



The Gujarati Association, Wolverhampton
Connecting our community

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GA NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2021

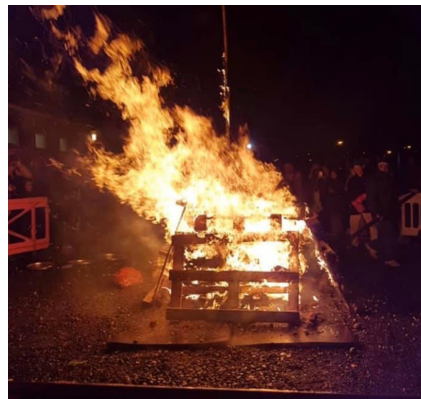
Jai Shree Krishna, Jai Ambe Everyone, we hope everyone has had a safe, happy Christmas and a great New Year. It has been a tough year for all of us and we would like to take the opportunity to share the year we have had. Our prayers to everyone, we have faced many challenges: we have lost loved ones and have had a very difficult time without our families. As we look to the future, we pray that everyone remains healthy and we can look forward to reopening our hall for events and festivals.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, our events and festivals have been cancelled since March, and our hall has been closed but thankfully due to technology we have been able to celebrate special times of the year, in a different way.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN 2020

MAHASHIVRATRI

We celebrated Mahashivratri in our GA Mandir, we had great attendance and it was very spiritual Om Namo Parvatipataye Har Har Mahadev,



HOLI

Holi was a great event, the blessing of the Holika Dahan was passed onto all devotees. We had a lot of people of all ages taking part. Thank you to all our volunteers that assisted in running the event.

Due to Coronavirus Pandemic the religious festivals were hosted online using applications like Zoom and Facebook. Thanks to Ariyan Patel and Manisha Patel who organised majority of the online events and managed our Facebook. See below for the events that we organised online.

GANESH CHAETH

Our first online event was Ganesh Chauth, we asked members to share pictures of their prayers and prasad. We shared many religious stories to our community to bring awareness to the festival. Look on our website for pictures.



NAVRATRI AND SHARAD POONAM

Navratri is one of the community's favourite festivals and we had to celebrate from home. We had daily garbas, thal and aarti at 7pm, which we had great numbers of viewers (over 200 viewers on Atham). We also hosted a competition for the community to participate in, we shared via Facebook and Instagram. We thank all that took part and congratulations to our winners.



DIWALI

Diwali was very unusual for us this year as we normally have our amazing Diwali Show. This year we organised a range of competitions with lots of prizes. We had over 100 entries taking part in our Rangoli competition, Food Plate competition and Diwali card competition. Congratulations to all the winners. As well as this, we took part in an online zoom event in conjunction with 27 Hindu organisations in the West Midlands. It was a well organised event and thanks to the organisers for their efforts.



CHARITY EVENTS AND SUPPORT IN 2020



MACMILLAN CANCER COFFEE DAY

The GA hosted an amazing Macmillan Coffee Day in the Sitara Hall, there was an amazing turnout with a great variety of food and drinks. Thanks to the organisers Champaben and Minaben and to everyone who volunteered to support the event, thanks to everyone who made food for the day and to everyone who donated. We raised £1800 for the Macmillan Charity!



ELIAS MATTU FOUNDATION DONATION

The Elias Mattu Foundation help the vulnerable and elderly in Wolverhampton. The GA donated £500, to the fundraiser and the Gujarati community raised £1500, leading to a total £2000 for the foundation. Thanks to all who donated!



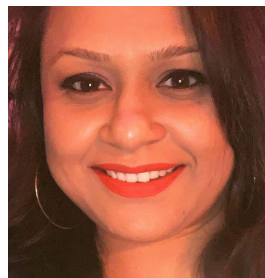
ANISHA PATEL SAMARITANS SUPPORT

GA supported Anisha Patel by donating £200 for her fundraiser for Samaritans. She walked 242 miles for the Samaritans Charity and was supported by many members of the community. Overall she raised over £3000. Well done to Anisha



NIKITA PATEL BREAST CANCER SUPPORT

GA supported Nikita Patel by donating £200 for her fundraiser for Breast Cancer. She did 400,000 steps for the Breast Cancer Charity and was supported by many members of the community. Well done to Nikita



GA'S NEW WEBSITE

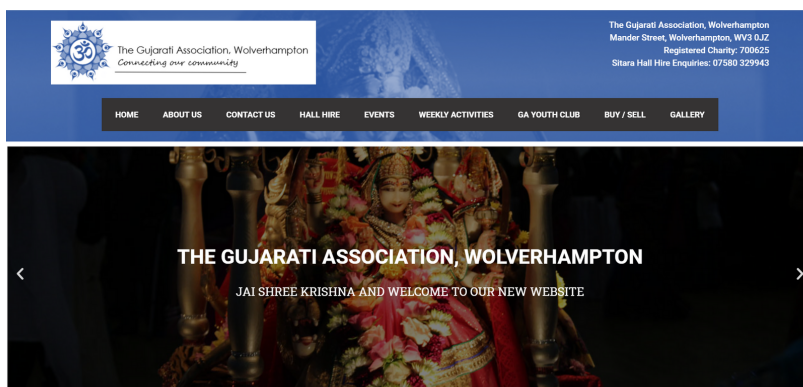
It comes with great pleasure to announce that during the 1st lockdown The Gujarati Association, Wolverhampton, created a new GA Website. It is a complete revamp and contains a lot of new features!

www.gujaratiassociation.org.uk

The GA Committee would like to thank Ariyan Patel for designing and creating the website, a lot of innovation and time was put in to building this website! We would also like to thank Raj Patel for project managing this task and Naresh Patel for technical support!

We have a few new features on our website, a main new idea we have implemented is that we now have a Buy/Sell page, where the community can put items that they wish to sell, this can be then be viewed by the wider community to buy. More details can be found on website!

We have many pages on our website that show us the past, present and future. Our gallery has pictures dating back to 2009 and our about us page provides information on our history. Have a look at our website and we have a forms option in the contact us page for any enquiries.



ZOOM

We would also like to take this opportunity to inform our members that during the lockdowns, the GA Committee have been working hard to organise Online Fitness Classes via Zoom, more information is on the last page. We have also ensured that the GA has been running through the past year, by using zoom for our committee meetings.

ॐ OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI ॐ

The Gujarati Association Wolverhampton would like to take the opportunity to give condolences to all the families that have lost a close loved one this year. We have great sympathy for all the families that have suffered during this tough time. We pray to God that all the souls that have departed us from this world find peace. Om Shanti Shanti Shanti.

It comes with great sadness to inform everyone that this year we have lost 4 of our key members that made it their life's work to support the community. The GA was established and built by these key figures and it is not possible for us to be where we are, without their support. A small article is written below in honour to, Shrimati Rekhaben Shivam, Shriman Bhikubhai Chhibabhai Patel, Shriman Parbubhai Unkabhai Patel and Shriman Harishbhai Gijubhai Patel.



SHRIMATI REKHABEN SHIVAM

SHRIMATI REKHABEN SHIVAM WAS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE GA OVER THE YEARS. FOLLOWING IN THE GREAT FOOTSTEPS OF HER FATHER AJITBHAI. SHE WAS A EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER AND SERVED AS VICE PRESIDENT. SHE WAS A ROLE MODEL TO OUR SAMAJ AND SHE WORKED HARD FOR THE PROSPERITY AND COHESION OF OUR COMMUNITY. DURING HER TIME AS A COMMITTEE MEMBER, SHE SUPPORTED US GREATLY IN CHANGING OUR CONSTITUTION, IT WAS WITH HER DETERMINATION WE WERE ABLE TO DO THIS. SHE WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPORT IN OUR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS. HER WORK AND EFFORTS WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN AND SHE HELD A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS. REKHABEN WAS A MEMORABLE MEMBER FOR ALL HER GOOD DEEDS. OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI



SHRIMAN BHIKHUBHAI CHHIBABHAI PATEL

SHRIMAN BHIKHUBHAI PATEL, A LONG SERVING COMMITTEE MEMBER AND PRESIDENT OF THE GA FOR OVER 10 YEARS. IT WAS A GREAT HONOUR FOR US TO HAVE HIS TIRELESS SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE OVER THE YEARS. HE REMAINED A KEY MEMBER AND DIGNITARY OF THE SAMAJ EVEN TOWARDS HIS LAST DAYS. HE DEVOTED HIS TIME, EFFORT AND KNOWLEDGE TO THE GA AND BECAUSE OF THIS WE ARE STILL RUNNING TODAY. IT WAS WITH HIS EFFORTS AND IDEAS THAT WE WERE ABLE TO BEGIN THE PROJECT OF BUILDING THE SITARA HALL BY PURCHASING THE NEW LAND FOR THE GA AND HE WISHED TO HAVE A LARGER SPACE FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO ENJOY AND BENEFIT FROM. THE SITARA HALL IS ONE OF OUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENTS AND WE WILL ALWAYS THANK BHIKHUBHAI AND FAMILY FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION. HE WAS WELL KNOWN AND ESTEEMED MEMBER OF THE SAMAJ AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS WILL BE REMEMBERED. IT WAS HIS WISH THAT THE PRESENT GA COMMITTEE WORK WITH A NEW GENERATION OF PEOPLE FOR THE PROSPERITY OF THE COMMUNITY. BHIKHUBHAI WILL FOREVER BE KNOWN WITH GREAT RESPECT FOR HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY. OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI



SHRIMAN PARBHUBHAI UNKABHAI PATEL (P.U.)

SHRIMAN PARBHUBHAI PATEL, ALSO KNOWN AS P.U WAS A WELL RESPECTED MAN AND WORKED WITH THE GA FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE. HE DEDICATED HIS TIME AND EFFORT TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY. PU BHAI WAS A UNIQUE MAN WITH A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOUR, WITH A LARGE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY. THE GA WAS FOUNDED IN 1968 AND HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS AND OUR INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR OVER 40 YEARS. PU BHAI ALSO WORKED IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY HELPING HINDU ORGANISATIONS ACROSS THE UK. HIS WORK IN INDIA ESPECIALLY WITHIN HIS KOTHAMDI GAM WAS WIDELY APPRECIATED AND PRAISED. PU BHAI SUPPORTED EVERYONE AND WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED FOR HIS COMMITMENT AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO WORK FOR THE COMMUNITY. HIS ADVICE AND KNOWLEDGE BENEFITTED US ALL AND HE REMAINS A PILLAR OF OUR SAMAJ. HE WILL BE MISSED BY ALL AND HIS LEGACY WILL CONTINUE FOREVER AND WE HOPE TO BUILD ON IT. OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI.



SHRIMAN HARISHBHAI GIJUBHAI PATEL

SHRIMAN HARISHBHAI PATEL WAS A PROACTIVE, DEDICATED MAN WHO BROUGHT HAPPINESS AND PRIDE TO THE GA. HIS WARM PERSONALITY AND HUMOUR MADE US ALL LAUGH, THERE WAS NEVER A SMILE MISSING WITH HIS PRESCENCE. HE PRIMARLY BEGAN HIS WORK IN OUR YOUTH CLUB BY HELPING RUN IT, FOLLOWING THIS HE WORKED IN THE COMMITTEE AND HELD THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT FOR A FEW YEARS. HARISH WAS A GOOD HEARTED, THOUGHTFUL MAN, WHO MADE IT HIS LIFE'S GOAL TO BUILD THE SAMAJ. HIS WORK AND EFFORTS WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. THE 2001 BHUJ EARTHQUAKE WAS ONE OF HARISHBHAIS GREATEST ACHIEVEMENTS WHERE HE WORKED IN THE GA AND HELPED RAISE £42K, THEN GOING TO VISIT BHUJ AND HELPED CREATE 97 NEW HOMES SUPPORTING THEIR COMMUNITY HEAVILY. HIS HARDWORK HELPED THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND WIDER COMMUNITY ACROSS THE WORLD. HARISHBHAI WAS A KNOWLEDGEABLE MAN THAT BROUGHT US ALL TOGETHER WITH HIS WORK AT GA AND HE WILL ALWAYS REMAIN AN IMPORTANT LEADER OF OUR SAMAJ. HE IS AND WILL ALWAYS REMAIN THE PRIDE OF THE GA. OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI



PARMATMA AE ATMANE SHANTI SACHI
AAPJO
OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI



ONLINE WEEKLY ACTIVITES

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, we have had to close our hall and all the activities that take place. In the early stages of the lockdown, we had introduced "GA Online Fitness", our amazing teachers using zoom continued our yoga classes and fitness class.

A big thanks to Rajni Patel for organising these online classes for the community.

For Codes to the classes please contact Rajni 07572143862.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Description</u>
Monday	Yoga Class with Valentina	6.15pm -7.45pm	Yoga class run by Valentina, who focusses on Hatha yoga and relax & restore for all levels of experience so whether you are a beginner or an expert, this class will accommodate to your abilities.
Tuesday	Fitness Class with Emily	6.15pm- 7.15pm	An amazing fitness class that is run by our great teacher Emily. We focus on all aspects of keeping fit and it is suitable for all ages.
Thursday	Yoga Class with Valentina	6.15pm -7.45pm	Valentina focuses on vinyasa flow / ashtanga, average 25 per class. The health benefits are great, therefore if you have not done any yoga before please come along and you may become devoted and reap the benefits.
Saturday	Yoga Class with Emily	11.00am-12.30pm	Saturday is run by Emily and focuses on vinyasa flow with mindfulness and meditation, average of 30 people per class.



It has been a tough time for everyone because of Covid-19, it has been a hard year and it has been very disheartening too. We have asked some members of our community to write a few lines on the effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic and how it has affected them...

Champaben Patel (GA Secretary)

I am a lady of leisure and before this year, enjoyed the freedom of doing what I enjoyed, whenever and going places that suited me in my own time. Apart from going to the gym weekdays daily and G.A where I attended the 3 yoga classes and the aerobics plus the Thursday Bhajans, therefore, was there five days a week, plus all our religious events and committee meetings.

The lockdown coming in March this year changed most of my free lifestyle. No gym, no G.A. events and I did not go shopping for 3 months, kindly done by my family. I only went for a walk and spend most of my time cooking snacks during the summer and phones calls to family and friends.

Zoom saved the day, by GA. running online yoga and fitness class. Also meant we could chat to members before the class as we missed the human connection. It also allowed at sad times, prathna and prayers by the community members and extra access to witness the crematorium funeral service. This helped us feel connected with the community.

I have always remained positive and taking one day at a time and following the safety guidelines. Never imagined that a vaccine would be ready by the end of the year. They have done an excellent job on that front and we move into the new year with hope that we can at some stage return to normal spring / summer. A massive thanks to the NHS (my sister is a nurse at Dudley Hospital) and all key workers.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at G.A. soon. So missed all our events and seeing everyone. Stay safe.

Sue Patel (GA Ex-Youth Leader)

In July 2019 I decided to take Voluntary Redundancy after working for the Council for over 30 years to have a break in my life and enjoy the world around me. I used to meet my friends 3 times a week going to restaurants, holidays, yoga, walking, swimming, gym and just enjoy what I want to do, when I want to do it.

Then March 2020 came along with the Corona Virus (Covid 19) from Wuhan which put my life on HALT. I couldn't go out to see friends and family, only essential shops open, everyone running around for toilet rolls, tinned foods, pasta etc. We had 2 holidays abroad cancelled in April and May. My kids were working from home one upstairs the other downstairs so most of the time I was in the kitchen. I have never cooked so much bhajias, muthias, theplas, dhoklas etc in my life. My husband was on furlough. Around May I was getting stressed and anxiety and felt claustrophobic due to not been able to go outdoors. Getting upset hearing the sad news of our members/pillars of our community passing and tears falling after thinking of them, it was hard, but I was there for my friends whenever they needed me.

Then the beginning of August I thought this virus is not going to stop me enjoying my life so started doing the things I enjoy such as long walks getting the fresh air on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, swimming on Tuesday and Thursday, Yoga on Saturday and more walking with family (social distancing) on Sunday in the Park. After my walks I was going to our allotments it was amazing. Fresh air, growing our own home-grown vegetables, spinach, cauliflower, dhania, methi, onions, potatoes and the lists goes on. Don't get me wrong it wasn't easy but all that hard work paid off, now enjoying the nourishment of home grown foods.

I also volunteered one day a week in August and October half term for The Little Munchkins School Club and every Saturday's I volunteer for the Elias Mattu Foundation delivering food parcels to the elderly and vulnerable with the help of my nephew which is still ongoing. So now I can think straight that from January 2021 I am hoping to find a part time job and enjoying my lifestyle doing things I want to do in life.

So my message to everyone is to think positive, stay healthy and keep safe!

Kamlaben Patel (GA Committee Member) and Jaswantbhai Patel (GA Trustee)

We were in India when India declared lockdown because of Covid19. Strict restrictions were imposed on transport and shops selling non essential goods were forced to close. The shops selling dairy products, vegetables and food stuff were also permitted to open for limited times only and that applied to medical stores as well. Wearing face covering was compulsory. We were there for about five weeks and then returned to England. We had problems with buying basic essential stuff needed for day to day usage as we had self isolated ourselves for a month. Our son, neighbour and friends helped us to overcome that problem.

We miss our weekly activities- our Monday Day Centre, playing table tennis, carrom, badminton and Thursday Bhajans and walking for health. These activities used to make us pass the time cheerfully. In the lockdown we learned how to use the zoom facility which enabled us to take part in meetings, celebrations of events and paying homage to loved ones who had passed away. During these winter months we find it hard to pass the time and pray to God that the vaccine and the new year will bring happiness to all the people in the world.

Anil Patel (GA Ex-Secretary)

I have Diabetes (Type 2) so I am classed as being in a 'High Risk' Category. This meant my employer having to get me to work from home as a higher priority. My Wife also had to work from home earlier than most because of my condition, so from March 2020, the initial lockdown, we were both working from home. Schools were also closed and so my teenage Daughters (currently doing their final year A-levels), were also impacted and too had to work from home, doing 'on-line' lessons etc.

This resulted in ALL four of us working downstairs in one room (thankfully it's a through lounge). Initially it was quite a nice change and a good experience. The downside was having to rely on a reliable 'Wi-Fi' and broadband connection. When the connection did go down (sometimes once a day), all four of us were left frustrated. This is when you realise how much we all as a nation now rely on 'I.T' so much. When it all works its great but when something goes wrong, we're all stuck.

Advantages of working from home:

- Save on commuting time and stress of sitting in heavy traffic morning and night
- Save on petrol for both of us
- Not having to drive to work in the snow!

Disadvantages:

- No privacy,
- Doing more hours
- No physical people contact - missing work colleagues
- Having to use more Gas and Electric!

Mentally and physically, it does put a strain on all the family, and it is important to do regular exercise. Going for walks, doing Yoga really helps. Obviously, in the summer it was great to get out, but at present when it's cold, dark and wet it is hard to get motivated to go out and get fresh air.

I am really grateful to the G.A for still providing free 'on-line' yoga and keep-fit classes throughout the week.

Gitaben Patel (GA Committee Member)

When lockdown happened last year, like everyone else I found it hard to adjust, not seeing family or friends, life was going to be different. In this situation I think about what I can do to help. I thought about my community members who are older and living alone and how isolated they must be feeling. I thought they would like to hear a friendly voice, so I started to call people and see how they are coping, I tried to be positive and listen to people.

The second thing I started to do was to make masks at home. I have a talent in sewing so I made many approximately 1000 masks and donated them to Community members friends and family and also a local food manufacturer. I was very grateful to receive a certificate for my community work by the West Midlands Police department.

The third thing I have been doing is attending Zoom call with community members. We use this time to keep in touch, sing Bhajans, shradhanjali bhajan, do exercise, celebrate religious functions eg Navratri, Diwali we even played online bingo, games and quizzes! Even though we are not all experienced in how to use Zoom we all helped and supported each other. Seeing everybody online has been very special and helped us feel connected.

Whatever you do to cope with the situation, remember to stay in touch with each other.

Anika Patel (Ex-Youth Member)

Without a doubt, this has been a truly unique and interesting year. One of the main things that were the most impacted was our education. It has been tough for all people of all ages, many parents with younger aged children have had to act as their teachers, whilst working themselves. As a sixth form student, once lockdown was implemented, we all were faced with online learning. This was a relatively easy transition and many of us were grateful that this meant we didn't need to wake up at 7am every day. I count myself lucky as a student of Highfields School; the school supported me and my peers from the start of lockdown and it has made the whole time easier to handle. However, as the months passed, the worry regarding uncertainty over whether the A-Level exams were taking place increased, as well as the pursuit for possible universities was also hindered. I missed not being able to see my friends and family - many 18th birthday celebrations were cancelled or executed virtually.

Whilst I can keep on complaining; the year also offered many benefits. I managed to watch a lot more TV shows and films than originally planned (Netflix truly was a saving grace). Zoom calls with loved ones quickly became a highlight. Also, we spent a lot more time together as a family and exercise became a regular thing (consisting of workouts, going for walks in the park and virtual yoga sessions. Regardless, it could have been a lot worse and I'm hopeful for the future!

I hope everyone stays safe and well.

Manisha Patel (GA Ex-Assistant Secretary)

2020 – Just like everyone else, I was looking forward to another year of adventure and excitement. Life was pretty much normal, you know work, looking forward to my holiday, little breaks away, seeing friends, working at GA etc.

God or whatever it is out there in the universe clearly had another plan for us, Covid – 19, lockdown happened, and everything changed for everyone.

I work as an Office Coordinator in a care home, I love my job, my residents, and my colleagues. Working here has given me such a beautiful insight about life, and the knowledge and experience that the residents have, and share is priceless. There is always a buzz with activities, family members visiting, however after the announcement everything stopped.

Residents were confused and sad. They did not quite understand the virus and definitely did not appreciate the lockdown rules. We had to make sure that their wellbeing was looked after. We were working really quickly to setup face time facilities, so we can still maintain communication with their loved ones.

Trying to teach residents to use technology, i.e., face time, was challenging in itself. We were becoming more available to our residents; we were becoming their family members. Our daily routine changed, as our workload doubled as we were taking on more care responsibility. We were doing our best to make sure the residents were well looked after during this difficult time.

The staff were struggling too, their concerns of being at work and going back to their loved ones. They were worried in case they were taking the virus back home. It was chaos; however we took it in our stride, and we were sensible and followed guidelines and did our best to protect ourselves, residents and our loved ones.

We are in a better position now with regular testing in place and some of our team members are residents have got the vaccine too. Positives from 2020...

- Be grateful
- We all have a fighting spirit in us
- Be honest to yourself and others
- Live your life to the fullest
- Be crazy
- Laugh a lot
- It is ok to cry, be angry
- It is ok to make mistakes (but make sure not to make the same mistakes again)
- Be kind to yourself and others
- Spread love, but do not promise love
- No such thing as a perfect opportunity
- Everyday is an opportunity to create something perfect

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Jai Shree Krishna Everyone,

We are in the grips of worldwide pandemic 2020 and it has brought up unprecedented challenges for everyone. It has been hard to manage our community centre and samaj. We have done whatever we can to help whoever we can, all of the events that the GA has hosted online was in aim to bring the community together.

We are so sorry to lose some of our community members forever. My deepest condolences to all the families and friends that have lost loved ones in the past year. Among them Rekhaben Shivam, Bhikhubhai Patel, Parbhubhai Patel (PU) And Harishbhai Patel, we will not forget their contributions, time and support that they gave to the community.

A new thing for our committee is that we have had to organise committee meetings via zoom to discuss ongoing matters. As well as, organising keep fit and yoga classes via zoom as well. We have helped various Charities financially or manually wherever we can. We hope with help of VACCINE we may experience some kind of normality soon, with the hope that we are able to organise our AGM in the summer. I would like to let everyone know that our Accounts for 2019/2020 have been published, they have been approved by the accountant and external auditor, they are available to read on the charity commission website, which you can access through the "about us" page on our website. Please visit our new website for updates on the GA, we have many sections for people to explore. Whether its looking at old pictures or religious information, you can find it on our website. Thanks to all of our volunteers and workers that supported us due Covid-19 pandemic.

I hope to see everyone soon and hope this message is received in good health.

Regards
Fatehbhai B Patel (GA President)



@GAYOUTHCLUBWOLVES

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NEWSLETTER MADE BY ARIYAN PATEL