Volunteering to deliver some of County Longford’s “Meals on Wheels” was one of the best things I could have done for myself. The logical reasons range from providing people who, for some reason unable themselves, with a nutritious daily meal, to being able to “check in” on distant neighbours who may have little social contact, to helping people keep their independence living in their own homes rather than a nursing home or hospital. However, the icing on the cake is the variety of good, kind people you meet: other volunteers and staff of course, but mostly the grateful recipients.

Nowadays, *busyness* is the order of the day. Many people, isolated by age, retirement, ill-health, disability, may feel left behind; this can be dispelled by a few minutes of chat whilst delivering the meals. The same visit can give a feeling of security to those who, whilst enjoying being independent, may for some reason need the reassurance of a regular visit.

During this coronavirus pandemic there is a population of people with special needs who would normally avail of support services provided by the state, but which is no longer available. These are at least provided with a nourishing meal and a regular visit by a friendly face: perhaps not the companionship of a day centre, but at least a relief from a “lock-down”.

All of this can be read on the faces of all of the variety of clients we visit. The payback is terrific. I could never have foreseen the level of satisfaction, and pleasure to be gained from a couple of hours driving, whether around our lovely town or through the beautiful surrounding countryside. The ‘friends’ I meet regularly are a real source of joy.

Owen Harrison : Volunteer .

