

Year 5 Summary

October 2020 to September 2021



You may remember that we were unable to hold last year's AGM due to the COVID19 restrictions. We did produce the necessary reports for Year 4 - on Finance, Annual summary and Befriending and these are still available on the Good Neighbour Scheme web site News and Events page.

Before I move on to the latest year - year 5, I'd like to touch on a couple of items from last year's report -

Firstly, Rod Hudson, our chairman, passed away in November 2019. He ran the steering group meetings with gentle good humour. He was also a volunteer driver and is greatly missed.

Secondly, Year 4 was a year of awards. In October, we won the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland), Rural Service Award. Then in November, we won the Volunteer Led Organisation of the Year and then we became the Overall Charity of the Year at Voluntary Action Leicester and Leicestershire. We didn't really have an opportunity to celebrate these awards because of Covid. I think we were given the awards because of our dedicated team of volunteers, and the organisation behind the GNS and I think this combination has carried us through the difficult last eighteen months. The steering group would like to thank all our volunteers for their dedication and perseverance.

So, to Year 5.

In November 2020 we had a reorganisation of the Steering group. It was a bit like musical chairs:

Lynn Hopkins, who was a Safeguarding officer carrying out DBS checks, and data administrator right from the start of the GNS, stepped down from the steering group. Lynn did an amazing amount of work during the first months of Covid, when we had over 30 new volunteers join on a temporary basis. I'd like to thank Lynn for all the work she has put into the GNS and for remaining an active volunteer.

Claire Ayres stepped down as secretary, a job she has done efficiently since the start, and I'd like to thank Claire for the time and enthusiasm she has given to the role. Happily, Claire has remained on the steering group assisting the Befriending team.

Jo Shobrook took over the role of secretary, as well as Volunteer co-ordinator; Helen Horne joined the steering group to organise Telephone coordinators and I became chair. Judith remains as Treasurer, Miranda as Publicity and Wheelchair organiser, and Sue as Safeguarding officer.

So, for the past year we've had 8 members on the steering group. And we're fortunate to have Carol Newbold assisting the Befriending team and Fiona Page and Harriett Gilbert assisting Safeguarding. We'd be delighted to hear from anyone who'd like to the organisation, especially as Cherrie is stepping down and we do need another volunteer to help organise Befriending. We've been meeting over Zoom but we're back to meeting in person with wine!

The Scheme has been running for 5 years and we've just passed the 2,300 jobs total. The number of jobs each year has increased from 185 in the first year to over 660 this. It's a brilliant effort from our volunteers. We now have 51 volunteers with many of the temporary volunteers, who joined at the start of Covid, becoming full DBS checked.

We introduced a Traffic light system to show which services we were offering. It was kept up to date on the Good Neighbour Scheme web site and on our Facebook page and allowed us to switch services on and off in accordance with government regulations and the various shutdowns.

As you'll see from the charts and statistics on display, the make-up of jobs has changed significantly over the pandemic. Most of the jobs this year have been telephone Befriending. Our wonderful Befriending Team has given over 250 hours during this year through 534 phone calls or visits (over

600 hours in total over the pandemic) keeping in touch with local residents. The team received a Top Team Award in the Charnwood Community Heroes 2020, in recognition of their hard work and dedication.

The Befriending team also organised a joyful weekend in early March when Oliver Stanley serenaded some of our residents. Judith secured a grant from Leicestershire County Council. Oliver travelled with his song selection around the villages singing for people on their doorstep and many neighbours and passers-by of all ages enjoyed it too, all socially distanced I'm pleased to say. And in August, the team arranged an outdoor tea party with some residents and volunteers. Cherrie has asked me to say how resilient some of the recipients of befriending have been. The way they've coped with lockdowns and lack of social contact has been amazing. I think the Befriending team has helped enormously to that end. A huge thank you to Cherrie, Claire, Carol and all the befriending volunteers for all the time and care they have given.

A small pool of drivers has continued to take people to medical appointments, including vaccinations. To keep our volunteer drivers and passengers as safe as possible, we ask that they all wear face coverings. We've been able to offer free face masks to volunteer drivers and service users thanks to Tesco who gave us a grant for Covid-19 related expenses and to Oakwood Pharmacy for providing us with masks and hand gel at cost price.

In January 2020 we launched our wheelchair loan scheme. It's has run without interruptions during the pandemic and Miranda will tell you more in a bit.

In May, we began planning for the return to our full list of services. We needed to know which jobs our volunteers were happy to do and gather opinions on whether we should ask volunteers and clients their vaccination status. We sent out a newsletter to all volunteers which included a link to a survey. 29 of our volunteers completed the survey and many volunteered for more tasks. 26 people completed the question about whether we should ask about vaccination. The consensus was that we should.

So, on September 1st we returned to our full service. The job sheet that telephone coordinators use has been amended to include a question on vaccination status. We will still try to provide help to someone who is not vaccinated, but we make the volunteer aware of this before releasing the name of the client. The information isn't recorded on file.

Just a quick admin note - The telephone coordinator has a list of volunteers and the jobs each has opted to do. We've updated the lists from the survey returns. If you were unable to complete a survey, we've defaulted to your pre-covid choices. If you wish to change your choices, or need to update your contact details, email address etc, please could you complete one of the pink forms? They're on the table at the back of the room. Thank you.

As you can see from the stats on the display boards, the number of jobs we're doing is down, apart from befriending which is massively up. Obviously, the lack of face-to-face medical appointments has played a part, and possibly greater support from friends, neighbours and family. Many people are still very cautious about going out. The Steering Group think it's a good idea to relaunch the scheme with a leaflet drop and renewed publicity later in the year to ensure that everyone in our two villages knows that the Good Neighbour Scheme is still operating and now offering all the services we did prior to the start of Covid19. If you have any suggestions as to how we can promote the scheme, please let us know - there are Suggestion forms on the tables at the back, and a Question and answers session after refreshments.

And lastly, in 2019 we decided to organise a 'Picnic in the Park' for spring 2020, open to all residents. Well, that got kiboshed by Covid! But was resurrected by an enthusiastic team of Jo, Claire, Fiona Page and Emma Lambourne as the Community Picnic that ran so successfully on Sunday September 12th. There were games and entertainment, prosecco and cake and even an unscheduled air display! It was part funded by the Parish Council. Thank you to everyone who helped and everyone who supported it.

And a very big thank you to all our volunteers from the Steering Group. We all know how difficult the last 18 months have been, and some volunteers may have felt under used. Please spread the word that the Good Neighbour Scheme is open for business as usual.

Tricia Shakespeare - Chair of Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves Good Neighbour Scheme