



Heroes of hope

Out of incredibly trying times this year have come moments of hope, kindness, and inspiration. Here, we celebrate just some of the people who have stepped up to support others, and ask them what lessons they're taking with them as we look forward to the future

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Have a think back over the past year. No doubt, you'll be able to conjure up countless examples of selflessness and heroism that have inspired you. That said, a survey from Totaljobs saw, in the past six months, three in five key workers disclose that they felt undeserving of the title 'hero'.

If that finding tells us anything, it's that perhaps it's time we re-evaluate what we mean by 'hero'. Because in the world that we live in, heroes don't wear capes. Heroes are the everyday people who go out of their way to support those around them – through personal challenges, and at the risk of their own wellbeing.

From the bus driver who united the city, to the engineer who used his daily exercise to deliver face shields, and the mother and daughter who made sandwiches for local NHS crews, be touched by these stories, and leave knowing that with hope, kindness, and community, we can achieve more than we could ever dream.

Susannah Fenton: Lending an ear

Just one week into lockdown, Susannah took over as the new director of the Herts and Essex branch of Samaritans, in Ware. Overseeing 170 volunteers sharing 24/7 shifts on the phone, webchat, and over email, Susannah had her work cut out for her.

"We were quickly given the green light to operate as 'essential workers'," Susannah explains. "We altered shift times, changed how we ran our duty room, adopted vigorous cleaning protocols, suspended outreach and fundraising events, and found alternative ways to keep volunteers in touch with one another.

"I learned what a brilliant bunch of people we have, prepared to come in night and day in the pandemic for callers," she continues. "Some who couldn't come in helped from home, volunteering for the NHS. The dedication shown by everyone has made me very proud of our wonderful team."



50 sandwiches a week delivered to the local ambulance service

E u n a

Euna Kang: Café owner feeding the heart of the community

March was tough for Euna. Not only did she have to close her café in Effingham, Surrey – named Layla’s after her nine-year-old daughter – but as a cancer patient, she was categorised as a vulnerable person. However, none of that stopped her from deciding to take action.

“Layla and I decided to make sandwiches, cakes, and food to show our gratitude to the NHS,” says Euna. “We delivered them to Leatherhead ambulance centre,

Redhill ambulance crew, St Peter’s hospital, Epsom hospital, and some local elderly people, three times a week.”

In total, Euna counts nearly 350 meals delivered.

Throughout lockdown, Euna had offered the closed café up as a community store, to sell essential goods for elderly and vulnerable people. When that came to an end, and Layla’s was opened again, Euna had the full support of the community.

“You do good things without expecting anything, but it’s karma,” she says. “This is what we’ve learned from the experience. We can’t change this situation, but we can adapt and share what we’ve got.”



Zita Newcome and Claire Ross-Masson: The joy of song

Lockdown has been a very confusing and difficult time for young children, who may not truly understand what is happening. That’s where Zita and Claire come in – the two person team behind Teddies Music Club, an independent singing group for pre-school children and their grown-ups.

Zita and Claire had been recording music videos for the last couple of years and, when lockdown began, not only did they send these out to Teddies families, but they also offered them for free nationwide – so

that everyone could enjoy the power of song.

“We’ve learnt how isolating it is to be in your own bubble,” says Zita. “It makes you realise how important it is to take care of your mental health, and how important it is to reach out to people.”



B e n



100,000
face shields
made for the
NHS

Ben May: For the front line

When Ben's work as a prototype engineer came to a complete halt in March, his first thought was that he couldn't stand by and watch NHS workers putting themselves at risk. So he teamed up with two colleagues, Dean Carran and Si Freedman, to create safe, fully-approved face shields, by setting up their non-profit company: Protecting Heroes. Their work was non-stop, with Ben and a group of friends using

their daily exercise to deliver prototypes to surgeons working on Covid-19 wards around London.

Ben received help from the National Physics Laboratory in Teddington, manufacturers across the UK from Gateshead to Kent, and 245 ordinary people who donated to the crowdfunder. To date, they have created more than 100,000 face shields for the NHS.

Ben says: "The point is, while the idea was mine, the execution was enabled by a massive network of people. It's a whole lot easier to achieve the impossible if you do it for reasons that others can get behind, because the power of community is absolutely immense."

Louise Pipes: There for families

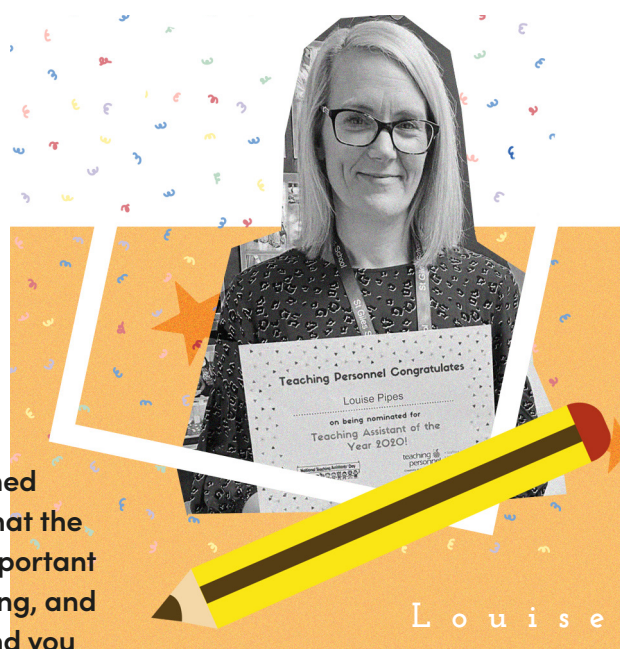
A family support practitioner at St Giles special school in Derby, where her role involves identifying when families may need more support, Louise is used to working alongside parents and children in her community. But while her school closed in March, her work continued.

Louise called parents two or three times a week, and organised supermarket shopping runs to gather essentials for families who were in need. But that's not all, with the help of her colleagues, Louise also collected prescriptions for those who were isolating, and

offered resources to help children with routines.

Reflecting on her lockdown experience, Louise says: "I have personally learned from this experience that the only things that are important are our health, wellbeing, and the love of those around you."

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L o u i s e



**Andrew Pattison:
First on the case**

A paramedic and senior operations manager for South East Coast Ambulance Service, Andrew bears a huge amount of responsibility. At the same time as attending emergencies to treat patients, he also liaises with hospitals to assess how they can work together to offer the best care possible.

At the start of the pandemic, Andrew was one of seven managers

called to headquarters to form a ‘command hub’, to support the crews out on the road. To do this, Andrew did a 100-mile round trip to HQ every day.

“Doing the job that we do in the emergency services, we are resilient,” Andrew says as he reflects on what he has learned during this time. “Work is important. At the end of the day, without work you can’t put food on the table. But it’s also important to have your family time, and live life to the best, as it is far too short.”



I will never forget the love that was shown to the NHS by the British public, it helped to carry me through

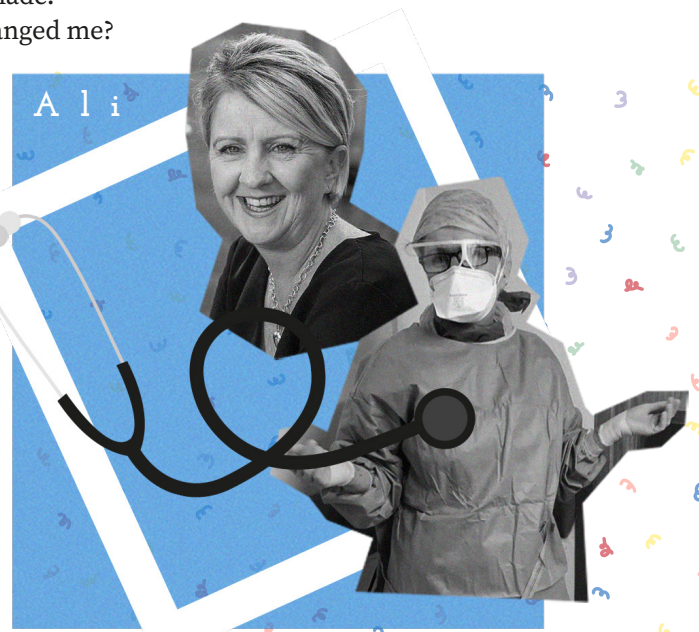
Ali Harris: On the front line

“When I first heard about Covid-19, I was so scared, I thought I would run away,” Ali, an ITU senior operating department practitioner, says, as she reflects on the year. “But as it got closer, I put on my PPE and, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with my colleagues, I walked towards it.”

Ali says that, throughout this time, an “overwhelming feeling of care” took over her, and never once dwindled. She worked through difficult personal times, on the ward on the anniversary of her mother passing away – and, on her day off, she ran 21km to raise money for blood cancer charity Bloodwise. All this hasn’t gone unnoticed, and Ali is due

to be recognised in the Story Terrace *Unsung Heroes* book, a well-deserved accolade.

“Has Covid-19 changed me? Honestly, I am not sure that it has,” says Ali. “What it has done is reaffirm the love that I have for my family and friends. I will never forget the love that was shown to the NHS by the British public – it helped to carry me through.”



Moe Manir: Planning a safer route

As a bus driver and trade union safety activist, Moe was never going to be satisfied to sit back and watch the struggles of his colleagues. He set up a Facebook group to bring together London bus drivers, so that they had a space to share their experiences, offer reassurance, and exchange tips. These groups allowed Moe to keep on top of the latest safety challenges and requirements, all of which he fed back to employers, leading to steps being taken to better protect drivers and passengers.

Also recognised by Story Terrace as an *Unsung Hero*, there

is no doubt that Moe’s self-motivated initiative led to many lives being saved.

“I hope that I have made my dad proud,” says Moe. “He worked tirelessly to help the community. He became Mayor of Tower Hamlets, where I grew up. I am the only son among six sisters, and one of my younger sisters, Apsana Begum, is now an MP. We learned about the road my father took, and we’ve followed it.”



Zoe Stothard: Constructing a safer workplace

Even before lockdown, Zoe was going above and beyond in her role as senior site manager for David Wilson Homes, going on to win the Pride in Job Quality award four years in a row – becoming an advocate for women in construction.

As part of her role, Zoe is in charge of all safety, health, and environmental aspects of the

development, and was there when her site was closed at the start of lockdown. After a few weeks, they were able to open again, with measures in place to make sure that everyone was safe, including a ‘Covid Marshal’ who oversaw all guidance.

“I interact with many different people, whether it’s tradesmen, customers, or office staff, and it has been amazing how everyone has opened up and wants to talk about this strange time,” says Zoe. “I will always remember that, no matter how busy we get, there’s always time to ask how people are doing.” **1**