



**Examining the motivations and emotions linked to the formation of a Voluntary sewing group formed in response to Covid-19**

***‘Tamworth Volunteers – Sewing for NHS and Healthcare Workers’ (April – June 2020)***

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- Relatively little attention has been paid to informal community groups and activities (Toepler, 2003; McCabe and Phillimore, 2018)
- During the immediacy of lockdown under Covid-19 requirements, these ‘under the radar’ groups came to the fore when responding to risk and need and are important when considered to be part of ‘civil society.’
- These small, community led groups have formed seemingly overnight to address immediate need in a swift, responsive way that many statutory or more formal organisations are often unable to do (Streets, 2020)

# Research Undertaken

- Mixed methods research took place with 99 participants during the period of UK Covid-19 community lockdown and social distancing in April/May 2020.
- Online JISQ survey, 99 participants; quantitative and qualitative questions.
- The study considers the responses of individual research participants within a Tamworth community group forming as a direct result of Covid-19.
- It examines the emotions and motivations of community voluntary involvement during the lockdown period of Covid-19 (April – June 2020).

- This research is interesting as it examines the motivations and emotions behind collective action during the Covid-19 health crisis we are currently experiencing.
- It considers the volunteering activities of individuals in and around a small market town during a period of national & international crisis.
- An online questionnaire asked participants about how they heard about the group, what their emotions and feelings were about joining and the motivations of why they chose to join.



## Is Location important when volunteering time/resources?

- 80% of respondents felt that the fact that this was a Tamworth group had been important to their reasons for joining
- Only 20% of respondents indicated that the location of the group made no difference to their decision to join

## Emotions & Feelings connected with the collective of Volunteering

- The research questionnaire aimed to capture some of the emotions and feelings of volunteers during the pandemic connected to volunteering for this group, a time in history when we will look back upon and consider for some generations.
- Respondents offered qualitative comments to this question linked again to feeling part of a community effort to help, for some there was anger at the political aspects of Covid-19, some felt a sense of pride and a sense of community cohesion.
- Some replies indicated a sense of doing something to assist their own mental wellbeing, of being purposeful and playing their part.

## Feeling APPRECIATION: A sense of Community

*“We’re in an extraordinary phase of history and I felt the need to contribute. I’m disabled and work from home, but I am a crafts person and have the skills to contribute a little by sewing and crocheting items. If we all offer a little bit to community, wouldn’t the world be a nicer and safer place? I wanted to feel that I’d done something to support others during this awful time.”*

## ANGER- at lack of PPE equipment and for political reasons

*“I see NHS workers on the tv working long, uncomfortable and dangerous hours. I am only asked to sit at home. It is the least I can do. It has been lovely to see the rapid join up of the group, all Tamworth folk coming together making a difference. Lovely.”*

*“I think it disappointing to think the government were so ill prepared for what unfolded compared to other countries. I feel happy to have been involved, that I could support by producing garments... a drop in the ocean but working together is achieving at least something towards the cause!”*

*“Love the group and thankful to be a small part but angry we’ve had to do it.”*

## **PRIDE and feeling a patriotic connection to the purpose of the group**

*“I feel a little bit proud to be doing something for my country (albeit minuscule) compared with the doctors and nurses. You feel so helpless at home and this enables me to be a part of something lovely and useful. “*

*“I am proud to be part of this group, and so pleased I found it. I think the ladies who set it up have been inspirational. I like to think that groups like ours are playing an important part in helping the NHS, care workers, key workers etc, by providing scrubs, masks, headbands, laundry bags etc.”*

Pride or vicarious pride is important in volunteering (Septianto et al., 2018:501)



## Reminiscent of being at War

*“It feels reminiscent of the war era where everyone joined regardless of class/money/status to become one and fight for a common goal. It has restored my faith in humankind and made me proud to be British.”*

*“These are such devastating times for many people and such suffering is taking place. It helps tremendously to know that we are, as a group and as individuals, helping to ease that suffering for so many people. Whilst I couldn’t be a part of helping the nation through CV-19 as a nurse, I have been able to help those nurses to work a little more safely and a little more comfortably through it. (A bit like the land girls taking on the farming during the war 😊)”*

Relief of personal  
Anxiety: helping  
the mental  
wellbeing &  
health of  
individual group  
members

*“The group posts make me smile and that helps my mental wellbeing too, being part of something.”*

*“I had depression and volunteering helped me to cope. And glad that volunteering in this group help the community.”*

*“I am proud to be part of a wonderful group and cannot believe how Tamworth residents came together offering numerous skills or general support. I think if I was not part of this group I would be lonely and would find it difficult to keep occupied. Whilst me mental health is fine I know from experience it doesn't take much to become sad or depressed. When the group winds down I will continue to help others however I can. On a selfish note this really helps me.”*



# Research Summary

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- Emotional connection to purpose is vital when choosing to volunteer time, skills or resources to a community cause.
- Emotions connected with volunteering in this context were: a sense of appreciation/the need to contribute, anger, pride (individual & collective), self worth.
- A geographical connection to volunteering is important.
- The sense of community and mutual purpose might be of particular interest given the social and financial impact of the pandemic on all communities across the globe.