

## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20



### Marvellous Midland Chase Region!

We may have been restricted in many ways for half of the 2019-20 year but that hasn't stopped us! In spite of this, we have achieved an amazing amount of project work. We have amended and updated our plans, adapted our way of working and, between us, have completed a significant number of projects – all tying in with the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the **5Ps** (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, Partnerships), the **3Es** (Educate, Enable and Empower) and the **3As** (Awareness, Advocacy and Action).

Since the first lockdown started and over the following months, Club Programme Action Officers have shared some of the projects their clubs have been working on – as mentioned at the SIGBI conference last weekend – and it would be good to continue to share this information.

This newsletter is by no means an exhaustive list – clubs have provided details of just 2-3 of their projects during the 2019-20 year.



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## Midland Chase Region

We have worked together on three projects in the year:

### Washing bags, hearts, ear defenders

Six clubs within Region worked together to produce washing bags for uniforms, knitted/crochet hearts and ear defenders to support the NHS. In total, we delivered 373 washing bags, 1,311 knitted/crochet hearts and 218 ear defenders – that's 1,902 people we have helped in some way, amazing! All the items were delivered to QE and Heartlands.

Other clubs within Region also produced significant volumes of scrubs, wash bags, ear defenders, masks, syringe driver bags etc – a conservative estimate shows that we have made/donated over **5,000** items between us. How amazing is that!



### Keyworkers' newsletter

We put a call out to clubs to document the daily experiences of key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a superb reaction and responses were gathered from a wide range of key workers – not only in the NHS and caring professions, but also in the often overlooked private and voluntary sectors.

A diverse range of key workers – some Soroptimists, relatives and friends- replied, telling us what they have been doing as part of the mobilisation of effort to combat the virus, the effect of Covid-19 on their job, the changes they've made personally and professionally, the difficulties and hardships they've encountered and the potential long-lasting changes to their day-to-day working lives.

The material was compiled into an extensive newsletter which was widely circulated within the membership, but an opportunity was also spotted to find a wider, high-level audience for this aspect of our work.



Recording everyday life in Britain

The Mass Observation Archive specialises in material on everyday life in Britain. It contains papers generated by the original Mass Observation social research organisation (1937 to early 1950s), and newer material collected continuously since 1981 (Mass Observation Project). The Archive is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in the care of the University of Sussex where it is housed as part of the University's Special Collections.

The feedback was really positive with comments such as 'truly inspiring and makes one feel very humble', 'informative and heart searching report', 'a very impressive account of people's working lives in extraordinary circumstances'.

### Covid-19

The International President's Appeal, Road to Equality, launched a new Project "Making Masks" in recognition of the fact that the very inequalities addressed in The Road to Equality are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – "We are witnessing increasing threats to the safety of women and girls – domestic violence, human trafficking, FGM and child marriage, with many older women facing the crisis alone, and refugee women lacking access to adequate healthcare and sanitation facilities. Women, representing 70% of the global health workforce in most countries, are on the frontline, working tirelessly, often for less pay than their male counterparts".

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### Midland Chase Region (continued)

SI asked for an online survey to be completed with details of the work we have done in order to recognise and measure our collective impact. The survey was completed and photos sent on behalf of SI Midland Chase (wash bags, ear defenders & hearts and the Keyworkers' newsletter)

#### Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts project

The observations at courts in both our Region and Midland Arden Region were completed in March 2020, just before the restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19! The project went live on 6 Jan 2020 & ran for 9 weeks with pairs of Soroptimists attending 7 Magistrates Courts where domestic abuse cases are heard. Online questionnaires were completed after each observation and input to police database.

Few facts and figures:

- Nos. of Soroptimists involved: Midland Chase – 42 members from 8 clubs, Midland Arden - 16 members from 5 clubs (more members trained but no observations in Warwickshire because of changes within the police force)
- Observations over 9 weeks – c70 court visits by MC, c30 by MA
- In terms of hours (and after deductions for times when there were no DA cases or courts were cancelled for some reason) – c550 hours in MC and c225 in MA

West Midlands Police are arranging a feedback/thank you session which will take place on 19 November. Although numbers able to attend are limited, a recording will be available for anybody else interested.

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### SI The Wrekin



It's been an interesting year!! We were lucky enough to hold our **Souper Sunday** event, to celebrate International Women's Day, just before lockdown. Friends, neighbours and family were invited to give up their Sunday lunch and visit our soup kitchen instead. A glass of wine helped the social conviviality and also the generous donations made. The funds raised were split between the ChoraChori project in Nepal and to support women locally at risk of or suffering from domestic violence.

### **Festival of Imagination and Sustainable Development goals**

At the beginning of the year we managed to secure a £1000 grant from the Lottery Celebrate 25 fund, to hold a conference in September. The conference aimed to bring the local community together to promote the Sustainable Development Goals and explore what we as a community can do by simple actions to help achieve these goals. The original plans could not go ahead due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, not to be thwarted, we have found other ways to promote the Goals.

In September we teamed up with the **Festival of Imagination** which was held in the Ironbridge Gorge 12-27<sup>th</sup> September. We held a number of activities.

- One of our intended conference speakers, Charlotte Watkins was hosted on the Festival Event TV, showing her previously recorded Tedx talk on her Zero Waste Life The presentation was introduced by an up-to-date recording relative to Covid. This presentation is still available on the Event Catch-up site.
- As festival partners, we have links on the site with information about our club, Soroptimist International and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The T shirt Trail – Using old T shirts, we made posters highlighting the impact Fast Fashion is having on climate change and pollution, plus a few messages from Angry Birds on what actions can be taken help the planet. The T-shirts were displayed on washing lines on one of the main car parks and around trees along the Wharfage.
- Shops also displayed posters to show what actions they were taking to contribute towards the Goals
- A short quiz was available to download based on the trail and shop posters



Following the Festival we continued with the **Sustainable Development Goals community challenge**.

Disposable masks are starting to become a major polluter of the rivers and oceans. Our challenge for October was to make 50 masks for the food bank to distribute locally; reusable masks are a luxury many people can't afford.



The lottery has now extended the time for the grant to be used and we will continue to highlight different goals over the next few months in novel ways. Overall, we have managed to reach a wider audience than we would have done by just holding a conference.

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### SI Wolverhampton

#### Supporting Compton Care



SI Wolverhampton have been making syringe driver bags for Compton Care since 2016. Patients in the hospice and the community use the bags to carry around syringe drivers whilst receiving treatment. The project was originally started following the death of long-standing member Mary Wilmot, who was a patient at the hospice, and the club wanted to give something back in the way of service to say thanks for the care given to Mary. 50 bags were given to Compton Care in April 2020 and the latest batch of 100 bags was delivered to the hospice in September meaning that over 400 bags have now been donated.



#### Supporting NHS staff and patients during the Covid lockdown

Members of SI Wolverhampton were continuing to deliver service to the community despite the lockdown. Club members produced various items for NHS staff and Covid patients including laundry bags for uniforms and shoe bags so staff could safely take them home to clean. Face masks and ear protectors to use with them were made for staff in a local doctor's surgery. Matching pairs of knitted hearts were made for Covid 19 patients in intensive care as they were not allowed visitors. One stayed with the patient if they sadly passed away, the other matching one was sent to relatives so they could still share something physical with their loved one after they had passed. Hand creams were given to Walsall Manor hospital for staff whose hands were suffering from the consequences of constantly wearing PPE.

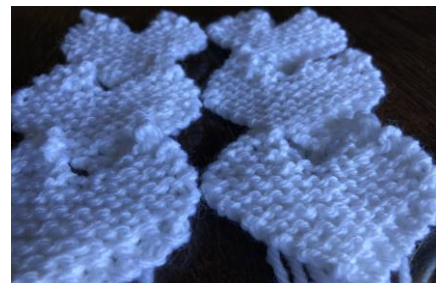


## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

### SI Tamworth

#### Support for NHS

Our Members have been busy knitting hearts and sewing wash bags, headbands, face masks for the NHS with other clubs in the Region and also Scrubs for the North Warwickshire "Scrub Hub".



#### Socially distanced tea party

Tamworth Soroptimists took the opportunity of a sunny Saturday afternoon for some members to meet up to have a socially distanced picnic meeting. It was wonderful for those able to attend to catch up with all the news, enjoy the sunshine and raise some monies. We were delighted to raise funds for our charities from the excellent tea provided, a raffle and other donations totalling £482.

#### South Africa Tea Bag Appeal

When Tamworth Soroptimist, Vicky Vernon flew for her holiday in South Africa she took with her the used teabags collected by club members and friends. There was a total of 7000 teabags! These have been given to a charity in Hout Bay South Africa to be made into tea trays and coasters, providing employment for the local community.

Members of the South African Wolves Supporters Club became interested in the project and the charity agreed to make some tea trays and coasters displaying the Wolves Badge. These will be sold at the football club to raise money for the charity. The charity details, Soroptimist emblem and notes will be on the underside of each piece.



## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

### SI Sutton Coldfield

#### Tondo Health Clinic, Manila

We have continued to support the Purple Community Fund (PCF) in a number of health programmes in the last 12 months:

- **Poverty** – In November 2019 we delivered 2 car loads of baby clothes, baby milk, nappies and toys to Southampton to be shipped by container to Manila. We are very thankful to SI Hallamshire, our Friendship link, for their very large donation of items.
- **Food Poverty** - Many families have no income over Christmas as work closes down. We therefore donated £240 to provide food parcels to those families in need.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – In January 2020 a local volcano erupted close to Tondo which enveloped the whole area in volcanic dust. The prevalent health condition within the community is respiratory illness and the volcanic dust aggravated the health of the community. Face masks quickly sold out and were not available so the women artisans turned their hands to sewing face masks which could be sold to earn an income. Members donated £120 to enable the women to make 400 face masks.
- **COVID-19** – Since the outbreak of COVID in February, the Community has been in full lockdown and with added restrictions of not being able to work, families have had no income. Militia law imposed further restrictions. It is only recently that the law was lifted to allow those over 21 and under 60 to be able to walk and cycle outside of their community. Schools closed and children were not allowed out of their homes. The situation was compounded by a devastating fire that swept through the site. The Community were reliant on PCF which ran out of food - in the latter stages only rice was available for distribution. The Club donated £100 and individual members over £600 to enable us to boost the donation with gift aid benefit.
- **Mental Health Family Planning Programme** – The lockdown has created major mental health issues with mothers within the community. Female contraception is either unavailable or unaffordable and the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy has created tension and anxiety especially with the current living situation, loss of income and lack of food. The clinic is not able to provide female contraception so members donated £690 (including GiftAid) to enable 5,000 condoms to be purchased. The doctors at the Clinic manage the Family Planning programme.



#### Friendship Link, Alzheimer's and Twiddlemuffs

This year we are supporting SI Hallamshire by knitting Twiddlemuffs and teddies. For the last few years we have alternated in supporting each other's projects and we were overwhelmed by SI Hallamshire's support for us last year. Twiddlemuffs provide a wonderful source of visual, tactile and sensory stimulation for those with dementia and Alzheimer's whilst keeping hands warm and snug. The result is a beautiful array of textures and colours, recycling of fabric and bits and bobs. Members have found knitting the Twiddlemuffs as therapeutic as those who will receive them.



Our friends have also taken up the challenge by knitting teddy bears complete with clothes for SI Hallamshire.

## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

### SI Staffordshire Moorlands



#### Krizavac Project

We are collecting sewing machines, account books donated by a member, Primary school books donated by a village school as they have just updated their library - all going to the village of Chilamony in Malawi with the Krizavac project.

#### Knitting

Knitting still going on for our local refuge - hoping to be able to deliver in the next few weeks unless we are in lockdown again.



#### Marmalade and cards

We have not been idle, still making and selling marmalade and cards. Money raised from selling marmalade and cards has gone to Médecins Sans Frontières.



#### Support for Blood Bikes and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

We had a retro fair last year to raise money for the Blood Bikes and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to help with the purchase of Gun Moor, an area where the fires caused problems last year.



## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

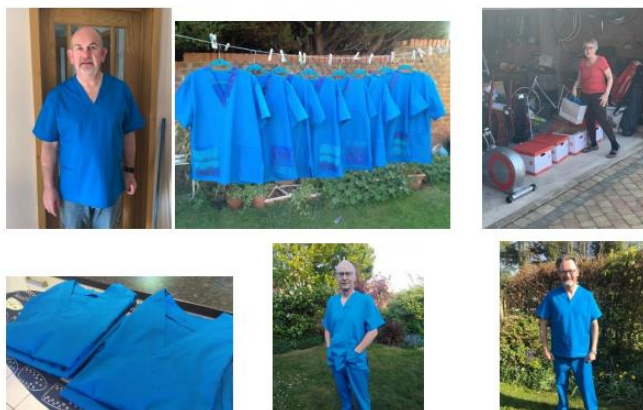
### SI Stafford

#### Care Home Scrubbers!

Care Home Scrubbers is the name coined for our band of extraordinarily talented and enthusiastic seamstresses who were busy sewing scrubs for the staff in a Care Home to wear instead of their own clothes. It was the initiative of Joint President Elect Gill Green, who organised her team of intrepid sewers, together with tasks allocated via spreadsheet by our able treasurer Alison! Thanks to Gill, sewing machines were begged and borrowed and dusted off, scissors sharpened and away we went.

Club members were involved from delivering fabrics, cutting out garments, sewing and collecting finished articles and returning to Gill. Her garage became a temporary warehouse collection point before delivery to the Care Home. In all 80 sets of scrubs were made.

We made brilliant use of our WhatsApp group to provide tutorials and support for tricky bits, such as finishing the necks and sewing pockets. Talented members embellished pockets and necklines and the final products were modelled by some 'Soroptimisters'. Photos of the scrub creation in action from delivery, cutting out, sewing and modelling .....



#### Scarf knitters

Members have also proved themselves to be nifty with needles and knitted 45 scarves to a set pattern. The scarves were made to help Stafford's House of Bread, a local charity that supports vulnerable and homeless people in Stafford and the surrounding area.

Its volunteers lend a hand to anyone who needs extra help. The House of Bread offers a range of practical support including food, toiletries, clothing banks, plus advice and guidance on a range of issues and signposting to professional organisations. SI Stafford has for a number of years supported the food bank run by the charity.



#### Drake Hall

We have carried out various projects at Drake Hall Prison over recent years and this continues. Recent service work includes the following:

*Angel Tree* in which gifts are distributed for children of prisoners in conjunction with Prison Reform.

*Distraction Packs* for the mentally distressed and possible suicide victims consisting of various books and games which prove essential during times such as school holidays and Christmas.

*Meet and Greet*s for prison visitors which have been well received by both staff and inmates.

*Collection and donation of odd balls of wool and codewords /crosswords* enabling the ladies to knit squares for blankets for the Salvation Army. In addition to occupying the women prisoners in craft sessions, we are contributing towards our local communities.

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### SI Lichfield & District

#### Socially Distanced Litter Picks

One of the activities planned for 2020 was Club service work to help clear up litter in our district. Needless to say Covid-19 put paid to that in Spring 2020, but gradually as restrictions were eased, Planet sub group took on the challenge of working out how our Club could deliver on this in a safe and effective way.

Planet wanted to build partnerships in this area as we felt that this would be a more effective way of tackling the issue while also developing opportunities for sustainable partnership working with other local groups.



Our first Litter Pick was held on 25th June in collaboration with Brereton Million to mark World Environment Day. It was very successful and we are now starting to work with Brereton Million on other projects to help local women and girls. 26th July saw Club members at Rugeley working "closely" (at 2m distance and more) with members of the local Council, Lions and Townswomen's Guild. Later in the Summer on 23rd August, we partnered with Burntwood Litter Legends in a pick which was so successful we ran out of collection bags!

Much of the litter collected is from fast food outlets and takeaways and includes plastic soft drinks bottles, along with alcohol cans. Most worrying is the quantity of small silver canisters used to contain Nitrous Oxide, a chemical compound traditionally used in baking or in hospitals as a pain killer. Known as "laughing gas", it sounds like harmless fun, but Office for National Statistics data shows there were 25 deaths directly linked to the gas between 2010 and 2016, so it's no joking matter.

#### Sewing Bee

In addition to working with other clubs in Region in making scrub bags, ear defenders, etc for the NHS, we have met in groups of 6 maximum, initially outside and now inside.

During the year we have sent dresses, jumpers, shawls and Days for Girls kits to the Kori project in Sierra Leone (via SI Thames Valley), the clinic in Manila (via SI Sutton Coldfield) and Zambia with the Baraka charity.

We have identified a new charity which is keen to have some of our dresses, particularly those for older girls – Kids Club Kampala. They work with and support vulnerable kids in Uganda, providing for both their immediate needs and strengthening their futures through educating, feeding, protecting and skilling.



The first batch of 114 dresses, 34 boys' shirts, 34 pairs of shorts and 10 Days for Girls packs are currently in transit to Uganda!

The Days for Girls kits will enable girls to continue their education when they are on their period.

#### Young Footballers and Healthy Relationships

Recognising the importance of educating males about domestic violence, we held an awareness raising session run by 2 officers from West Midlands Police on 'Healthy Relationships & Keeping Safe' for 20 boys, aged 16-18, at Lichfield Football Academy followed by a 'fun' activity where the boys packed Buddy Bags to be given to children going into a refuge. The session provided training on the following areas: healthy relationships, sex and the law, consent, pornography, online safety & sexting.

## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

### SI Lichfield & District (continued)

The presentation was interactive and promoted discussion and plenty of debate. We wanted to address the education of violence against women with young males and to ensure that they are aware that they need to take responsibility in ending male violence against women. They need to understand what constitutes a healthy relationship and what does not.



At the end of the session the 20 boys who attended the training session were much more aware of the basics of healthy relationships and online safety than they were before. Any women or girls with whom these boys interact in the future will hopefully benefit from the training the young men have received.

Finally, we gave each boy a water bottle with the Soroptimist logo and key words on it as a reminder of the day.



The project has been included in Soroptimist International's influential and formative report to the United Nations' High-Level Political Forum 2020.

# SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

## SI Cannock & District

### Your Body, Your Rules

For the academic year beginning September 2019, 14 ambassadors signed up for the project with a new school, Norton Canes, coming on board as well as two members of Cannock Police Cadets. The training day for the second cohort of Ambassadors was held in September 2019 and was just as successful as the first. All schools are delivering the project to Y8 pupils; Soroptimists Jackie Prince, June Bould and Trish Mellor are overseeing the project in the schools, all schools were visited in the autumn term 2019.



At the end of January 2020, a workshop was held when all schools and Ambassadors confirmed the benefits of the project to their schools and young people and their wish for this to continue. Plans were made for the development of Your Body, Your Rules with the leadership emphasis moving from Soroptimists to schools.

Unfortunately, schools were closed at the end of March. We have made contact with all schools in the last few weeks offering our support if needed. Understandably, the current situation does not allow for our YBYR project to continue in the way it has but we maintain contact with all schools and will develop the project again when the situation allows whilst continuing to advise where asked.

### Helping our NHS and Care Home workers

Over 1,500 items of face and hand cream; uniform bags; ear defenders and fabric masks were delivered to Cannock, Walsall Manor and New Cross Hospitals; and to 6 Care Homes in the Cannock & Rugeley area. Creams were donated by members, friends and neighbours – some members leafleted their neighbours and had a fantastic response. Those good with a sewing machine got to work on the fabric items. Everything was appreciated – an all round feel-good factor!



### Supporting the Food Bank, Staffordshire Women's Aid (SWA) and Pathway during Covid-19

During the first few months of lockdown Cannock Soroptimists collected and received many donations of clothes and cleaning materials. Clothes and toiletries were donated to Cannock Food Bank, Pathway, SWA and other mother and baby groups. Tinned and packet foods have been donated to Cannock & Rugeley Food Banks - these items have come from club members, their friends and their neighbours.

### Books4Home – International Literacy Day

This project is continuing with great success – we are able to donate books most weeks, and so far, generally well over 100 – and all of those beautiful books are saved from being pulped and instead are loved by a child who probably would never own a book. Again, the success of social media has been demonstrated – SI Lichfield and District and SI Cirencester and District have been in touch to ask how they can be involved! International Literacy Day will continue year round! And at a socially distanced, number limited, coffee morning, members donated £90 to ensure this project continues. President Trish's dog, Toby, loved the books!!



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### SI Cannock & District (continued)

#### Helping the Planet



Following on from a very impressive zoom presentation given by club member Emma Hodge's 11 year old daughter Katie, attended by many visitors including SIGBI's APD Planet Naina Shah, club members have collected packaging for a week to discover more about recycling, including that T bags [except for PG Tips, with others following suit] contain plastic; you can recycle only clean tin foil; you should take the tops off plastic bottles and they should of course be washed too; black meat trays cannot be recycled. They have learned even more about recycling from a presentation given by club member Olivia Lyons; many have joined in community litter picks – and found abandoned shopping trolleys as well as a frightening amount of litter!; and many members now have at least one meat and fish free day each week – recipe sharing is popular! Katie keeps us all on track with ways to care for our garden wildlife

# SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

## SI Burton on Trent & District

### Support for Mental Health and homeless charities

In our fundraising activities, we concentrated on two main charities - Burton upon Trent MIND (which fitted with the SIGBI theme for the year Mental Health) and the YMCA again which fitted the theme owing to the work YMCA do with homelessness and Food Banks both of which help mental health.

Fundraising involved:

- Plant Sales and Table Top Sale for YMCA
- Coffee Morning MIND

We also collected toiletries for the YMCA.

### Orange the World

At the Table Top sale, we wore Orange supporting the 2019 theme for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 'Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape'. Like in previous years, the 2019 year's International Day marked the launch of 16 days of activism that concluded on 10 December 2019, which is International Human Rights Day.



### Climate change



*Bee Box in Garden*

SI Burton upon Trent and District's original project for 2020 was climate change and we have been able to pursue this project during lockdown.

### Support for NHS

During lockdown Members have made hearts, mask mates, masks and scrubs to help the NHS staff and care homes.



## SI Midland Chase Programme Action Report 2019-20

### SI Bilston

#### Support for NHS



One of our members is a keen seamstress and has led the club in providing items of PPE that have been delivered to New Cross, Walsall Manor and Cannock hospitals as well as Compton Hospice and 10 Wolverhampton Care Homes. Julie has been assisted by members providing materials, buttons ribbons etc.

To date approximately 400 scrub bags and 650 ear defenders have been made and delivered. The demand has moved recently to face masks/coverings, as previous donations from other organisations have dried up. Approximately 200 masks have been provided for Walsall Manor and New Cross hospitals.

Sadly one of our members had to have a procedure in Cannock Hospital recently. During her visit, our member Jean spotted a nurse using a knitted ear defender that was the only one she had. Jean volunteered to supply 20 more for her along with scrub bags.

No sooner the word and Jean used the club WhatsApp communication to alert others who responded immediately. The great result is that 20 ear defenders and 20 scrub bags have been delivered to the department at Cannock hospital.



One of our members, alongside a SI Wolverhampton member, has used the time by knitting for the premature baby unit at New Cross hospital. Between them they have made trauma teddies, cannula covers and matinee coats.

#### Support for vulnerable women and families

Apart from stitching we have supported Di's Kitchen, a charity supporting the homeless, Changing Lives a charity supporting vulnerable women and Strengthening Family Hubs by delivering goods. School Uniforms were delivered to Strengthening Family Hub in Bilston for a family in real need.



Members met at Linden House respecting socially distanced rules and donated food for Di's Kitchen.



Photo shows goods collected for Changing Lives

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### SI Bilston (continued)

#### Webinars

Members have joined

- a) Webinar for the Day of Memory (Karma Nirvana) to learn more about Honour Abuse and Forced Marriage
- b) Webinar for Modern Day Slavery with a focus on local issues as we are members of WASP, Wolverhampton & Walsall Anti Slavery partnership. We are using Facebook and WhatsApp to inform members of signs and symptoms of modern day slavery.