

60 SECOND INTERVIEW WITH RUTHIE JACOBS OF WILLESDEN GREEN

For Mutual Aid Food Willesden (MAFW)

A food hub offering emergency essential boxes locally during Covid-19



PHOTO: Ruthie at the food hub

Q Can you tell us about yourself?

I am a teacher in a secondary school in Ealing, I am working from home at the moment and wanted to do something useful with all the time I have saved on commuting!

Q How did you hear about Mutual Aid Food Willesden?

The community around Willesden has been so enthusiastic that at the start of lockdown it was difficult to find any volunteering as everyone was so keen to help. Luckily I saw an advert to contact MAFW on the Next Door community app - I sent them a text and started volunteering the next week!

Q Have you noticed any changes as a result of Covid-19 lockdown?

Society has been upended! People are spending a lot more time in their local area, whether that is helping out in the community, spending time with their family or jogging in the park. Everything has slowed down and people seem to have a lot more patience (who could have imagined waiting 30 minutes to get into Sainsburys in February!).

Q Can you tell us how you're involved helping provide essential aid?

Every week I volunteer at Mutual Aid Food Willesden's food hub. I along with all of the other volunteers contact people in the community to find out what their needs are and then put together food packages for them and their family. We try to make sure that it is full of delicious and nutritious food. I have also spoken to lots of people in the community to establish what support they need so we can direct them to the right services.

I am also helping to organise the CommuniTREE initiative to ensure all 240 trees can be planted.

Q Are there any stories that you could share?

I love calling people up before I make up the food packages, it reminds you how important everything you are doing is, humanises what would otherwise be a box with some tins.

Everyone I speak to is so kind and grateful, normal and local people who are struggling. From the mum who is trying to work out what to do with her 16 year old whose exams were cancelled to the dad trying to get his hands on some eggs so his kids can do some baking. Every package we make up has a family and a story behind it.

Q How would you sum up what Mutual Aid Food Willesden does?

Everything Mutual Aid Food Willesden does is directly targeted at helping those most in need who are suffering economically and socially due to Covid-19.

Mutual Aid Food Willesden is an amazing example of the community coming together to support each other when that support has not been available on a national level. Without Mutual Aid Food Willesden, there are people who would not eat, have access to medication or know there is any support out there.

