

THE SPIRIT OF CHICHESTER

Jeanette Hockley sums up on behalf of Chichester BID

We have witnessed many local organisations show true resilience through the pandemic’s uncertain times. Not only are they diversifying and adapting services, but many have done wonderful work to support communities and boost morale, such as making scrubs for local health workers or donating food for the homeless. As Chichester BID (Business Improvement District) became aware of these inspiring stories we wanted to publicise and celebrate them. Here are just a few of the incredible contributions and acts of kindness that really highlight the spirit of Chichester.

MASKS FOR NHS & CARE STAFF

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic there has been huge demand both nationally and within our community for protective clothing for medical professionals, what’s known as Personal Protective Equipment or PPE. We at Novium Architects decided to help fight the virus by putting our in-house 3D printing technology to use: we have been printing face shields for frontline NHS staff and local health organisations.

It’s been a collaborative effort. Locally, we have worked with The Makers Guild in Portsmouth and at our best have been able to print up to 300 mask components a week; these have then been assembled and shipped out to the NHS. But these efforts have occurred across the country through the Industry Prints initiative. This has seen contributions by over 40 architectural practices, contractors and businesses, all making vital PPE for the NHS frontline staff. Participants have included Foster+Partners, Willmott Dixon and HOK to name a few.

Dan Smith

MAKING SCRUBS

During the pandemic Chichester Scrubs had several teams of local volunteers making and distributing scrubs (protective clothing). Their expertise lay in fashion and costume design, dressmaking and soft furnishing production. Many were staff from the Festival Theatre, Chichester College and Elizabeth Turner Soft Furnishings. About 30 volunteers worked from home or in isolation in their work rooms and they were simply

wonderful! Another team of 8-10 drove to collect and deliver the scrubs. We also had a Facebook group with a membership of about 350 many of whom were making laundry bags for the scrubs as well as much needed hats and masks. Our system worked like this:

- Health workers contacted us via email and placed an order.
- A number was assigned to each order for cutting at Batt Sails.
- Pre-cut sets were collected and matched with the required haberdashery (thread, drawstrings, size labels etc) and then delivered to our volunteer makers.
- On completion they were collected and placed in laundry bags, hats and masks added, and then delivered to health workers

Originally, we made the patterns ourselves and cut them by hand which added days to the process, so we were very grateful to Dick Batt and his magnificent equipment when they stepped in.

During the summer we raised an estimated £15,000 through generous donations from the public. After paying for materials the balance has gone to local NHS charities. In all, our teams made and delivered over 600 sets of scrubs - and also donated over 500 scrubs bags and 1,000 scrub caps to local hospitals and health care workers. We stopped production in mid-June when orders slowed as industry re-started and many of our volunteers returned to paid work.

Sally Garner-Gibbons



Pharmacy staff with their new face masks made by Novium Architects



Volunteers working from home



Dick Batt’s equipment has been invaluable for bulk cutting material to required designs



Fiona O’Connor, one of Chichester Scrubs organisers, shows off a newly-made set of scrubs

MEALS FOR THE STREET HOMELESS

The Four Streets Project was officially ‘born’ in 2017 and now we have around 35 local volunteers who provide a continuous service throughout the week. When the Coronavirus situation become more serious in February we enhanced hygiene procedures but soon this was not enough. By early March it was clear a completely new approach was needed to ensure volunteers and the homeless were kept safe, and so Four Streets could maintain its commitment to ‘never missing a night.’

We have always had a very good relationship with all of the churches across Chichester although Four Streets is not a church or faith-based group. Coincidentally, St Pancras Church was also looking at how it could safely operate their regular breakfast club by following Government safety guidance around hygiene and social distancing. Ideas were pooled and by mid-March Four Streets had started a 7 days a week socially distanced hot take-away supper club for the homeless & vulnerable, based at St Pancras Church. Four Streets has since operated daily from St Pancras Church throughout the pandemic. On a typical night we have seen 30 or more people needing a hot takeaway dinner. But we have had to quickly and continuously adapt our processes because so many of our long term suppliers have closed their doors. However our volunteers are a fabulous team who have adapted to change quickly and we’re incredibly proud of what’s been achieved during such testing times.

Donna Ockenden



Four Streets volunteers pack hot meals every evening at St Pancras Church
Photo: Andrew Miller

Our contributors come from a cross section of Chichester life: Jeanette Hockley is Chichester BID’s Operations Manager; Donna Ockenden is founder and volunteer with The Four Streets Project; Dan Smith is an Associate at Novium Architects; Sally Garner-Gibbons is Stage Manager at the Festival Theatre and lectures on production arts at Chichester College.