Befriending Report for Wickham Market Good Neighbours

March 2021

What a strange and difficult year for those elderly folk living on their own, and for the most part cut off from direct social contact. Thankfully, due to a loyal bunch of befrienders we have been able to maintain telephone communication even when everything has been completely locked down. Our clients have appreciated this and looked forward to a chat even if at times there was little to talk about. I'm sure there has been lots of reminiscing going on and we have got to know our befriendees even better than in 'normal' times.

From March to July 2020 contact was literally telephone only. Then from July through to September/ October garden visits were possible. Thanks to the glorious weather it was a delight to enjoy the simple pleasure of a cup of tea shared. However, come November we were back to square one and I know the winter months have taken their toll.

Three of our dear friends moved into full time care and subsequently one passed away. A message of sympathy was sent to that lady's family. The volunteers were also a little depleted either through ill health or the need to care for their own loved ones or by a house move. Our sincere thanks to each of them for the service they have given to our clients.

At Christmas, we were able to treat thirteen of our clients to a shoe box filled with goodies and practical gifts, wrapped and delivered with love by our volunteers. We had several messages of thanks and appreciation. Recently we have helped to deliver 20 bags produced by East Suffolk Council to promote healthy living in the elderly. These went to clients and others to whom we thought they may be of benefit. Again they were welcomed and appreciated.

Fortunately new volunteers have come along and we are now in the position to accept new befriendees. So if you know of anyone who is living on their own who might like a regular chat or maybe even more as lockdown begins to relax, please do get in touch with me via the Good Neighbours' phone.

A few statistics for those of you who like numbers.

8 befrienders are currently supporting 10 clients. 3 volunteers are willing to be assigned to new clients.

The actual number of contacts made throughout the year are as follows:

Phone Calls 701 Visits 111 Outings 40

I should clarify that visits were mainly in August and September when the lockdown was lifted plus a few doorstep visits to take Christmas gifts etc.. Outings have been mainly confined to those who have been fortunate enough to 'bubble' with their befriender. We have always maintained the Covid restriction guidelines.

Maureen Wheeldon March 2021