

Testimonial for Helen Raw

Although Helen and I have never met face to face – I have seen her work at first hand for 5 years as the project director for a series of programmes initiated by the War Widows' Association, and funded by external grants. Initially I saw her work from my role as Treasurer and latterly for 2 years as Vice Chair of the Association.

The projects – each individual by name and funding – have followed a similar thread, to enable members of the Association who could not access the internet, for a variety of reasons, to do so and thereby engage with family, access commercial advantage etc.

The majority of the participants have been female and widows; some without close family, others without family close at hand to help. As use of the internet for a range of domestic tasks has become the norm in society at large (eg for correspondence, billing, shopping, news) those unable to do face increased isolation, and not being 'at the party' from the beginning adds to the fear and concern at how to do so, and how to do so safely. These projects have provided appropriate equipment set up to individual needs, supported access the internet, and taught participants how to email and enjoy face-to-face contact with family, sometimes from across the far side of the world. They have been supported in learning fundamental safety principles, and how to use commercial services to their advantage.

Helen has done and overseen all of this.

She has procured appropriate equipment, established their individual needs and then supported them from nervous 'first-timers' to developing knowledge users. And she has done it all remotely. In addition, she has provided ongoing support to participants of the previous projects, which itself has helped reduce the sense of isolation due to age and infirmity, and as ladies have said "she has become a friend – not just an IT adviser".

Furthermore, she has provided a supportive 'on-call' service, and throughout presented comprehensive monthly reports to the committee.

Finally, she has been the Association web-manager monitoring social forums and ensuring that the committee of volunteer trustees are kept notified of contacts that need to have a response, and provided IT support to the committee themselves.

"Campaigning, Caring, Remembering – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow"

War Widows Association, c/o 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA
National Telephone: 08452 412 189 **Email:** info@warwidows.org.uk **Website:** www.warwidows.org.uk

My visibility of the projects - which were born originally out of the social isolation of Covid – have given me the highest opinion of Helen and her work. Whilst working with the technical challenges of remote-learning– she has been flexible in her approach, understanding and patient of the complex issues many of the participants have faced.

I regret that I have not been able to meet Helen face to face – I would very much welcome the chance to thank her in person for all she has done for the Association.

Debbie Bowles
Vice Chair
War Widows Association

For further information email

vice-chair@warwidows.org.uk

War Widows Assoc Mail, PO Box 29265 Dunfermline KY12 2FH

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