



HANTSAR volunteers scoop national award in recognition of work supporting vaccination rollout

Volunteers at Hampshire Search and Rescue (HANTSAR) have been awarded a prestigious [Skills for Health](#) Our Health Heroes Award for their efforts supporting Covid-19 testing and vaccination across the county.

The charity, one of the country's county-based Lowland Rescue teams which provide round the clock cover to assist the police and other agencies to search for vulnerable missing persons, was praised highly for stepping into the breach to help the NHS at a time of great need alongside running full search and rescue services throughout the pandemic.

Presented with the prize at a glittering awards ceremony held at the Science Museum in London, HANTSAR Vice-Chair Trevor Vidler said:

"I am delighted that the hard work and dedication of our team has achieved national recognition. At a time of great difficulty for us all, our wonderful army of volunteers stepped up to the plate to support vaccination efforts across the county. Not only that, they did so whilst juggling a busy schedule of call outs to search for vulnerable and at-risk missing people."

HANTSAR beat stiff competition to scoop the 'Most Inspired Healthcare Support by a UK charity' prize, with an expert panel of judges voting unanimously in favour of HANTSAR due to the immense personal sacrifice of their passionate volunteers, who have provided critical support to the vaccination programme across Hampshire, working in partnership with Solent NHS Trust..

HANTSAR first got involved in local efforts to help combat Covid-19 in April 2020. Volunteer teams supported Portsmouth City Council by delivering essential PPE to Care Homes and other Healthcare agencies on a daily basis for 12 weeks within the city and surrounding areas. At Christmas 2020, with lorries snarled up at Portsmouth harbour, **63** HANTSAR volunteers gave up their time between Christmas and New Year to get drivers tested at Portsmouth International Port before they returned to the continent.

Also in December 2020, as the vaccination rollout gathered pace, **14** HANTSAR volunteers trained to work as vaccinators to ensure that when vaccination centres opened they, together with their team colleagues, were ready to step up.

And did they!

Between January 2021 and January 2022, over 70 HANTSAR volunteers filled hundreds of shifts as professional guides and vaccinators across the county at the main mass-vaccination centres in Southampton, Portsmouth and Basingstoke. More recently they have, with very little notice, supported the schools programme, adapting schedules to attend different schools across Hampshire each and every day.

In total the HANTSAR vaccinators have helped to deliver an estimated **17000** vaccinations, and the whole team has contributed over 9000 hours to the programme.

Congratulating HANTSAR on their win is Angela Anderson, Deputy Chief Nurse at Solent NHS Trust, and Clinical Director for the Solent NHS Trust led mass vaccination centres;

“I cannot express strongly enough how important our volunteers from Hampshire Search and Rescue have been to enable us to deliver the vaccination programme. They have supported us both inside and outside of the centres in all kinds of weather, always with a smile on their faces. They have all been so professional and committed and have not grumbled when we have had to change things at short notice. We could not have done what we have without each and every one of our wonderful volunteers. I am so very grateful from the bottom of my heart and this win is thoroughly deserved.”