



Annual Report 2016 - 2017



Offering practical support, friendship and advocacy in the local community through volunteers

Registered Charity: 1133510



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REPORT AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE TRUSTEES

It has been an immense privilege to have been involved with Karis Neighbour Scheme since its inception and, as chairperson, to be asked to introduce the annual report for another year of its activities.

Central to Karis Neighbour Scheme has always been the concept of human development. The United Nations Human Development Report 2016 ‘Human Development for Everyone’ was the focus of the UN Secretary General’s speech in June 2017 as he called for people-centred development. What was said resonates with the daily realities with which Karis Neighbour Scheme grapples and with our aspirations and ways of working. Despite much development there is however a growing inequality in many areas. A focus on external factors alone is inadequate.

"No problem can be solved by the same kind of thinking that created it.", Albert Einstein

In order to create change and genuine human development new thinking is necessary.

First, it is important to acknowledge that people’s inner factors such as mind sets and motivations play crucial roles driving people’s behaviour and development. As Nelson Mandela once said: “In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such one’s social position, influence, wealth and standard of education.. but internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one’s development as a human being”. Transformative change and development come from within.

Second, empowerment for self-help should be our guiding principle. While social factors matter and governments have critical roles in development, it is ultimately people who are the change agents in their own lives. Self-empowered people are better able to rise above and beyond circumstances, change their environment and sometimes whole societies. Rather than seeking to ‘develop’ people from the outside, it is more effective to inspire, encourage, and assist.

Third, co-creation means people and partners create development together. Taking self-responsibility, while acknowledging shared responsibility, is key to sustainable change. This entails listening to people’s aspirations and challenges to jointly strive for solutions. It also means to let go of preconceived ideas and to foster local ownership and deep collaboration.

Evidence of activity is prominent throughout this Karis Neighbour Scheme report. The personal stories open a window through which one can glimpse the value given to each individual, the different kind of thinking which enables problems to be solved, the belief that transformative change and development come from within and the faith and spirituality which undergirds it all.

In commending this report to you I also thank you for your interest in and support for this unique organisation. Together with you, we are creating lasting change and genuine human development.

Ross Bryson
Chair of Trustees

REPORT FROM CEO

It is encouraging and a little daunting to be reporting on another year's activity within Karis Neighbour Scheme! Time hurries by and the impressive data and stories reported here reflect the considerable activity and number of lives that have been part of the KNS journey this last year.

Yet again we want to express our deep gratitude to the hundreds of people who make our charitable work possible.

We are inspired and honoured that we are welcomed into the lives of clients and patients who share their strengths and challenges with us, enriching all in the process. We are grateful and admire the generosity of our volunteers and the dedication of our staff who go above and beyond to enable our projects to make a difference. It is their hard work and love that create spaces and places that are marked out because they are understood to be offering something unique and 'different'.

The following reports illustrate an incredible faithfulness which is woven through Karis Neighbour Scheme, for example: the celebration of 15 years of our ESOL class which has been faithfully delivered by volunteer teachers, the faithfulness of funders who have continued to support and grow our projects.

We celebrate in particular the faithfulness of individual donors, many who have continued to give over the years, enabling the story of Karis Neighbour Scheme to come to life and be developed.

The Karis BeFriends project for older people has been faithfully supported by all of its participants. It has been so delightful to see their ownership of the vision, especially for the Time for Tea project for example, wanting to support it with their own fundraising initiatives. We were also thrilled to receive a Legacy Gift which made an incredible difference to the longer-term sustainability of this project.

Out of the faithfulness of volunteers, funders, staff and local churches, we have been able to establish and grow the Baby Bank and set up a Job Club this year and we have seen the Listening and Guidance Service gain a broader base of funding support which means it has been able to offer more secure staff contracts.

We are touched by the on-going faithfulness of so many who believe in the Karis Neighbour Scheme vision and we look forward to another year. Thank you!

DEVELOPMENT

Harry Naylor has recently moved to become Operations & Finance Manager, this has been part of a transition to more of a development role within the organisation. He has been with Karis for a little over 12 years now and continues to take a lead on finances and fundraising.

We've had a good 13 months at Karis, seeing our projects continue to grow and develop in response to needs in the community. This has partly been possible thanks to a fairly steady year in terms of funding and support for our projects.

The Job Club has been an exciting addition to the range of support already on offer through our advocacy & advice work, and we look forward to seeing the fruit of this work in supporting people in to better employment. There has been a ready response and we're ready for some of the challenges on the horizon including the continuing role out of Universal Credit.

Because of extending our financial year to bring it in line with the calendar year, we've seen more people this year than the last. Across Karis Neighbour Scheme we've seen 1122 people, having had the opportunity to impact them and their families through the support we provide.

FUNDRAISING

We have had a 13 month financial year this year to bring our financial year in line with the calendar year rather than the December to November period we have been operating under since the charity started.

With WholeCare receiving significant funding from Birmingham & Solihull and Sandwell West Birmingham CCGs we treat this contracted service as a distinct financial division within the charity. The service received £56,730 in new payments this year and carried forward £27,668 from the previous financial year.

In terms of Karis Neighbour Scheme and our other projects, we have had a successful year in terms of fundraising. Our expenditure on these projects rose to £138,919, up from the previous year.

Our thanks to all the funders and donors who have supported our work, a full list of acknowledgements is at the back of this annual report. Grant funding continues to be the biggest proportion of our funding, we received a total of £90,774 in grants over the past 12 months, down from the year before.

Individual giving and donations are also a significant proportion of our income, and this year included £63,096 of regular giving and donations as well as gift aid of £3,813. This saw giving and donations increase significantly on the previous year, while gift aid dropped slightly. This represents around a third of our income for Karis Neighbour Scheme (excluding Wholecare KNS). We also received a very generous legacy donation on top of our other giving, we have earmarked these funds for the Karis BeFriends project as this was the area of our work the individual concerned had benefitted from.

Consequently we would like to thank all the very generous individuals who have supported our work, especially our regular donors, as well as the churches and other groups who have supported us financially.

Other fundraising efforts have raised a little over £1,000. We've had nearly £350 raised by some of the older people we support who wanted to give back and have been making crafts to sell and organising bric-a-brac sales. We also continue to receive donations from 'Play for Good' board game days using our space at The Square, and raised £367 from our annual barn dance thanks to the generosity of one of our supporters who joined with us to celebrate a landmark birthday.

INTRODUCING KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Who Are We?

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a small community project working in inner city Birmingham. We work throughout various local communities offering support to people facing disadvantage or hardship.

We value working in relationship with people and seek to offer friendship and emotional support as well as helping in more practical ways. As an organisation, from the staff team to the growing number of volunteers who give their time to support our work, we value everyone who we come into contact with and try and demonstrate this in how we work.

We try to meet people where their needs are and have worked to 'fill the gaps' where services do not exist in the area. Over the years this has led to the development of a number of projects offering a broad range of support within the community.

We are aware that as a small organisation we are not always best equipped to deal with every problem. We work closely with other groups, charities and services to ensure that people can get the help they need if we cannot offer it ourselves. We do not seek to compete with, replace or duplicate existing services.

Who Do We Help?



We currently work across the Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne areas of Birmingham. The communities in these areas face different challenges and have a diverse range of needs.

We support a broad cross-section of the communities in these neighbourhoods through our various projects, however, we have a particular focus on those who are marginalised or isolated. For example we work with a large number of refugees and asylum seekers in the Ladywood and North Edgbaston area, and in Harborne we support mainly older people who are living on their own.

However, we do work with all sorts of people, who are facing hardship and disadvantage in various ways, both material and emotional.

What Do We Do?

We offer support to lonely and isolated older people through our befriending project, Karis Be Friends. This includes visiting people in their homes and putting on various social events.

We also support local families, through a *Welcome to Ladywood* Drop-In group and also our English for Speakers of Other Languages classes, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers. Our Children & Families worker also visits families in their homes to offer befriending and support.

We provide an advocacy and advice service, in partnership with several other local organisations, with a weekly drop-in session where we offer money advice and advocacy such as help with filling in forms, making phone calls and signposting to other support.

We offer support with practical tasks such as gardening, decorating and DIY. We offer food, toiletries and other essential provisions to those most in need as well as some limited provision of furniture and household appliances through donations we receive.

We are also working alongside other groups and local residents in the area, working together to respond to local needs, encouraging and supporting activities and projects which respond to unmet needs and help reduce isolation.

Our Team...

Trustees

We currently have a board of five trustees. **Dr Ross Bryson** is a GP at the Karis Medical Centre, he has been at the practice for over 20 years and has been a trustee since Karis was set up in 1999, he is currently the Chair of Trustees. **Mrs Rebecca Cuthbert** has worked for several charities and public sector initiatives. Her previous experience covers family support, community development, project management and cross-sector partnership working. **Mr Marc Kusicka** is a Chartered Accountant based in Birmingham currently working for the University of Birmingham. Previously, Marc completed his qualifications and worked at Deloitte LLP. **Mrs Kathryn Miles** has a background in Public Health and has worked at the University of Birmingham for over 15 years, holding several senior roles. Currently she is working with academics to deliver health and social care leadership programmes. **Mr Steve Watts** is an elder at Church Alive, a local church in Ladywood, and has been involved in the area for around 20 years, having previously worked as a secondary school teacher, he is also involved in a number of other community groups in the area.

Staff

We have a team of seven staff who oversee and co-ordinate Karis Neighbour Scheme's activities. **Rebecca Cuthbert** is our outgoing CEO, we will shortly be welcoming **Maddy Bunker** to the role, **Ruth Fuller** is the Children & Families' Worker, **Helen Bell** is the Karis BeFriends' Project Co-ordinator, **Patti Tan** is the Karis BeFriends' Project Assistant, **Harry Naylor** is the Operations & Finance Manager and **Meg Koh** is the Administrator, **Bram Scott** is the Money Advisor and **Sam Clarke** is the Administrative Support Worker, both as part of the Ladywood Community Advice partnership project.

Volunteers

We rely on a team of around 80 volunteers, who give their time in various ways, to provide the friendship and support Karis offers, whether this is giving time to visit someone in their home, helping look after children at the ESOL classes, clearing someone's garden or helping at the office. Without their considerable efforts and commitment so much of what we do would simply not be able to continue.

Our volunteers represent a broad range of backgrounds and come from all different walks of life. Having been set up as a community group, out of the concerns of people living and working in the area, we have always sought to maintain our grounding in the local area and build and strengthen links within the community. Most of our volunteers live in the south west area of Birmingham and around 56% are residents in the area we work in.

Sometimes, those we have supported or befriended move on to volunteering and this is fantastic to see, especially when people who were isolated or lonely or struggling, when we first met them, have become settled or confident enough to then go on to help others in similar situations.



Supporters

Our supporters are also invaluable and contribute a great deal to our work as a charity. This is not just financial support, though their generosity in this regard is not to be underestimated, but also in offering support in kind such as donations of food or clothing, responding to particular practical needs, getting involved in fundraising and raising awareness of our work. We do have a formal 'Friends of Karis' scheme, however, we also receive support from others who give of their time and resources. We are also grateful for the support of numerous local churches and the partnership of other organisations and community groups we work alongside. A list of many of our supporters, along with a list of funders who have supported our work this year, can be found at the back of this report.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR



889 contacts providing practical help,
supporting 341 individuals and families

247 families received support from Baby
Bank including cots, pushchairs, nappies and
milk

90 referrals to the local foodbank and/or
emergency food parcels distributed

120 lifts provided or times we
accompanied people to appointments



Over 80 volunteers involved in our projects
throughout the year

614 people supported with advocacy &
advice

Had 32 people attend the Ladywood Job
Club which launched in October

Over 1500 issues dealt with through the
Ladywood Community Advice service





More than **450** local families supported in various ways over the year

had contact with **187** children

provided activities for **52** families with more than **100** children during school holidays

118 adults and **131** children came to the Welcome to Ladywood drop-in

101 adults and **61** children came to our English classes

351 one-to-one befriending with **106** families



63 older people visited in their own homes

59 people came to regular Sunday Afternoon tea parties

20 older people came to a regular Tuesday morning group

an average of around **240** people supported every month

around **50** new referrals every month

6167 contacts supporting **1122** people over the course of the year



THE STORIES...

This year we've helped 1121 people from the local area through the Neighbour Scheme. While a number of people need help with a particular problem and we only see them once or twice, there are many who are facing ongoing hardships or difficult circumstances.

We come alongside people to offer friendship and support, especially those who are isolated and don't have help from anywhere else. In doing this we have the privilege of getting to know people and not only support them through the lowest points but celebrate with them in the successes and joys as well.

The stories below give some sense of the difference we have made to people's lives. As always, we have changed the names of the people in the following stories.

Eleni was an asylum seeker who was moved to Birmingham after being in the country only a few months. A support worker who had been working with her during her first few months here got in touch with us as she was concerned that Eleni was isolated following her move and lacked some of the things she needed for her baby. Our Children & Families Worker visited her and organised a Baby Bank parcel, also inviting her along to our Welcome to Ladywood drop-in.

Shortly afterwards Eleni got permission to stay in the UK which meant she needed a lot of help navigating all the changes that come along with this news, such as needing to find new accommodation and switch from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to mainstream benefits. We helped her through this process, helping store some of her things on the day she had to move out of her home office accommodation, helping advocate on her behalf at the neighbourhood office and helping her settle into the hostel she was allocated. Thanks to a small grant we were able to support her with some essentials during the wait for her benefits to be paid.

Distressingly, a misunderstanding led the council to discharge their duty of care towards Eleni and her young son, potentially leaving them without anywhere to stay and facing rough sleeping. We were able to find Eleni legal help and after much prayer and legal argument she was finally able to get temporary accommodation, a place for herself and the next step towards finding somewhere more permanent.

Sandra was referred to us by an old friend who had bumped into her and was concerned to hear her husband had recently passed away. She was struggling a bit with a few things he had used to deal with. We visited her to introduce ourselves and invited her to the Senior Life Group which she has been attending regularly and finding a place to develop new friendships.

We've helped with a few practical things at home from time to time, such as reattaching a section of guttering which had come loose, and over the past year have walked alongside her through some difficult circumstances – one where she hasn't felt safe at home because of a worry about a situation she was facing and another where she was victim to a fraud. We helped report the fraud and deal with some of the fallout through the Ladywood Community Advice drop-in, which helped relieve some – if not all – of the stress and worry it caused.

Liam is an older gentleman who lives on his own, he had been getting very high utility bills but didn't have a gas supply in his property as it had been disconnected. He came to see us at Ladywood Community Advice, we helped work through the issue, including visiting him at home to confirm that his supply had indeed been disconnected. After chasing it up a number of times for Liam we did finally get the issue resolved and his bills were updated.

Paul was referred to us by his GP. He was concerned about a visit from a council housing officer to review his tenancy that was happening the next day. We were able to go along with him and be a support during the meeting. It became apparent that there were some issues he needed some help with, including tidying up his flat and fitting a key safe. Over the next few months we arranged for volunteers to come in and do a one-off tidy to help sort out the room that had become too cluttered, and do some cleaning to make it easier to keep on top of.

We went with him to get a keysafe, and he was really pleased to be able to get a new houseplant at the same time which had taken up residence outside his flat when another volunteer visited to fit the new keysafe outside his flat. While we were helping him with these things he also talked to us about other things he'd like to do, including volunteering somewhere that supported people who were homeless. We put him in touch with a few other local projects we know who were a good fit for what he wanted to do.

We met **Alice** about 9 years ago, when she was referred to us by her GP as she had no support from family. She has been a regular at our groups and events, and we've helped her on odd occasions with practical tasks like moving furniture around in the home, setting up a new phone and so on. However, on the whole she had remained quite independent, being able to drive and get out and about. She has been quite reluctant to receive further help, either from ourselves or from other organisations.

This past year has seen her health deteriorate, meaning more visits to her GP and hospital appointments. We have been able to come alongside her as a emotional and practical support during this time. We've accompanied her to appointments and helped her work through the fact that her independence is reducing and she needs more support. We supported her through the difficult process of having to give up driving and have been there to talk to her as she has expressed her anxiety about the fact that she feels "*closer to facing death*". We have also been able to encourage her to gradually accept more support from other agencies, "*in (her) own time*", while still helping her maintain as much independence as she can, which has been one of the foremost things she has wanted, in her words, "*the need to continue to be able to do things for myself*".

Fatima is a lady we have known for a while, she has been in the UK a number of years now but still has things she struggles with from time to time. This year she, like lots of others, was asked to re-join the council housing register by reapplying online. She had tried to do this herself, but in misunderstanding one of the questions her application had been closed and refused. We helped her go through the process of making calls to re-open the application and navigate the online system to correctly input her details. This took a number of times seeing her to sort out and in and around this issue we also helped her register for school places online and apply to Birmingham Big Bikes for new bikes for her and her family.

Janice was referred to us as she was struggling to get out of her high-rise flat, because of anxiety and some physical difficulties. She was spending most of her time alone in her flat, and when we first met her she said she was struggling with depression and felt lonely.

Over the time we've known her she has begun to come regularly to our Sunday afternoon tea, 'Time for Tea' and has developed friendships with others who come, even meeting up regularly with the people she has got to know there and this year she managed to go on holiday with one of her new friends. We were also recently invited to join in her birthday celebrations along with the friends she's made at 'Time for Tea', which was fantastic to see, and recognise how much has changed for Janice in being able to get out and about and even being the one to make plans to get together with friends.

...AND THE STATISTICS

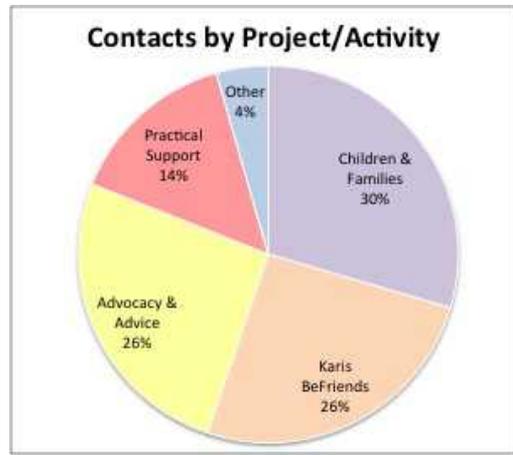
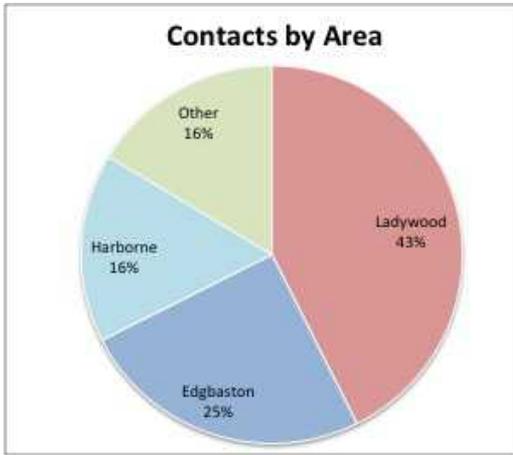
We collect a range of information about the people we've been supporting and our contact with them over the course of the year. In presenting this information we've tried to pick out the headline facts and figures that will be most informative, relevant and useful.

The following statistics cover the period from 1st December 2016 to 31st December 2017 (unless otherwise stated):

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Total no. of individuals supported:	766	879	1078	1122
Total no. of contacts:	5310	4853	5982	6167
Average contacts per month:	443	404	499	474
“ “ “ week:	106	93	115	110
“ “ “ day:	21	19	23	22

Demographics

	Individuals (%)	Contacts (%)
<i>By Gender</i>		
Male	29	18
Female	71	82
<i>By Age</i>		
16-24	8	7
25-34	22	17
35-44	20	18
45-54	12	8
55-64	10	7
65+	15	36
Undisclosed	12	7
<i>By Ethnicity</i>		
White (British)	19	30
White (Irish)	1	3
White (Other)	14	12
Mixed (Wh. & Carib.)	<1	1
Asian (Indian)	2	2
Asian (Pakistani)	3	4
Asian (Bangladeshi)	1	1
Asian (Other)	2	4
Black (Caribbean)	8	6
Black (African)	25	21
Chinese	1	1
Other	7	6
Undisclosed	16	8

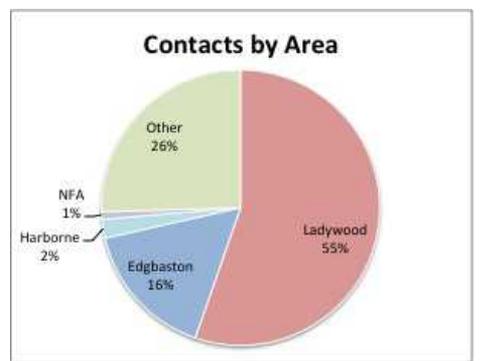
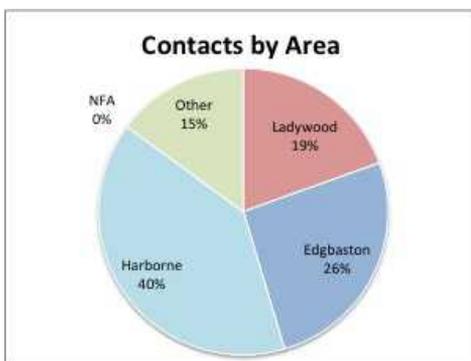
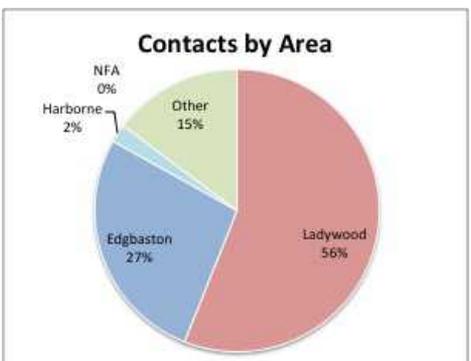
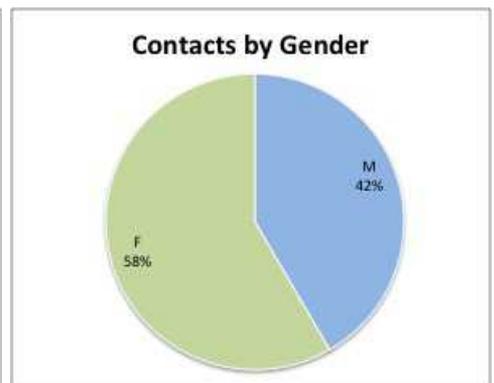
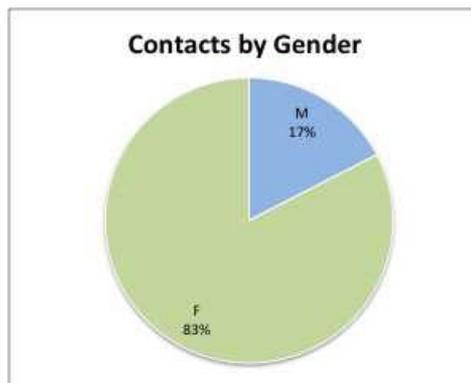
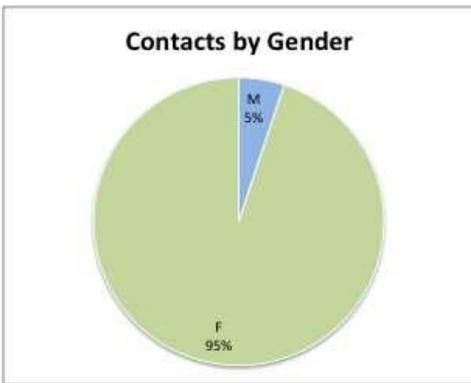
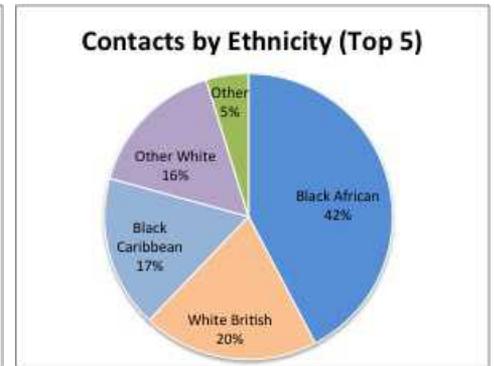
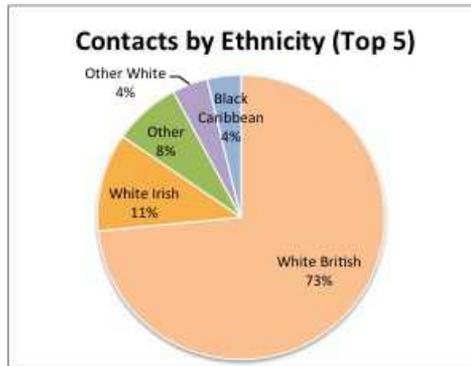
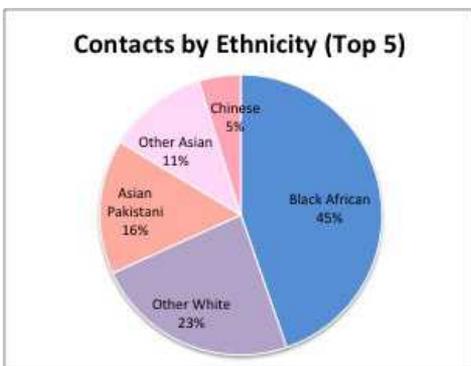


Breakdown by activity

Children & Families

Karis BeFriends

Advocacy





ADVOCACY

The Ladywood Community Advice project has been a significant part of our advocacy & advice work over the past year. This joint project between ourselves and the Ladywood Project has been running for three and a half years.

This partnership grew out of the need for advice around benefits, co-inciding with the significant changes that started around 2014 and have continued with the roll out of Universal Credit. We employ a Money Advisor, Bram Scott, who is based at the Ladywood Health & Community Centre and delivers the advice project through a weekly drop-in and one-to-one appointments.

The weekly drop-in session enables people to access advice quickly if needed. Alongside money advice the sessions also offer general advice and advocacy, provided by staff at partner organisations and volunteers. This includes filling in forms, requesting repairs, help to make phone calls, or explaining letters. We can also book people in to see a debt advisor working with Birmingham Settlement who is based opposite the centre in the local Credit Union two days a week, as part of a range of other support we signpost to where necessary including crisis support such as emergency fuel grants from the Ladywood Project or food parcels from Birmingham Central Foodbank.

One of the common threads for people we support through the service is having English as a second language, this can make everyday things more complicated, and navigating systems such as benefits or housing can be particularly challenging. We take the time to talk face to face, understand people's situations, and help them communicate with the people they need to.

In particular this year we have encountered a lot of need around people moving to Universal Credit, one of the biggest challenges being the requirement for people to have an e-mail address to sign up for the benefit and to access and use their digital log book regularly. We are seeing a lot of people who aren't confident in this area, who need help to set up an e-mail address or have one but haven't used it in so long they've forgotten their password or log-in details. This adds to the time it takes to help with the application and often means they need ongoing help accessing their log book as well.

We have also developed a partnership with New Roots housing association, who house people who are considered non-priority homeless, and are delivering some of our appointments at their offices to enable their tenants to access support.

This year we saw 506 people through the Ladywood Community Advice sessions and had 1113 contacts. We continue to see a high level of need, including new individuals. This year we had 265 new people access the service (52%).

Following the piloting of 'Get Online' sessions in the Digital Den adjoining our drop-in space, which was a response to needs around housing applications (with Birmingham City Council asking everyone on the housing register to re-register which could only be done online) and Universal Credit, we extended this provision into the Ladywood Job Club over the summer. This has been set up in partnership with Suited for Success (a charity providing suits and other smart business wear for people who have interviews) and St John's & St Peter's Church.

The sessions help people with job searching and updating CVs, as well as partnering with others to offer further support. Over the year this has included hosting Google Garage who provided a wide range of free training from basic computer skills to courses around setting up your own business, an initiative with Learning Works as part of the USE-IT project to help people access NHS jobs, and support for ex-offenders through a national charity.

In total 91 people accessed either Get Online or the Ladywood Job Club throughout the course of the year with 176 contacts and since officially launching the job club in October we have seen a big increase in attendance with lots of referrals coming from local job centres. Again, one of the strengths of this provision is the amount of time we can give people, often those who don't receive the support or help they need elsewhere. This is in no small part thanks to the growing team of volunteers who are helping with the sessions from all of the partner organisations.

Advocacy is also something we provide through our other projects and activities, such as through befriending visits, and people accessing phones and/or the printer and photocopier at our office in order to deal with issues themselves.

Taking into account all of this support we have supported a total of 614 individuals and families over the past year through 1585 contacts.



CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Our work with local families continues to provide much needed support through the 'Welcome to Ladywood' drop-in, ESOL classes and home visits, as well as trips and activities during the school holidays. Ruth Fuller is our Children & Families Worker and has been working with the project for nine years now.

It's been another full year for the Children & Families project; We've had 2298 contacts with 451 families, welcomed four new volunteers and said goodbye to one. We remain indebted to the kindness and commitment of our excellent volunteers, who give generously of their time and themselves enabling us to fulfil our vision of being a good neighbour within our community.

2016 marked a special milestone for the Children & Families work; our ESOL class turned 15 years old. Never ones to miss an opportunity to celebrate we hosted a 15th Birthday bash. It was a precious time of meeting up with old friends, thanking God for his faithfulness and honouring our long serving and hardworking volunteers, many of whom were there at the very first class in 2002.

Communication is the centre of ESOL, on the surface we help speakers of other languages on their journey to speaking English, so that can flourish in their new community. On a deeper level we communicate something more, through our welcome, diligent lesson preparation, interest, hospitality, encouragement and celebration, we communicate love. Love is always costly; at ESOL it means bearing with the chaos of people's difficult and painful lives, it requires faithfulness and tenacity, patience and hard work and yet 15 years on we're still here, with 14 volunteers who come every week, ready and willing to love. That, much more than the date, is a thing worth celebrating.

As well as partying this year we welcomed 101 students and their children to the class.

The Welcome to Ladywood Drop-in remains a cornerstone of the work – centred of course around food and hospitality and enjoying each other's company their highs and low. A particular highlight was celebrating Narooz – Persian new year. We had a lovely party full of the warm hearted Kurdish and Iranian hospitality and great food we've come to expect. 118 people came 575 times to the Drop-in over the year.

One to one befriending is a special part of the work and this year we were able to carry out 351 sessions with 106 families, thanks to an increase in volunteer support.

Mostly we visit clients at home, sometimes we go out for coffee or a walk with clients, showing them to their new neighbourhoods or introducing them to hidden treasures like the reservoir. This time with clients allows us to form relationship and our team actively seek out ways to communicate love and our client's worth. Aware that the asylum seekers we knew didn't have photos of their children, we organised a photo shoot. One of our trustees whose hobby meant he had all the gear very kindly gave his time and expertise. The shoot sessions were really happy times, seeing our clients glammed up and us monkeying around to make their babies smile! We gift wrapped a framed photo and a small album to 12 of our families and paid for it all thanks to a gift given with which to bless asylum seekers.

Over the summer we took a group of asylum seeker to a volunteer's house, we enjoyed a bouncy castle, pizza and ice-cream in her delightful garden.

We also took a trip to Sandwell Valley and Hatton Park farm having rearranged both trips because of our British summer weather! We welcomed 52 families in all on our trips.

Baby Bank Central is now well established project providing second hand baby clothes and equipment to families in need. This year we've had the happy problem of more donations and support that we could handle in our weekly sessions, so we mustered our friends and had a week long sort out and tidy up. Thanks to a grant from Percy Bilton we put up new shelves and were able to reorganise our system to be more efficient. We are also indebted to volunteers from HSBC, Birmingham City Church and Church Alive who helped a great deal throughout the year. Over the year we have had the privilege of providing supporting 247 families with parcels and other essentials.



KARIS BEFRIENDS

Helen Bell is our Project Co-ordinator for the Karis BeFriends project and has been leading on this project for over 12 years now, Patti Tan works alongside her as a Project Assistant. Karis BeFriends offers support to older people in Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood, who are isolated or lonely, including regular befriending visits and social get togethers.

Karis Befriends offers befriending, practical and advocacy support to older people mainly through visiting them in their own homes, or accompanying them out into their local community, as well as organising regular social events. Providing opportunity for older people to continue to flourish and connect with others, knowing a sense of community. Often providing emotional and practical support to those facing issues and difficulties in the later stages of their lives. During this last year we have supported 211 older people, through 2418 contacts.

For some they are housebound, with no family of their own, therefore benefit from our regularly visits, for others we can be a point of contact for the older person or family, to call when the need arises, where there are concerns, where they are struggling physically or emotionally, or need to have someone coming alongside to help practically or walk with them through their changing life circumstances or help connect with additional support needed. Some find continuing to get out can be a struggle, due to physical limitations or lack of confidence or anxiety, therefore encouraging them to continue to go out and accompanying them can be of real benefit. Those we support are often referred from local G.P. surgeries, social workers, other health professionals, relatives, friends or older people themselves telling others about what we do!

Throughout the year we have continued to gather groups together through social events, for example our Christmas Party, regular Arts and Craft Group, local trips out. We continue to partner with volunteers from Churchcentral, a local Church, to hold our weekly 'Senior Life Group' at the Kenrick Community Care Centre, and our bimonthly Sunday afternoon 'Time for Tea' event at the Onneley Centre in Harborne. Enjoying meals and time spent together, participating in activities, discussion and quizzes, listening and learning from each other, trying new things together and encouraging each other as we face challenges together.

There have been many highlights this year, too many to mention them all in detail, but here are a few.

'Our Stories Woven Together' Story Collecting Project around isolation over the Summer, where Anna O'Brien, Professional Storyteller, spent several days with us, visiting some of the older people we support. Encouraging the older people to share their stories and talk about ways they are woven together with others to form community, hearing their experiences of seasons of their lives when they have felt connected, and times when it has been more difficult to connect.

We gathered the stories together and published a booklet and held a lunch event inviting local older people to come and hear these stories and have an opportunity to share their stories too, a real rich experience for all those involved!

We have continued to benefit from working in partnership with many organisations within the local community and being an active partner within the Body, Mind and Spirit Partnership and have continued to be amazed at the ongoing funding provision for the Karis Befriends Project.

However, the real highlights continue to be hearing the difference the Project makes to individual lives, seeing one of the older people we have supported being featured on the local ITV news in the run up to Christmas 2016 with the headline of "The woman who's found happiness in her eighties after years of isolation."

And some of the comments gathered this year from a consultation as part of our funding from Birmingham City Council, when people were asked what the impact would be if the project no longer existed:

"I would be totally alone, no opportunity to go out, I have no family in the UK, where would I go? This is a way for me to get out and find friends and keep my brain active, otherwise I would be at home on my own and I already have depression, so would be extremely depressed."

"Without Karis Befriends there would be a big gap in my life. I live alone and it is so easy to become isolated and it's more difficult to get out. Having help and lifts and encouragement to get out, keeps me going out."



PRACTICAL WORK

Alongside our befriending work and other projects we seek to help alleviate some of the hardship people can face in connection with their situations, whether due to financial hardship, illness, or because of the lack of support of friends and family that so many of us rely on.

This support is offered in a 'neighbourly' way, responding to the needs people have and helping match volunteers who have time and skills to the jobs that need doing. These can be small tasks around the home such as putting up a curtain rail to bigger jobs such as painting a room, help moving, passing on donations of furniture or help with clearing a garden.

We are often able to help with very small tasks for people we're befriending, which, although they may not have a huge impact themselves are something someone has been worrying about and could otherwise have dragged out and caused unnecessary distress. Something as small as re-attaching a piece of guttering that had come loose or putting up newspaper ahead of someone coming to inspect the roof to see if patches of damp were recent.

We continue to see a particular need around helping people move to or from emergency or temporary accommodation and have been able to use our storage space at The Square to store some belongings on a short term basis if someone is being moved around a lot.

Examples of some of the other kinds of help we've given this year include:

Cleaning and helping clear cluttered rooms for an older gentleman ahead of an inspection of his flat for fire safety, it brought one of his rooms back into use that had been too cluttered to get into, he was so pleased with the room being cleared that he started to use it as his main sitting room and was where we met with him on subsequent visits.

We helped a young mother who was moving into her new home to fit stairgates, connect up her washing machine, and do some painting all of which made the transition a lot easier for her and her young son.

We arranged a group of volunteers to help a family re-paint their hallway after a kitchen fire which had sadly left one of the children in hospital for an extended period.

Cutting back a hedge that was getting overgrown for an older lady as it had begun to overhang and block the path to her house.

We have a small ford transit connect van which helps support this work, whether in enabling us to move furniture or larger items or delivering tools and equipment for practical jobs or collecting and passing on donations. This resource also enables us to support other projects and organisations, allowing them to make use of the van or loaning out some of the resources we have such as tables, chairs and gazebos for events.

As well as this kind of help in the home we also help in other neighbourly ways, such as providing lifts and accompanying people to appointments where needed, this is most often because of old age or poor health. We've provided 120 lifts over the course of the year, helping people to attend doctor's appointments, access other help and support, or to get out to get shopping.

The other way we help people practically is through provision of support for those facing crisis.

This includes referrals to Birmingham Central Foodbank, help applying for grants and other financial assistance, and provision for new families who are facing hardship through the Baby Bank (a joint initiative with Birmingham City Church), providing baby equipment such as pushchairs, cots and Moses baskets, as well as essentials like nappies and formula. The Baby Bank has continued to grow and now works with referral partners from across the city.

This year, in all, we helped 341 individuals and families (351, 15-16) in practical ways through 889 contacts (822, 15-16).

We also saw a further increase in the number of people we're supporting who we would assess as acute cases, where they have accessed three or more types of support or we have had four or more instances of providing practical help, this year increasing to around 16% of those we've provided practical help to (13%, 15-16).

INTRODUCING WHOLECARE

WholeCare was set up as a division of Karis Neighbour Scheme to deliver services through NHS commissioning. Set up in mid-2014, WholeCare has been instrumental in the development of Listening and Guidance, a GP Chaplaincy service.

We are currently working with Birmingham & Solihull and Sandwell & West Birmingham CCGs to deliver the Listening & Guidance service through GP surgeries in the Edgbaston & Harborne areas of Birmingham and across Sandwell.

The part of the project commissioned by Birmingham & Solihull CCG originally sat within the Edgbaston Wellbeing Hub (EWH) but has since been re-commissioned to continue beyond the end of that pilot.

LISTENING & GUIDANCE



The Service

Our Listening and Guidance Service offers one-to-one sessions in a GP surgery with a Chaplain for Wellbeing. The service is for patients facing loss - loss of hope, loss of relationship, loss of job, loss of direction, loss of health and end of life care. The service is also for patients who just want someone to listen to them and need to talk through an issue. Based on a model of 'whole person care' the service encompasses the inter-linkages between the physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of health. It is for patients of all faiths and beliefs and celebrates the value of keeping people's own life stories at the heart of their care.

The NHS Context

The service has been innovatively commissioned by two NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups across Birmingham and Sandwell (BSol and SWB). Spiritual care is an explicit component of whole person clinical care encouraged by modernisation strategies with the National Health Service. However, although spiritual care services are well established in hospice and hospital settings and are increasingly developed in mental health services, they are still very limited within General Practice, and our Listening and Guidance Service is the first example of NHS commissioned Chaplaincy in General Practice in England. We are currently commissioned to deliver 60 hours of care across the Sandwell and Birmingham area, so the service is still small, it is our vision to develop the availability of the service more widely so that it can impact many more patients.

Patient Outcomes

In the last year we have received approximately 300 new patient referrals into our Listening and Guidance Service in addition to those still being seen from the previous year. Patient Feedback from the sessions is very positive and expresses a variety of ways in which the service makes a difference. Many of the outcomes that patients have expressed focus on: new hope for the future, a better understanding of one's situation, feeling more in control, more at peace, increased self-confidence, renewed engagement with community life and a return to work. The patient quotes are very inspiring:

With a tablet you take it and you think, is it doing what it should be doing [...] [whereas] having the Chaplaincy Service, it's like whatever is eating me up I could let it out verbally [...] the antidepressants it's just like kind of numbing things down [...] sometimes I felt that didn't really help me [...] talking to someone was more easier [...]."

It's making me more positive in my approach to life and the things I attempt to do.

The chance the Chaplain provides as being able to pour out of (part) of my burden has been very helpful. It means it has helped me not getting worse, deeper in my depression.

I feel the chaplain helped me to understand how I've been feeling and identify some of the causes.

Always listening and not judging.

It has contributed to finding a more relaxed and peaceful state of mind.

We were able to discuss all aspects of life including spiritual wellbeing which was of great importance to me

It has given me a reason to carry on with my life.

In addition to patient feedback we also take a 'wellbeing score' (WEMWBS) at the beginning and part way through the course of sessions. These scores corroborate the strong evidence from the patient feedback and show an average improvement of 7.2/8 points for patient wellbeing.

(http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/researchers/userguide/wemwbs_practice_based_user_guide.pdf).

Partnership Working

Integral to our way of working is close partnership with other agencies and organisations, health services and GPs. In order to provide 'wholeperson care', we often signpost on or support patients to navigate other services available. Embedded in Karis Neighbour Scheme, our Listening and Guidance Service benefits from strong links with community organisations, we can support patients to become volunteers and to engage with community projects and groups.

Staff Team

Helen Watts is our Senior Chaplain for Wellbeing, based at Karis Medical Centre, along with Elizabeth Baker, delivering the service in the BSol area. Sandy Thompson is our Chaplain for Wellbeing based at The Mallings in Sandwell and delivering in the SWB area. Our Chaplains receive regular supervision both clinically and pastorally to ensure they are delivering a high standard of care to the patients they are seeing.

Future hopes and plans

We have been appealing to both CCGs that our service would be able to operate more efficiently and effectively if it were scaled up in size and if contracts were longer than a year. In addition to reaching more patients and keeping waiting times down, this would also enable us to offer staff contracts that were longer-term and longer hours, helping us to attract and retain staff.

We also have plans to deliver our service from additional GP sites extending the access of our service and raising the profile of our provision amongst more GPs.

In addition to local plans we are doing what we can to raise the profile of GP Chaplaincy nationally and we have invested time in speaking to other interested parties about our service.

We recognise however, that we continue in a difficult economic climate where health and social care budgets are facing severe cuts. Whilst we are committed to trying to influence the CCGs that it makes long-term financial sense to continue investing in our service, and in the Wellbeing Hubs in which we operate, we are also aware that we may need to draw on other funding sources in the coming year if we are to develop the service in the way that we have planned.



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We couldn't do it without you!

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