

## David's Lockdown Story

"I've always been active, busy and sociable so to see the many things I took for normality suddenly become unavailable was a huge shock for me and us all.

"I have lived in Leeds 17 for over 60 years and I am lucky to live in a small and close community. I spent a forty-year career in financial services during which I enjoyed helping people reach their ambitions and lifestyle aims. Once I retired, I continued to seek out opportunities to continue to help people whilst living a less structured life. I wanted to be able to start enjoy 'living in the moment' with friends, family and new people I was yet to meet.

"I was aware there were people like me who wanted to stay active, connected and sociable beyond retirement. I'd always wanted to experience 'walking football' and I struck lucky to find there was a new session launching organised by Moor Allerton Elderly Care (MAECare) with involvement from Leeds United. As I attended the sessions, I realised this was something I could manage and deliver to give it a longer life span as this was a short-term offer. So that's what I did.

"What started off as attracting and organising sessions for both men and women over 50 soon became much more as I recognised the need for interaction, chat, banter and inclusion of people I could see were at risk of, or suffering from, isolation.

"As the pandemic struck, I had to change the way I delivered this support. By using technology and assisting older residents to adapt to embrace technology, we were still able to provide a much needed lifeline of support and interaction. The walking football evolved to become a home-based activity where I delivered sports kit to resident's homes and I delivered training through video tutorials and telephone support.

"I always look for new opportunities to reach people in different ways and through the first lockdown I decided to set up a weekly quiz. It was good to see how it soon became a hit as people tuned in three times a week to enter, then to see the answers, and then again to find their place on the leader board. At one point I decided to host the quiz from my shed and this only increased its popularity!

“Recently, my wife of thirty-six years, Jayne, has supported with this and we often film the questions whilst out walking our dog. It has been fantastic to see how older people have responded to this activity and embraced interacting in new ways. It’s good to see the sparkle in their eyes as they enjoy this new version of contact.

“I’ve always been community minded and involved in local issues. I became chatty with an elderly neighbour when we both got into a routine of walking our dogs at similar times. I realised that I hadn’t seen her for a while and it concerned me. Knowing where she lived I took the decision to check on her and found that she had sadly broken her arm in a fall. It was lovely to see the lady recognise me and also to see that she appreciated being part of a community that cares and looks out for one another. COVID-19 may have disrupted many plans, but it can’t stop people who truly care to find new ways of supporting their others.

“Alongside the quiz I am happy to be involved with a lunch time fish and chip delivery with a local care organisation; Moor Allerton Elderly Care (MAECare). They take orders and deliver these using the community access bus to the homes of elderly and often isolated neighbours. It’s inspiring and rewarding to see how just that few minutes of personal interactions care and attention makes such a huge difference to someone who is struggling with this new ‘normal’. I’m proud to have made a difference.

“I think back to where my deep-rooted drive came from to volunteer and help out and I know it is from the values my parents instilled in me. From a young age I was involved in local activities and volunteering through our Jewish communities’ B’nai B’rith Youth Organisation. It taught me the value of organisation and allowed me to see how individual small acts could amount to great things”.

“It struck me a while ago as I saw an elderly lady blow a tyre on the ring road that I needed to help her. It crossed my mind for a fleeting moment that I should stop and help. And I did. It made me realise that if you THINK you can help, you SHOULD.”

**ENDS**

David can be contacted at:

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David: *“I am currently organising **Covid-19 Chanukah Surprise** for the members of the community where I live. 40 gifts of food related to the Jewish festival of Chanukah will be delivered to my neighbours.”*

David gives permission for use of the attached images.

David told this story to Mary Webb on 8 December 2020.