

Fintech VeeLoop supports volunteers shopping for the vulnerable

Founded by Randa Bennett and Patricia Salume, London-based fintech startup VeeLoop has solved the payment problem experienced by volunteers when shopping on behalf of vulnerable people during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Online approval and payment service VeeLoop originally developed to help young people shop online, started working on a solution only four weeks ago after contacting Sara Hill, a freelance business consultant who was volunteering for her local COVID-19 Mutual Aid group in North London.

Sara was experiencing problems taking payments for essentials like food from the vulnerable people she was supporting and posted a request on various fintech forums to ask if anyone had a solution for the payment problem. The VeeLoop team contacted her and they teamed up to create vHelp.

In four weeks, *vHelp* was up and running and helps safeguard vulnerable people while ensuring volunteers are getting reimbursed. The service also provides insight and an audit trail of volunteer activities for coordinators and organisations. Coordinators are given card readers to be used by volunteers who help with shopping.

Then volunteers can shop and take it to the vulnerable person, who will pay using the card reader, without contact. Volunteers upload receipts to the

system and get paid immediately, and a transaction record and audit trail are created within vHelp.

A small pilot is currently being run with mutual aid groups in North London. The initiative has received support from a number of other businesses including iZettle, a PayPal service, who kindly donated card readers and covered the transaction fees for the pilot. Ignition Law, who helped develop the data protection policies, SimplyPayMe, who has donated their payment technology for the pilot and 'Improve my UX' who are helping us design the user experience.

*We are so happy to be finalists for Start-Up of the year at the @WestLBusiness Awards 2020! Great to be shortlisted alongside so many great local organisations. <https://t.co/Wh2zcsQcNV>
[pic.twitter.com/HUScex5bAk](https://t.co/Wh2zcsQcNV)*

— VeeLoop (@vee_loop) January 9, 2020

“We’re seeing communities coming together to support the vulnerable in our society but without a payment system many volunteers are having to exchange cash, which carries a high risk of contamination. We hope this new payment system will become the main payments and records system for volunteers and voluntary organisations

supporting vulnerable people during the Covid-19 crisis in the UK. We are receiving many requests from organisations looking for a similar solution for their payment challenges so we know the demand is out there. Even when lockdown starts to ease, vulnerable people will still need to be shielded for at least a year.” – Randa Bennett, Founder and CEO of Veeloop

As vulnerable people will possibly be in lockdown and need support for months to come, the next step is launching the vHelp app to enable co-ordinators to set up jobs, allow volunteers to upload receipts and family of the vulnerable to have visibility of card charges, so all records are kept within the app.

The team’s vision is for vHelp to become the main payments and records systems for volunteers and voluntary organisations supporting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 crisis in the UK.

VeeLoop is an award-winning London based startup founded by Randa Bennett and Patricia Salume. They started the company to meet the needs of modern families – kids and teens want to shop online but don’t have a suitable payment method. Their service enable young people to shop online safely whilst keeping parents in the loop. VeeLoop is funded by Worth Capital and angel investors and is based at the Westmont Enterprise Hub at the University of West London.

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