

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER - 1133510
REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER - 06595341



KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Practical help | Advocacy & advice | Befriending | Emotional support

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





ABOUT KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a community project working in the Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne areas of Birmingham. We have been in this community for 25 years, working with local initiatives and partners across the area and are a well known and trusted source of support.

We offer friendship and support to those who are isolated or marginalised in these communities and who are often facing disadvantage or hardship. This includes older people, families and individuals who might benefit from the compassionate, non-judgemental emotional and practical support that we can provide.

We build relationships with people, coming into their lives often at a point of crisis, but maintaining our support as circumstances resolve, for as long and often as we are needed. Much of our work revolves around practical help that can make a big difference to someone's life, but we also offer emotional support throughout.

We are a relatively small organisation, working closely with other groups, charities and services locally and across the city. This helps us to 'fill the gaps' that other provision may leave, allowing us not only to address those gaps as they present, but also to develop new, more permanent projects that address those unmet needs. Our long standing presence here means we are trusted and respected, and able to work with the communities we support to provide on-the-ground, individual support to people in need.



Contents

3	Staff Team
4-5	Board of Trustees
6-7	CEO Report
8-9	Volunteers
10-11	Fundraising
12-13	Statistics
14-15	Stories
16-17	Listening and Guidance
18-19	Men's Space
20-23	Children and Families
24-25	KBF Advice
26-27	Ladywood Community Advice
28-29	Karis Befriends
30-31	Acknowledgements

Karis Neighbour Scheme
c/o Church of the
Redeemer
Monument Road
Birmingham
B16 8UU

STAFF TEAM

At the end of 2023 we had 16 paid staff members,
working an average of 21 hours per week.

Harry Naylor, CEO

Michaela Brookes, Administrator

Hannah Eno, Fundraiser

Victoria Yates, Finance & Operations

Bram Scott, Welfare Rights Advisor

Lorrie Blake, Welfare Rights Advisor

Ruth Pedzai, Children & Families' Worker

Liz Brown, Family Outreach Worker

Helen Bell, Karis BeFriends Project Co-ordinator

Patti Tan, Karis BeFriends Project Assistant

Katharine Harris, KBF Advice Worker

Helen Watts, Senior Chaplain for Wellbeing

Elizabeth Baker, Chaplain for
Wellbeing (left in April 23)

Dilip Patel, Chaplain for Wellbeing

Jane Grimshaw, Chaplain for Wellbeing

Anthea Wright, Chaplain for Wellbeing

Edd Stock, Men's Space Project Worker



**3 new staff joined
us in 2023**

4 of our staff have been
working at KNS for more
than **10** years.

Our average service time
is **6.5** years





GILLIAN HARLEY-MASON

It is my privilege, as Chair of Trustees for Karis Neighbour Scheme, to celebrate the work of this remarkable charity over the past year.

As you read this report, I hope you will appreciate the extraordinary breadth and depth of the compassion and influence demonstrated across all of the individual projects, with so many people whose lives have been blessed by the kindness and skill of each of the members of staff.

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

2023 has been another year of ongoing challenges for many people living in Ladywood and surrounding areas, with the cost of living cuts and changes in benefits causing more financial hardship. It has also been even more competitive to successfully bid for grants with more organisations chasing ever smaller sources of funding.

Despite this, the wonderful team have been determined in finding new ways to increase the scope of the charity's reach, work out where the gaps of need are in the area and find creative and innovative ways to support people. Expanding the Listening and Guidance team, adding more venues for welfare advice, opening the Baby Bank Shop and launching the new Men's Space project are a few of this year's exciting developments and are a credit to the energy and ambition of the team.

Harry Naylor as CEO has continued to raise the profile and reputation of KNS through his ability to connect and network with many different organisations across the city council, charitable sector and NHS. He continues to lead and care for the staff members, as well as adapt and evolve KNS for today's opportunities and challenges.

The Board of Trustees are a motivated team of people who are well placed to oversee the charity from diverse roles and backgrounds. I admire their integrity and rigour as we meet each quarter, and we are about to appoint a new well qualified Treasurer next year to reinforce our governance and financial oversight. We are delighted to play our part in championing and encouraging the work of KNS.

I am delighted to commend this report to you, and on behalf of the Trustees, thank each of the staff and the volunteers for their gracious, caring work in bringing wholeness to individuals and families in our community.

Thank you for your interest in the Charity – If you would like to be in contact I would be more than happy to hear from you.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES



We currently have a board of 7 trustees, the average length of membership of the board is 8 years.

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a Private Company Limited by a guarantee.

First incorporated 16 May 2008

Registered Charity Number: 1133510,

Company Number: 06595341

Improving Quality certificate date: Dec 2021

Members of :
NCVO,
Advice UK,
ACGP,
RightsNet,
ICO

Gillian Harley-Mason has been chair of trustees for KNS for 6 months. She has been a GP at Karis Medical Centre for 30 years and has responsibility for safeguarding at the practice.

Ross Bryson has been a GP for over 35 years at the local Karis Medical Centre and is a founding trustee.

Rebecca Cuthbert has experience in public & voluntary sector management and delivery, working in partnership with health, education & local government.

Kathryn Miles works on strategic research at University of Birmingham. She has an interest in maximising opportunities for KNS.

Steve Watts is a leader of a local church and has been involved in serving the area for over 20 years.

Alex Elphinston joined the board in April 2022. He has a background in law with over 30 years experience as a solicitor.

Henry Aggrey also joined in April 2022. He is the pastor of River of Life Ministry in Ladywood.

Joining us in 2024 - Elizabeth Cudjoe, a chartered account and member of a Ladywood church.



CEO - Harry Naylor



2023 has seen another year of Karis providing much needed support and friendship to people in our community who are isolated, marginalised or struggling.

The breadth of this support has grown with our new Men's Space project starting since October, something we're looking forward to seeing develop and be shaped by those participating and by those who we are looking to partner with to help enable new groups and activities.

We've also seen growth in our Listening & Guidance Team: a huge thank you to Elizabeth for her nearly 9 years' service, retiring in April this year – we have since welcomed Jane and Anthea; with thanks to funding from a new model of specialised Social Prescribing.

The other area of growth has been in the number of people, and the amount of support, we've been able to provide. We noted last year 2022 had been a record year but we've seen a nearly 10% increase in the number of people supported this year to 1632 (1490, 2022) and an even sharper jump in the number of contacts to 9185 (7915, 2022).

Much of this has been driven by our Community Advice work and the Baby Bank, both having seen a lot more need this year, due in no small part to the Cost of Living crisis.

The Baby Bank Club initiative, seeking to provide a step away from the emergency crisis support provided by Baby Bank is one example of how we've sought to respond to this changing need.

Despite the challenging situation around Birmingham City Council's finances, we were pleased to see both of our grants under the Prevention & Communities programme re-commissioned from October.

Both of these are now as part of cross-city partnerships, with the new Birmingham Community Action Network (B:CAN) linking our KBF Advice work to four other community based organisations, with a new focus on supporting people with poor mental health.

This has helped us look forward to the next 12 months with a degree of financial stability, which is welcome amidst a great deal of uncertainty across the wider sector. Particularly as we look ahead to celebrating our 25th anniversary later in 2024.

As ever, and most importantly, I commend the excellent individual project reports, and the stories they highlight, which show the difference our work makes to people's current situations and their sense of hope for the future.

16%
increase in
contacts year on
year

8748
contact hours with
1632
clients

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN 2023



- New 'Men's Space' project started in October, welcoming Edd Stock as project worker.
- Welcomed Victoria Yates as our new Finance & Operations Co-ordinator.
- Elizabeth Baker retired as Chaplain for Wellbeing in April, welcomed Jane Grimshaw and Anthea Wright as new Chaplains for Wellbeing in August and December respectively.
- Staff and Trustees both enjoyed away days, a chance to be together as a wider team and decide on plans and priorities.
- Baby Bank Club piloting new 'pantry' model.
- New B:CAN partnership linking our advice work with other advice groups across the city.
- New link with University of Birmingham Medical Practice.
- Social Prescribing funding via ARRS enabling us to expand Listening & Guidance team.
- Prevention & Communities grant funding re-commissioned.

VOLUNTEERS

Being a volunteer at Karis Neighbour Scheme means you are in a team of wonderful, dedicated, skilful and kind individuals!

home visits
esol teacher
form filling
time for tea
board games
practical tasks
welcoming
admin
babybank club
art group
lifts to appointments
senior life group
esol crèche
babybank
telephone befriending
advocacy
trustees
crips out

7 of our regular volunteers have signed up to Tempo Time Credits. This initiative allows volunteers to earn 'credits' as a reward and to recognise the time they put into helping our communities.



Those signed up can then use these credits in a range of entertainment and physical activity venues!

It is a great way to say 'thank you' with rewards such as a cinema trips, local swimming sessions, entry to museums or days out.



There are over **70** active volunteers across the projects, and we have said goodbye to some (to ventures new) as well as welcoming new faces.

1806 volunteer hours recorded!

Thank you!



One new volunteer was a former client. We intensively supported her 9 years ago when her newborn son was very ill and she was very isolated. Now she has come back to volunteer at the Baby Bank Shop, taking the money and helping with the running. Her volunteering has been mutually beneficial and it has been a delight to see her in action

VOLUNTEER QUOTES

I enjoy[my volunteering] because older people have a depth and experience to life that I don't, I enjoy hearing funny and sometimes outrageous stories of life and receiving advice for my own life.

Ethan

I can't think of a better charity to volunteer with. I truly believe in their vision...I always feel welcomed and appreciated. Thank you to Karis for modelling a great partnership between staff and volunteers. Emma

I enjoy helping out with looking after the children because it makes me boost my confidence [in public], and I want to improve my experience and make new friends.

Sara

I enjoy being at the drop in because it is so very different to what I do with the rest of my time.

Friendships are made & sustained. It's a place where joys & sorrows can be shared without fear , a 'special space'!

Sheila

I love helping people practically so making cakes and giving lifts is a great way to do that. I enjoy chatting with everyone and hearing about their lives ... I always have a huge sense of satisfaction and fulfilment from being part of [KNS volunteers]

Sarah



FUNDRAISING



Hannah Eno

2023 saw changes to the funding landscape for charities that seek support from Trusts and Foundations.

As well as there being a greater number of applications generally across the country, and thus, increased competition for funds, some of the larger Trusts started to announce their intentions to 'spend out'. This means they are closed for applications while they wind down their giving. Other Trusts changed their criteria to reduce the income threshold for charity applicants, meaning medium sized charities like ours no longer qualify for being considered for funding.

Towards the end of the year we started to see that some application deadlines were brought forward because of the overwhelming number of applicants. There is no doubt that over this year, funding has become more challenging to find and successfully attract.

We'd like to thank all the very hard working staff and trustees who have to make difficult choices about who they fund - there are so many worthy applicants.



We are truly grateful to all those who support us – volunteers, donors, organisations, Trusts and Foundations and businesses.

Overall this meant we did see a slight drop in our income through Trusts, and means going forward for 2024/25 we will have to work harder to both find sources of income and make good applications. We are addressing this through trying to further diversify our income streams, hoping to build our individual donor base and maximising our work with corporates, the latter of which has been quite successful with a significant donation from the Morrisons Foundation to support our new Baby Bank Club.

We are grateful to all who have supported us, acknowledged elsewhere in this report, and who have continued to maintain great relationships with us. We are always keen to develop relationships not only for funding but also to demonstrate the impact of our work.

As well as the financial support we received, we are also grateful to the 4,500 individuals who follow our baby bank work on Facebook and to the 288 donations of goods we received over the year that helped us to help vulnerable families. So many people rose to the occasion when we put out pleas like 'Moses baskets urgently needed!' sending us new items through our Amazon wishlist, as well as continuing to supply us with high quality used goods that we pass on to families.

The funding we receive supports all the projects you will read about in this report, whether by paying for materials we use in our drop-in group for families, salary costs for our Listening and Guidance mental health support project, wood for Men's Space (our newest project), or the all important core costs that mean we can employ admin, finance and fundraising personnel. Without those we couldn't function!

5 facts about our funding in 2023

56% of our income came from 27 Trusts and Foundations



5% of our income comes from donations by individuals

Our largest new grant this year was £24,000



We raised £1340 through Crowdfunding and £558 by holding a Barn Dance!

Our Baby Bank was supported by four supermarkets - Morrisons, Asda, Spar and Tesco's



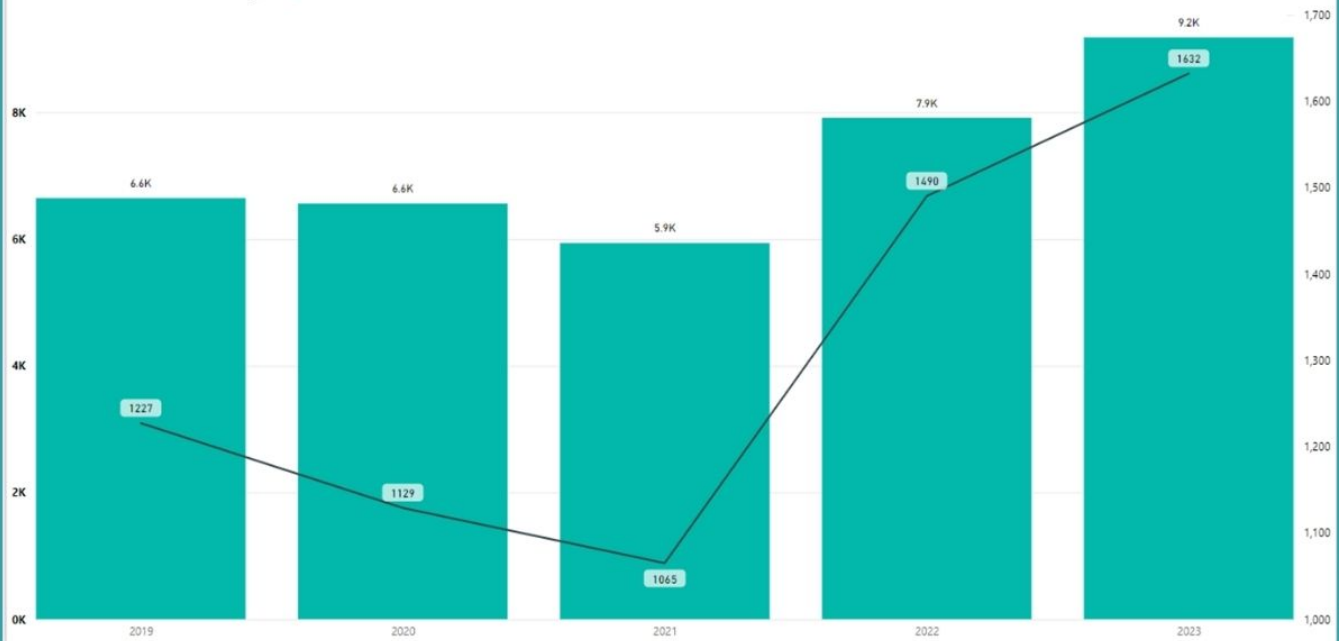
HOW YOU CAN HELP!

If you would like to support us, there are a number of ways you can help!

- 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 <https://karisneighbourscheme.org/giving/>
- If you are a Trustee of a charitable foundation and would be interested in hearing more about our work, please contact Hannah at hannah.eno@karisneighbourscheme.org
- If your business would like to support us, please contact Hannah as above.

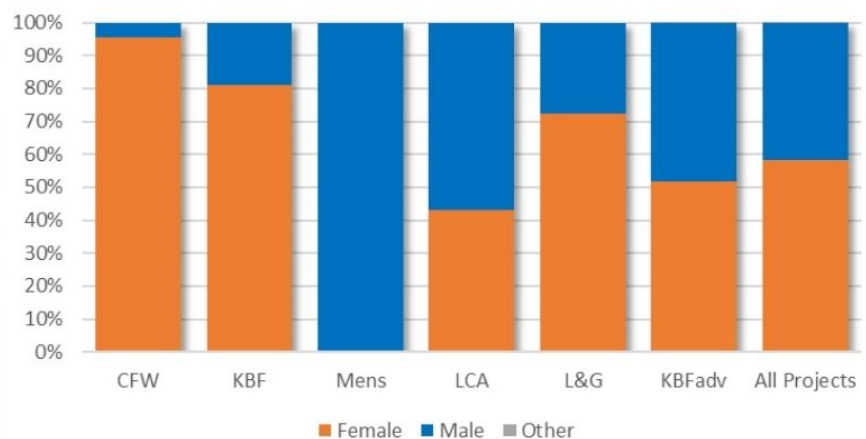


Number of clients and contacts over last 5 years ● Contacts — Clients

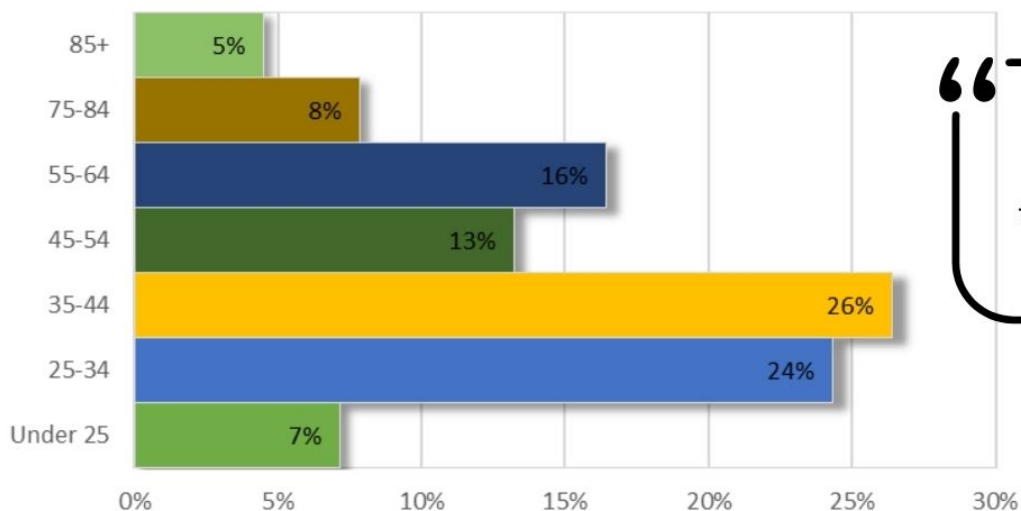


We've seen an 25% increase in clients and 28% increase in contacts since pre-covid records (2019)

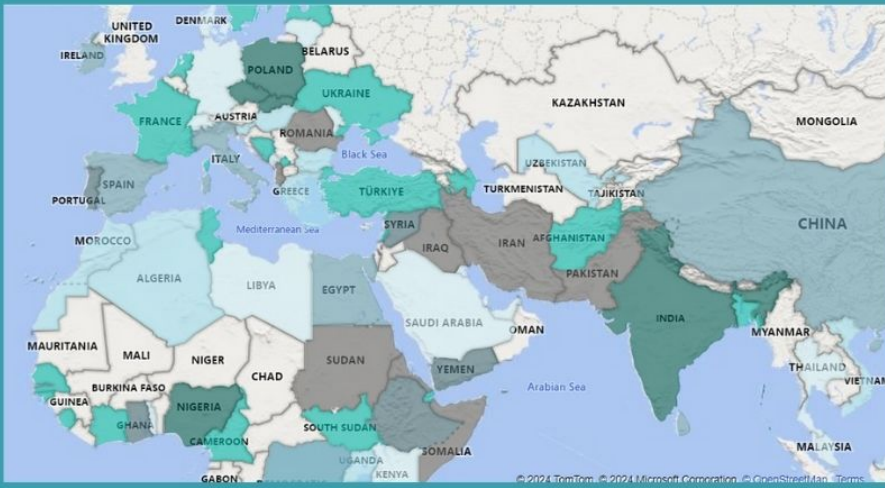
Gender of our clients in each project



Age Groups of Clients

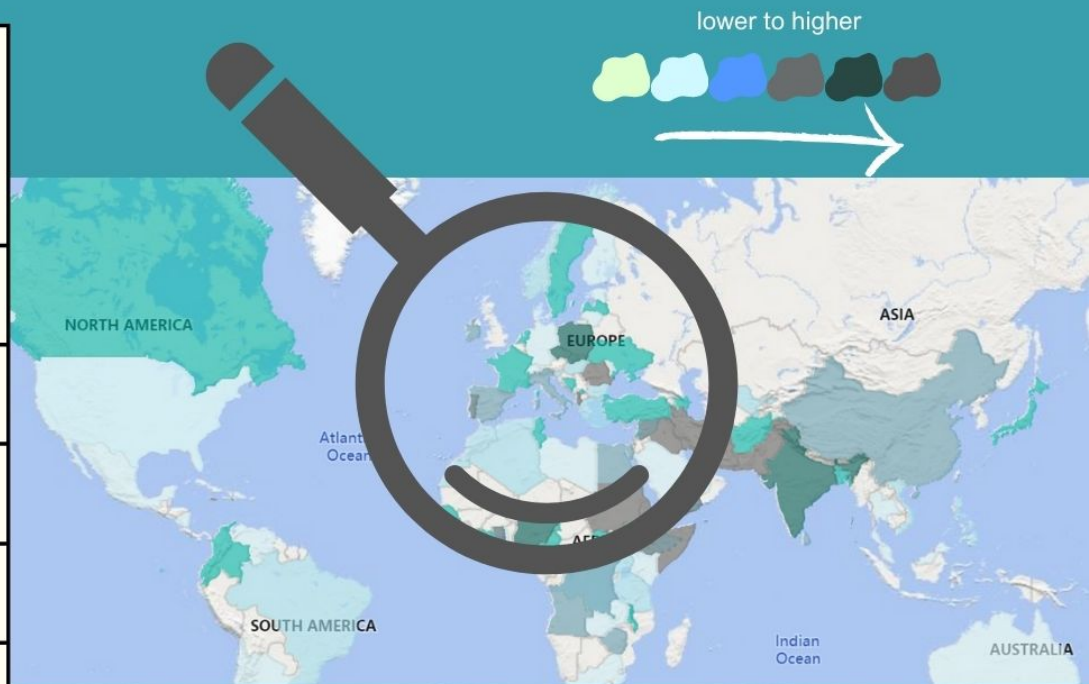


“40% of our contacts were from those who live in B16”

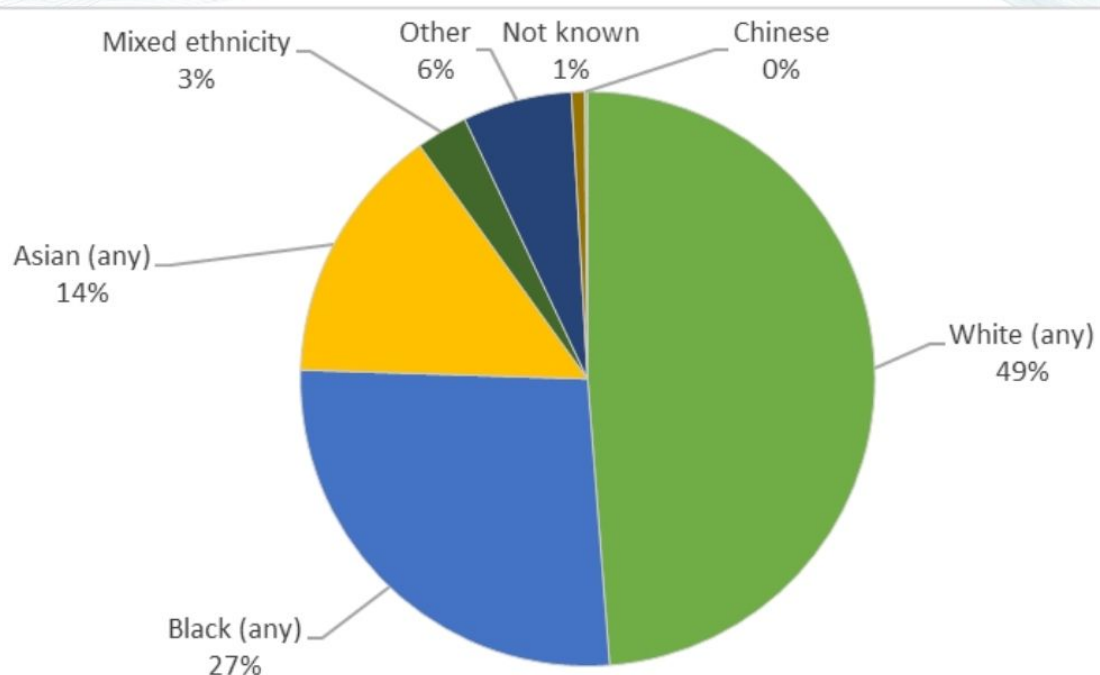


Clients come from at least 113 different countries

Other than the UK, our clients came from these top 5 countries
Eritrea
Sudan
Somalia
Iran
Pakistan



Ethnicity group of our clients



STORIES

When Edd met John he was dealing with severe grief after losing his partner of 25 years. Edd encouraged John to help serve food and get involved in the board games project. Prior to this John had only left the house for doctors' appointments and to pick up his daily newspaper. By getting involved and helping others he regained a sense of purpose and belonging. The Social Prescriber who referred John said that they had seen a positive change in John's outlook after Edd's engagement with him.

Listening & Guidance referred a patient for Children & Families support after a relationship breakdown and bereavement that left her isolated, sad and without access to public funds. We supported her with baby items and food and delivered and assembled a cot for her son, and she started to access Baby Bank Club. We invited her to the Drop-in and on trips and outings, although she struggled to engage in group settings. She has since moved out of the area, but we were able to offer support in finding new connections in her new area.

She told us that during her time with us her wellbeing improved dramatically and she feels more hopeful about the future since meeting us; "Ruth and the rest of the team offer an amazing support emotionally and financially and I'm very happy with [the support]."

91 year old Felicity lives alone in sheltered accommodation. She has been coming to our weekly Senior Life Group for some time, although does struggle with her mobility and feeling low, after the loss of one of her sons. This year she invited another lady from her housing to come too. It has been amazing to see the difference in her as she comes along and looks out for her friend coming too. Her mood is definitely lifted when she is with us, she actively participates, contributing and saying more in the group. She says "Coming here on Tuesday, does so much for me, seeing and being with people".

STORIES



90 year old Ethel is very sociable and enjoys initiating conversation with anyone she sees while out with our staff or volunteers. Although quite vulnerable due to her dementia, it is always a joy to be out and about with her and see her interacting with others, reminiscing and taking opportunities to share her story and encourage others!

She also appreciates the opportunity to come to Time for Tea and is an expert at coming up with the correct quiz answers!



A lonely asylum seeking lady was referred to us and despite a very long walk came regularly to ESOL and the Drop-in with home baked goodies to share. Ruth visited her at home where the lady shared her story which was full of heartache, through talking about it and praying she found a freedom and was visibly brighter and happier as a result.

She enrolled on our 'ESOL for work' course and as a result of Suited for Success support she now volunteers four days a week in a charity shop, reserving the fifth day to help us at Karis!

We also signposted her to a local church where she is getting involved, she fed back to us that when she met us she was bored and couldn't speak English, now she speaks English on a daily basis, has more friends and feels more hopeful about the future.

Listening and Guidance



Helen Watts



Listening and Guidance is available to patients from seven GP practices in two Primary Care Networks in Birmingham.

It's been quite a year for Listening and Guidance! Changes, challenges, growth and grace have been the characteristics of our year, with lots to be thankful for.

We have always had our base at Karis Medical Centre, with patients either coming in person to Ladywood or having telephone appointments. In February, we expanded our service to provide face to face appointments at University Medical Practice. Dilip now works there one day a week. This improved access for their patients has been really important and valued, with the clinical lead saying that the service is 'working wonders' for his patients. Well done, Dilip!

Elizabeth retired in April after almost 9 years in post. She is missed by colleagues and patients alike, and we're very grateful for her contribution to L&G over the years. We gave her a warm send-off and wish her well in her retirement.

1200 hours of
therapeutic
sessions

We faced some challenges securing funding to replace Elizabeth, so Helen and Dilip worked hard to manage the high volume of referrals with reduced capacity. Eventually we were able to advertise for two part-time Chaplains, thanks to the hard work of partners at Karis Medical Centre and our CEO, Harry, who secured a contract with the Edgbaston Primary Care Network to enable a specialist L&G Social Prescriber service.

We recruited in the summer and were excited to be joined by our new Chaplains for Wellbeing. Jane arrived at the end of August, and Anthea came on board towards the end of the year. Both have settled in wonderfully, and we're thrilled to be up to full capacity!



“

“Chaplain sessions have given me positivity, hope and calmness in order to frame my mind-set and outlook better.”

”

Throughout all these changes and challenges, the important work of supporting our patients has continued. We draw alongside people facing all sorts of circumstances including loss, unexpected life events, trauma, change, sadness and family difficulties.

It is a privilege to share part of their 'journey' with them, offering a place to reflect on what matters most to them and helping them to keep going with renewed hope. Attending to spiritual needs, whether expressed as faith or not, is central to how we work, so we're interested in what brings meaning, purpose, hope and a sense of belonging to people's lives.

This year, we worked with 319 patients. People usually have between 4 and 12 one-to-one sessions with the Chaplain for Wellbeing.

Our strong links with GPs, Social Prescribers, Health and Wellbeing Coaches and the mental health team mean that we are able to work out the best support for each patient, and we often cross-refer to achieve this. Naturally, our colleagues in the various other projects within Karis Neighbour Scheme are also a vital resource and we love working with them!



2023 saw a 44% increase in referrals to L&G compared to 2022

“

“Your help couldn't have come at a more needed time. Thank you for being there to listen and help me see the wood from the trees.”

”

Christine says:

‘I had been suffering from persistent migraines and headaches for weeks on end, after particularly distressing circumstances, and was both physically and mentally exhausted. I wanted to not wake up in the morning, and had lost my way completely. A combination of migraine prevention treatment and sessions with the Chaplain enabled me to gradually recover physically, and progress emotionally thanks to a range of coping strategies.

I had some valuable discussions about the power of forgiveness, expectation management, guilt and shame. Instead of succumbing to rising panic and anxiety, I can (mostly!) actively recognise and register these feelings. If I can't identify a trigger, I have been able to adopt breathing techniques that have prevented their escalation and have helped to reduce their impact.

I'm grateful to my GP for hearing me, and to my Chaplain for her endless patience and understanding, and for giving me a safe space to talk about my worst fears and thoughts.’

Men's Space



Edd Stock

Men's Space is a new project at KNS that was launched in October 2023



The aim of the project is to create spaces for men to feel connected, supported and able to thrive at life.

Men who live in isolation have 30% lower life expectancy than men who are connected - by meeting together it enables men to feel more connected with the community in which they live and it creates opportunities for them to have a sense of belonging and purpose.

Project coordinator for Men's Space, Edd, joined us in October. Prior to coming to KNS Edd was a Chaplaincy Team leader at Walsall Manor Hospital. He co-leads Christ Church, Summerfield with his wife Katie and is a Chaplain to the Sea Cadets - so you might see him canoeing on the reservoir!

Since October Edd has been building relationships with partner organisations, scoping out potential projects that Men's Space could run, connecting with potential volunteers and meeting with clients who have been referred to KNS.

In December 2023 we started a Board Game project at St Germain's Church. As well as building relationships with men who come to the project, it has also given opportunity to work collaboratively with Restore (a charity that supports asylum seekers in Birmingham). Restore's clients have come and volunteered which has both helped the project and supported them in their integration into the community.



Edd has seen 14 clients 29 times in 2 months



'I have been receiving support from Edd due to a bereavement after my doctor mentioned Karis Neighbour Scheme to me. Edd has supported me on a regular basis and I would recommend him. I was especially touched by the memorial service which was arranged for my partner by Edd, this was very beautiful.'



Meeting Leo for the first time, Edd was struck by the effect of MS on Leo's life. Within 18 months of the diagnosis Leo's life had drastically changed and this had an adverse effect on his mental health and well-being.

For Leo, even just buying Christmas presents for his children had become a physical strain - so Edd took him on a shopping trip. As well as this service giving much needed practical help it also gave Leo dignity and autonomy as he was able to choose and pay for the toys.

Since Christmas Leo has moved away to more suitable accommodation that can support his needs, but he remains in touch with Edd.



'I do enjoy playing chess with people and Edd gives a good game, he is very approachable, sensible and friendly.'

Children and Families



Ruth Pedzai

2023 has been marked by generous provision and selfless voluntary help. This enabled us to support **499** people through our Children and Families project this year.



ESOL

After a successful term of classes in the theme of 'ESOL for Health' (funded by Faith Action) we agreed to deliver another term up to Easter 2023.

Following on from this we surveyed our students and found out they would value an 'ESOL for Work' class. So we approached 'Suited for Success' and asked if they would like to deliver this with us. Their expertise in helping women into work and ours in ESOL delivery was a great combination.

12 women completed this ten week practical course, which culminated with a visit to Suited for Success to get styled for interview clothes and then a trip to HSBC Head Office with Suited's CEO, Patricia White.

During the course we focused on the importance of volunteering as a next step in looking for work, and are delighted to report that two women are working, one is studying, two are overseas and seven women are now volunteering, five of them at Karis! In the autumn term we delivered a basic level conversation class. All in all this year we taught **79** students English.

A massive 27 volunteers gave us over 500 hours of help this year.

Some of those have been volunteering with Karis for over 20 years!

"It's given me more confidence to push forward and get a job. I feel so happy thank you so much."



WELCOME TO LADYWOOD

Now in its 22nd year, the Welcome to Ladywood Drop-in continues every Thursday during term time at Ladywood Methodist Church.

We often share food together and take any opportunity to party, whether it's the coronation, Eid, Narooz, Christmas or Easter.

89 ladies and their children came this year

The women really appreciate the programme of subsidised summer activities that we organise.

We organised a couple of 'bring and buy' sales which raised around £480 towards the cost of the coach to Weston-Super-Mare for **16** families. We travelled that day with 2 coaches from The Ladywood Project - it was great to see so many friends!

All in all, we organised 7 summer trips which were enjoyed by **51** families. We went to Hatton Country World (thanks to funding from 'Away From It All fund'), Birmingham Botanical gardens, Chamberlain gardens for a picnic, went on bell boats up the canal with Newbiggin Community Trust and to Cannon Hill Park on the regular buses.



HOME VISITS

Our project workers have the privilege of visiting many clients at home to introduce themselves and get to know the families who need support.

This year, along with volunteers they made **78** home visits with a further 30 one on one befriending contacts (i.e. coffee or a trip to the Botanical gardens to chat).

On one such visit we met a refugee lady and discovered she was keen to volunteer. We invited her to our Baby Bank training and she's now helping us weekly. We also connected her with benefit support and our Karis Befriends Project, and she is keen to teach the other ladies to knit.

Additionally, Ruth and Liz are available to accompany clients to important appointments where they need some moral support or an advocate. This year we've been to court twice and to a number of meetings with social workers and teachers, and accompanied a woman to hospital during a cancer scare.



Children and Families

PRACTICAL HELP

Our project workers and volunteers help families with a wide range of practical obstacles. One of these was helping a family move house, with volunteers picking up furniture from three different locations (sourced for free) and delivering it and assembling it. With a generous gift from a donor we were also able to help her carpet the property.

This year
we've helped
50 clients with
86 practical
issues

We had some additional donations this year that allowed us to provide school uniform for **19 children in 11 families** as well as Christmas gifts and vouchers for those suffering hardship. We are grateful to Ladywood Project and their holiday help and school uniform schemes. We continued to provide some funding to a local hotel to help homeless families with the cost of laundry.

Towards the end of the year we received funding from the Council's Winter Food Aid Fund for formula milk and hygiene items that we've distributed through the Baby Bank and Club.



BABYBANK

Baby Bank continued to provide clothes, equipment, nappies and formula to referred families in difficult circumstances.

This is thanks to continued and very generous support from the public, funders, supermarkets, local churches and charities passing on excess donations.

We held a coffee morning for referrers and a fun training session for an influx of new volunteers joining us (4 of whom are previous or current KNS clients).

367 families
were
supported in
2023



Babybank gave
out 44k
nappies - **42%**
more than
2022

BABYBANK CLUB

After Easter, we piloted 'Karis Baby Bank Club' running alongside our emergency free provision at Baby Bank.

The club provides heavily subsidised nappies, wipes and formula milk to eligible families. We started with a £500 donation and the uptake was enthusiastic! Thanks to a further two large grants from Morrisons and Birmingham City Council we were able to continue and expand the project.

16 families have so far benefitted.

As well as baby supplies we sell excess baby bank clothes and provide free hygiene items, toys and baby food are often up for grabs.



KBF Advice



Katharine Harris

Katharine Harris has now been in post as our KBF Advice Worker for over two years, and has been building on our existing referral networks so that we are able to reach as many people as possible. She was supported for part of the year by an excellent Advocacy Volunteer.



The Prevention & Communities grant from Birmingham City Council to provide welfare benefits advice for adults over 50 changed at the end of September, and the post is now funded via B:CAN to provide welfare benefits support to people living with mental health issues in Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne. We are still making home visits and seeing people in the office where this is possible. We are seeing an increasing number of people referred because they are unable to pay their bills, even with all benefit paid correctly, showing how the rise in prices has put such a pressure on so many people.

Over 226 clients
were supported in
the past 12 months

In 2023 we helped residents claim an additional **£541K** of income, with support from our advisor. This has included applications for Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, as well as benefit checks to make sure that the correct amounts are being paid. We also helped residents to challenge decisions, supporting with mandatory reconsiderations and appeals.

As well as benefit advice and applications, Katharine has also helped with applications for Disabled Travel passes, Blue Badges and grants, and Occupational Therapy assessments. We have helped residents to apply to the Big Difference Scheme, and made referrals to Debt Advisers, showing how working in partnership helps us to support our clients in a range of ways.

Our advisor has continued visits to St Germain's Church once a month to advise people attending the Pay As You Feel Community Hub and their Wellbeing Service. She has made visits to St Luke's Church to see clients, and has visited a local community group based in a sheltered housing complex, to talk about benefits and cost of living support.

“

Thanks for coming. You have
taken a lot of my stress away.
Thanks so much.

”



We have been supporting a client for a while whose partner had recently died. This was a referral from a Social Worker involved with the family.

There were many issues including benefit claims, setting up a new bank account, and appointeeship.

The client's own health issues have made it difficult for her to deal with matters herself, but it has been great to see her becoming more confident at sorting things out.

She recently said: "Your help and assistance helped us in some way to begin to piece our lives back together."

“ I am so happy I didn't have to go to tribunal. It's taken so much stress off me. At last I will be able to do some different things with my partner. Thank you so much. ”



We saw a client referred by their GP who had many health issues and was struggling to pay their bills and connect with people.

We helped with a successful claim for Personal Independence Payment and with Universal Credit forms.

We also made a referral to our Listening and Guidance service.

The client said "I was at my absolute lowest point and you showed me kindness and support that I will never forget."



Ladywood Community Advice



Bram Scott

2023 was the 9th
year of our Ladywood
Community Advice
project



**We have continued to
provide welfare benefit
advice through our 2
advisors, ranging from
assisting to make new
claims to representing
clients at Social Security
Tribunals**

Our service is based in a community centre in central Ladywood. The ward is one of the most deprived in England with high levels of unemployment, child poverty and long term illness and disabilities. Since Covid we have seen an increase in people presenting with mental health issues, adding to the already complex situations and pressures that many of our clients live through.

We rely on our team of amazing, dedicated volunteers to provide advocacy and advice on a range of issues including housing repairs, school registrations, issues with utilities, clean air zone fines and consumer disputes. They also tackle interactions with the DWP and the council, including making new claims. Much of their work requires basic computer skills or the ability to communicate by telephone, but these tasks create significant issues for the vast majority of our service users who have English as a second language.

Though more than half our enquiries are from new users we have a cohort of people who require ongoing appointments. The fact our service is local and face-to-face provides this reassurance and trust that is often missing in this digital age.

**We attended 8
Tribunals, 7 of which
were found in favour
of our clients**



**During the year we
saw 528 clients and
identified or assisted
to claim £988k in
benefits**

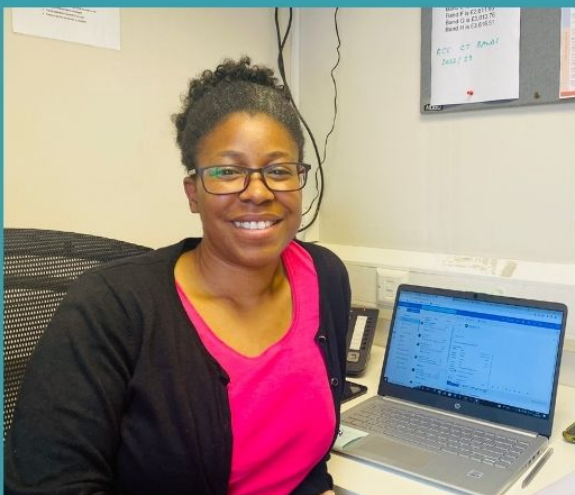
We work closely with Ladywood Community Project and cross refer clients. We rely on their volunteers to help with triage on our busy days.

We share space with Trident Reach who provide help to find employment, and a Severn Trent Water advisor whose role is to access discounts and grants. Working with others has helped us to provide a more holistic approach and a safe place to signpost for more support.

There have been no major legislative changes to benefits during the last year, but we expect an upturn in enquiries in 2024 as Birmingham residents on legacy benefits are due to be migrated onto Universal Credit. Analysis from other areas where migration has already happened indicated that 30% of claimants failed to register either timeously or at all which can result in breaks of claim. In an area such as Ladywood we might expect that non compliance rates will be higher. Universal credit claims, in the main, need to be made online, adding an extra barrier to many in our community.



“ A big THANK YOU - God bless you all for all you do for the likes of myself making our loads become light and bearable ”



“ With grateful thanks for your partnership and the very many extra miles you journey for people ”

Case Study: Mr and Mrs C both have mental health issues. Both were in receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) but Mr C's was reviewed and disallowed. As a result, not only did he lose his £95.00 a week but the couple's Employment Support Allowance (ESA) was reduced by £152.80 a week as his loss of PIP meant that they no longer qualified for one of the ESA premiums.

With our assistance Mr C successfully appealed the PIP decision reinstating his entitlement. However DWP ESA section had failed to reinstate the correct premium and had erroneously been under the impression that he was claiming as a carer.

Following our request for a review the correct ESA was put back into payment and backdated to the time it was discontinued.

Karis Befriends



Helen Bell

Karis Befriends offers support to older people who are isolated or lonely, encouraging them to connect, participate, contribute and flourish later in life.



The Karis Befriends project is led by Helen Bell, with Patti Tan as a Project Assistant.

We have continued to receive referrals from local GP's, health professionals, social workers, social prescribing link workers, community organisations, relatives, friends and older people themselves.

164 older people supported through 2668 contacts

We visit and befriend people in their own homes, over the telephone, or accompany them out into the local community, as well as organising regular social activities and events. 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 groups flourish as those who come invite others along too.

Throughout this year, we have continued to do one off trips, with individuals and groups, enjoying coffee or lunch out among friends, encouraging and building confidence to keep going out.

Highlights include a table top sale, attending a Carol Service, pub lunches and much time at Winterbourne Gardens! We enjoyed a joint trip out with the Children and Families Project at the Botanical Gardens, a thoroughly enjoyable time with many generations mixing!

“ Thank you so much for your efforts in visiting my mum and updating us on the activities Karis currently operate ”

Our Senior Life Group meets weekly with almost 30 participants connecting in during the year. We have enjoyed social time together, discussions, opportunity to support and challenge one another, with exercises, quizzes, sharing stories and much more. There is a real sense of community both in and outside the group, with people making plans to get together, go out together or chat over the phone.

95 clients visited at home

902 telephone befriending calls

206 birthday cards sent





Our Art Group is run by one of our enabling participants. Those who come are encouraged to contribute to a group project together, or work on their own individual pieces. It's been great to see new people joining in!

Karis Befriends is part of the Body, Mind and Spirit Partnership of church linked organisations across Birmingham. Our approach seeks to value older people within their neighbourhoods, bringing a wealth of experience, skills and wisdom to share with others.

By creating safe and welcoming spaces, older people are invited to participate and develop in activities that are meaningful for them and build community together.



“ your group is the only activity [my mum] joins in with, finds helpful and enjoys! ”



TIME FOR TEA

61 clients have attended our bi-monthly Sunday afternoon events. Each event had a focus, ranging from the King's Coronation, International Older Persons day and Christmas celebrations. With fabulous food, musical performances, quizzes and thoughtful discussions, the time is a highlight for clients and volunteers alike.

Every guest goes home with a gift bag full of seasonal treats, activities and goodies. We gave out over **800** gift bags in 2023!

We have enjoyed 6 'Time for Tea' events throughout this year

'Time for tea is a lovely way to spend a Sunday afternoon! There is such a welcoming, friendly atmosphere and you are able to meet old friends and perhaps make some new ones. I particularly like the quizzes, often quite difficult! Last but not least is the delicious tea - always plentiful and a treat to eat! All the great effort made to provide this is really appreciated by the guests.' Jane

As we continue to journey with people for longer, we have lost a number of older people during this year. For some this has involved visiting more often when in hospital, even being with one lady as she passed away. We often go to or contribute at funerals, or continue to stay in contact with their family.

We count it as a privilege to know and journey with people in their later years.



PARTNERS AND MEMBERSHIPS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to all our funders and donors:

AFIA, Asda Foundation, Baron Davenport's Trust, Birmingham and Black Country Communities Fund, Birmingham City Council Winter Food Aid Fund and NDSU, Blakemore Foundation, Cole Charitable Trust, Dumbreck Charity, Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme, Edward and Dorothy Cadbury Trust, Eveson Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Grantham Yorke Trust, Grimmitt Trust, Harry Payne Fund, Heart of England Community Foundation, Henry Smith Charity, Hinchley Trust, Hortons Social Purpose Committee, IM Properties Fund, Marsh Charitable Trust, Morrisons Foundation, Richard Kilcuppe's Trust, Roger and Douglas Turner Trust, Sheldon Trust, RS Brownless Trust, Tesco's Community Grants, Tramore Trust, WA Cadbury Trust, Warburtons Families Matter, WED Charitable Trust and all the individuals who send us gifts, cash and donate equipment for our families to our baby bank

THANKS TO:

Age UK Birmingham, ASIRT, Asda Solihull, Baby Bank Alliance, B30 Foodbank, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Central Baptist Church, Birmingham Settlement, BVSC, Birmingham Central Foodbank, BMSP, Birmingham Mother's Union, Cobden Hotel, CNSO, Church Alive, Children Centres, ChurchCentral South, Christchurch Summerfield, Digikicks, Eat Make Play, Edgbaston Palace Hotel, Edgbaston NNS, Faith Action, Faith in Later Life, Gas Street Church, Gateway Children Services, Growbaby, Glasspool Charity Trust, Harborne Medical Practice, Incredible Surplus, Karis Medical Centre, Ladywood & North Edgbaston Social Work Team, Ladywood District Office, Ladywood Health & Community Centre, Ladywood Methodist Church, Ladywood Leisure Centre, Lordswood Medical Practice, Living Well Group, Ladywood Project, LBC, Ladywood NNS, Mental Health Providers Forum Network, NHS, Narthex, Nechells POD, NDSU NCVO, Newmans Trust Homes, Oasis Church Harborne, Pilotlight, QAC, Outreach Shop, RE:Future Collective, Real Junk Food Project, Ring and Ride West Midlands, The Roundhouse, Severn Trent Big Difference, Sharesack Ladywood, Shencare Community Transport, Shiloh Computers, St Georges Church Edgbaston, St Germain's Church Edgbaston, St Johns & St Peters Church Ladywood, St Lukes, St Johns Harborne, Suited for Success, St Michael and All Angels' Church, Thrive Together Birmingham, Waitrose Harborne, Zurich Insurance





Karis Neighbour Scheme
c/o Church of the Redeemer
Monument Road
B16 8UU

0121 455 7524

admin@karisneighbourscheme.org
www.karisneighbourscheme.org

