

RLI Report: Care Packages and Quarantine Tea and Talk

We'd like to thank the Researcher Development Programme for funding our project for PhD researchers during the pandemic. The idea behind the project was to offer wellbeing support and a sense of community to researchers across schools in the form of small care packages that were tied to the (optional but encouraged) participation in Tea and Talk sessions organised over Zoom.

With the help of the £750, we were able to fund 55 care packages and 55 Tea and Talk sessions in the month of June and July. As Hive Scholars, we have access to PGR feedback on our Slack channel where we received a lot of positive comments on this initiative and researchers told us they felt 'looked after' and 'thought about'. The Tea and Talk sessions were attended by several PGRs and offered a space to interact, vent (!), and catch up with peers from across schools. The conversations ranged from talking about dealing with research during the pandemic, adjusting to the new routine, the different obstacles faced by researchers (especially those with childcare responsibilities or those who have had their field work disrupted), and how to be more productive among other things.

One of the most useful outcomes of this initiative has been our establishment of Tea and Talk sessions as ongoing, fortnightly events rather than occasional virtual cups of tea. We are grateful for the support offered to us by the Sussex Library and Doctoral School who have agreed to fund more care packages that we are continuing to tether to subsequent Tea and Talk sessions. We have had 4 sessions thus far with an increase in participation with every session. We also had some new PGRs attend our latest session (those who started in January 2020) which is a good way to acclimatise them to the community. We are proud to carry on these sessions as the legacy of the RLI project.