



KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Practical help | Advocacy & advice | Befriending | Emotional support

Annual Report 2019



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 is a privilege to introduce the Karis Neighbour Scheme annual report both to those who form part of the incredible support network around the organisation and for those curious to know more of this growing faith based charity committed to the people of Ladywood, Harborne and Edgbaston in Birmingham.

Ross Bryson who founded Karis Neighbour Scheme with support from fellow GP's from the Karis Medical Centre chaired the trustee team for over 20 years with wise and gracious leadership. We are so grateful for his commitment to Karis Neighbour Scheme as he stays on as a trustee and continues to provide oversight to enable Karis Neighbour Scheme to flourish. In being handed the reigns of chairperson I do so knowing the commitment of my fellow trustees and the unique skills they bring to their role and I am grateful to each of the trustee team for their careful oversight of Karis Neighbour Scheme.

The project leaders who work with compassion and care are the reason Karis Neighbour Scheme continues to thrive. They are trusted, committed, and meet clients with specific needs and walk with them, journeying with them, until they are no longer needed. Our staff team make Karis Neighbour Scheme the organisation it is, this report outlines their work and the impact they make on a daily basis.

Our volunteers working with individual projects bring not only the gift of their time but their compassion and their ability to enjoy a party! They also walk with clients and celebrate the breakthroughs while being present through the heartache. Karis Neighbour Scheme is dependent on many volunteers determined to be a good neighbour, giving their time, talents, and commitment. We are grateful for each and everyone.

In the last annual report, the story of the good Samaritan was highlighted. In the parable, the Samaritan takes the bruised and injured man and carries him on his donkey until they arrive at a place of safety and recovery. At a recent Trustee discussion, we reflected that every project involves the privilege of journeying with people. Clients often set the pace and we walk alongside to build hope, develop increased wellbeing and through walking with each person, enable them to flourish and feel part of their community in a greater way.

Karis Neighbour Scheme will always have at its heart, caring for the whole person and valuing each person who comes to us with a need. Life can be messy, cruel and complex but when we meet those needing help, the experience of 20 years of journeying with people means we have some exceptional people to journey alongside and thanks to our supporters and current funders we have the resources to equip Karis Neighbour Scheme as an organisation to continue the journey with many more people in the future.

On behalf of all the Karis Neighbour Scheme team, thank you for your support and your provisions to help us journey into the year ahead. If you are interested in knowing more about our organisation, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Amanda Smith
Chair of Trustees

REPORT FROM CEO

As you will see in the 2019 Annual report it has been another busy and exciting year at Karis Neighbour Scheme.

First of all, I would like to thank the trustees for their support and guidance over the year. They wisely steer our direction and priorities. I particularly want to thank Dr Ross Bryson, as he stood down as Chair during the year. He has passionately held on to the vision and sets an amazing example of commitment to the community. We are all thankful that he is remaining a trustee and continues to provide his wisdom and expertise. He has now handed over the role of Chair to Amanda Smith who is doing a great job in taking us on to the next steps.

Karis Neighbour scheme continues to successfully run several projects in the community including Community Advice, Karis Befriends and Children and Families. We also have two Chaplains for Wellbeing based in Karis Medical Centre. We have grown over the year as we became part of the Neighbourhood Network Scheme and have employed Nettes Derbyshire as a support worker for this project, linking up the social work teams and local community organisations.

I am particularly thankful to everyone who we work with in the local community. We would not be as effective without the other organisations, churches and individuals who are committed and passionate about this community.

I am also extremely grateful for the support we receive from our funders and donors as well as the individuals and local churches who continue in their commitment to us.

The next steps for Karis Neighbour Scheme, as well as protecting and developing our ongoing projects, are that we become more effective and efficient and strengthen our infrastructure. The new database helps towards this outcome and we are developing a strategic plan to help us look towards the future. We have renewed and refreshed all policies and they will be updated annually. We have also started work, and are committed across the organisation, to implement Trusted Charity in order to ensure sound governance practices, proper financial and risk management systems, and a reliable system for measuring outcomes.

Finally, I want to thank the Trustees, staff and volunteers for everything that they do. Karis Neighbour Scheme exists because of the hard work and commitment of these wonderful people.

Maddy Bunker
CEO

DEVELOPMENT

Harry Naylor has been with Karis for a little over 14 years now, most recently in the Operations & Finance Manager role, continuing to take a lead on finances and fundraising.

We have seen some growth over the past 12 months, both in terms of new projects – the Neighbourhood Network Scheme – and the reach and impact of some of our projects. This has been notable in the demand on Baby Bank Central which has been responding to the huge need for support for families in crisis across the city. This comes with the usual mix of excitement about possibilities and the challenge of adapting to new circumstances.

In particular we are glad to have had news late in the year that our funding through the Body, Mind & Spirit Partnership has been extended for another 2 years. Longer term funding is so helpful in allowing staff to think about the development of their work strategically.

A notable development this year has been the introduction of our new database. We are extremely grateful to Bjoern, a Microsoft partner, who gave of his time and expertise to introduce us to the PowerApps system. This has allowed us to build our own, in-house system to replace the old access database which had been designed by one of our volunteers before my time here. I also want to thank our staff and volunteers for adapting so quickly to the new system and ensuring the system has produced such useful and reliable data for our reporting.

FUNDRAISING

We have had another successful year of fundraising. Our expenditure overall was up slightly, despite reductions in some areas, the increase largely due to the addition of the Neighbourhood Network Scheme project, a new area of work for us this 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, including some payments still due we will have received a total of £105,588 in grants towards the past 12 months, up from the year before.

A further £30,875 was received in relation to service provision, a considerable rise due to an increase in commissioned services. This is in addition to the £30,815 of funding from Clinical Commissioning Groups towards our Listening & Guidance Service.

Individual giving and donations are also a significant proportion of our income, and this year included £70,515 of regular giving and one-off donations as well as gift aid of £1,755. This saw giving and donations increase – after a small drop the year before - while gift aid has continued to drop. This continues to represent a little over a quarter of our income.

We have seen an increase in giving via our virginmoneygiving online platform, this has largely been giving towards our Baby Bank project by supporters who find us through our Facebook page. This raised £1,253 for buying essential items for our Baby Bank parcels over the past 12 months.

We want to extend a particular thank you to all the generous individuals who have supported our work, especially our regular donors, and the churches and other local groups who have supported us financially.

Other small fundraising efforts have raised £324. We've continued to see some of the older people we support making crafts and organising bric-a-brac sales as a way of giving back. This has raised over £200 over the year. We've also raised nearly £100 from our monthly 'Play for Good' games days.

INTRODUCING KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Who Are We?

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a community project working in inner city Birmingham. We work throughout several local communities offering friendship and support to those who are isolated or marginalised and who are often facing disadvantage or hardship.

We value working in relationship with people and look to express care and compassion in the midst of the difficult circumstances people find themselves in. At the same time we offer a helping hand in practical ways. This is true of our staff and the many volunteers who give their time to help others. As a result we will tend to 'journey' with people, through changing circumstances.

We are a relatively small organisation and we recognise we are not always best equipped to deal with every problem. However, we work closely with other groups, charities and services to try and ensure that people can get the help they need and we work 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.

Who Do We Help?



We currently work across the Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne areas of Birmingham. The communities in these areas are very diverse, with different strengths and challenges. We have been working in these areas for over 20 years and despite seeing a lot of changes throughout that time we continue to faithfully serve our neighbours.

While we work with a broad-cross section of our communities, there are two areas of our befriending work which have a particular focus. We befriend a large number of refugee and asylum seeker families in Ladywood and North Edgbaston, and we support a lot of isolated older people in Harborne and Edgbaston.

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 a weekly group as well as other social events and an art group.

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

Alongside our befriending support we provide an advocacy & advice service. This provides advice on welfare benefits and help to fill in forms, make phone calls and signpost to other support through appointments and a weekly drop-in session. We partner with another local charity to run a Ladywood Job Club as part of our advice work.

We also offer support with practical tasks such as gardening, decorating and DIY, usually for people we already know through our befriending work.

We provide a Listening & Guidance service, based in General Practice, offering confidential pastoral care from Chaplains for Wellbeing. This service is available to patients of 7 GP practices in the area.

This year we began work on the Neighbourhood Network Scheme, a city-wide initiative looking to build closer links between social work and community groups and activities. We are working on this as part of a constituency wide partnership led by Birmingham Settlement.

Our Team...

Trustees

We currently have a board of seven trustees, the average length of membership of the board is eight years.

Amanda Smith, previously a non-executive director of a family owned business, joined the board in 2017 and has recently taken on the role of chair

Ross Bryson has been a GP for over 20 years at the local Karis Medical Centre and is a founding trustee

Rebecca Cuthbert has been involved in a number of charities with experience in family support, community development, project management and cross-sector partnerships

Gillian Harley-Mason is also a local GP with responsibility for safeguarding at the practice

Marc Kusicka is a Chartered Accountant based in Birmingham, previously having worked at Deloitte LLP

Kathryn Miles has a background in Public Health at the University of Birmingham

Steve Watts is a leader of a local church and has been involved in serving the area for over 20 years

Staff

We currently have a team of thirteen staff who co-ordinate Karis Neighbour Scheme's activities.

Core Team - **Maddy Bunker**, CEO, **Harry Naylor**, Operations & Finance Manager, **Michaela Brookes**, Administrator

Children & Families - **Ruth Fuller**, Children & Families' Worker, **Liz Brown**, Family Outreach Worker

Karis BeFriends - **Helen Bell**, Project Co-ordinator, **Patti Tan**, Project Assistant

Ladywood Community Advice - **Bram Scott**, Welfare Rights Advisor, **Sam Clarke**, Welfare Rights Assistant

Listening & Guidance - **Helen Watts** & **Elizabeth Baker**, Chaplains for Wellbeing

Neighbourhood Network Scheme – **Nettes Derbyshire**, NNS Support Worker

KBF Advice – **Daniel Bains**, Advice Worker

Volunteers

We rely on a team of around 80 volunteers to enable our work to happen. Although several long-serving volunteers have had to step back over the past few years we have had new volunteers start and keep our team around the same size. People give their time in various ways and may be involved once or twice a year or several times a week! We're so grateful for the enthusiasm, effort and commitment of all our volunteers. Our volunteers come from a broad range of backgrounds and are drawn mainly from in and around the communities we work.



Supporters

Our supporters are also invaluable and contribute a great deal to our work as a charity. As well as regular giving, we receive support from others who give of their time and resources – notably over 3000 supporters have engaged with our Baby Bank Central project through Facebook over the past few years. We are incredibly grateful for the continuing support of numerous local churches and the partnership of other organisations and community groups we work alongside. For a full list of our supporters and thank yous please see the last page of this report.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR



228 families received support from Baby Bank, receiving parcels including...

21,720 nappies, 525 bundles of clothing, 61 buggies, 55 cots and more

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

42 lifts provided or times we accompanied people to appointments



77 volunteers involved in our projects throughout the year

Over 2,000 volunteer hours given



595 people supported with advocacy & advice

162 people attended the Ladywood Job Club

People helped to access £989,000 of income through Ladywood Community Advice





Nearly **400** local families supported in various ways over the year

Over **2,650** contact hours providing support and befriending to children & families

provided activities for **23** families during school holidays

108 families came to the Welcome to Ladywood drop-in

53 students attended our English classes

222 one-to-one contacts with **88** families



72 older people visited in their own homes

62 people came to regular Sunday afternoon tea parties

22 older people came to a regular Tuesday morning group

an average of nearly **300** people supported every month

nearly **70** new referrals every month

8,029 contact hours supporting **1,226** people over the course of the year



THE STORIES...

This year we've helped 1226 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.

When we first met **Ana** she was feeling very low in mood and was struggling to look after her very energetic twin boys. She was spending whole days not getting dressed and found organising her life really difficult. Our Family Support worker visited her after she was referred to us and spent a bit of time chatting. She also began to encourage Ana to make small steps such as getting dressed as soon as she got out of bed.

After a few visits she was able to take Ana and her boys to the local Children's Centre and to their stay and play group. She also helped Ana to connect to a support worker there and this led to her getting early funding for the twins to attend nursery.

This support has been a lifeline for Ana, giving her the time and space she needed to feel like she could get on top of her home life, as well as giving her some much needed time for herself. Making those connections was a small thing for us to do but has made a big difference for her.

Julia is in her mid-90s and has severe hearing impairment so has to lip read. She has been coming to our activities but has found it hard to participate because of her hearing and this has sometimes got her down.

As a result we suggested a volunteer could visit her at home. She was initially unsure, expressing that she wondered why anyone would want to visit and spend time with her. But we encouraged her that the volunteer would benefit from spending time with her and that she could probably teach them a thing or two!

We were able to match a volunteer who was taking a gap year before going to study medicine and he has been visiting regularly, usually enjoying a good game of scrabble which has been one of her hobbies. She has told some of the other older people at our groups how much she enjoys the visits, and she has valued the contact where her hearing impairment isn't as much a challenge as it is in larger groups.

As well as benefitting Julia, our volunteer is finding the befriending really helpful in broadening his experience before he starts his career in medicine.

Sabha was living in a hotel room with her four children when we met her, emergency accommodation provided by the council. She was a new arrival and didn't have school places for the three of her children who were of school age and didn't know where to start. Our Family Support worker sat down with her and helped put her in touch with the local schools. Her children had places within a week.

Tom had been helped to apply for Universal Credit by our Ladywood Community Advice project in March, but was initially turned down. His habitual residence test had been erroneously 'failed' despite him living and working here in the UK for over 5 years. We requested a mandatory reconsideration but received no decision for several months, despite our chasing and providing the required evidence of his status.

Eventually his claim was put into payment. It took a deal of further chasing and raising a complaint before the Department of Work and Pensions eventually conceded, in December, that they had made an error and backdated Tom's claim to March. This provided him with around 6 months of benefits that would have otherwise gone unpaid and helped with the costs he'd been struggling with during that time.

Michal came to the Ladywood Job Club in the summer after he had lost his job in construction work. Being out of work had led to him losing his housing and he was currently homeless. He was struggling to find another job because his CSCS card had expired.

Michal and his partner were able to see our Welfare Rights advisor about their benefits. They weren't currently receiving anything so we helped them to apply for Universal Credit and contacted the benefits office to help them resolve an issue with their previous benefits.

Through Suited for Success, who we partner with to run the Job Club, Michal was able to access training to renew his CSCS card and gain the health & safety qualifications he needed to enable him to do this. We were then able to find him a short work placement with a leading construction company and Suited for Success helped again with providing smart interview wear and interview prep.

More recently we have bumped into Michal out and about and were pleased to hear he has been in work regularly during the Covid-19 outbreak, thanks to the qualifications and experience the Job Club helped him to access.

Laura is in her early 90s and was a keen walker in her earlier years, but hadn't been getting out much recently. As she had been coming to our Senior Life Group we had got to know this about her and two of our regular volunteers, who also enjoy walking, asked if she would like to go with them. They were able to go for a walk in the local woods where the paths are gentle but there was enough up and downhill to make it a challenge, which Laura appreciated. The walk brought back a lot of memories of past excursions which Laura chatted about with a lot of excitement. She even got onto a swing in the park along the way, which she was so delighted about she wanted to send photos of her on it to her children!

Sheila suffers from paranoid schizophrenia. She had been found fit for work by a work capability assessment and as a result her Employment and Support Allowance was stopped. We assisted her with a mandatory reconsideration of this decision and it was overturned.

However, we also identified that Sheila was also potentially entitled to Personal Independence Payments due to her circumstances. We assisted her with the claim process but like so many applicants her initial claim was unsuccessful. After a mandatory reconsideration we helped her take her case to appeal. Our Welfare Rights Advisor represented her at appeal tribunal and as a result her benefit was put back into payment.

The temporary stop in her Employment and Support Allowance had affected her housing benefit and council tax support claims, which had also been closed. Again, we were able to help her request a review and the claims were reinstated and backdated so she didn't suffer any loss.

...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 January 2019 to 31st December 2019 (unless otherwise stated):

	2014-15*	2015-16*	2016-17†*	2018*	2019
Total no. of individuals supported:	879	1078	1122	1114	1226
Total no. of contacts:	4853	5982	6167	5514	6645
Average contacts per month:	404	499	474	459	554
“ “ “ week:	93	115	110	106	128
“ “ “ day:	19	23	22	21	26

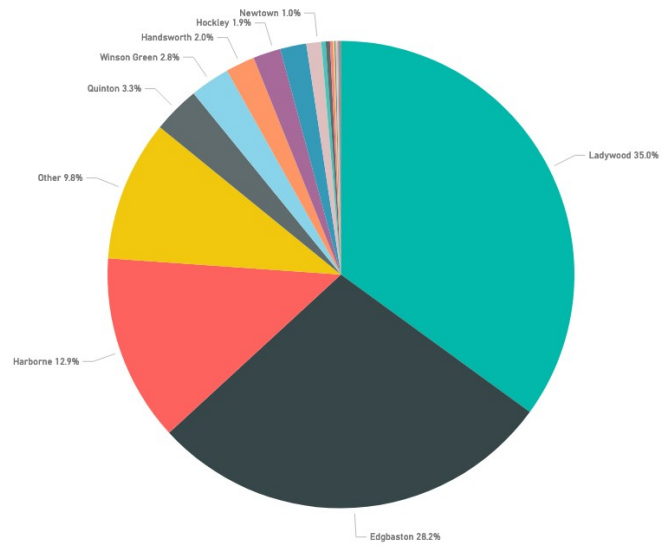
*Excluding contacts from our Listening & Guidance service

†13 month year

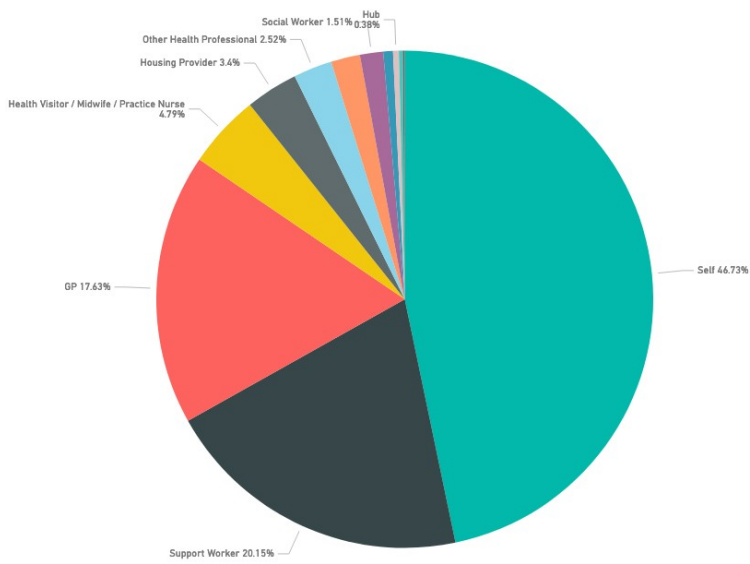
Demographics

	Individuals (%)	Contacts (%)
<i>By Gender</i>		
Male	28	22
Female	72	78
<i>By Age</i>		
16-24	10	3
25-34	22	16
35-44	21	20
45-54	18	15
55-64	14	14
65+	15	32
<i>By Ethnicity</i>		
White (British)	30	38
White (Irish)	1	2
White (Other)	10	8
Mixed (Wh. & Carib.)	2	1
Asian (Indian)	2	2
Asian (Pakistani)	6	5
Asian (Bangladeshi)	1	1
Asian (Other)	8	8
Black (Caribbean)	10	9
Black (African)	25	20
Chinese	<1	<1
Other	5	6

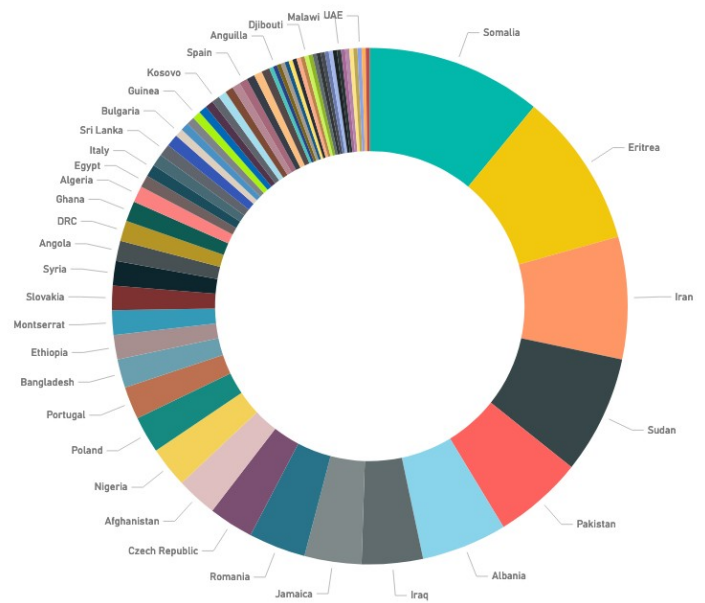
AREA PROFILE BY CONTACTS



SOURCES OF REFERRAL



COUNTRY OF BIRTH (NON-UK)





ADVOCACY & ADVICE

Our Ladywood Community Advice project has continued into its sixth year, supporting just under 600 individuals and families over the course of the past 12 months. Bram Scott, our Welfare Rights Advisor, supervises a small team of volunteer advocates who see people at a weekly drop-in. People can see Bram about benefit issues at the drop-in session as well. In addition he provides appointments at other times of the week for issues which are more in-depth such as lengthy benefit applications i.e. PIP and dealing with tribunals.

2019 saw some major changes for benefit claimants in Birmingham. The main impact has come from the city becoming a 'full service area' in respect of Universal Credit. In practice this has meant that anyone who would have made a new claim for Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Tax Credits, Job Seekers Allowance, or Housing Benefit under the old system must now claim Universal Credit instead. Any claimant already in receipt of any of the above 'legacy' benefits who had one of a range of changes in circumstances is also required to move to Universal Credit.

There have been a number of well documented issues arising from the introduction of Universal Credit, predominant amongst them the fact that there is a delay of at least five weeks before the first payment. We have been supporting a large number of people who needed help to make their claim online, and to get used to accessing their accounts regularly to avoid claims being closed or sanctions being applied. Claimants also need advice and assistance to claim help with their Council Tax (Council Tax Support) as this stops automatically when someone moves to Universal Credit. In a large number of cases we are finding that the amount of Universal Credit awarded has been incorrect and requires revision. The frequent issues we see are failure to pay housing costs or contributions for dependant children, or incorrect decisions about habitual residence.

More than half of our contacts this year have concerned Universal Credit. As a result, we made a change to Sam Clarke's role, who has moved on from her previous administrative role. She is now our Welfare Rights Assistant, specifically seeing clients in relation to their Universal Credit claims and queries.

We continue to deal with a lot of queries relating to disability : Personal Independence Payments and issues relating to care needs, Employment Support Allowance and issues around capability to work, Disability Living Allowance for children. There are often disputes arising from these areas. Whilst endeavouring to resolve these issues through the review and appeal process it is still the case that some claims have to be resolved at tribunal. In 2019 we took 17 cases to tribunal. Of these 15 were found in our client's favour one case was lost and a decision is pending on one.

The specialist advice we have been able to provide to navigate these changes has helped people access £989,000 of income that claimants may otherwise have been prevented from accessing.

As well as providing appointments for welfare rights issues we hold a drop in surgery on Wednesday mornings where we offer a general advocacy service with the help of volunteers. Volunteers assisted clients with 341 separate issues last year including liaising with landlords on housing repairs, assisting with housing bids, sorting out a range of issues with utility providers and filling in any imaginable form. We are fortunate in the number of volunteers we have but have found ourselves having to rota people on because of the space available to us at the centre. We'd like to thank all the volunteers who have helped throughout the year - Mohan, Katerina, Karen, Annabel, John and Corrine together with our more recent volunteers Malika and Sahra. We wish every success to Corrine in her new nursing career.

The Ladywood Job Club runs alongside our drop-in advice surgery and has supported 162 people looking for work this year through 570 attendances. This is run in partnership with Suited for Success, another local charity who provide smart business wear and interview coaching for jobseekers. One of our big successes this year was working with the new Ladywood Leisure Centre and Birmingham City Council's World of Work team to help people access vacancies at the centre, which opened in August. This led to 16 out of around 50 jobs at the centre going to local residents who had attended a recruitment session we held in May.



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 over ten years now.

It's been another full year for the Children & Families project; We've had 1650 contacts with 373 families, welcomed nine new volunteers, said goodbye to six & welcomed Liz Brown onto the staff.

The growth and development of Baby Bank Central has remained a big part of the work this last year. We gave out 282 parcels to 245 beneficiaries, thanks to huge generosity from the general public. Our Facebook page, superbly managed by a volunteer, hit 3,000 likes in the summer, which is the reason why we've had enough resource to give out 21,270 nappies, 525 parcels of clothes and 55 cots! As well as equipment and clothes we've received financial donations that have really helped provide new mattresses, change mats, as well as stairgates and cots when they've been needed urgently. After a visit to Jubilee Children's Storehouse in December 2018 we made some procedural changes to our weekly shift. We were so impressed by the way the storehouse volunteers dignified beneficiaries by giving them choice we incorporated this into our format.

One to one befriending remains a special part of the work and this year we were able to carry out 206 sessions with 88 families. Mostly we visit clients at home, sometimes we go out for coffee or a walk with clients, or we help to celebrate special occasions when friends and families are few and far between. Other times it's pure muscle that's required, which was the case when a lady and her son needed to move house after a period of upheaval. Thankfully the steep flight of stairs and washing machine were no match for a cheerful group of volunteers from a local church! Coming at short notice they filled their cars and saw mum, son and washing machine installed within an evening. Here's what she said ***'I am not lonely... I realised that there are still people in the world who help others without any expectation. People who have a kind heart, who are very supportive when you need them. Those who can be your family'.***

The Drop-in is a precious welcoming space for local people, particularly women, in our 17th year we welcomed 108 families with 731 attendances over the year. We enjoy a meal together, playing & singing for the children and this year started 'competition weeks' where the women brought dishes around a theme i.e. potatoes, pasta or bread – the winner of fruit week won a pineapple! Food and eating together is a major theme at the Drop-in, so it was only fitting to get together to make a recipe book to give to Heather, a faithful and much loved volunteer at the Drop-in when she left for pastures new. A personal highlight this year was when we dedicated a session to three volunteers who come weekly to serve, welcome and wash up. Ruth set the date and suggested that the ladies might like to express their appreciation. The influx of creativity and kindness was second to none; some ladies came early to set up, others washed up so the volunteers didn't, others brought food and another brought a meal for each volunteer so she didn't have to cook in the evening, one lady gave each volunteer a hand massage and the list of kindnesses went on, it was beautiful!

We said goodbye to another long term volunteer at ESOL in the summer, at 80 she decided to finally retire! We did consider closing the class down as were struggling for help particularly in the crèche but we're thrilled to say that an influx of clients volunteering to help on a Friday has meant that we're really well staffed. It's been a wonderful turnaround and super to see ex-students giving back so wholeheartedly.

Over the summer we trialled some joint 'intergenerational trips' with Karis Befriends. We started small just a few beneficiaries going to Cannon Hill park & Botanical Gardens to share picnics and cuddles with obliging babies but it was a glorious beginning and we hope we'll be invited back - not least because the sun seems to shine on KBF trips! We finally took our now annual trip to Hatton Park (postponing it twice because of the rain). We enjoyed the animals and games and only once had to run for cover because of a downpour.

This year, in many respects has been quieter, with fewer client crises and new referrals but it's been a year of depth; seeing clients give back and the fruit of long-term faithful relationships, perfectly encapsulated when at our Eid Drop-in, one lady exclaimed; ***'this is my family'.***



KARIS BeFRIENDS

Helen Bell is our Project Co-ordinator for the Karis BeFriends project and has been leading on this project for over 15 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.

We have had a busy year through the Karis Befriends Project supporting 132 older people through 1932 contacts. We've been able to provide 2932 contact hours across all our activities.

The Karis BeFriends Project offers support to older people mainly living in Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood areas. We provide befriending, practical and advocacy support mainly through visiting people in their own homes, or accompanying them out into their local community, as well as organising regular social events. This provides opportunity for older people to continue to flourish and connect with others, find a sense of belonging and community. We are able to journey alongside and offer emotional support in the later stages of their lives.

Throughout the year we continued to receive referrals from local G.P. surgeries, social workers, other health professionals, relatives, friends or older people themselves. The continual flow of requests demonstrates the ongoing need and the degree of isolation and loneliness experienced by some at this stage of life.

A big part of the year has been continuing to encourage and enable people to gather together, whether through our weekly Senior Life Group, or our 'Time for Tea' bi-monthly Sunday afternoon tea, our monthly 'Arts and Craft' group, our trips out, or our Christmas Party. These groups help participants to encourage one another, giving opportunity to remain active and contribute, valuing each other and sharing skills and experiences.

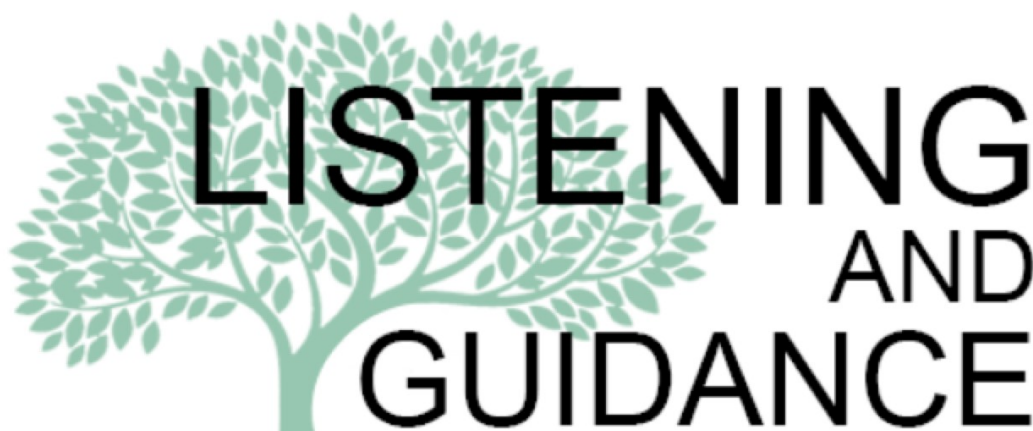
"I came to join the Senior Life Group (SLG) because of the loneliness I felt when I had to sell my house. After a few weeks I realised there were likeminded people here and I have made a lot of friends. There is always a friendly atmosphere in the group. I look forward to going each week but especially now as I don't get out very much."..... "Coming to SLG is the highlight of my week. I felt isolated before, I enjoy the fact that my life isn't cancelled"....."I read some information about SLG and decided to try it out. I was lonely and didn't get out of the house very much at all. I find being here is interesting and I have found happiness"....." Without it lonely people would be lonelier. It would increase the isolation of the elderly especially those who have no family or families who live close. Once isolated you can get used to staying at home and lose confidence to go out."

Throughout the year we have taken opportunities to celebrate together! Whether participant's birthdays, small steps and achievements, those we have known and lost during the year, or 'International Older Persons Day'. We have enjoyed some intergenerational trips out this year and opportunities to be creative together. We've also spent time discussing and considering different topics, for example making healthy choices, asking for help at our pace, how to continue to flourish, coping with personal loss and the loss of those around us.

For those who struggle to get out and join in with activities we visit them in their own homes giving time to regular befriending and/or encouraging and helping them to get out. We are also a port of call if people are in need of some practical help, or need connecting with additional support. We are looking forward to our new KBF Advice project starting in the coming year, being able to offer benefits advice and other advice through home visits to those older people who are unable to get out and access that support elsewhere.

Karis Befriends has continued to benefit from being an active partner within the Body, Mind and Spirit Partnership (made up of Churches/Organisations supporting older people in Birmingham) as well as other partnership working with local Churches, organisations and businesses within the community. We have seen provision and been well funded this year. In addition a small group of the older people have been keen to get involved and wanting to help, knitting items and making marmalade and jam, which they seem to have enjoyed the opportunity to contribute. The highlight of the year continues to be hearing and seeing the difference the Karis Befriends Project makes to individual lives and the positive impact of having so many volunteers involved:

"I was cooking by torchlight because the bulb in my kitchen had blown. I'd got as far as buying a new bulb, but it meant carrying up steps from downstairs to put it in and my balance isn't good anymore. Steve and Jan (volunteers) were on their way home from helping another lady from the group when they spotted me walking back with shopping and brought me home... I asked Steve and the 100 watt light bulb now in my kitchen has been such a delight! I sent Steve an e-mail "little things mean a lot"..... "It's the little things that matter" 95 year old SLG participant.



The Service

The Listening and Guidance Service is based in a GP surgery in Edgbaston and offers one-to-one sessions with a Chaplain for Wellbeing. At its core is the belief that compassionate listening can be healing and restorative for people in a ‘whole person care’ model of healthcare provision. The Chaplains for Wellbeing pay attention to the emotional, spiritual and social needs of their patients, with a focus on helping people to find purpose, meaning and hope in the midst of their situations. ‘Most GPs acknowledge the central place that spirituality occupies in personhood, with the bi-directional relationship between spiritual wellbeing and physical health often being evident in consultations’¹. The service is available to people of all faiths and beliefs, who may be experiencing loss of wellbeing, whether through bereavement, changed circumstances, relationship challenges, social isolation or health concerns.

The NHS Context

The service was commissioned by two NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups across Birmingham and Sandwell (BSol and SWB) although our Sandwell and West Birmingham service was wound down in the early part of 2019. 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 limited within General Practice, and our Listening and Guidance Service was the first example of NHS commissioned Chaplaincy in General Practice in England. While 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 and, as noted opposite, in addition to delivering our own service we have been working over the past year to support the setting up of a similar model for a number of other Primary Care Networks.

Patient Outcomes

In the last year we received 146 new patient referrals into our Listening and Guidance Service from GPs in Birmingham, in addition to patients still being seen from the previous year. We use the recognised WEMWBS ‘wellbeing’ scale at the first session which is repeated on occasions as sessions continue. On the scale where total scores can range from 14-70 we have seen an average improvement of 9.4 points over the course of our sessions. We also invite patients to complete a Patient Reported Outcome Measure (PROM) form at the end of their sessions. These provide more qualitative data, with many patients expressing positive outcomes such as appreciating being listened to, recovering hope or faith, developing coping strategies, building resilience, feeling more in control or more at peace. Quotes from patients express what this has meant to them in their own words:

“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.”

Staff Team

Helen Watts and Elizabeth Baker are our Chaplains for Wellbeing. They receive regular clinical and pastoral supervision. This year both Chaplains received training in the effects of adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed care. They have also received training in complex grief and bereavement care. Both Chaplains are accredited by the Association for Chaplains in General Practice (ACGP).

Local Partnership Working

Patients are signposted to local services where appropriate. We work closely with other KNS projects and with services to support refugees and asylum seekers, as well providers of mental health services and counselling. The aim is to reduce social isolation and help patients to engage more fully with their community. We benefit greatly from being situated within a GP surgery, where referrals to in-house counselling or other health care professionals are easier.

Wider Connections

Our Chaplains participated in the Birmingham and Black Country Chaplaincy Collaborative, a partnership of health care chaplaincy covering hospitals and mental health services in the region. We were able to offer input from a GP chaplaincy perspective to their volunteer training programme. We also represent GP chaplaincy on the board of the College of Health Care Chaplains, raising the profile of this kind of work. During 2019 we hosted 2 half-day forums for Chaplains from other settings in the wider Midlands area, with the aim of improving the standard of GP chaplaincy and unifying the vision for service delivery and staff training. In conjunction with the ACGP, we are also working on developing national training materials and identifying research projects.

Developments

KNS Listening and Guidance has been at the forefront of Chaplaincy in General Practice for many years. We have seen an increase in awareness of the need for services addressing the spiritual, ‘whole person’ needs of patients and have been involved in assisting with the development of other services. Specifically in 2019, we worked with Patient Care Networks in Dudley to develop a Listening and Guidance Social Prescribing Service. We acted as consultants for the service design, recruitment and induction of Chaplains, and are committed to providing on-going clinical supervision.

¹Appleby A. Swinton J. Wilson P ‘What GPs mean by ‘spirituality’ and how they can apply this concept with patients: a qualitative study.’ BJGP Open 2018

NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORK SCHEME

Jeanette Derbyshire joined our team in July as the NNS Support Worker for the Ladywood Ward. We are working in partnership with Birmingham Settlement (lead), Nechells POD, and Soho First CDT, to deliver the Neighbourhood Network Scheme in the Ladywood constituency, building closer links between the community and social work teams in the city.

KNS started working on this project in April 2019 and initial work was done on Partnership Agreements and recruitment.

I came into post in July 2019, at which point the project consisted of Asset Mapping the community groups in the wards supporting over 50's.

Alongside this I have been regularly attending Social Worker's 'huddle' meetings. The project is feeding into the 'Three Conversations' model of social work by providing a register of the assets in the area that Social Workers can connect people to. These meetings also enable the social workers to feed back on any gaps in provision, so that we can support local assets – such as community groups, local residents and charities - to meet these.

One example of 'plugging gaps' was the issue of hoarding as a problem area. I was able to highlight the West Midlands Fire Service 'Safe and Well' checks, as a good first step to finding support with the issue, and link them up to the social work teams to work more closely where people may benefit from this.

In July the Ladywood Constituency Steering Group had its initial meeting and we were asked to invite groups/citizens to attend. Two groups and one citizen from the Ladywood ward have been regular attendees on this panel and at subsequent meetings.

The asset register for our ward started with 18 groups mapped in the initial stages of the project - which had been undertaken before we joined. By the end of August we had been able to add a further 22. Sadly, during the year some groups or activities closed or came to an end, but by the end of 2019 the number of assets on the register for Ladywood ward stood at 68.

In October the small grants scheme, which is a key aspect of the programme, went live and we were able to offer financial support to small groups where they could offer activities that may be beneficial for over 50s. This has got off to a slow start, and some of the initial applicants were unsuccessful, but we are hopeful we can help groups to access this funding in the year ahead.

Support in developing infrastructure for the groups was part of the offer, and some training has been made available through Birmingham Settlement as the lead partner.

The opening of the new Ladywood Leisure Centre over the summer has enabled some of our groups, and importantly our local social work team, to meet in more suitable premises, where they had had to travel some way out of the area for team meetings previously.

Having both large organisations and grass roots assets has enabled us to put people in touch with others who can help them – often making links across the wards within the constituency (for example New Roots Housing Association has started a programme in conjunction with AVFC based in Aston).

There have also been two networking meetings enabling group leaders from the whole constituency to meet up together with social workers, BVSC and the partner organisations for the Neighbourhood Network Scheme, which has again facilitated such links on a wider scale.



One of the things that we value about the way we work in community is the ability to be ‘good neighbours’ in practical ways, underpinning our befriending with a neighbourly helping hand. Although sometimes this means helping with something small - like putting up a curtain rail or providing some willing hands to move a washing machine – it can make a big difference to the people we’re supporting.

For those who don’t have the support networks we rely on so often, finding help with these everyday things can be a relief, taking a burden off their shoulders and helping them to find that sense of community that can sometimes be missing. Time and time again the expression of thanks we receive for this kind of support seems out of proportion to the size of the task we’ve helped with, but this underlines just how important this support is to people and how much they value it.

One of the areas we’ve seen an increasing need for help with is decluttering. This is closely linked to our befriending work, and has been seen mostly in our older people’s befriending – Karis BeFriends. We have helped a number of individuals this year, usually as part of a wider effort to address the issue if it has become something that is making the home environment unsafe. We are not a specialist service – and we are not always best suited to help. However, there have been instances when - provided alongside befriending - we have been able to build up trust to help people sort through and get rid of belongings they no longer need.

We’ve also continued to see a need for help with people moving accommodation, quite often refugee families on having been granted leave to remain. There are a lot of practical needs that can arise during this process, not least in being moved between emergency, temporary and permanent accommodation, often at fairly short notice. Our volunteers have been able to help a number of families this year, responding with only a few days notice to move their belongings.

For one family the support continued over a number of weeks as they settled into the home, helping them to sort out carpets for the property, and a group of volunteers stripping the wallpaper so they could paint and brighten up their new home.

We were also grateful to The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham for the loan of their bigger van on several occasions this year when our small van wasn’t quite big enough for the job at hand. This included moving one older couple who had been in temporary accommodation for some time, move all their belongings out of a flat on the 11th floor of a tower block to the first floor of sheltered accommodation. Having use of the bigger van meant we could do it all in one trip, which made the job a lot easier, especially when our volunteers already had to contend with the fact that the sheltered accommodation didn’t have a lift.

Our van, which has provided over 10 years’ service in supporting our practical activities, is also put to use passing on donations. We’ve helped numerous times this year where someone has wanted to donate a sofa, or a fridge, or so on to someone else in the community but needs help moving the item. Here, our small van and some willing hands go a long way to enabling these acts of generosity within the community.

We helped one family who had moved to a new property who had found a fridge/freezer they could afford at a charity shop but were stuck for transport to get it from the shop to their home. Our volunteers were more than willing to help and made the collection and dropped it off.

The van has also continued to be used to support our Baby Bank Central project, collecting larger donations, including surpluses from other projects.

Other practical support includes making referrals to Birmingham Central Foodbank and giving out small emergency parcels from our own pantry when needed. We also helped a number of people access grant support for particular needs this year. This included one lady whose bed had broken and this was aggravating her existing back problems, and another gentleman whose fridge and cooker had broken meaning he was struggling with sticking to the carefully controlled diet he needed to manage his health conditions. Often these referrals have come via local GPs who are well placed to identify these kind of needs.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, a huge thank you to all our volunteers and supporters.
We couldn't do it without you!

Thanks also to,

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