

COVID-19 VACCINATION HERO



Gill Kantolinna

Vaccination Hub Volunteer, Gill Kantolinna, rides a motorbike. A big, big motorbike. Before COVID, she was often to be found supporting St Michael's Hospice events or fund-raising as one of the Hospice Riders. However, as events fell by the wayside, Gill was keen to help out elsewhere.

A retired Mental Health Nurse and now aged 74, Gill shows no signs of slowing down. She admits to being quite a proactive person, is outgoing and likes mixing with others. So, when she heard through her surgery that volunteers were being sought at the Leominster Sports Centre Vaccination Hub, she was quick to step forward.

Since then, she has volunteered at the Hub up to three times each week, depending on need and the availability of vaccines. As her Mental Health Nurse certification has lapsed, she undertakes non-clinical roles such as chair

cleaning and sanitisation. Gill is very happy to help out in this role. She says: "People have to wait for 15 minutes after their jab, so it gives me the opportunity to talk to them. Often people haven't been out for a year, so it gives them the chance to catch up and perhaps to see friends and neighbours they haven't been able to see for a while."

What's the best bit about volunteering at the Hub?

Gill admits that the past year has been tough for her personally. In particular, she has found being apart from her family and grand-children really difficult. Gill says that volunteering at the Hub has made a big difference to how she feels: "There's a wonderful camaraderie here and I've met some really lovely people. The organisers are very friendly and efficient and amongst the volunteers I have found friends who I know I'll see long after this crisis is over."

Gill also loves to see the reaction of patients as they come for their jabs. "Most feel huge relief," she says, "and some are overwhelmed. They talk to me about their concerns. Many see the vaccination as a way out and they're really appreciative of all that we're doing."



I see volunteering as a part of being British. I would definitely recommend volunteering - it's made a big difference to the way I feel.