

# Communities Secretary marks national Thank You Day

- Robert Jenrick thanks all those who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic
- Events up and down the country will be a chance to celebrate local heroes
- Communities Secretary encourages all to fill the airwaves with thanks for everyone who played their part

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick is backing Thank You Day to shine a light on the unsung heroes who have served local communities during the pandemic.

Across the UK, people will be gathering to show their gratitude by hosting Covid safe BBQs, picnics, street parties and certificate ceremonies in honour of those who have selflessly given their time to help those in need.

The Communities Secretary is calling on people to fill the airwaves by sharing their thanks and tributes on local radio and social media.

Unsung heroes include people such as:

- Averil Pooting, a Community Champion, who set up a pop-up vaccination centre at St Barnabas church, getting the vaccine to the most vulnerable in our society
- Tabitha Resta in Bedford who worked tirelessly to ensure people experiencing homelessness had access to vaccinations
- Faith leaders who embraced technology to ensure communities could celebrate religious festivals online and opened up places of worship as vaccination centres
- The many volunteers who delivered food parcels and those who were always there at the other end of the phone or on the doorstep to smile, listen and talk so people did not feel alone
- Volunteers and charities who worked to get rough sleepers off the streets and provided lifesaving support for those fleeing domestic abuse
- Council staff, social workers and refuse collectors who kept vital services going during the most challenging times.

The Prime Minister will be joining the festivities with a 'BB-Thank-Q', hosting community leaders, NHS workers and representatives from the Royal Voluntary Service.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This past year has been challenging for us all. But in the darkest of times, when people were most in need, the actions of our friends and neighbours to support our communities have shone the brightest.

Across all faiths, ages, backgrounds and languages, our communities have shown off the best of this country.

You are all our community heroes and on behalf of government I want to say thank you.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

Over the past year, each of us has experienced immense change in our lives, during this incredibly difficult period of time. However, we have come together, supporting our friends, families, colleagues and communities.

As restrictions continue to ease and life begins to represent normality, it is essential that we remain kind and compassionate to one another. Today, of all days, I want each of you to say 'thank you' to those most important to you.

[Thank You Day](#) on Sunday 4 July is a community initiative with events and activity held across the country as a way of thanking each other and of building on the community spirit that so many felt during lockdown.

The day is being marked by faith communities. For example, Imams will be including Thank You Day in their sermons, reminding the importance of all communities coming together to continue to help and support each other.

Churches up and down the country will be thanking their congregations and volunteers for helping get through the year. Jewish and Muslim women are organising picnics together around the country.

Members of the public are being encouraged to mark the day in numerous ways from picnics to BBQs and street parties while sticking to Covid guidelines.

## **Case studies**

Just some of those who have made an invaluable contribution to our communities:

**Sam Dorney-Smith** is a specialist nurse in inclusion health in London, and is also a Fellow for Pathway Health charity. Sam mobilised health care in hotels in London at the beginning of Everyone In, ensuring that individuals had access to health care. She also advised the teams working in the hotels on how to implement interventions to protect staff and residents and keep people safe from COVID-19, such as PPE protocols.

**Tabitha Resta** is a rough sleeper co-ordinator in Bedford. She worked with the local public health team to ensure that people experiencing homelessness could register with a GP and could also access vaccinations. She also co-ordinated health care into the hotel housing people experiencing homelessness.

**Averil Pooten** from St Barnabas Church, Walthamstow is Filipino. She co-chaired an event about the vaccine answering questions with NHS Barts trust medical professionals and East London Mosque. Following the event, Averil got contacted by NHS Barts Trust team to set up a pop up vaccine clinic at St Barnabas's church that was safe and free for all people who wanted to take on vaccine. Over 40 people were vaccinated as a result.

Averil then got in touch with the Jesuit Refugee Centre who shared a positive message about their pop-up clinic with refugees and asylum seekers they support and other organisations. As a result nearly 100 people got vaccinated who were refugees and asylum seekers, many of them from the Philippines.

After a **Luton Council of Faiths** vaccination review meeting with faith leaders, some of Luton's Jewish congregation contacted the community council officer to know if there was help available for an elderly Jewish man (88) who needed his 2nd dose of vaccine and he was having difficulty getting through to his surgery. The officer made arrangements and this elderly man was vaccinated on 30 March at 1.45pm during the Jewish religious festival and observance of Passover.

The story offers an everyday example of how people of different faiths have pulled together in the pandemic – the elderly person was Jewish, a local councillor who accompanied was a Muslim of Pakistani origin and the doctor who administered the vaccination was a Sikh of Indian origin and the officer was an Irish Catholic.

With support from MHCLG funding, **The Dash Charity** in Slough continued to provide a full and specialised service to families fleeing to their refuges at crisis point throughout the pandemic. Thirty-three families were fully supported throughout their stay and were provided with one-to-one support through a dedicated Refuge Independent Domestic Violence Advocate, alongside support from our Children's Services Team where appropriate.

**Blackburn with Darwen Council** identified issues around Muslim burial rites and requirements very early, including swift burial, visitation, washing and shrouding of the deceased, burials rather than cremation, congregations for burial and the need for women to be lowered into the grave by immediate blood relatives.

To address these issues the Council established a strong partnership with key local organisations including the Blackburn Muslim Burial Society, Lancashire Council of Mosques, and local councillors. Together the Partnership engaged directly with Mosques, scholars, Imams, residents and the community to find acceptable solutions.

In Birmingham, **Centrala** supports social integration and cohesion of Central and Eastern European communities. Many members of their community have post war traumas from war experience from their homelands. They were scared of the pandemic as it reminded them of the war in Bosnia, as it was not safe for them to leave their homes for months.

Centrala's friendly team of volunteers were there for them as an outreach

support when going to appointments, including vaccination appointments. They also provided help with interpretation, booking an appointment, arranging transport or simply offering information and advice, including translation of the NHS vaccination leaflets.