



KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Practical help | Advocacy & advice | Befriending | Emotional support



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



REGISTERED CHARITY

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ABOUT KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Vision

We want to see hope and wholeness brought to people's lives in Ladywood, North Edgbaston and Harborne, contributing to communities that are thriving and full of life.

Mission

KNS is a Christian charity in Birmingham that exists to:

1. Provide support to people in our community who are in need by offering a broad range of help including practical & emotional support, advocacy and befriending.
2. Bring people in our community together by reaching out, offering friendship, providing opportunity to get to know one another, and enabling people to be good neighbours to help others flourish.
3. Ensure no one is neglected or forgotten about by standing with people, helping them find the support they need, and responding to gaps in provision locally.
4. Work with other groups and organisations in our community and across the city to strengthen networks of support which contribute to seeing lives and communities changed for the better.

Values

The support we provide is shaped by how we express our values including grace, kindness, acceptance, compassion, honouring the individual, caring for the whole person, working in partnership and building relationships.

We are a faith-based organisation. Our values are based on the Bible and the person of Jesus. We are motivated by the love of God and the example of Jesus Christ.



STAFF TEAM

At the end of 2025 we had 18 paid members of staff, averaging 21 hours per week

goodbye

In 2025 we said goodbye to six members of staff: Bram, Helen W, Katharine, Emma, Ruth & Victoria

hello

But we also welcomed six new staff members to the team! Zoë, Toni, Rachel, David, Felicité and Laura

All our staff are paid a real Living Wage

Helen has been with KNS since 2006!

20 YEARS



Christmas 2025 staff awayday

Staff singing at our 25th anniversary celebration



CEO REPORT

HARRY NAYLOR



Following on from celebrating Karis Neighbour Scheme's 25th anniversary last year, we have seen a year of some significant landmarks and change in 2025.

Firstly, we passed a significant landmark this year, supporting well over 2,000 individuals and families this year across all the areas of our work - 2,139 in total, up just under 9% on the year before. This just represents the number of adults we've worked directly with, meaning that when we take into account the impact on whole families, including children and other dependents, we've impacted several times this number of people overall.

This increase has partly come from some of the newer areas of our work having become well established, 18 months into our delivery of Social Prescribing to our closest group of GP practices and now two years into our Men's Space project. These projects represent two different strengths of Karis and our work.

Our Men's Space work has built on our other established befriending projects, and has this year joined the wider Body, Mind & Spirit Partnership, alongside Karis BeFriends, recognising the importance of specific work to reach out to and gather men together – finding activities which are meaningful and provide opportunity for connection. We've continue to see the importance of this kind of work which can reach out to people who are for one reason or another isolated or lonely and help bring them into places which build community and develop mutual support.

However, our links with health and adult social care are really significant within these areas of work as they can be routes to connect with people who don't have contact with any other support or help.

And this is where our Social Prescribing work has been another great model of closer working between community based groups such as ourselves and statutory services, in this case Primary Healthcare. We've seen our Social Prescriber, Kalbinder, build really strong links with practice

teams, with GPs, but also have the resource through our wider projects to connect with the practical and social support patients need – not only into our work but through that network of support we work with locally – notably this year building stronger connections with Re.Future and their Form of Clouds project based at Perrot's Folly, but also a whole host of other community groups and activities that patients are supported to connect to.



At the time of writing we have recently hosted another Network Breakfast, which have become a regular opportunity to host people from across our areas of work to come together and strengthen connections – supporting our goal of building better networks of support locally. It's fantastic to see the energy and ideas that can come from having so many community minded people in the same room and I think testament to this is that we have often found the events running over time because people are finding the conversations so productive!



However, the other driver of reaching the milestone of supporting over 2000 people this year are the challenges people continue to face around cost of living and around a lack of services or support. We continue to connect with a large number of people who are in temporary accommodation and the wide range of pressures that people can experience as a result of this. We will continue to respond where we are able to to these emerging needs, this is particularly evident in our Children & Families' work where the team not only are looking at how to respond to practical needs but how to provide more opportunities for people to get involved as active participants in groups and activities.

As well as reaching this milestone, the other significant theme this year has been a lot of change within the leadership of our various projects, the leads in five of our seven project areas have changed in the last 12 months. This has meant saying goodbye to a number of very experienced staff, notably Bram Scott, who had lead Ladywood Community Advice for 10 years, and Helen Watts, who had lead our Listening & Guidance work for nearly 8 years, both of whom retired this year. Also, Ruth Pedzai who officially left us this year, although we had said goodbye in 2024 when she went on maternity leave, who had led our Children & Families' work for over 16 years.

My heartfelt thanks to all of them for all they gave to Karis Neighbour Scheme in their time here, they were all immensely talented in their own fields of work and led their project areas exceptionally well. Likewise to Katharine Harris and Edd Stock, who despite being with us for three and one years' respectively, likewise have made significant contributions, both helping to establish newer areas of work.

It has been a joy to welcome so many new faces to the team as a result, and you will hear from them in their individual project reports throughout this annual report, evidencing the new ideas and energy they bring with them to their work. A particular thank you here as well to Michaela, our administrator, for supporting all of our recruitment and the brilliant job she does around the induction of new staff.

As always, a huge thank you to the whole of the Karis Neighbour Scheme team for enabling our work throughout 2025 – our trustees, our staff team, our amazing volunteers and participants, and the many partners, friends and other supporters who make it possible for us to bring hope and wholeness to so many lives.

I look forward to seeing what 2026 holds for us all.



TRUSTEES STATEMENT



GILLIAN HARLEY-MASON

Karis Neighbour Scheme is now in its 27th year and is going from strength to strength in achieving its vision of bringing hope and wholeness to people's lives. As I hope this report demonstrates, the staff and volunteers are doing amazing work across the different projects to assist individuals and families, old and young, men and women in some of the most deprived and marginalised groups in our city.

2025 has seen ever more challenge and change, due to national and international conflicts, reflected in a constant and rising need for help and support within our area. The team meet these needs tirelessly and compassionately, caring for people on an individual basis and enabling them to thrive. The stories described later, reveal the huge difference that this care makes in people's lives.

There has been a significant turnover in staff this year, more than any previous year, with farewells to well-loved friends and a warm welcome to newcomers. It's been sad to say goodbye, but CEO Harry has navigated these transitions very well and the new team is thriving. I am so thankful to those who've worked for KNS for many years and for their legacy of compassion and excellence, in whose steps we will continue to follow.

Our Board of Trustees are a committed and diverse group, bringing different skills and experience to the governance of the charity, representing the local area, different churches and the NHS, with particular skills in areas of law, accountancy and social policy. I am enormously grateful for their time and diligence in enabling KNS to operate to the highest standards and giving their wisdom and insight to difficult issues, particularly around funding decisions. We had an enjoyable awayday in September examining our governance structures and developing a recruitment strategy for new trustees, focussing on areas to strengthen the gaps in the Board. And we celebrated the brilliant work of Harry in 20 years of service with KNS across different roles, now our most excellent CEO.

With an annual turnover of over £400k we are hugely grateful to all our individual donors and sources of funding from various agencies. Your generosity is vital to enabling the work to continue and without which our impact would be significantly diminished. We hope we can go on partnering with you in the life of the charity.

As we look to the new year with growing challenges in funding, temporary housing, local government policies and the Ladywood Regeneration Scheme, I am confident that KNS will continue to go from strength to strength. Building on the work of all those who have gone before, this current team will go on making a difference and changing the lives of the people they serve. As trustees we are privileged to serve such a wonderful charity and I am honoured to be able to commend this year's report to you. Please contact me if you have any questions.

7 of our 8 current board members



THIS YEAR WE HAVE ...

Had the most staff change overs – six out, six in!

Hosted two Network Breakfasts for local members of the community, charities and businesses to connect with us

Taken part in Shelter training workshops to help understanding of challenges around housing

Trustees had an away day

Welcomed 33 new volunteers

**taken participants on 11 group trips: six for Children and Families
and five for Karis BeFriends**

Hosted three work experience students

*Started new initiatives in the Men's Space project -
coffee and chat, and a monthly evening event!*

**Staff had a brilliant 'escape room' event as part
of our team awayday, created by CFW project
worker Rach!**

**We ran a proactive project for
patients with dementia through our
Social Prescribing work**



OUR VOLUNTEERS

This year 87 volunteers helped us to support clients

Roles included: undertaking befriending, running crèches, helping to serve refreshments, helping with administration in the office and even interviewing for new project staff!

In 2025, volunteers donated 1,701 hours of their time towards supporting clients. We value their commitment and effort. Many volunteers have been with us for over 10 years. Nine of our current staff (out of 18) came to us through volunteering or having had support from us.

I think that if I had to make a choice as to who I would choose to do voluntary work for then it would be Karis. Having done voluntary work here and there for a few years now (since around lock down) I can honestly say that people such as David and before him Edd, are great people to be around.

Volunteering gives me the satisfaction that, although I am unemployed, like a lot of other very capable people, I can still be seen to be able to work.
Stephen, Men's Space Volunteer

66

'Time for Tea - It is the kind of place I'd like to go to!! Warm, welcoming, and thoughtful every time. Seeing the lady I befriend has brought me such pleasure and enriched my life: she has an interesting life and we enjoy staying in touch in between the Sunday events'

Helen, Volunteer, Karis Befriends

99



Luke is a medical student volunteering with Karis Befriends at some of our group events. He also supported, through home visits, Edwin, a gentleman who was mostly housebound. Those visits made such a difference in encouraging and connecting with Edwin in what was his last season of life. In 2025, Luke made over 40 befriending visits to Edwin, bringing him along to Senior Life Group several times and taking him on trips to Bournville Garden Centre and a Christmas Carol Service.

At Edwin's funeral, the family thanked Luke. He said *"Getting to know Edwin over the past year and a half has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. What started out as volunteering to help Edwin with his loneliness quickly became genuine friendship. Together we would chat about his love for history, his job working on telephone lines and his many holidays to Benidorm! I got to meet one of his closest friends and together we would have a lot of laughs. It wasn't always easy because Edwin suffered from declining health in the final six months of his life but during that time period it was a real gift to be able to visit him and help him through that. I still remember how happy he was to hear that I was having a baby and moving house, and he was one of the first people I told. The connection with Edwin was one of true friendship and it has been a relationship that I will never forget and always cherish."*



"I started volunteering at Karis five years ago after donating some goods to baby bank. I'd seen a programme about Karis many years ago (Secret Millionaire) and was blown away by their work, but didn't have time then to get involved. Five years ago I came and met Ruth (then Children and Families lead) and started volunteering at baby bank. I was immediately impressed by the time taken with each client even when things were hectic and stressful and the compassion and love shown to people during some of their worst times. It's been an amazing time being a very small piece of this part of Karis's work and getting to know all the wonderful staff and volunteers who help to improve the lives of so many people around them, with humility, grace and kindness."

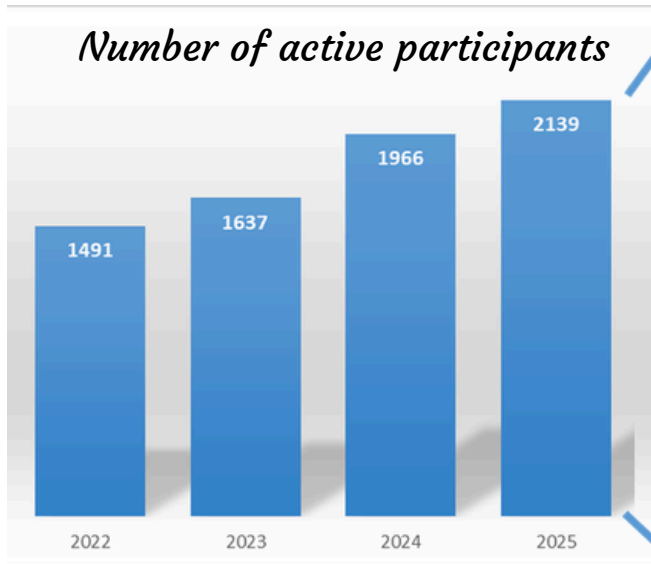
Hannah, baby bank volunteer

"The sense of fun around the table, competition when the play gets tight, and friendship and conversations which happen when we're resting between games is a highlight of my week. We all really value the good that it does us, from the physical exercise to the time and friendships with others. It's a great work out for body, mind and spirit. I love it."

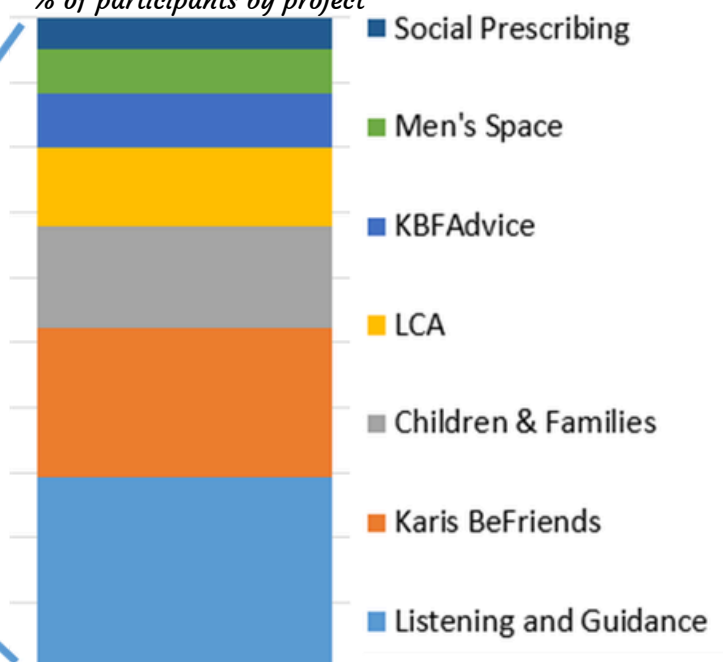
Andy, Men's Space volunteer



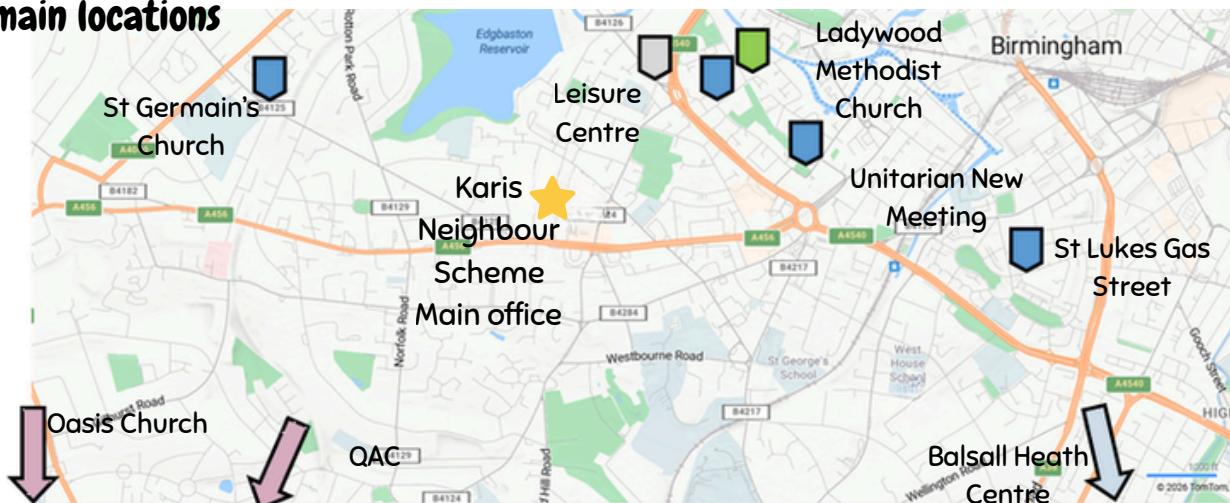
THE YEAR IN STATISTICS



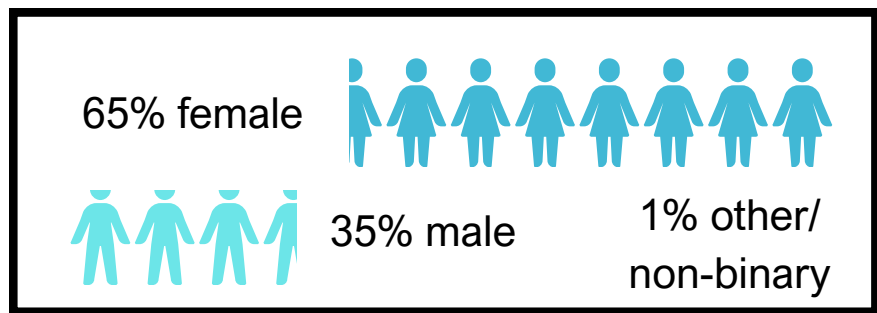
% of participants by project



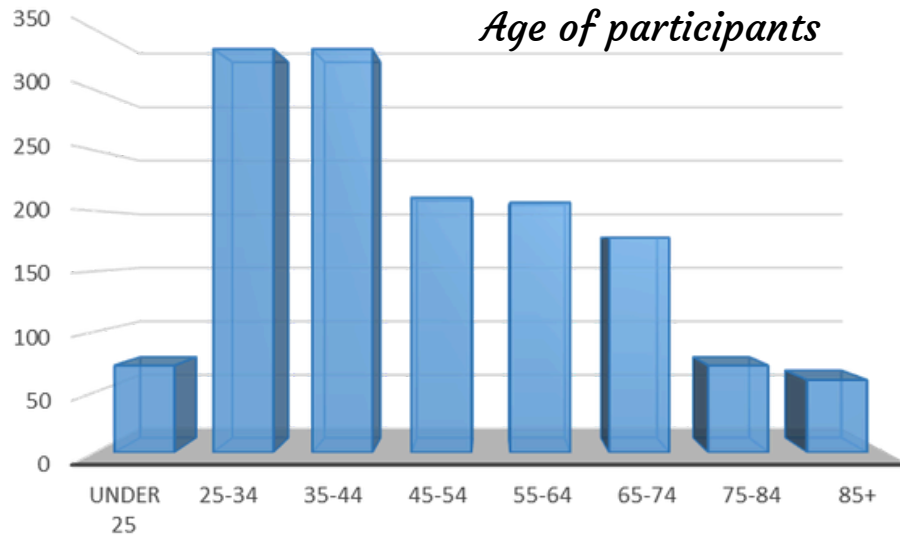
our main locations



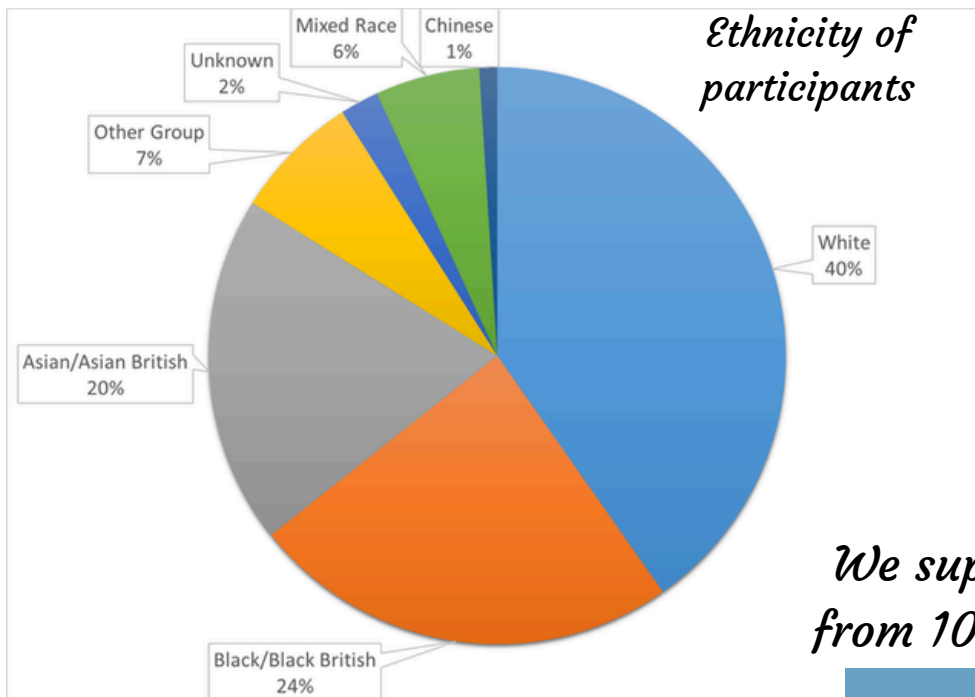
Gender of participants



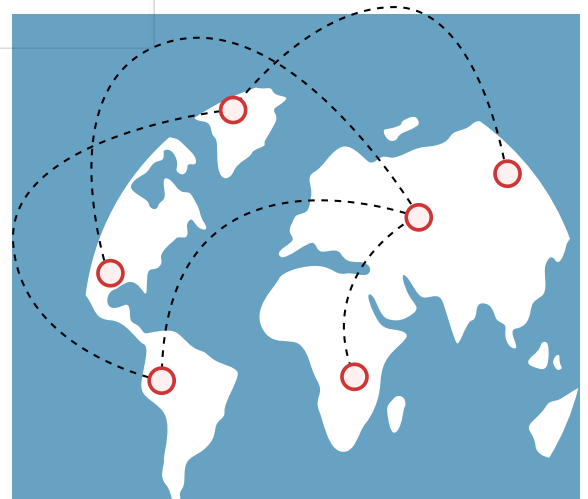
Age of participants



Ethnicity of participants

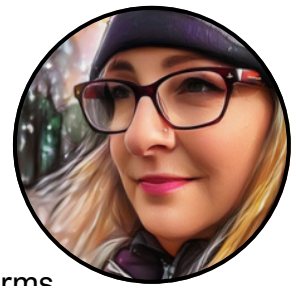


We supported participants from 106 different countries



FUNDRAISING

HANNAH ENO



It is wonderful to be able to say that we had an excellent year at Karis in terms of fundraising, receiving more than £204,000 in charitable funding over the course of the year. This came from 30 Trusts and Foundations, six of whom were new to us. This means we have a sector-beating rate of just more than 1 in 3 applications being successful and is a great credit to what we do at Karis. As ever, we are extraordinarily grateful to the Trusts that support us, the Trustees who take the time to consider an overwhelming number of applications each year, and all the administrators who help to run those processes, many of whom do this in addition to other jobs or gratis.

This year we received two financial one off gifts from local churches, and are regularly supported by two other local churches, and we had several significant donations from individuals this year - we are so appreciative of the generosity shown. We are grateful to The Wand Medical Centre who gave a large donation in December. In a lovely moment of circularity (given most of our referrals to baby bank are from health professionals), nursing and midwifery students at Birmingham City University organised a fundraiser to benefit the baby bank. They not only raised over £800 from a cake sale for us but also made a huge collection of baby equipment, nappies and formula, and one of the students later came and volunteered with us for a morning helping to sort donations. We thank them and their tutors who organised the event. We also had donations from Tommee Tippee (via Baby Bank Alliance), Apple Store Birmingham and Ickle Bubba, all for baby bank.

The fundraising climate is generally acknowledged to be quite difficult these days with high competition for limited funds, a decline in donations from individuals to charities, and a number of Trusts pausing, reviewing or closing their programmes. We are therefore very appreciative to have been considered and funded by so many. We also acknowledge the immense impact that individuals have on our work, including our volunteers who freely give their time and expertise to us and the people we support.

Delivery of baby bottles from Tommee Tippee



Students at Birmingham City University fundraise for us



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

*Thank you to all who give their time or money to us
If you'd like to support us, please get in touch with us as follows*



- Volunteer with us! There are a range of roles available. Contact admin@karisneighbourscheme.org



- You can donate used goods to our baby bank – we take most items as long as they are in good condition. To check what we accept and arrange a donation, please contact babybank@karisneighbourscheme.org



- You can donate money to us via our Wonderful donation portal, or by BACS or cheque – see www.karisneighbourscheme.org/donate.php



- If you are a Trustee of a charitable foundation and would be interested in hearing more about our work, please contact hannah.eno@karisneighbourscheme.org



- If your business would like to support us, please contact Hannah as above.



SOME STORIES

Ahmed had had a heart attack in 2018, which left him partially paralysed down his right side and he then underwent major heart surgery. He used to be a musician but since his heart attack has struggled to get the motivation to continue.

Ahmed had struggled with a lack of trust in his medical care. We were able to take some small steps with him around this, helping him download the NHS app so he can view his own medical records and see what his prescriptions are. Taking the time to listen to his concerns, which is something he felt others hadn't done, has helped Ahmed look forward, he has become much more positive and hopeful. Ahmed is planning to share more about one of his passions, making music, at our next visit – something he's really looking forward to.

Men's Space

Donald, aged 56, came to us as a single person with a chronic health condition. He was referred by a social worker and had no income.

We were able to help him apply for Personal Independence Payments, Universal Credit and a blue badge application.

With our support, Donald gained a total of £16,147 (including backdated payments) and now has better ongoing financial support.

Ladywood Community Advice

“Your help made an immense difference. I didn't know I could get help with filling in forms or that someone could accompany me to the court hearing. I couldn't have gone without your support.

One of your workers also gave me information on the Olio App to get free food as I'd never heard of it. I was going without food before that - I did qualify for the food bank but that was limited in amount.”

Ladywood Community Advice

Sophie was referred to us by a domestic abuse charity. She was pregnant, and had fled her home some distance away in the night with nothing. She was living temporarily in a women's refuge who referred her to us for baby items for her forthcoming birth. We were able to supply her with a Moses basket, sheets and blankets, baby clothes for the first six months, a newborn buggy, baby bath, bottles, a steriliser, toys and books, 150 nappies, a changing mat, baby shampoo, nappy cream, cotton wool and washing cloths, muslins, a baby towel and a playmat. Once mum has had the baby, we will be able to offer follow up support, such as more clothing bundles when baby needs the next size of clothing.

We also provided mum with several gifts including a toiletry set and pampering items, as well as practical items like maternity and breast pads. Wherever possible we do this to help people feel loved and cared about. We also considered Sophie's wider needs, in line with our approach of considering the whole person, so we connected her to our befriending support. As a result Sophie has received regular visits, including trips out, as well as coming to our weekly drop-in group. This emotional support and listening ear has started to help mum and baby to meet other people locally and re-build support networks.

Children and Families Work and Baby Bank

When we first met Bill several months ago, he was fairly reclusive and spent most of his time at home. He only left the house for essential shopping or the rare visit to church.

Over several visits, we explored whether Bill might like to go out together to take a walk or maybe visit places that he felt were meaningful to him. He eventually agreed, to a walk around the Reservoir, then later a pub in central Birmingham that he used to visit with his late wife. During this time, Bill reminisced warmly about past visits with his wife, smiling as he spoke.

The time we spent together and the outings we took helped him reconnect with important memories, process past experiences, and rediscover enjoyment in being out and about.

He has moved from being largely housebound and withdrawn to someone who is now engaging much more regularly with the community, and rebuilding confidence in social situations.

Men's Space

A patient referred to us with a history of difficult past relationships was struggling with feelings of hopelessness and estrangement from her adult children. She had occasional suicidal thoughts and was only prevented from acting on these by her faith.

Over many sessions we attentively listened and helped her to reflect on her strengths and competencies, despite her challenges. We discussed sources of hope through texts and relaxation techniques that helped her to self regulate emotional and physiological responses to stress.

The patient reported that the sessions had been cathartic and that she felt much better. This example shows the benefits of being listened to, heard and believed, and the power of disclosure in a safe and confidential setting.

Listening and Guidance



One of our Karis BeFriends participants helping with group activity preparations in the office

Over many years we have befriended and supported Elsie through the Karis Befriends project and she is well known to us, often popping into the office to talk to staff.

A change in her circumstances this year meant that she needed to make some changes around how she paid for bills and managed her money. Because this is all done online now it was very difficult for her to navigate, so we were able to support her to open a basic current account and set up direct debits for the first time in her life. This required both visits to the bank and also helping her to get familiar with online use.

We also provided some support and reassurance along her journey of decreasing mobility, enabling her to remain independent in managing how she copes with everyday activities.

Karis BeFriends

KARIS BEFRIENDS OFFERS SUPPORT TO THOSE AGED 50+ WHO ARE ISOLATED OR LONELY, ENCOURAGING OLDER PEOPLE TO CONNECT, PARTICIPATE, CONTRIBUTE AND FLOURISH IN LATER LIFE

KARIS BEFRIENDS

HELEN BELL AND TAHLIA GREEN



Karis Befriends is part of the Body, Mind and Spirit Partnership of church linked organisations across Birmingham. We have continued to receive referrals from local GP's, health professionals, social workers, social prescribing link workers, community organisations, relatives, friends or individuals making contact themselves.

Our regular befriending has continued through the staff team, volunteers and our enabling participants. They have carried out home visits, trips out, phone calls and accompanying people to appointments.

One highlight this year, was taking 2 older people to the CBSO 'cuppa concert'. This is especially focused at helping those with dementia to enjoy live music and join in. It was absolutely amazing seeing how they interacted

with the music - one conducted the musicians throughout! She said "You don't realise the world of a difference this has made to me! Thoroughly enjoyed it!"

Alongside our befriending, we offer those we connect with opportunity to get involved in our fortnightly Art Group, weekly Senior Life Group and our bi-monthly Sunday afternoon 'Time for Tea' events, as well as other one off activities. Part of our aim is to get people talking and supporting each other, helping to build their confidence and giving opportunities for people to forge new friendships. Through this year we have definitely seen each group flourish and those who come invite friends too.

'I can't thank you enough for your visits - I really look forward to you coming. Thank you for the daffodils - still looking good on the window sill. I love to receive the 'news' from Karis and the puzzles! And thank you for the 'goody bag' - much appreciated! Thank you so much for everything.'



102 hours
spent on the
phone



**This year, Karis Befriends
has supported 180 older
adults through 2,781 points
of contact.**

100th
**Two participants
turned 100!**

Senior Life Group

Senior Life Group continues to meet weekly, in partnership with Churchcentral South. We've had various trips out, discussions, opportunities to sing together, be creative together, celebrate birthdays, enjoy quizzes and refreshments. We've had time laughing together, share tears together and hearing from one another. Much of what we do has been embedded in the participants offering suggestions, sharing ideas, contributing more within the group, cheering one another on and encouraging new people to grow in confidence.



Time for Tea

This year, we have had 5 Sunday afternoon Time for Tea events at QAC in Harborne, in partnership Churchcentral South. Each time we enjoy food together and quizzes with prizes and opportunity to make friends and catch up with others. We have had themes around New Years' resolutions; thinking about good habits to keep doing; friendship; talking about and looking after our Mental Health; sharing our opinions and how we can make stronger communities; and an opportunity to remember on Armistice Day.

166 birthday
cards sent out

"It is important to leave the house and meet people. I've realised people are very important to me and coming keeps my mind active"



Art Group

Art Group has continued to be led by one of our participants and meets every other week, with a core group of participants who attend most of the sessions. This year has seen a variety of activities, group work and individual projects. The group created a wall display from drawing and stitching an outline of their faces, made their own Christmas wreaths and Christingles and crafted paper tissue collage projects.

Those in the group often give encouragement and support to one another and share about other activities and events in the surrounding areas and have an active WhatsApp Group!

So much of what we do and who we are through Karis Befriends is a direct result of the ongoing support and initiative of volunteers and those participants who enable our activities in so many different ways! We are so grateful.



31 people attended Art Group

As we continue to journey with older people, we have lost a number of them during this year. We count it as a privilege to know, remember and journey with people in their later years.

MEN'S SPACE IS A BEFRIENDING PROJECT FOR ISOLATED MEN OVER 50, HELPING TO BUILD CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTION THROUGH INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT AND GROUP ACTIVITIES

MEN'S SPACE

DAVID FARRUGIA



David began the role as the Men's Space Project Coordinator in February 2025, after moving up from London with his family. Before that he had worked as an IT Manager for over ten years, while also serving as a pastoral leader through his church for more than twenty years.

David began in his role by contacting every known Men's Space participant individually, introducing himself and offering a one-to-one meeting. These early conversations were invaluable. They gave insight into each man's personal circumstances, challenges, and hopes, and helped to understand the barriers that had prevented some from engaging more fully.

From these initial points of contact, further home visits were arranged, as well as in-person catch-ups or trips out, which quickly developing into ongoing, regular support for many individuals. This relational groundwork became the foundation for everything that followed. It helped build trust, establish consistency, and ensure that each man felt seen, heard, and valued.

Gardening



Early in the year, David established a gardening group at St Germain's Church. This group provided an opportunity for men to work outdoors, learn new skills, and contribute to a shared community space. For some, the sense of achievement and routine became a very important part of their week.

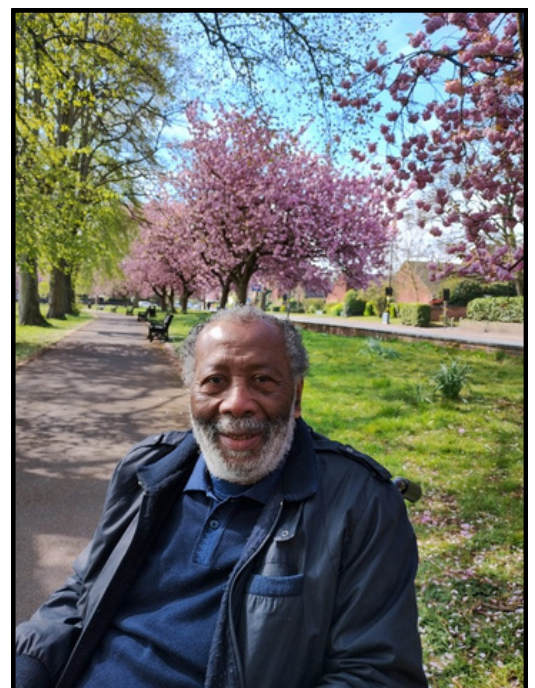


**Men's Space
supported 112
participants
in 2025**

Table Tennis

Table tennis club remains popular with a high level of friendly competition amongst players! This takes place weekly at Ladywood Leisure Centre who kindly provide facilities free of charge, and we usually have around 5-10 men attending each week.

"David has helped me sort some things out with housing and decision making. Having this help has shown me how to make smart choices to protect myself. I have one good friend now and we support each other."



Walking Group

As spring arrived and the weather improved, we began to develop group activities that could bring men together in ways that felt accessible, purposeful, and enjoyable. The first was a walking group, in partnership with Karis Patient Participation Group. This offered gentle exercise, fresh air, and a safe space for conversation, a simple but powerful combination for improving wellbeing.



Having more contact and support has made me feel more supported and hopeful

Coffee and Chat

In late summer, we started a weekly Coffee and Chat drop-in, providing hot drinks, hot food, and a warm, welcoming environment where men could relax, talk, and build friendships. For some attendees, this became their main point of social contact each week, and the consistency of the space helped reduce isolation and improve confidence.

Events Nights

David also began a monthly Men's Space Events Night, held on Saturday evenings. This community-focused event was designed to bring men and women together for fun, connection, and shared activity. Each event has included either a quiz or bingo session, with prizes and free hot food provided. These evenings have been supported by a small team of dedicated helpers, whose contribution has been essential in creating a friendly, inclusive atmosphere.

The Events Nights have quickly become a highlight for many participants. They offer a rare opportunity for people to socialise in a safe, positive environment, and they have helped strengthen community bonds. Feedback from attendees has consistently highlighted the sense of belonging, enjoyment, and relief that comes from having a space where they can simply have fun and be themselves.

Across the year, Men's Space has grown into a vibrant, varied, and relationally rich community project. Many participants who were initially hesitant or withdrawn have become regular attendees, and several have brought friends along, a clear sign of trust and ownership. With continued support and with the help of a wonderful team of volunteers and participants, we can hopefully expand our reach, strengthen our partnerships, and develop new opportunities that empower men to thrive. David stated: "I'm deeply thankful to God for the opportunity He has given me to support such a powerful and much-needed provision for men in Birmingham and I'm excited to see where He leads us in the year ahead."

I also regularly see David from Karis. We chat, and he sometimes helps me with practical things and takes me out. I feel much more positive about life in general now ...

Men playing chess at the Board Games club



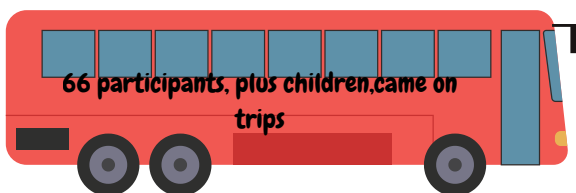
**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORK SUPPORTS LOCAL FAMILIES TO
REDUCE ISOLATION AND PROVIDE EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL
SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP**

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RACHEL D'MELLO AND LIZ BROWN

In the Summer, we said goodbye to Hannah and Emma, who had covered Ruth's maternity leave in the baby bank and project lead roles respectively. We welcomed Laura to the baby bank role and Rachel to the project lead role, both of them started in September.

Despite all the change, the work remained consistent and we had numerous referrals from asylum seekers, refugees and homeless families (many from the local hotels). Each person we work with has different needs and its been such a privilege to be able to offer such a broad service to them. This summer we managed to run a trip each week for our families, which included visits to the IKON gallery, a beach trip and a Botanical Gardens trip (where we took 80 families in one morning!). The families are so grateful for these opportunities and its been so lovely to be able to bless them in this way.



An Afghan lady was heavily pregnant but suffering terribly from a bulging disc. The council had housed her in temporary accommodation - on the 3rd floor with no lift access! She was unable to leave the house at all, and had an 8 year old isolated with her.

She had repeatedly asked the housing manager to move her downstairs but her request had not been actioned.

KNS staff stepped in and wrote to the council, collecting evidence from her GP. Finally, after a council visit, she was moved to a downstairs flat. Its so encouraging to see a positive outcome when we work in partnership with other services.

One of the biggest barriers many of our families face is housing. This is not something we are able to resolve, but where possible we will advocate for them. This can include writing letters to the council about unsuitable accommodation, speaking with the local authority or referring the family to another service. We have seen some success in these areas which is positive.

Emma and Liz attended some workshops on temporary accommodation and how to challenge unsuitable B&B and hotel accommodation. These were very informative and helpful for the team to be able to support with better knowledge.



Welcome to Ladywood Drop In

Our weekly welcome Drop In's were greatly enhanced in 2025 by Eco Birmingham coming and running hourly sessions with us. This involved story telling, crafts and nature activities for the mothers and children. The mothers loved engaging in this and one of our ladies who comes along without her children was seen actively encouraging others to get involved saying "this will help your English!!". It is lovely to see the way that the ladies support and interact with one another - they are an incredibly resilient group of women and have created an environment where anyone is welcome.

"If you come to Karis drop in you won't be lonely any more".



Throughout the year we have seen over 80 different families attend the drop in. One of the highlights has been that a few of the ladies have brought friends along who are new to the area - one lady even approached another lady in a park because she looked lonely.

English classes (ESOL)

Our Friday English classes continue to be popular. From January to July we had two separate cohorts come through - these lessons focused mainly on grammar, reading and writing.

There were 25 people signed up and around 18 attended each week. It has been great to see many women really grow in confidence and make friends with women from other nations. The make up of the class has been so diverse with no one nation dominating so that has really helped the ladies practise speaking in English.

Children and Families Work has supported families with:

- applying for schools
- school uniform
- getting to know other families
- English classes
- temporary bus passes
- registering with GP
- volunteering opportunities
- advocacy and advice
- and much more!

Volunteers

We have worked hard this year to recruit volunteers, especially as several volunteers had to step down over the summer. In 2025 we also saw an increase in our participants wanting to volunteer for the charity because they have experienced the value of what we do and want to give back something and be involved in helping the community too! In October we ran some volunteer training and saw 25 people attend, learning about our work and ways they could help.

I love volunteering with children and families. I know that our hearts are joined deeply with every person we meet.



We have a team of people from all walks of life who support in the varying roles across baby bank, baby bank club, ESOL and Drop in.

Life's better together!



KARIS BABYBANK

LAURA SMITH



This project, started in 2014, originated from a connection with a local food bank where we observed an unfulfilled need for baby items. Since that time we have supported thousands of families, providing everything from prams, cots, beds, blankets, clothes, toys, toiletries, food and formula, amongst other items. We mainly work with expectant mothers who are referred by over 100 agencies across the city. The majority of our clients live within Ladywood and Edgbaston, but we also take referrals from across the city for those who are homeless, do not have access to public funds, are refugee or asylum seekers or have a child in need/protection plan.

Most of our stock is donated to us from generous and kind individuals across the city but we also buy some of our stock where we need to supply brand new items like mattresses, toiletries and formula. A group of amazing volunteers sort through donations and place them in our very organised stock rooms, while our Coordinator makes parcels that are given to referrers or the clients themselves. Where possible, we sit with clients and learn of their circumstances, providing emotional support and advocacy for the range of challenges they face. Where relevant we encourage them to make use of our other Children and Families services, like the weekly drop in group.

**I received all the stuff for baby I am very happy everything is so beautiful..
Thanks for helping me in this difficult time.
I really appreciate and wish all of you good health and happiness who dedicate their time and love to others.
Baby Bank client, 2025**

**"Thank you so much for the donations I collected on Thursday. My clients were absolutely delighted and asked me to pass on their heartfelt gratitude to you.
Keep up the amazing work – it truly is a fantastic project, and your support is making such a big difference."
NHS Referrer to baby bank**



A regular team of hardworking volunteers help sort donations every week



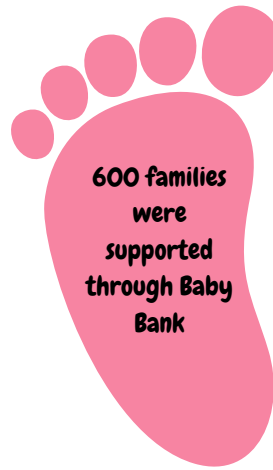
We are one of only two baby banks in the city, so demand is very high, particularly because of the rising costs of living. We are a member of the Baby Bank Alliance which represents about 400 baby banks across the country, and campaigns on behalf of families in need, as well as monitoring how many people are being supported nationally. It won't surprise anyone to know that need has been rising for years, and shows no signs of diminishing.

We receive wonderful feedback from the families who have been supported, one lady saying "I can give my baby the things she needs - this is my dream".

In 2024, demand for baby bank was so high (and outstripping supply) that we developed the **Baby Bank Club**, modelled on food pantries and aimed at families who had some (but limited) income. This subscription service (£2.50 a year) provides nappies and formula at 50% of shop cost and allows us to continue to provide baby bank items to those in desperate need free of charge.

Families using the Baby Bank Club are generally on Universal Credit and there is a specific income threshold in order to be eligible to become members.

All the money that the Club generates is used to buy stock. As well as nappies, wipes and formula, we have a clothes rail with items for 10p each, as well as a table of free items that have been donated to baby bank but which we can't use for those clients (usually items for older children). The Club is run by one of our members of staff and a participant volunteer.



OUR TWO ADVICE SERVICES PROVIDE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT WITH BENEFITS APPLICATIONS AND APPEALS THROUGH FACE TO FACE SUPPORT

LADYWOOD COMMUNITYADVICE

LORRIE BLAKE AND BRAM SCOTT

LCA offers invaluable welfare and benefit support and advice to those living in and around the Ladywood Area. This service has been running for over a decade and is a lifeline for many people struggling on low incomes. Demand for support around Universal Credit, PIP and Disability Living Allowance is high, but we also support people on a host of specific benefits issues and we also help with debt and utilities advice.

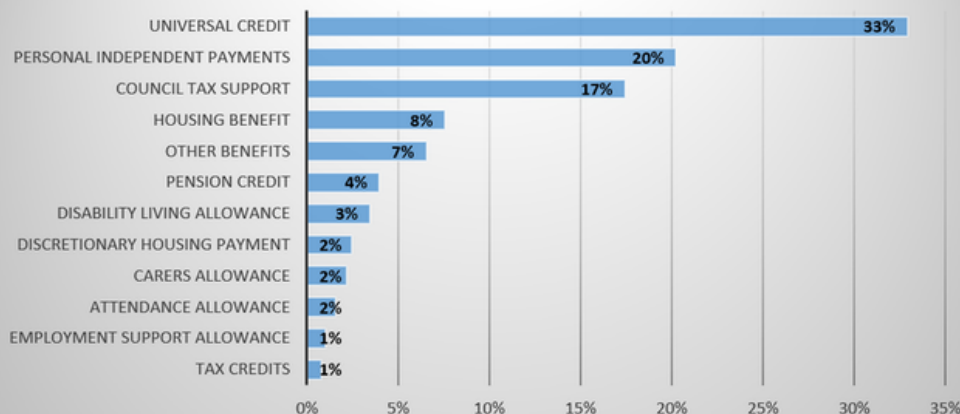
Our service continues to value volunteers who give up their time to help others, particularly in the area of advocacy; supporting local residents primarily with phone calls and form-filling. This year, two trainee volunteers, based at St Germain's church, began seeing clients unsupervised, after completing their training and feeling confident to fly solo. They provide assistance on matters such as bus pass applications, driving licence forms and calls to DWP and Birmingham City Council.

In August we said goodbye to the Ladywood Community Centre, which has been our main hub for over ten years, due to the building being permanently closed down. The community centre also housed the Ladywood Project and Incredible Surplus, two charities that we had close links with whilst at the community centre, as service users were able to benefit from support from all of those services. We still maintain close links with the Ladywood Project as both of our services moved to the Unitarian New Meeting building, still within the heart of Ladywood.

People have also been assisted with the expression of interest form for the household support fund which opened periodically throughout 2025.

**£1.8 million in additional household income
gained with the support of this project**

Types of benefit support offered



Staff and Volunteer Changes

Bram Scott, came to work for Karis on the LCA project, intending to stay for a year on a fixed term contract bringing his wealth of knowledge and experience to LCA; 11 years later in 2025, we said “goodbye” to him as a member of staff, and “hello” to him as a volunteer!

By Bram continuing to volunteer with us, he demonstrates his ongoing commitment to welfare rights and the people of Ladywood and nearby areas.

Toni Green started in November and is a wonderful addition to the team at LCA, having previously worked for Citizens Advice Birmingham for a number of years. She was able to hit the ground running, assisting people with their PIP applications, general benefit queries and grant applications and has continued our outreach service at Gas Street St Luke’s in Attwood Green, increasing the provision to fortnightly.

“(She) was stressed out and upset before and couldn’t cope and the help and advice that Lorrie gave did a lot for us. We are feeling much better about the financial situation and a big cloud has been lifted off me.”

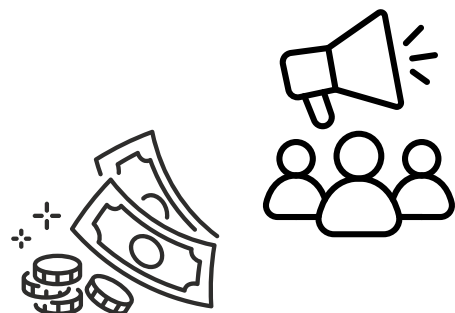
We see clients at our central location at the Ladywood Unitarian Church but also at two outreach locations at Gas Street Church and St Germain’s Church.

This provides access to our benefits advisors to a wider range of people and is a ‘walk in’ service so that no appointment is necessary, making it easier for people to get help.

In 2025, we saw 612 clients, making 1,478 points of contact with them. Many people who seek our support come back to us but we also receive a high number of new referrals.

During 2025 we saw a slight decrease in numbers because of staffing changes and our relocation. However, many clients needed 2-4 appointments in transitioning from Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Housing Benefit over to Universal Credit - these transitions entailed associated problems with overpayments and arrears.

Our benefits appeal success rate remains high with 90% of appeals receiving a positive outcome in our client’s favour.



KBFADVICE

ZOË GORDON



This role involves meeting a wide variety of people, particularly clients with mental health needs and physical disabilities. Many clients find their lives too chaotic to attend appointments in person and so it can be difficult at times to meet up with them, despite their need for support. Home visits really help with this issue because people are more likely to manage this; for some getting dressed or leaving the house can be too much of a challenge.

Zoë started midway through the year, taking over from Katharine Harris, and in the last six months has made 161 home visits to help clients navigate benefits. In her first couple of weeks with us, Zoë had the privilege of sitting in on a tribunal for Personal Independence Payment and the outcome was successful; the client was awarded the full amount of PIP! It was so exciting to be a part of someone receiving what they are due.

Over the last 12 months we have supported 357 clients with 1,001 points of contact helping with:

- Universal Credit Applications and Migrations
- Personal Independence Applications
- Mandatory Reconsiderations
- Appeals
- Attendance Allowance Applications
- Understanding benefit decisions
- Pension Credit
- Housing costs
- Council Tax discounts

**£1.3 million in additional household
income gained with the support of this project**

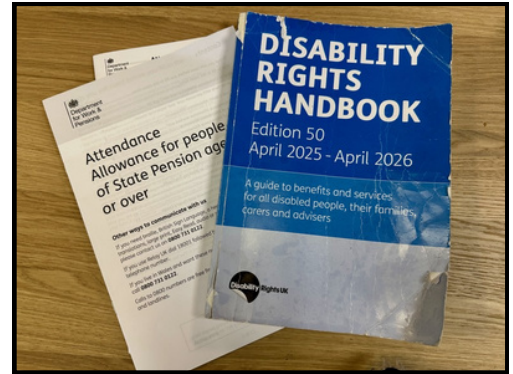
If I hadn't spoken to you I wouldn't have known what I could claim. The service is really good. I have had lots of help from Karis.



"Home visits make a big difference, you did a brilliant job I would not have been able to do it without you."

Zoë says “I do a lot of small things that make a difference.” This year there have been successful Attendance Allowance awards, Migrations to Universal Credit and sorting out Housing Benefit issues. More recently a number of clients have reported that they have received the full amount of Personal Independence Payments, sometimes even before going to tribunal.

Listening to people and making them feel valued is one of the highlights of this role - sometimes it is the first time they have felt heard and supported.



Recently I have been working with a lady with complex mental and physical health needs following an accident many years ago. She has PTSD, anxiety and depression and struggles to understand forms that she used to be able to complete so easily, finding daily tasks exhausting and overwhelming. Having been in receipt of Employment Support Allowance for many years, she was instructed to migrate to Universal Credit. This was an overwhelming demand for her, particularly as someone with no email address or mobile phone.

Much of our support for this lady entailed long phone calls which would have been impossible for her. With patience and time we were finally able to set up the claim. There have been a lot of complications since then with wrong payments, over-payments and incorrect debits, but we continue to support her. She is so thankful for all we have done and the fact that we undertake home visits. It is a real privilege to be able to make such a difference and bring so much light to people who are so overwhelmed and are unsure to whom they can turn.

**“It has given me hope for the future as I never approached anyone for help before. I feel I’m no longer alone in my mental and medical struggles and I don’t feel so isolated. I feel I can now ask for help and not be judged and it’s given me a more positive outlook on my life.
Thank you so much for all you have done to help me, I’m extremely grateful. “**

LISTENING AND GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE TO PATIENTS FROM SEVEN GP PRACTICES IN TWO PRIMARY CARE NETWORKS IN BIRMINGHAM.

LISTENING & GUIDANCE (L&G)

HELEN WATT, ALISON THOMAS, JANE GRIMSHAW, ANTHEA WRIGHT

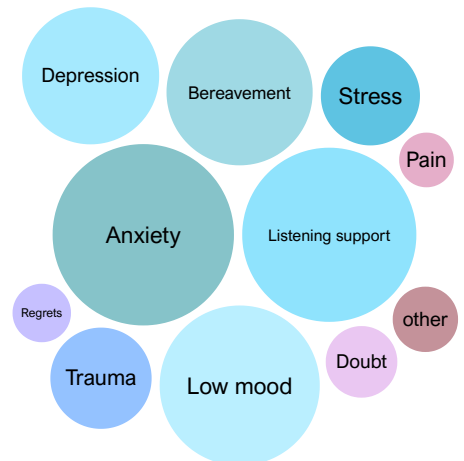
As Chaplains for Wellbeing, we offer face-to-face appointments at both Karis Medical Centre, which has always been our base, and more recently at University Medical Practice, one day per week. We also offer telephone appointments to our patients or a combination of the two. This year has been full of excitement, challenges, and changes. There have been opportunities to grow and flourish and time to say goodbye!

At the beginning of the year, we hosted the ACPG conference “Hope Bearers” in Birmingham. Speakers included our lead chaplain Helen Watts and GPs from Karis Medical Centre (KMC), and was attended and supported by other members of Karis Neighbour Scheme and KMC. The event brought together over 100 participants including doctors, chaplains and others that were passionate about bringing hope to patients.

This year has seen the Chaplains grow and flourish in their individual work and as a team. It has also been a time to prepare for the Lead Chaplain, Helen Watts, to retire at Christmas. Plans were collaboratively developed to ensure that the amazing work Helen did would continue by the other three chaplains (Jane Grimshaw, Anthea Wright and Alison Thompson) after she left, until long term arrangements are put in place.

This year we have worked with 316 patients providing 1,858 Listening and Guidance sessions. These patients have been referred for a variety of different reasons, as shown below

Helen had worked as a Chaplain for Wellbeing in Primary Healthcare since 2016. Helen will be sadly missed by the Listening and Guidance team, KNS and KMC staff as she has brought wisdom, care, support and humour to those she has worked with. She will also be deeply missed by those patients she has journeyed with who have found her compassionate care and support have brought hope and strength through challenging times. We were able to celebrate Helen and wish her well both with the KNS and KMC.



Size of circle represents number of patients referred



Helen wanted to say, “Thanks to everyone for everything! Working at KNS has been such a wonderful experience!”



L&G continues to strengthen links with GPs, Social Prescribers, Health and Wellbeing coaches, Mental Health and Karis Neighbour teams. This is to support each patient in an individualised holistic way.

L&G uses a wide range of resources in patient sessions. This year has seen the Chaplaincy team attend training to enable them to issue “nature prescriptions.”

The natural environment brings physical, mental and spiritual benefits, and a growing number of L&G patients have benefited from access to this.



It's always great to get feedback from our patients who tell us the value of Listening and Guidance and the difference it has made in their lives. So, this report is concluded with recent patient quotes together with expressions of thanks to funders, advocates, and GPs whose help and support makes this work possible, as well as thanks to God for his continuing grace and care

“The chaplain was calm and reassuring. She helped me to regain purpose and self-worth, recognising that the pain I experienced did not define me. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to attend these sessions”
It has given me the time and space to explore my emotions without judgement and allowed me to feel listened to and understood. The activities have given me the opportunity to reflect on aspects of my life and seek ways to have greater control and understanding. It has given me inner strength to move forward.

“I am so grateful to you, I would not be where I am today without the support. The service has been so beneficial. It has been so helpful to have a listening ear, that was understanding. I have grown in so many ways. I feel lighter and look at things differently. My mental health is the most stable it has been. I am eating well, going to the gym and looking to work full time. I am in such a different place.”



MENTAL
Health
MATTERS

**LISTENING
AND
GUIDANCE**

**SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROVIDES HOLISTIC CARE FOR PATIENTS AT
THREE LOCAL GP PRACTICES**

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

KALBINDER MASIH

Karis Neighbour Scheme took on the Social Prescribing role for the Edgbaston Primary Care Network of GP practices part way through 2024, with Kalbinder Masih, our first Social Prescribing Link Worker, joining the team in August.



Social Prescribing has become widespread across Primary Care since 2019. However, the principle of Social Prescribing – enabling patients to access help & support with social, emotional or practical needs in order to improve health and wellbeing – is one which our work has embodied in numerous ways since Karis was established over 25 years ago.

The important principle of Social Prescribing is that the support is personalised – meaning the Link Worker takes time to listen and get to know and understand the person's needs and helps them find the right support helping individual overcome barriers of support with finances, be more socially connected supporting mental health, be active, be healthier and live well more independently improving mental and physical health. Working together creating a plan that is shared and the patient is able to take ownership of and be in control, allowing individual to lead a happy lifestyle.

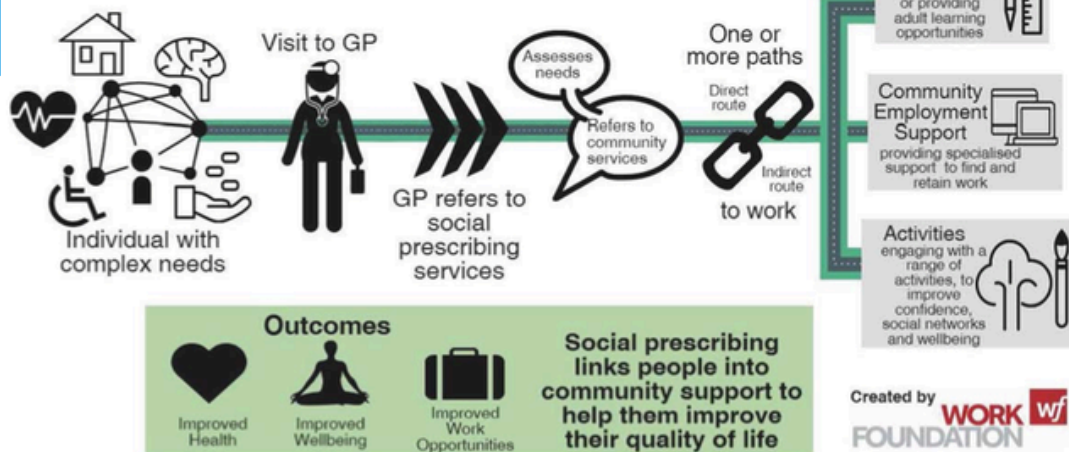
Kalbinder sees patients referred by GPs and wider teams at Bath Row Medical Practice, Karis Medical Centre, and The Wand Medical Centre. Through a number of sessions her role is to understand with the patient what support they may need, what their priorities are, and to help connect the patient to support that is available, most often in their community.

Kalbinder works with multiple partners including the practices' Health Coach, working with patients with chronic ill health, and utilises 'Green Prescribing' - getting people out into nature and reducing isolation to improve mental health wellbeing. She forges connections with those caring for people with dementia working alongside relevant organisations such as the Alzheimer's Society, dementia cafes etc.



The Wand Medical Centre

Social Prescribing Pathway



CASE STUDIES

David was at a low point in life, being bullied at work where he was a professional chef. He had stopped eating or sleeping and isolated himself. The bullying affected his mental health and thoughts of suicide were going through his mind. He decided to go to GP for help but found it hard to talk about his experience. He was seen by Kalbinder, who made referrals to Listening and Guidance and Form of Clouds (art project), both of which would help to build confidence, provided a food bank voucher as he had a low income, and free travel voucher. He also decided to attend prayer sessions at church. Kalbinder supported him in volunteering for food groups where he could share his skills and teach others how to make pasta (his speciality) and his confidence grew enormously with him now looking forward to new opportunities to share his passion.

Asma, a mum with a two year old son had come in from a background of domestic violence. She was suffering from social isolation, with thoughts of suicide. She was having panic attacks when she went outside, was struggling for money and was not eating. It was hard for her to find support for her son and there was a lack of family support. After seeing Kalbinder she was referred to L&G, and Children and Families support. This provided her with the opportunity to attend a weekly drop-in group with other mums, get baby essentials through the baby bank including formula milk and receive befriending for emotional support. Food vouchers and free travel pass were provided to help her with costs. As a result of these interventions, her confidence improved and she was inspired to try to get back to work, by starting some voluntary work that was related to her professional work field. She was also supported to refresh her CV so that when she was ready to apply for jobs, this was up to date and ready to send.

**In six months:
190 patients supported
with 761 contacts
164 referrals received**



OUR PARTNERSHIPS

We work closely with the following partnerships and organisations. We appreciate their support and commitment to our communities.



St Germain's Church



NHS
Birmingham and Solihull
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust



LADYWOOD
NEIGHBOURHOOD
NETWORK SCHEME
CREATING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES



LivingWell
Consortium UK



NCL



OUR SUPPORTERS

We give thanks and appreciation to all who support us.

In addition to those shown below, we also thank: Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust, George Henry Collins Trust, Grimmitt Trust, Hinchley Trust, IM Properties Fund, National Garden Society, Richard Kilcuppes Trust, The Toy Trust, Truelight Trust, Sheldon Trust, Tramore Trust, South Birmingham Friends Institute, WG Edwards Trust, Gas Street Church, Oasis Church, and many individuals.

We thank Birmingham City Council for its support through multiple funding streams, and the companies that have donated to our baby bank this year - Ickle Bubba, Tommee Tippee and Apple Store Birmingham. Finally thank you to the nursing and midwifery students of Birmingham City University who donated both cash and equipment for our baby bank during a cake sale and collection in the Spring term.



The Wand Medical Centre



Forte
Charitable Foundation



THE
GRACE TRUST



Baron Davenport's Charity

Founded 1930



MARSH
Charitable Trust





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