



London Region Woodcraft Folk

How Districts are dealing with Covid-19

London Committee sent out an email to all group and district contacts offering financial help as we were concerned that groups might close with numbers dropping or hall rents going up. So far, we haven't had any requests for money (most groups aren't back in their halls yet) but some lovely responses and imaginative ideas of how they have survived so far.

Who had heard about Zoom before this pandemic? But we certainly have now:

We were the first Woodcraft Folk group to meet online, and carried on doing it for several months after that. We didn't even take a break for Easter - we had an Easter Monday session, in fact. The virtual group nights were very successful for a lot of kids, although they certainly didn't suit all of them, and we were concerned about those ones, and about looking at ways to reach out to the wider group. Unfortunately, we didn't manage that. But we did keep the core of the group going throughout lockdown, and our kids/families joined in to the Big Camp IN and many others of the events organised by national Woodcraft Folk, as well as events we organised ourselves for families. It was, frankly, wonderful. (South Norwood)

We provided a programme of on-line activities via Zoom, we ran this most weeks from early April through to the end of June. We had a joint Zoom session for Elfins and Pioneers, and a separate Zoom session for Venturers. Some of the children joined the Zoom sessions most week, but others did not take part at all. We found it useful as a group of leaders to keep in touch, but we were running short of ideas.

The Venturers had their own Zoom sessions, with support of 2 leaders. They had some themed sessions (eg a Black Lives Matter speaker and a mental health session), but mainly benefited from being able to chat and support each other.

The Elfin/Pioneer Zoom sessions included: quizzes, games (eg scavenger hunts and ideas from Dream Big at Home), yoga and exercises, craft activities, microwaving a cake, Refugee topic, improvisation and mime.

We had some District wide sessions, eg Family Quiz, Virtual Camp - with tents in gardens and a joint craft activity. (Watford)

As a district we also ran two virtual camps in which the Venturers participated and delivered some activities. Cooking together has worked particularly well over zoom.

Treasure trails have been great to get people outdoors, and we've used WhatsApp to post photos, videos and comments to create a sense of a shared activity even though people have been doing it in small peer or household groups, and staggered over a number of hours. (Newham Watersmeet)

Some districts only used Zoom for adults and others found its limitations. WhatsApp is also proving useful for some groups of adults:

We discussed holding zoom meetings but, in the end, decided not to use them in the summer term because most of the parents felt their children were spending enough time online with school lessons. (Tolworth & Kingston)

Over that time, some more of the children dropped out, as being online was just a bit too much for them and their families, particularly after school moved online, so it seemed like kids were in front of a screen all day. Even their PE was in front of a screen. (S Norwood)

We missed the camping, but there have been some great outdoor sessions:

The biggest upset has been the lack of this year's camping. A big disappointment to all. (Harrow)

We had our first face to face session yesterday - what we called a "walk and talk". It was run for family groups, and we walked from where we usually meet, through the park and some streets to another park, where we played some games and had a picnic lunch. And sang a song or two. And then walked back to the starting point, through a third park. It was a wonderful event, partly because it was just so lovely to see people in the flesh. (S Norwood)

Our Venturer Group has continued to meet weekly, initially virtually and since July outdoors. Attendance has been good and the young people have appreciated the opportunity to meet and catch up. We ended the summer term later than usual to make the most of the opportunity to be outside together. (Newham Watersmeet)

The plans for the autumn are mixed, some going back indoors, others adapting meeting times and staying outdoors:

Lewisham - can't use the school so meeting alternate weeks on a Saturday morning in a local park.

Greenwich - the community centre is open but groups meeting in the garden as much as possible and at normal times on a Monday night.

Forest Hill - can only use the toilet of their normal building so meeting outside at normal times.

We are running outdoor sessions every other week this half term and have not decided what we will do after that. (T&K)

Our half term programme is: Week 1: games in the park, Week 2: walk with geocaching, Week 3: Zoom - craft activity, Week 4: Zoom - games and improvisation, Week 5: Sunday morning walk (no group meeting), Week 6: Campfire at Sarratt (Watford)

Some are beginning to feel the strain:

Our District meeting next week will be discussing how we go forward as a group. Leaders are feeling the strain, and are a little lacking in energy and we need more input to keep the programme lively, interesting and fun. (Newham)

I think it is touch and go whether the group continues in the medium term, frankly. It relies heavily on me, despite the fact that we have quite a lot of parent leaders, and I simply don't have the capacity or energy to do as much as is needed. But that is for another conversation. (S Norwood)

The Pioneer group to close due to Covid-19 and the lack of leaders. (Harrow)

But there are also some great achievements:

The District issued 10 fortnightly editions of the 'Harrow Woodcraft Times' newsletter. (This was made possible by a parent who was in marketing and had the skill to create it). (Harrow)

Hackney district held a virtual camp and managed to raise donations from that.

Wimbledon district are getting bored with zoom meetings and their local park and are planning a trip to the Zoo; they managed to get a grant to pay for it.

Here is the offer of financial support from London Region again:

If money holds you back from running your group, we are happy to give you a one off payment of £100 without any hassle. Just email Anna, our treasurer, London@woodcraft.org.uk with details of whom to make the cheque out to and an address, then we do the rest. Sadly we still haven't mastered bank transfers.

If you think that wouldn't be enough, please get in touch with Becky, our development officer, b.a.harris@hotmail.co.uk and work out with her what would be necessary to get the group up and running again.

Pioneer Activity Days at Shadwell

You will, of course, be aware that we had to cancel our dates in May due to the dreaded virus. We did book again for this September, but of course we have had to cancel these too - remember when we thought this would all be over by now? Shadwell have been very helpful and, although they now ask for a deposit, they have allowed us to carry this forward until next year when we will definitely be booking again, even if we have to wait until September for things to get back to normal. If you are the treasurer of one of the Districts which has received a refund, please cash the cheque ASAP.

Planned Events in 2020/21

Date	Event	Contact
Tue 3 rd November	London Committee Zoom	Monika 020 8567 5613 londonwf@yahoo.co.uk
Saturday in November???	Venturer Ice skating Alexandra Palace If viable...	Sarah 07981 303247 sarahrichardson@writeme.com
Sunday in February 2021	London Region AGM Virtual or venue to be decided...	Monika
Saturdays in May 2021	Pioneers Water Activity Days Shadwell Basin	Anna 020 8399 3614 London@woodcraft.org.uk

Bubble Camps at Park Farm

We have enjoyed hosting over 30 bubble camps this summer at Park Farm which have been so successful that we are thinking of making it a regular feature for at least one weekend next year when we hope to return to our primary aim of providing camps for our members. Families have come from near and far to enjoy the woods and the countryside with one family coming back four weekends in a row. There has been ample space to keep socially distancing whilst at the same time enjoying the many walks around the area, the occasional camp fire



and use of our standing kitchens for food preparation when not visiting a local venue to eat. The children seem to especially enjoy jumping on the trampolines when not in the woods or at our bushcraft area. Thanks to our volunteer wardens who now enjoy their stay in the new 'Lodge' building' and the donations which totalled over £2000.

London Region has a page on the National website:

<http://www.woodcraft.org.uk/places/england/london>

Follow us on: Facebook Group: [London Woodcraft Folk](#),

Instagram: [londonwoodcraftfolk](#), Twitter: [@LondonWoodcraft](#)

Please contact us via londonwf@yahoo.co.uk with any queries or suggestions