

Covid-19 Response Grants 2021/22

RSVP Forth Valley - Walking and Knitting Groups



Who are RSVP Forth Valley Walking and Knitting groups?

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) is a part of UK wide organisation Volunteering Matters. They provide a range of volunteer led activities for the over 50 age group and are self-managed. Their aim is to encourage and assist older people to use their skills and experience to volunteer and keep active in retirement.

The two knitting groups, based in Dunblane and Alloa, are primarily “knit and natter” social groups. The walking groups provide social and health benefits to people’s lives.

How was the grant used?

- **Walking groups**

Since receiving the grant RSVP has been able to source hi-vis jackets and stock an emergency supply of hand sanitiser. This has allowed long walks on Wednesdays and short walks on Thursdays to restart safely. A new shorter walk in Bridge of Allan every Thursday has been established.

- **Knitting groups**

The grant has provided sanitiser dispensers for knitting group venues which have enabled them to restart safely and supply a small stock of wool.

What had to change due to Covid-19?

- Walking groups were limited by the amount of households who could meet and by the distance and length of time permitted for outdoor activity. The initial trial run of six Covid-safe local walks was frustrating for some people as they were very keen to get back to their normal more varied and challenging schedule.
- As restrictions slowly began to ease RSVP limited their programme to a weekly walk with a gradual staged return to the usual three walks per week.
- Knit and natter classes stopped running and the knitting groups were unable to meet. Although some members were still knitting at home, some were not and the organisation was not in a position to fundraise to supply wool.



Walking in the country



Dunblane knitting

What difference has the grant made?

- The walking and knitting group members have all expressed their gratitude and enjoyment at meeting up with friends again within a Covid-safe environment.
- The hi-vis jackets ensure that members, especially new members, know who the walk leaders are and who is responsible for the walkers and their health and safety that day.
- The knitting group has attracted new members and along with existing members they have continued to knit during lock-down, evident from the dozens of knitted clothes handed in for onward distribution. A visitor to one of the knit and natter groups by a care sector organisation, talked about the Shoebox appeal where boxes, that include our knitted goods, are sent to people in need in eastern Europe.

“Having first hand feedback was a huge morale boost and is encouraging members to keep knitting, which is invaluable. Dropping off a bag full of complete garments is in itself an incentive to get out of the house thus reducing isolation and improving mental health.”

Lead Organiser for RSVP Forth Valley

