Loughton Voluntary Care: Annual Report 2018

The summary of our work in 2018 is given on the separate sheet showing our undertakings;

Transport: 2018 showed a small increase in the number of drives after a couple of years of fewer drives. Trips to hospitals were slightly down: the increase was in drives to surgeries and local clinics, especially Forest Medical Centre. The number of clients using the transport service was much reduced at 125 (2017:160), so taking fewer clients to more frequent appointments

There is an alarming increase in the number of requests which we did not meet (60 2017:24). Many of these were due to very late requests and 8 were due to The Beast from the East, but there were also a number of occasions when mistakes were made. It continues to be difficult to find drivers to go to Harlow or Whipps Cross hospitals because of the difficulties with parking; where we are unable to help with late requests for these, Duty Officers

are referring people to hospital transport.There was a small increase in the number of drivers (24 2017:22).

I thank all of our drivers who enable clients to get to their crucial appointments.

Good Neighbour Scheme:

The number of clients helped under this programme (20) is slightly down on last year (22). The vast majority are receiving a regular visit at home and I thank all our volunteers who take on this regular commitment, often for several years.

Escorted Shopping: The weekly shopping trip shows a massively reduced use in 2018 (250: 350 in 2017). This is mainly due to the increasing frailty of the shoppersas the majority are now well into their 90s. This means that

we need more escorts on each trip (taking up room on the bus previously available to shoppers) and there has

also been a problem in recruiting escorts, particularly those who are fit enough themselves to push a wheelchair.

Throughout the year there have also been concerns about the condition of the minibus. A successful application was made to EFDC for a grant towards the shopping costs. On the plus side, Mike Millroy has kindly taken on the role of managing the trip and we are now using a different bus which is in better condition. Mike and I did look

into using the VAEF bus, which is bigger and comes with a driver, but we could not have it on a day which suited

the escorts. Mike and our other two drivers renewed their Midas training in 2018. Many thanks to them and to

all the escorts who give up half a day to support the shoppers.

Weekday social outings: 24 clients attended Christmas lunch at the Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford. Again we are

Grateful to Hasler’s Foundation for providing 6 drivers. LVC volunteers also clients to the Davenant School Tea Party at Easter.

Weekend social outings: The number of times clients were taken to the Fish & Chip lunches at St. Mary’s and Loughton Methodist Church and the tea parties at St. Michael’s are much the same as last year.

Silver Surfer Club:The number of clients attending the 6 week courses was down at 30 (2016: 39); the majority

of these have attended at least 2 (and often more) courses and the Club is a valuable part of our work on social inclusion. We have had a number of referrals from Loughton Job Centre. Again I should like to thank the congregation at Loughton Methodist Church for making space for us and always offering a warm welcome. Steve and Emma continue to manage the club with empathy and humour. Thanks too to all volunteers who range from a previous learner to sixth formers; they all contribute so much to the learning and the fun of the occasion.

Games Group: This has gone from strength to strength with 603 visits in 2018 (460 in 2017). It ran on every single Wednesday with the exception of Boxing Day – a tremendous commitment from the 3 regular volunteers, June, Malcolm and Julia. Again, I would like to thank them and also Loughton Library staff for their support and hospitality.

Keep Fit: The Keep Programme ran from January to August when we were forced to close it due to the mounting losses incurred by paying for both the instructor and the venue. 33 people used the service, but not regularly enough for it to pay its way. The regular users were very sorry that it had to close as they found it helpful in maintaining and improving physical fitness, confidence and mental well-being. Thanks, to Jody, June and Maggie for their commitment.

Garden Rescue: In 2018 ten gardens were cleared by the team (2017: 3). Due to the jungle-like nature of some

of the gardens, we invested in a heavy duty shredder. Many thanks to Samantha, Manon and Ian and the rest of their team.

Fish and Chip Lunches: For several years LVC has been driving clients to the monthly lunch at St Mary’s. These finished in July, due to lack of volunteers from St. Mary’s. Fortunately Loughton Methodist Church agreed to

host the lunches which recommenced in September and uses volunteers from LVC and LMC. There were 4 lunches in 2018 and a total of 67 meals were eaten. The lunch offers the chance for people to enjoy the fellowship of others; so far there has been a pianist and a sing-song at each lunch. We are reaching people who do not use any

of our other services and this accounts largely for the increase in the total number of clients (248 2017: 232)

Volunteers:The total number of volunteers is much the same as last year and the number of drivers slightly up

42 (2017: 22). We recruited one driver, two visitors,three Silver Surfingmentors, one keep-fit volunteer, two Duty Officer and two shopping escorts, much fewer than last year (11 2018:22) The Christmas social event attracted fifteen volunteers. It is a tribute to the great efforts of our volunteers that we are able to maintain our projects

and embark on new ones. Thank you all.

We are grateful for the continued financial support from Epping Forest District Council, Charles French Charitable Trust and St. Mary’s Church and Waitrose Community Matters Scheme.In 2018 we also received donationsfrom Loughton Town Council and from Spirit Sisters. Many thanks to all these groups who help to fund LVC.

Partnerships: LVC continues to work in partnerships with other local groups. In 2018 these included taking

referrals from community nurses, Alzheimer’s Society, Age UK, St. Margaret’s Hospitals, GPs, the Restore Centre and the local Community Agents (Red Cross).Our long-time connection with Churches Together in Loughton continues with Loughton Methodist Church hosting the Silver Surfer courses and the fish and chip lunch and

LVC volunteers taking clients to the tea parties at St Michael’s Church.Loughton Library hosts the Games group

and we worked with the EFDC Dance Team on the Keep Fit project.Our contact with local schools includes not

only the Davenant 6th form tea parties, but also volunteers from the 6th form for the Silver Surfing Club.

LVC continues to be an active member of the Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance*.*

Together we provide a raft of support for the vulnerable residents of Loughton.

In summary 2018 saw the continued need for our community transport, the maintenance of our social inclusion projects and some new developments in our services.

Janet Thomas

March 2019