanks to all those who took part in the hard work of packing and delivering the food parcels. ”

“ I would like to extend our family’s heartfelt thanks for the parcel you delivered to our parents, on Myton Road, earlier this week. It really helped them practically and emotionally. We are very grateful. ”

# Hub Managers

The Warwick District Shielding Hub would not have been able to run so smoothly without the Hub Managers giving up their time and working together to ensure the smooth running of the hub team. They dealt with the day to day operations, packing of boxes, loading of cars, delivering boxes, phone calls to residents and much more to ensure that everyone worked well together to help the District.




Working at the Shielding Hub was a fantastic experience for me. In a time of national crisis, it was great to come together with colleagues and partners to deliver much needed support to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. I had the privilege of speaking to so many wonderful residents across the district, some had lost loved ones or had no family network to support them. What struck me was their resilience to keep going and this certainly inspired me and fellow colleagues to keep delivering a first class service for them.

I feel really proud to have been part of WDC's response to COVID, the team at the Hub worked incredibly hard and I hope we were able to bring some comfort to our residents during a terrible time.

**Jon Barnett,  
Hub Manager**








Working at the Shielding Hub was an incredible experience. To be a part of something that made a difference and put WDC in a positive light gives me immense pride and professional satisfaction. Walking out into the car park on the morning of the 350 deliveries and seeing an abundance of willing drivers and vans ready to deliver these parcels, all looking at me and waiting for their instruction was as daunting as it was challenging. It is something that I will remember for a long time. The team of volunteers were incredible and always willing to help. No task was too small or unachievable, they all knew their roles and would go about their tasks with dedicated professionalism. Seeing people pulling together for one cause “to help the residents of Warwick District” was amazing and shows the dedication and sense of community spirit of all the people involved. It was very refreshing to speak to residents or their relatives who were so grateful for what we were doing. The sheer joy, appreciation and gratitude that was relayed down the phone felt amazing. It was a pleasure to work with all of my colleagues that volunteered at the hub during its time of operation, I have built sound working relationships with colleagues from WDC that I didn’t know, as well as WCC staff.

**Ian Rourke, Hub Manager**



It was a great and rewarding experience to be working at the Shielding hub. At first it was all surreal with no traffic on the roads and staff all with masks, aprons and gloves but we developed a great system with the pickers, the drivers and the Rangers all being very friendly and there to help every week which was fantastic. It was nice to be doing a job that was being appreciated by the public and to be able to work with new members of staff that I hadn’t worked with before, it was like a big family.

**Stuart Murrow, Hub Manager**

# WDC Staff Volunteers

An incredible number of staff across the Council gave up time to work at the Shielding Hub while also carrying on with their normal workload. Whether:

- doing shifts at the shielding hub
- phoning residents who needed extra support
- packing the food boxes
- loading cars and vans
- delivering food boxes across the District

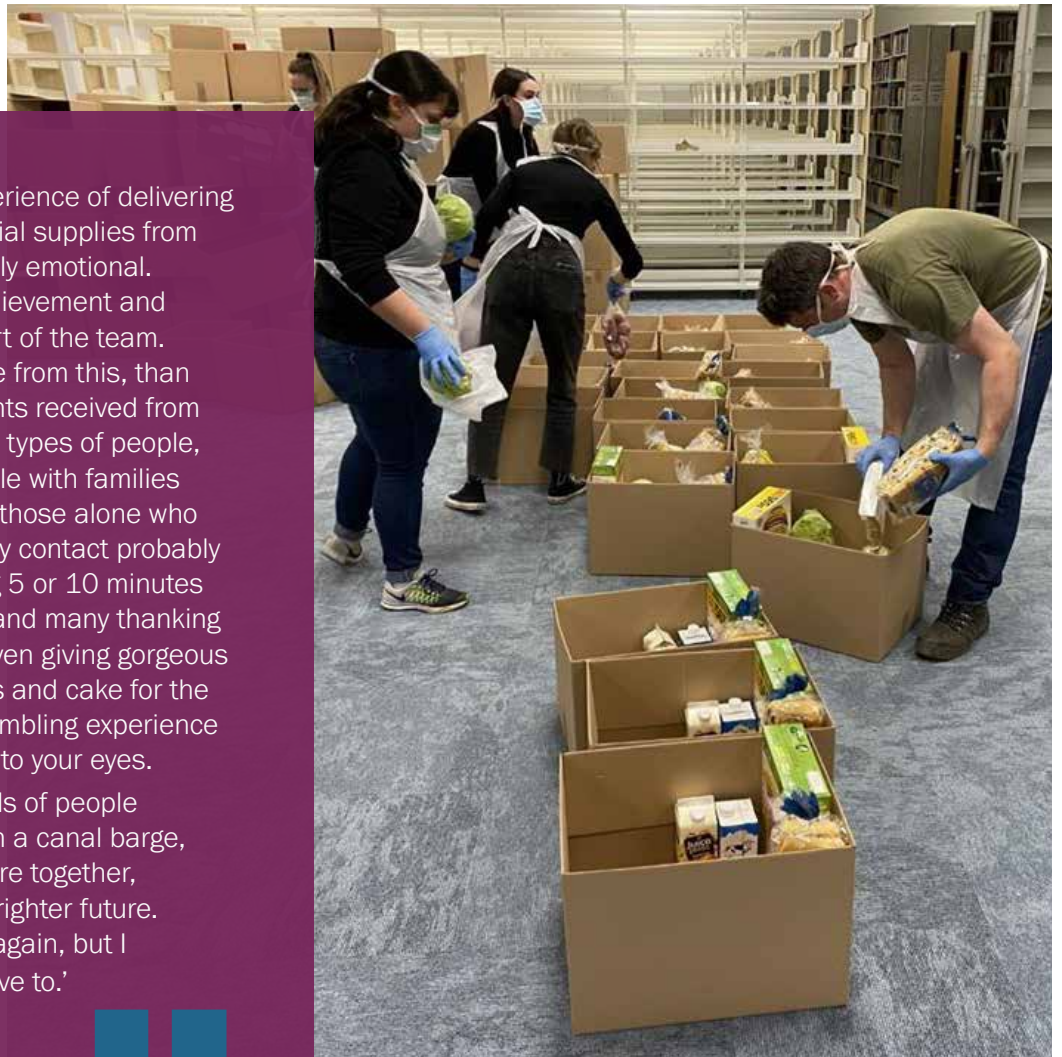
It was great to see staff from all our service areas getting to know each other and working well as a team.

**David Guilding** and **Dave Anderton** did a great job of organizing the staff rota to make sure we had enough packers and drivers each week. Our admin team, including **Velda Downes**, **Jess Goldie** and **Rob Lawson**, did an amazing job phoning up vulnerable residents to see how we could help.

**Thank you to all of the staff who volunteered their time.**

I found that the experience of delivering the food and essential supplies from the hub tremendously emotional. A great sense of achievement and gratitude to be a part of the team. I personally got more from this, than the District's residents received from us. I visited so many types of people, young and old; people with families or more importantly those alone who would've only had my contact probably that week. Spending 5 or 10 minutes with each chatting, and many thanking me and the team, even giving gorgeous home baked cookies and cake for the team, truly was a humbling experience which brought tears to your eyes. I delivered to all kinds of people and properties, even a canal barge, and it felt like we were together, working towards a brighter future. 'I would gladly do it again, but I hope that I never have to.'

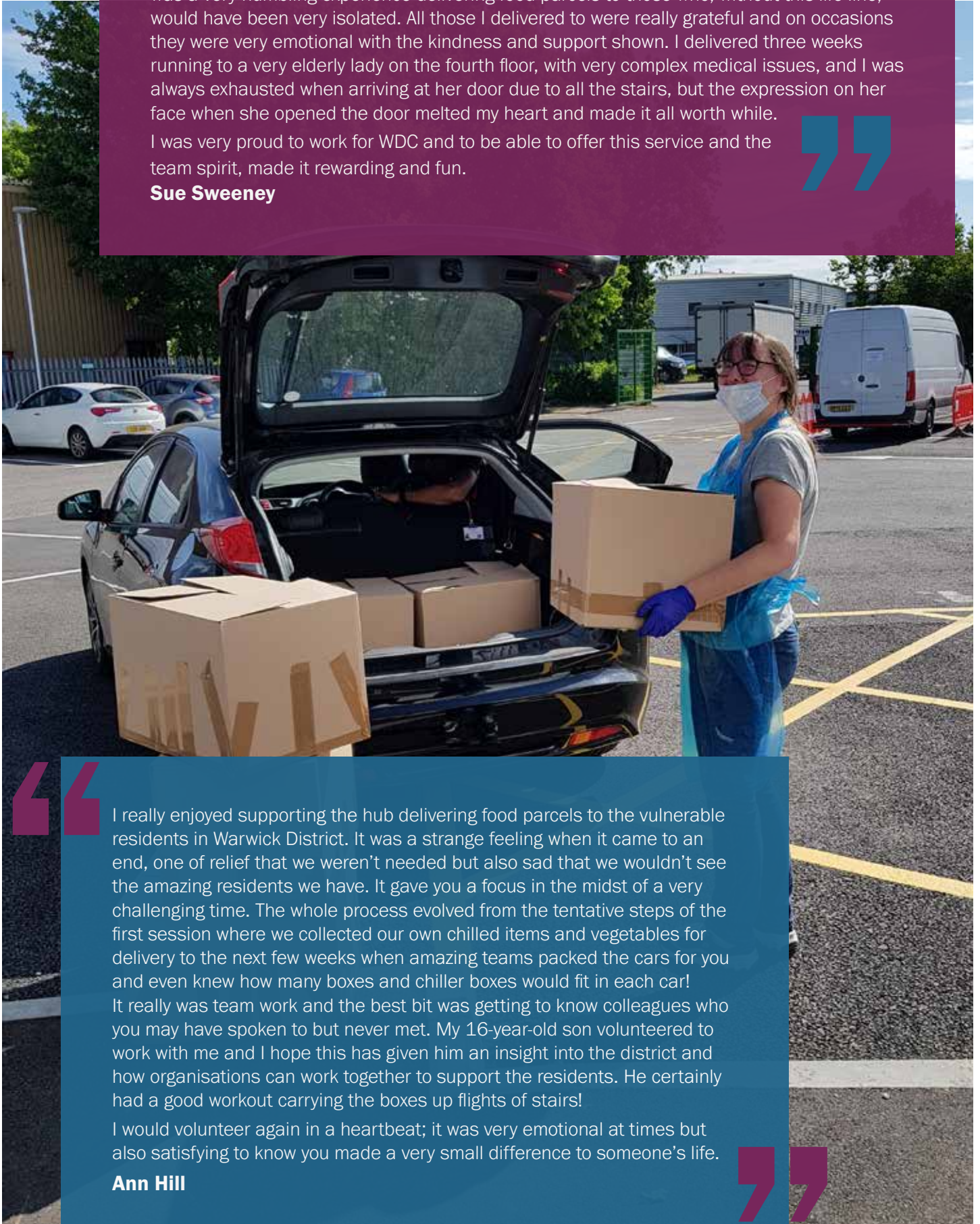
**Ian Yeomans**





To support the food hub I volunteered to pack and deliver parcels to vulnerable individuals in the community. The organisation was excellent and I always knew what was expected. It was a very humbling experience delivering food parcels to those who, without this life line, would have been very isolated. All those I delivered to were really grateful and on occasions they were very emotional with the kindness and support shown. I delivered three weeks running to a very elderly lady on the fourth floor, with very complex medical issues, and I was always exhausted when arriving at her door due to all the stairs, but the expression on her face when she opened the door melted my heart and made it all worth while. I was very proud to work for WDC and to be able to offer this service and the team spirit, made it rewarding and fun.

**Sue Sweeney**



I really enjoyed supporting the hub delivering food parcels to the vulnerable residents in Warwick District. It was a strange feeling when it came to an end, one of relief that we weren't needed but also sad that we wouldn't see the amazing residents we have. It gave you a focus in the midst of a very challenging time. The whole process evolved from the tentative steps of the first session where we collected our own chilled items and vegetables for delivery to the next few weeks when amazing teams packed the cars for you and even knew how many boxes and chiller boxes would fit in each car! It really was team work and the best bit was getting to know colleagues who you may have spoken to but never met. My 16-year-old son volunteered to work with me and I hope this has given him an insight into the district and how organisations can work together to support the residents. He certainly had a good workout carrying the boxes up flights of stairs!

I would volunteer again in a heartbeat; it was very emotional at times but also satisfying to know you made a very small difference to someone's life.

**Ann Hill**

# Warwickshire County Council

A network of six Warwickshire support hubs, at county and district and borough level, was quickly established in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Their purpose was to provide food and essential household items to individuals identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to the virus who were asked to 'shield' themselves by isolating during the peak of the pandemic.

WCC's distribution hub was co-located with WDC's satellite hub. It was operated by reassigned officers from the county and district councils and supported by local volunteers and two military planners who offered invaluable logistics support.

There was a lot involved in the process from end to end involving selection and set-up at the sites, equipping them for food storage, setting up systems for packing and safe delivery to residents. Council staff and volunteers kept the sites running and were responsible for making the deliveries with Fire and Rescue and the Local Pharmacy Committee supporting with delivery of medicines or in situations where people may need extra help.

Over the 15 weeks that the hub was in operation over 10,500 parcels, containing perishable and store cupboard food and household items, were packed and distributed with around 1,300 going out across the county each week at the height of the operation.

Supporting the activity at the distribution hubs was a newly established dedicated contact point that people who felt isolated without support were urged to call. From March to July 2020 the hotline handled around 15,000 calls and referred people in need to various forms of practical and emotional support from across the public and voluntary and community sectors.

It has been a rewarding project to be part of and I'm proud of what has been achieved. There were many challenges along the way and everyone rose to them to ensure vulnerable people were supported.

Overall, the experience has shown the strength of working together - community capacity, resilience and shared understanding have all increased as a result. The feedback from residents was overwhelming and it was humbling to be involved in a project that truly helped people stay safe and connected in a time of crisis.

The hubs are no longer operational but our work is not complete. Attention is now focused on a plan for serving vulnerable residents in the event of a second wave of the pandemic or potential local lockdowns.

**Charles Barlow, Hub Lead WCC**





# IT Case Study

In a complex crisis, everyone wants to play their part in making a difference. This case study shines a light on the rapid development of our Shielding Hub Food database and portal which underpinned the success of the food distribution service to our most vulnerable citizens.

WDC were mobilised on the 25 March and, just ten days later, our developer had a minimum viable product (MVP) that tamed the numerous and seemingly ever changing data sources to produce a basic delivery report for the distribution team.

Using the agile development methodology, we constantly iterated on the MVP over the next eight weeks. These thirty iterations expanded the solution to meet the growing needs of the food distribution service, including:

- Fully automated imports of the numerous data spreadsheets
  - Cleaning the data to ensure accurate citizen, address and contact details
  - Coping with numerous changes of the Central Government data schemas
  - Flagging up special dietary requirements
  - Creating accurate food box and delivery driver reports
  - Management reports for Warwickshire County Council and WDC
  - And a portal used by our Shielding Hub hotline team to handle local citizen food requests and delivery requirements
- Virtual meetings with show and tells
  - Central Government webinars joined and liaison with other local authorities to better understand and shape the solution's requirements
  - Given such as small project team, it's amazing how much we achieved, in so little time, with so much pressure and with an ever changing specification:
  - Before the basic solution was in place, staff at the delivery hub were spending around two hours a day making sense of the data they received. At that stage the data consisted of around 100 records.
  - By automating the data imports we shaved the time down to five minutes per spreadsheet.
  - We imported over 130 spreadsheets in total (and by the end there were more than 2800 records per spreadsheet) so that's a saving of at least 31 working days!
  - Over a ten-week period, we invested a total of 424 hours on this project (of which 236 were spent coding the solution)

With the lockdown restrictions in place, our small team made use of various tools to aid our virtual collaboration.

These included:

- Our group chat which thrummed with activity
- A Trello board that captured user stories, enhancements, bugs and their progress through to completion

While it's hard to capture the intensity of this development experience, let's just say that it was exhilarating, frustrating, exhausting and tremendously satisfying in almost equal measure!

These days, just about everything that WDC needs to achieve will rely on a contribution from ICT Services. As this case study shows, we can even play our part in providing food, a basic human need.

**Tass Smith on behalf of the Shielding Hub (Food) Solution Team**

# Community Volunteers



“Everyone Active were keen to be involved with the delivery of food parcels around Warwick District as this is a key part of the Company ethos of being involved with the local community. The General Manager of Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre helped every Tuesday helping those who were vulnerable or were unable to get to the shops themselves”

**Gary Titford,  
Everyone Active**



“As soon as Lockdown was announced by the government, I reached out to Andrew Day at WDC to volunteer our services for delivery of food and medicines to those shielding at home and the most vulnerable in our region.

Our offer was to help wherever possible using the Team at Electric Zoo and our fleet of Electric Cars with zero emission.

We were requested to report to the Shielding Hub where we assisted the Council team by receiving food parcels, with a list of names and addresses addresses, and made deliveries across the region.

We were extremely pleased to play our part in the WDC Shielding Hub, and would like to thank you, your team and WDC for allowing us to help those in need during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.”

**Lash Saranna, Electric Zoo**

**We would also like to say a big thank the local residents Covid Support Groups in Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth for all of their work with us and also to family members of WDC staff who joined us for packing and delivering of food parcels.**

