Loughton Voluntary Care: Annual Report 2021

The summary of our work in 2021 is given on the separate sheet showing our undertakings. This has been another strange year. Perhaps by the end of it we found ourselves in the “new normal”.

We were able to reopen the office in April and to restart the Escorted shopping trip, Fish and Chip lunch and Keep Well Club in June. It was extremely poignant to witness friends greeting each other in person for the first time in

a year. The Silver Surfer Club was harder to “Covid-proof”, but re-opened in October. It is a matter of great pride that LVC has continued transporting people to hospital appointments seamlessly throughout the pandemic.

This period has shown us all a new way of working and LVC now has its own Facebook page. Many thanks to

Laura Watson, Tracy Deacon and Eva Bagurske for setting this up and maintaining our online presence.

Volunteers

Some of our older drivers decided not to return after the first lockdown and, as the figures show, we are missing them. We did attract 9 new volunteers, but not for driving to medical appointments.

Good Neighbour

Face-to Face befriending also restarted in June where clients were happy with this. However, we did keep in touch by phone throughout the year and my spring was enhanced by receiving several emails showing how the hyacinths we delivered in December were doing. We were contacted by EFDC who had goody bags for the Senior Safety

Days they hadn’t been able to run. So with the addition of a small Easter egg, volunteers delivered these to

110 households and had a chat on the doorstep. In December we also delivered Christmas cards to clients.

The Good Neighbour figure for the year has reverted to something like normal, mainly as a result of people getting their own shopping again. I have included figures for prescription collection this year as it seems that this area of our work has increased over the pandemic.

Transport: The number of drives to medical appointments was up despite the move to telephone consultations. This was largely due to the vaccination programme. Sadly there was a considerable increase in the number of

times that we could not find a driver. This reflects the lower number of drivers available, but a lot of the appointments affected were during the few weeks of fuel shortages in the autumn.

The number of clients using transport returned to something like pre-pandemic times: again a reflection of the vaccination drive.

Escorted Shopping: The figures are from June to December only. Numbers are slowly building up from a low starting place. Two drivers completed Midas training.

Social Activities: These show a large increase, due to 6 months of the Keep Well Club and Fish and Chip lunches.

21 clients also attended the Christmas lunch.

Silver Surfer Club:This ran from October to December and 16 people attended. Many thanks to Mike Sabin for leading the project and to the very diverse group of volunteers ranging from 17 to 80+ who support the learning.

Games Group: The Library were unable to host the Games group, but as Loughton Methodist Church promote Games sessions at their café twice a week, we have been able to signpost people to that instead. So it is now a

LMC project.

Garden Rescue: The team undertook 7 jobs during the year which finished later than usual due to the rainy autumn. Many thanks to Sam and Ian for co-ordinating these, sometimes massive, operations.

Finance: I thank Treasurer, Mike Robinson, for his very full report: it means I have little to say. We received some very large donations and bequests this year, partly due to the disruption of funding in 2020. I thank EFDC,

Loughton Town Council and St Mary’s Church for their continuing generous support. Waitrose gave us two donations this year, one of which covered the cost of the Christmas lunch for which clients were suitably grateful.

Diners also received a diary, courtesy of The Card Factory, Loughton. I thank them too.

Partnerships: LVC continues to work closely with Loughton Methodist Church which is where the Silver surfing Club, the Keep Well Club and the Fish and Chip lunches are held. The Hasler Foundation kindly provided 7 volunteer drivers to ferry diners to the Christmas meal as they have so often in the past. I thank the Foundation for this valuable support.

As ever we are in touch with local agencies which refer clients to us - GPs, Social Services, the NHS Social Prescriber, the Red Cross Community Agent, community nurses and sheltered housing managers. In 2021 we also liaised with the Open Door group which supports people with mental health issues.

Finally, thank you to all volunteers who make LVC the success it is. It’s the sum of all the talents which you have and I never cease to be surprised at how far you will go to support people in a friendly and sensible way. I should

know by now! In the summer we will celebrate our 50 year Jubilee – a fantastic record. Our finances will allow us to do this in some style and we are looking for suggestions during July and August. It’s definitely time for some fun.

Thank you again.

Janet Thomas

March 2022