**Befriending Report**



**October 2018 to September 2019**

If success is measured in numbers then the figures speak for themselves. In year 1 we made 75 visits, year 2 -116, year 3- 221. However, we know it is so much more than just numbers.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge that the befriending service offered by Woodhouse GNS is provided as part of and in conjunction with other schemes which are and were already running in the villages. These include church organisations, voluntary organisations, charitable groups, paid services and statutory services.

We take into account that our volunteers are untrained and try to match the needs of people referred accordingly. This year we have drawn up a list of criteria for befriending in order to clarify what we consider to be the appropriate client group. This is not always easy and if we feel we are not the best service then we will attempt to suggest alternatives locally.

The people we support generally receive 1 visit per week with some flexibility according to need. This is sustainable over a lengthy period with the number of volunteers available. Our willing volunteers provide a consistent service often the same person visits each week or alternate weeks. There are also willing backup volunteers who will fill in for holidays and illness. I think we can safely say no visits have been missed. Some true friendships have formed through these visits and continued in a way which no longer appears on our data.

People receiving visits have enjoyed and benefitted from short excursions and introduction to other activities available locally. Access to these often continues with a little help through transport from GNS.

All volunteers say they enjoy and benefit from the visits in a variety of ways-meeting new people, discovering more about the history of the local area from older residents and awareness of what is available locally.

Our “clients” obviously enjoy the visits or they would have barred the door by now! But seriously they have all made comments about how they enjoy the home visits or the opportunity to get out and about with someone.

When dealing with people it is impossible to predict the requests which can be made but as we have progressed through the years we have tried to implement training to make sure we offer the best support and keep our clients and volunteers safe. This will shortly include Moving and Handling Training provided by a qualified OT trainer. This is to make sure we do not try to undertake activities for which we are unqualified and to show us how to do simple actions (like supporting someone from chair to car) avoiding back injuries or worse.

One of our volunteers also attended a conference at Leicester University early in the year about loneliness and its causes. This was particularly with regard to young people but providing a background to the national situation.

We consult national befriending organisations and are considering making an annual subscription to the Befriending Network. This offers support, training and guidelines for paperwork.

Age is no barrier to our service. Younger people have received support when incapacitated and some over 80 year olds provide befriending.

We hope to continue to provide a consistent service and to be able to support more people with the addition of new volunteers and to say thank you to volunteers who are completing their service.