KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Practical help | Advocacy & advice | Befriending | Emotional support

Annual Report 2021

Offering practical support, friendship and advocacy in the local community

Registered Charity: 1133510
Registered Company: 06595341

Push bar to open

Contents

Karis Neighbour Scheme	Page 4
Report and Introduction from the Trustees	Page 7
Report from CEO	Page 9
Fundraising	Page 11
A Snapshot of the past Year	Page 12
The Stories	Page 14
and the Statistics	Page 16
Advocacy & Advice	Page 19
Children & Families Work	Page 21
Karis BeFriends	Page 23
KBF Advice	Page 25
Listening & Guidance	Page 26
Neighbourhood Network Scheme	Page 29
Practical Work	Page 31
Accounts	
Acknowledgements	Page 33

Introducing Karis Neighbour Scheme

Who Are We?

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a community project working in Birmingham. We work in our communities, offering friendship and support to those who are isolated or marginalised and who are often facing disadvantage or hardship.

We currently work across the Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne areas of Birmingham. The communities in these areas are very diverse, with different strengths and challenges. We have been working in these areas for over 20 years and despite seeing a lot of changes throughout that time we continue to faithfully serve our neighbours.

We value working in relationship with people and look to express care and compassion in the midst of the difficult circumstances people find themselves in. At the same time we offer a helping hand in practical ways. As a result we will tend to 'journey' with people, through changing circumstances.

We are a relatively small organisation, and therefore we work closely with other groups, charities and services. This means we can 'fill the gaps' where services do not exist in the area and ensure that people can get the help they need. Over the years this has led to the development of a number of projects offering a broad range of support within the community.

What Do We Do?

- We offer support to lonely and isolated older people through our befriending project, Karis Be Friends. This includes visiting people in their homes, occasional groups as well as other social events and an art group.
- We support local families, through a *Welcome to Ladywood* Drop-In group and our English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. Our Children & Families Worker and volunteers will visit families in their homes to offer befriending and support. We run Karis Babybank, providing donated baby clothes/equipment to local families in need.
- We provide an advocacy & advice service. This provides expert advice on welfare benefits from our advisors, as well as help to fill in forms, make phone calls and signpost to other support. Through our KBF Advice we can offer this support to older people in their homes.
- We offer support with practical tasks such as gardening, decorating and DIY, usually for people we already know through our befriending work.
- We provide a Listening & Guidance service, based in General Practice, offering confidential pastoral care from Chaplains for Wellbeing. This service is available to patients of 7 GP practices in the area.
- We are a partner on the Neighbourhood Network Scheme, a city-wide initiative looking to build closer links between social work and community groups and activities. We are working on this as part of a constituency wide partnership led by Birmingham Settlement.

Our Team…

Trustees

We currently have a board of 7 trustees, the average length of membership of the board is 9 years.

Amanda Smith, previously a non-executive director of a family owned business, joined the board in 2017 and took on the role of chair in 2019.

Ross Bryson has been a GP for over 20 years at the local Karis Medical Centre and is a founding trustee.

Rebecca Cuthbert has been involved in a number of charities with experience in family support, community development, project management and cross-sector partnerships.

Gillian Harley-Mason is also a local GP with responsibility for safeguarding at the practice.

Marc Kusicka is a Chartered Accountant based in Birmingham, previously having worked at Deloitte LLP.

Kathryn Miles has a background in Public Health at the University of Birmingham.

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

Staff

At the end of December 2021 we had 14 part time staff working across our projects:

Harry Naylor, CEO; **Michaela Brookes**, Administrator; **Hannah Eno**, Fundraiser

Bram Scott & **Tasha Ramrous**, Welfare Rights Advisors

Ruth Pedzai, Children & Families' Worker, **Liz Brown**, Family Outreach Worker

Helen Bell, Karis BeFriends Project Co-ordinator, **Patti Tan**, Project Assistant

Katharine Harris (from November), KBF Advice Worker

Helen Watts, Senior Chaplain, **Elizabeth Baker & Dilip Patel** Chaplains for Wellbeing

Nettes Derbyshire, Neighbourhood Network Scheme Support Worker

Kickstart Scheme

For 6 months of 2021 we also offered a placement to a young person on the Kickstart scheme. Partnering with Living Well UK, we employed a Project Assistant to work across all of our projects, focusing on admin and social media. This gave the young person valuable experience and training to continue in their job seeking. We were very grateful to all their help and enthusiasm.

Volunteers

We rely on a team of over 80 volunteers to enable our work to happen. People give their time in various ways and may be involved once or twice a year or several times a week! We're so grateful for the enthusiasm, effort and commitment of all our volunteers. Our volunteers come from a broad range of backgrounds and are drawn mainly from in and around the communities we work.

Supporters

Our supporters are also invaluable and contribute a great deal to our work as a charity. As well as regular giving, we receive support from others who give of their time and resources. We are incredibly grateful for the continuing support of numerous local churches and the partnership of other organisations and community groups we work alongside. For a full list of our supporters and thank yous please see the last page of this report.

Report and Introduction from the Trustees

The inspiring stories contained in this year's annual report underline the importance of our staff team and volunteers, who journey with those seeking support from Karis Neighbour Scheme (KNS) on a daily basis.

What a privilege to walk with clients as they seek help, care, information, practical support and hope when life has been so challenging. The strength and depth within our team enables staff and volunteers to walk alongside those coming to KNS for help. On behalf of the Trustees, thank you for your ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of every client.

I was recently on a hill walk over very tough terrain, it was hard and steep and tiring, but I had a companion, an encourager and someone who shared their backpack supplies! We reached our destination together. Sometimes at KNS our journey involves a short time with someone who needs encouragement and resources. Frequently the journey is much longer and the commitment to befriend and equip people for the hard days, not just the good days, is the ongoing story of our staff team and the faithful volunteers who give their time and skills to help.

Harry Naylor, our CEO, highlights in his report that present circumstances continue to be challenging and life has become even more complex for people to navigate. It has been so encouraging in these times of challenging financial constraints to witness the faithful generosity of supporters, trusts and organisations who resource our work and enable us to help each person who visits KNS seeking support from our projects.

The headline numbers in the report show 500 people a month having contact with our team and with restrictions lifted we anticipate more for the year ahead. Thank you to all those who continue to commit funds from your organisations and those who give as individuals to KNS. We could not do this work without your faithful support.

I continue to be grateful for the trustees of KNS who have focused on the resilience of KNS as an organisation and consistently provide wise governance and oversight. In uncertain times we are committed to securing financial resilience for our charity. This enables us to invest in our staff team enabling them to develop and flourish in their roles.

The journey we take with clients is rooted in a story told by Jesus of the man who was a good neighbour. Finding a man beaten and bruised on the road, he delivered first aid and took the injured man to a place of refuge to recover and heal. The story continues that the good neighbour then paid for care and checked on the man's recovery.

At KNS we are committed to meeting those who need refuge, recovery and healing within our communities. Our lived experience is summed up beautifully in Psalm 84 v 6 'Even when our paths wind through the dark valley of tears, we dig deep to find a pleasant pool. God gives a brook of blessing'. During the last two years when Covid 19 caused our paths to wind through the dark valley of tears, our story is one of digging deep and finding God's provision and a hope for the future.

Thank you for your interest in Karis Neighbour Scheme, we would be delighted to hear from you if you wish to know more.

Amanda Smith, Chair of Trustees

Report from CEO

While we may have hoped 2021 would have been an easier year in coping with COVID-19, in many ways it presented more challenges, with the landscape of cases and restrictions changing frequently. Although the need for emergency support – which arose in the early lockdowns – reduced, we saw growing needs elsewhere. We've been working closely with Early Help supporting families in temporary accommodation in hotels along the Hagley Road, have seen a surge in queries about disability benefits – including appeals, and, in line with a trend of increasing pressure on mental health services, our Listening & Guidance service was operating at capacity shortly after a third Chaplain for Wellbeing joined our team.

A big thank you to our team of staff and volunteers, who have continued to show creativity, commitment and compassion in light of the shifting situation this year. In particular, I have been impressed by how motivated the team has been, despite the fatigue that many of us faced as COVID-19 continued to disrupt our lives.

We have seen a few changes to the staff team, welcoming Tasha Ramrous to the Ladywood Community Advice team in April, Dilip Patel as a new Chaplain for Wellbeing in July, myself taking over the CEO role from Maddy Bunker in July, and welcoming Katharine Harris to take over the KBF Advice Worker role in November after Daniel Bains moved on to a new post in October. We also welcomed Hannah Eno as a Fundraiser, taking on that role from me, and falling just into 2022 we welcomed Chris Shurrock as our new Finance & Operations Co-ordinator. Thanks to Living Well group, we also took on Bee Cooper in a Kickstart role, supporting all of our projects, for the second half of the year.

From a governance point of view, one of our big achievements this year was receiving the Improving Quality (IQ) Foundation Level quality mark, so my thanks to all those involved in this process, and particularly to Michaela Brookes, our administrator, who did much of the hard work evidencing that we met the required standards.

We continue to shape our response to needs in the community by working closely with other groups and organisations locally. In particular this year we have seen closer relationships develop with Early Help leads in our areas, the Social Prescribing Link worker teams, based at local GP practices, and the council's Community Network Support Officers, to ensure we are reaching those who most need our help.

Because of the challenges around COVID-19, we weren't able to return regularly to many of our group activities this year, tending to work more in smaller groups where we could. This is still having a big impact on our Community Advice work – where we would normally run weekly drop-in sessions – and our Karis BeFriends project. This has meant a small drop in the number of people supported this year, and a drop in the overall number of contacts. For 2021 we saw this drop to just below 500 contacts per month, or 23 people per day on average (2020, 546 contacts per month, 25 per day on average).

Looking ahead we expect 2022 will see more of a return to 'normal' for some of our activities, though we will continue to look out for where, due to the impact of COVID-19, there may be gaps for the community that – working with others – we can help to fill.

Harry Naylor, CEO

Fundraising

The work of Karis Neighbour Scheme is funded through a mix of donations from individuals and grants from Trusts, Foundations and the local authority. We also carry out some work delivered under contract, or as part of a service level agreement, such as NHS funding towards our Listening & Guidance service from the local CCG.

This annual report shows the breakdown of funds we receive, and where they are from. One thing is clear; that without the incredible support we receive, we would not be able to do everything that we currently do.

The need for Karis and its work remains high. We see continuing and possibly escalating use of our Children and Families resources as the global situation remains unstable and the likelihood of a new influx of displaced people increases. The need for advocacy and advice is ever present and new pressures on household incomes increase as the cost of living escalates. Our work with isolated elderly people remains in demand and is also likely to remain so. Listening and Guidance now runs at capacity as does the only other similar service in this area. Given the events of the last two years, we don't expect there to be a decrease in demand for this kind of support.

Our Strategic Plan identifies a number of project areas that we would like to expand but we also know that we need to grow our infrastructure in order to support the work we do. For example, increasing our number of volunteers will be necessary if we want to reach more people in the community. We are now at a stage where it will be necessary to put a dedicated resource towards managing the volunteers and this will require additional funds.

We also recognise the need to bolster some of our other functions and capabilities, for example, strengthening the links between our organisation, the community and the city council's initiatives such as takes place within the Neighbourhood Network Scheme. Karis has always played an important role here – being embedded in the community for so long has provided useful continuity for people when other initiatives come and go. We are local, trusted and knowledgeable, and our experience means we are able to help other agencies coming into the community to become familiar quickly with the community and its needs. We want to continue that function but that aim is likely to require additional staffing.

We are truly grateful to all those who support us – volunteers, donors, organisations and other charities. Thank you.

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 admin@karisneighbourscheme.org
- You can donate used goods to our baby bank contact babybank@karisneighbourscheme.org
- You can donate money to us via our CharitySaver or Wonderful donation portals, or by BACS or cheque – see https://karisneighbourscheme.org/giving/
- If you are a Trustee of a charitable foundation and would be interested in supporting us please contact hannah.eno@karisneighbourscheme.org
- If your business would like to support us, please contact Hannah as above.

A Snapshot of the Year

New Staff:
- Maddy left as CEO,
- Harry took over
- 4 new staff joined our team
- 1 got married!

New achievements:
- Completed Improving Quality Mark
- Moved BabyBank to new venue
- Increased capacity in our Listening and Guidance service
- Started 'Life in the UK' course
- Joined in with 'Postcards of Kindness' project
- Made stronger links with those in emergency accommodation, including offering Starter Packs and laundry help
- Staff completed 'Active August' and walked/cycled more
- Ran online Wellbeing Courses across 2 projects
- Helped older clients become more digitally confident

New Partnership:
- Hosted a Kickstart scheme placement for 6 months, supported by Living Well

3,858 contact hours supporting 1,061 people over the year

97 amazing volunteers, offering 2122 hours of support

246 Personal Independent Payment appointments

£729k in benefits gained for our clients (organisation total)

Average of 69 contacts a month seeking money advice or advocacy

382 home visits to older people

40 clients attended Time for Tea

766 activity packs/letters sent

224 hours telephone befriending

424 babybank parcels given out including:
36 cots, 39 moses baskets and 30,000 nappies

87 'mum to be packs'

Over 20 school uniforms provided

1225 contact hours to local families

50 clients attending Welcome to Ladywood

25 students doing online ESOL

283 clients seen by 3 Chaplains

That's 1276 hours of listening support

30% for anxiety, 27% for bereavement, 18% for low mood

Jacob

A GP referred to us a family where the son had missed two school years. We mobilised one of our existing ESOL volunteers to tutor him and through his contacts, concern and perseverance were able to work with the council and within the term he was settled back at school.

Stella

Stella, one of Karis Befriends participants, connected with one lady from the Children & Families project, a young mum where English is not her first language. Stella (who used to be a primary school teacher) offered to have regular phone calls with the younger lady so she could practice speaking in English and improve her English, apparently this has been going really well from both sides!

Mary

Since losing her husband during the pandemic we increased how often we visited Mary in her home. This was as well as regular phone calls, delivering items and sending cards. She continues to connect into 'Time for Tea' on Zoom and hopes to come along in person soon.

We received a thank you note from her, saying, *"I'm thankful for the bag of goodies. Your choices always excellent! Thank you and go on making old dears have a smile and know they are loved, treasured and remembered."*

Elizabeth

Now in her 90s, Elizabeth has not been able to meet up with others as much during this time. However she keeps in touch over the phone and has been coming up with ideas to go into our gift bags. She suggested making handmade coasters and in no time at all she had made over 100 of them!

She says *"I wanted to help Karis Befriends, which has been such a support to me and it keeps me busy and gives me something enjoyable to do while at home."*

Portia

We met Portia when a team of volunteers from a local church went into a hotel housing homeless people to offer help with school uniform. When asked if she needed prayer for anything she said 'I want to be close to God'. Karis provided her with uniform and baby clothes and she started going along to church where she found community. Six months later when she moved away, she left the church but had found community & friendship while she needed it.

Amina

Our Baby Bank received a referral from a Midwife for a lady who was 8 months pregnant with nothing prepared. When we met her, it became clear that she was very isolated and had no birth partner. We referred her to a Doula service who were able to be with her during her C Section and volunteers from a local church made her meals, did her shopping and looked in on her when she got home in those early weeks.

A simple referral for baby things turned into a community response to care for her at a very vulnerable time, she said "*..you really deliver so much and if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be in a [this] better place today emotionally or financially thank you so much".*

Shazma

When we first met Shazma, she was in temporary accommodation and struggling to raise her 3 young children in a small hotel room. As a team we:

- Provided essentials for her baby,
- Assisted in an application for a Community Support Grant to get help furnish her new house,
- Signed her up to Big Difference Scheme to reduce her water bills and obtain a washing machine,
- Referred to Warmer Homes Scheme to help with fuel costs
- Linked with Ladywood Project Holiday Help scheme for supermarket vouchers and children's books.

Shazma was delighted with all the help offered and stated how useful it had been to able to get help all in one place. She also stated that she now feels much more confident in being able to sustain her tenancy.

… and The Statistics

We collect a range of information about the people we've been supporting and our contact with them over the course of the year. In presenting this information we've tried to pick out the headline facts and figures that will be most informative, relevant and useful.

The following statistics cover the period from 1st January to 31st December 2021 (unless otherwise stated)

	2017	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	***2021***
Total number of individuals supported	1122	1114	1226	1130	**1061**
Total number of contacts	6167	5514	6645	6559	**5927**

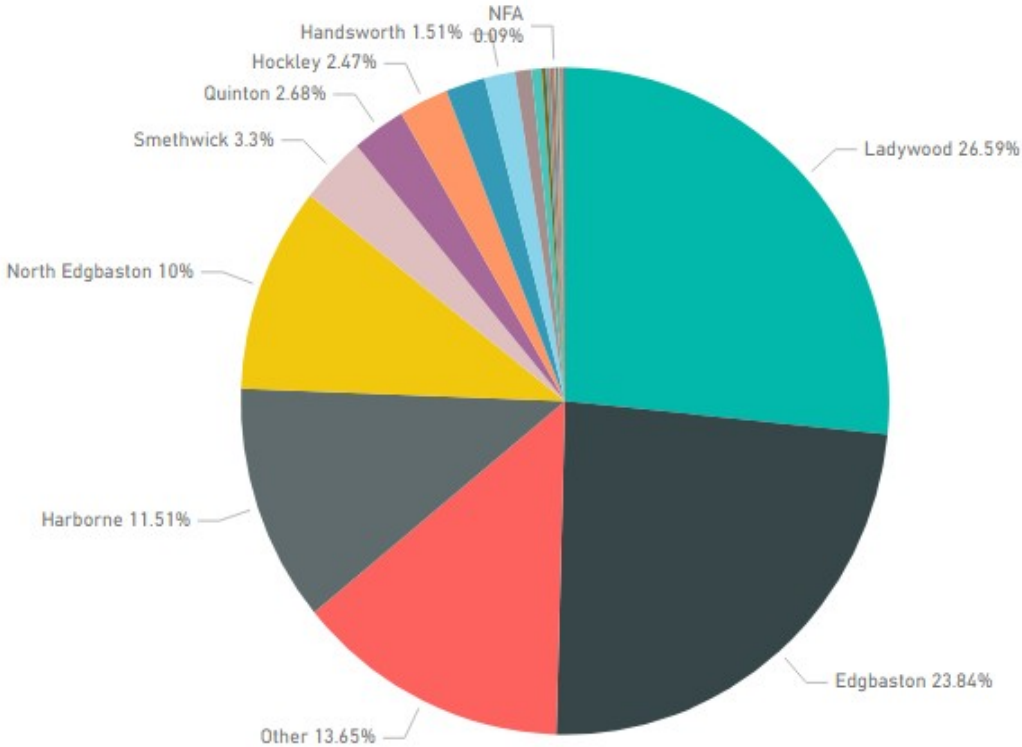
By Ethnicity

	Individuals	*Contacts*
White British	20%	31%
African Black/Black British	13%	13%
Caribbean Black/Black British	10%	8%
Any other White Background	8%	8%
Pakistani Asian/Asian British	8%	6%
Any other Asian Background	4%	5%
Indian Asia/Asia British	3%	3%
Any Other Group	3%	2%
Mixed, White and Black Caribbean	2%	2%
White Irish	2%	2%
Bangladeshi Asian/Asian British	1%	1%
Any other Black background	2%	1%
Chinese	1%	1%
Any other Mixed Background	1%	1%
Not Stated	1%	<1
Mixed, White and Black African	<1	<1
Not known	<1	<1
Mixed, White and Asian	<1	<1

By Age

	Individuals %	*Contacts %*
under 25	9	5
25-34	25	18
35-44	22	20
45-54	12	13
55-64	13	12
65+	20	32

Chart 1:
referrals by area



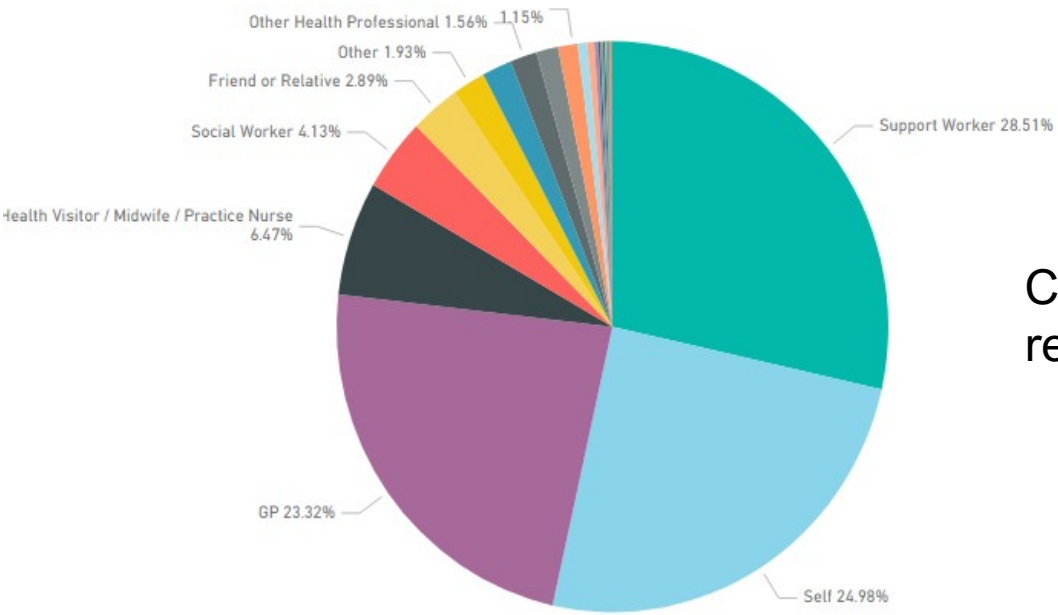
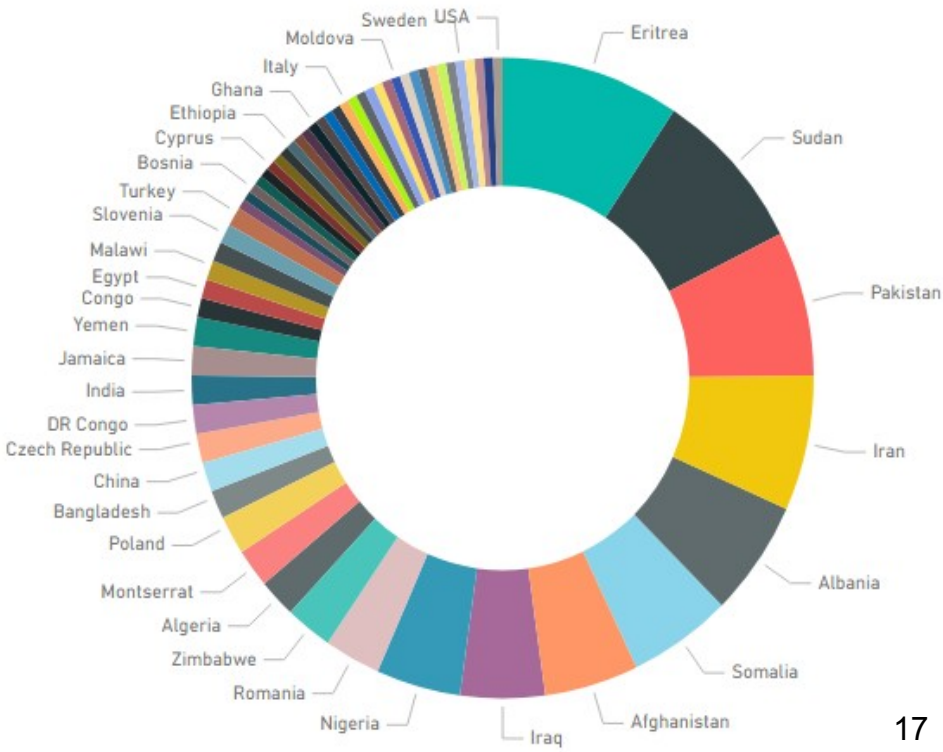


Chart 2: source of referrals

Chart 3: Non-UK country of birth



ADVOCACY & ADVICE

IN 2021...

260 received support with welfare rights advice

INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

NEW REFERRALS

162 for money advice or advocacy help

£553,000 gained for the families and individuals we supported

IN INCOME

HOURS OF CONTACT

454 with clients, either in person or over the telephone

TYPES OF ISSUE HELPED WITH

Universal Credit - PIP - Income Support - Attendance Allowance - ESA - Pension Credit - Foodbank Referrals - Council Tax - Utility Debt - Discretionary Housing Payments

Advocacy and Advice

Benefit advice and advocacy provided through the Ladywood Community Advice project continued to be impacted by the closure of the Ladywood Health & Community Centre due to COVID-19. This restricted the support we were able to provide, until the centre partially reopened in July.

Our Welfare Rights Advisor, Bram Scott continued to deliver support remotely via telephone appointments, however the challenges of working in this way and the lack of access to the regular drop-in meant the service saw a reduction in hours. but we were joined by a new advisor, Tasha Ramrous, in April, who has since increased hours to 4 days a week. Tasha comes to us with a wealth of experience including representation of clients at appeal tribunals over a number of years.

Since the community centre reopened in July we have been able to provide a face to face appointment based advice service. This has been incredibly welcome by those we are supporting as many services have remained on the phone for the time being, valuing us being able to look at letters and discuss issues face to face.

We are in the process of re-starting the support from our volunteers and from November we were able to offer fortnightly appointments. Alternating with this, we have been able to restart sessions with an advisor from Severn Trent's Big Difference Scheme helping with referrals for reductions in water rates and trust fund applications.

For most of 2021, tribunals were still held remotely, so our Welfare Rights Advisors were unable to represent in person. This change has also caused a backlog of cases and an increase in the number of adjournments. At the end of the year we had two cases that had been adjourned and a further six awaiting a hearing date. 13 cases had been heard and resolved, of which 11 have been found in favour of the client. Nine of these cases were in respect of disability related benefits.

Much of our time is used assisting people by identifying entitlements, filling in the forms and making claims on line. Most of our clients do not have English as their first language and often need help to both access and update their Universal Credit claims, which can be ongoing and time consuming. The other main aspect of our work is requesting mandatory reconsiderations of adverse decisions and preparing and representing at appeal tribunals.

This year we assisted 260 individuals and families to claim benefits totaling over £553,000 and access grants worth £14,998. 30% of the monies identified related to Personal Independence Payments 20% Universal Credit and 16% Disability Living Allowance. In terms of impact per household supported, we saw an increase this year, rising to an average additional income per household of £2,122 (2020, £1,620).

This support is likely to be increasingly important for local households in the year ahead with the impact of rising living costs combining with the removal of the uplift for Universal Credit.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

IN 2021..

388 FAMILIES

supported by the project in the past 12 months

VOLUNTEER HOURS **1363**

in many ways across the project

30,000+ NAPPIES

provided in Baby Bank parcels

272 FAMILIES

received **424** Baby Bank parcels

74 CLIENTS VISITED AT HOME,
56 BEFRIENDED IN OTHER WAYS

Children and Families

As we reflect on Children & Families work during 2021 what shines through is the generosity and faithful kindness of our volunteers:

All hands to the pump: Late last year we were given notice to quit our Baby Bank premises by the middle of January we were up and running in our new premises thanks to volunteer help and muscle. Throughout the year the volunteers have masked up and come in, continuing to serve our clients at a social distance of course! They've enabled us to give our 424 parcels to 272 families this year.

Fear into hope In March our Baby Bank received a referral from a Midwife for a lady who was 8 months pregnant with nothing prepared. As she was close by, our Children & Families Worker delivered all the items she needed for the baby. It became clear that she was very isolated and had no birth partner. We referred her to a Doula service who were able to be with her during her C Section and volunteers from a local church made her meals, did her shopping and looked in on her when she got home in those early weeks. A simple referral for baby things turned into a community response to care for her at a very vulnerable time.

Sadness into kindness Just before Easter one of our volunteers kindly delivered a Baby Bank parcel to a client living in a hotel. So moved was she by the plight of families living in these conditions that she asked whether she could organise a toy appeal and deliver Easter Eggs. Over this year we have been working ever closer with Gateway Family Services who have concentrated a lot of their effort on those living in the hotels. We sought their advice about how to proceed and they suggested we focus our kindness on one hotel in particular. Within a few weeks our volunteer had mobilised her school to donate toys and she delivered toys to every family in the hotel!

Heaviness into light relief: Our work in the hotels has only increased during the year thanks to funding from Gateway family services ; alongside baby bank parcels, we have provided over 20 families with school uniform, have started a project to provide kitchen starter kits to those who arrive with nothing, provided free laundry for those families who need it and have supported a local church to host a fortnightly 'coffee evening' to provide some friendship in the midst of really trying circumstances.

Weariness into reflection: In response to the pandemic and the toll we could see it taking on our clients, a volunteer along with Ruth delivered an online Wellbeing course to some interested women which culminated in a picnic when restrictions allowed.

Failure into fun: After a client told her how tricky she was finding studying for her 'Life in the UK', our team put their heads together and came up with a class which we launched in October, with the help of volunteers. The material is putting us Brits through our paces as we revise our history but it's been lot of fun! So far students have been coming along weekly and we look forward to them taking their test when they feel ready.

Isolation into community: Our weekly Welcome to Ladywood Drop-in re-opened its doors in September much to the delight of Zoom-weary families. We so enjoyed being back together again, marvelling at how much the babies had grown and enjoying tea and home cooking again together.

Again our team of volunteers have made it happen, rising to the challenge of regular toy cleaning and getting alongside the lonely and vulnerable. As Omicron hit we modified our Christmas party plans to something safer, when the party organiser was in isolation it was our volunteers who came to the rescue ensuring Christmas was saved for our precious children.

KARIS BEFRIENDS

IN 2021...

801 HOURS

of befriending with **135** older adults

31 HOME VISITS

average per month

766

GIFT BAGS OR ACTIVITY PACKS

VOLUNTEER HOURS **744**

enabling our activities over the past 12 months

738 TELEPHONE CONTACTS

OVER 1000 LETTERS AND CARDS SENT

Karis BeFriends

Our Karis Befriends project is led by Project Co-ordinator Helen Bell, and Patti Tan works alongside her as a Project Assistant. Karis Befriends offers support to older people in Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood, who are isolated or lonely, including regular befriending visits and social get togethers.

This year has continued to have some of the ongoing challenges of coping with and living through Covid-19, needing to adapt and be flexible in the ways we support people, while focusing on befriending and encouraging older people to stay connected. In journeying alongside people we hope to bring some sense of belonging and community. We are so thankful this year for the many times we have seen provision and hope in situations, known generosity from others, seen creative ideas develop and for our amazing volunteers helping sustain the way we are able to support people through Karis Befriends.

Karis Befriends has supported 135 older people through 1659 contacts in 2021. Throughout this year we have continued to receive referrals from local GP's, health professionals, social workers, social prescribing link workers, community organisations, relatives, friends or older people themselves.

We started off the year by continuing to keep in touch with people whether through regular befriending telephone conversations, emails or even a WhatsApp video call! Regular conversation over the phone have been a real lifeline for some, where they are still struggling to get out or their circumstances have changed. Throughout the year we have been sending out lots to those we support: cards, letters, 5 different 'Time for Tea' newsletters, quizzes, information about local activities, as well as sending individual notes and birthday cards. We always have a continual flow of phone calls from older people thanking us for remembering their birthday!

Over the Summer months, we ran a 'postcards of kindness' project, where children, individuals or families from Churchcentral West and South wrote or made postcards, enabling us to send out 116 packages. We did a similar thing at Christmas and made 107 Christmas cards to send out to local older people.

Doorstep and home visits have continued to be a very important way to offer support, as well as accompanying someone out for a walks, coffee or an appointment if needed. We have enjoyed having a Winterbourne Garden pass, which has been an ideal place for a coffee and a wander throughout the year.

We started the year with group activities online over Zoom for those who were able to access them, completing a Wellbeing Course, 3 'Time for Tea' Sunday sessions, and weekly midweek 'Time for Tea' Zoom meeting through March to July. It has been really lovely to see people develop their confidence online and connect this way.

Then in the Autumn, we restarted some of our groups in person - two Art Groups, two Senior Life Groups and our first in person Sunday 'Time for Tea'. It was lovely to see people meeting face to face, including new people. We had hoped to have a Christmas party, but with the changing Covid situation we were unable to gather a larger group. Instead we went out doing some local coffee mornings in community rooms and delivered 90 Christmas gift bags.

We are so grateful to all those we have connected with this year, how they have encouraged one another, our amazing volunteers and the support of other organisations and local Churches.

KBF ADVICE

IN 2021...

100 INDIVIDUALS

supported with advice by our adviser

£176,000

IN INCOME

gained for the people we supported

58 HOURS OF HOME VISITS

continuing to offer face to face support to those who need it through doorstep visits

IN GRANT SUPPORT **£5,229**

for particular needs such as household goods

REFERRALS MADE FROM

Social Work teams, Community Network Support Officers, GPs, Social Prescribing Link Workers, and via the Wellbeing Team at St Germain's Church

KBF Advice

We are now at the end of our second year of our work, providing welfare benefits advice out in the community for older adults (50+), funded by the Prevention & Communities grant from Birmingham City Council. This work is aimed particularly at older adults living in Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne and looks to support those who may have mobility or other issues that make it difficult for them to access our existing advice support or other community based services.

After joining our team in January 2020, and working through a particularly difficult period with the COVID-19 pandemic, Daniel moved on in October and we welcomed Katharine Harris to the KBF Advice Worker post in November.

In 2021 we helped residents claim an additional £176,000 of income, with support from our advisor, this has included Universal Credit applications, pension credit and applying for Attendance Allowance.

Over 100 individuals were supported in the past 12 months, and alongside benefit applications our advisor has helped people with a whole range of issues including housing applications, blue badge applications, and occupational therapy assessments.

We have been able to work with people over a longer period, building strong relationships with clients and working through issues which have come to light as the casework has progressed. This pro-active approach, working with people referred to us by GPs, social workers, social prescribing link workers and more, has been a help for people who may have otherwise struggled to engage with support previously.

In light of COVID-19, we carried out a lot of doorstep visits and contact over the phone during periods of lockdown early in the year, but have been gradually returning to home visits where people are comfortable with this.

"[the service] made a tremendous difference, real, consistent support...not had support like this in a while"

As part of our COVID-19 response we also worked closely with St Germain's and their Wellbeing Service, with our advisor seeing people at their drop-in sessions fortnightly, allowing people who were accessing the Pay As You Feel café and their Emotional Wellbeing Service to receive advice quickly and easily. Because of the staff changes later in the year, we had to put this support on hold temporarily, however, our hope is to be able to return to attending these sessions again in 2022, allowing us to reach people in North Edgbaston.

"The help reassured me and took off a lot of pressure that I had before"

The feedback we have received highlights the impact of relieving the pressures that come with struggling financially, and providing a long term solution – by ensuring people are receiving income they are entitled to – is a huge relief for lots of those we help. In feedback 70% of respondents reported a significant improvement in how well they are coping financially after our support.

Since joining us in November, Katharine has been welcomed into the team and is getting to know more about our other projects and how they connect with KBF Advice – working particularly closely with Ladywood Community Advice and Karis BeFriends. She has started to advise clients and complete forms, with the need continuing to be particularly around disability benefits and how they affect entitlement to other benefits.

Sometimes we just need to be heard by someone who will listen

"This has really changed my life! I understand myself so much more and I am learning to accept myself"

"I know when I come here I will be truly heard. I don't get that very much in my life, so thank you."

"If it hadn't been for you, listening so patiently to my muddles and worries, I might not still be here"

"The Chaplain gave me permission to be sad, but also gave me reasons to hope"

Listening and Guidance is delivered in partnership with the NHS, providing spiritual and holistic care through a confidential listening service. It is provided by Chaplains for Wellbeing. Our team consists of three part-time Chaplains – Helen, Elizabeth and Dilip.

2021 was another busy year for Listening and Guidance. Dilip joined us in July thanks to some funding provided by Living Well Consortium, and this enabled us to extend our reach and offer more sessions to patients from seven different GP surgeries.

The pandemic showed us that working on the telephone is not only possible, but often really valued by our service users, who have appreciated both the convenience of being able to have their sessions from home, and the relative anonymity it provides. So we have found people sharing at greater depth more quickly, accessing spiritual and pastoral care in a wide range of circumstances.

We are now able to work from Karis Medical Centre again, and some face to face appointments have been resumed. We've definitely become more flexible, whilst maintaining the highest standard of caring, compassionate listening.

In 2021 we worked with 283 different patients, offering 1174 sessions. People are referred for all sorts of reasons – bereavement, other losses, change, anxiety or depression, relationship challenges, overcoming trauma or abuse and many more. The quest to find hope, meaning and purpose and a sense of belonging are at the heart of spiritual care. As Chaplains, we listen for these needs and help our patients to develop their own resilience and to reflect on what really matters to them. Where appropriate, we pray with people and help them to think about the place of faith in their lives. Whether they identify as religious or not, we find so many of our patients are seeking spiritual comfort, and respond positively to the opportunity to think about how they can live with greater integrity and peace.

Listening and Guidance works closely with Karis Medical Practice, offering support to staff as well as patients. It's been a very stressful time in general practice and our presence has been a reassuring and caring one for everyone. We've become a model for spiritual and pastoral which other practices are interested in and we've had the joy of helping some surgeries to start providing their own service. How wonderful to imagine a time when all GP surgeries would have access to a Chaplain for Wellbeing!

Here's some feedback from doctors we work with:
"It's a humane, pragmatic and empowering service."
"L & G is a really important element in our whole-person approach to health care."
"I fully recommend L & G – every patient I refer is helped. A wonderful resource."

We remain committed to providing this holistic resource to GPs and their patients. The Chaplains for Wellbeing have benefited from a range of training opportunities, and all work to the code of conduct of the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplains. Helen and Elizabeth are accredited by the Association of Chaplains in General Practice, and Dilip is working towards this.

We look forward to another year of supporting people through some of the most difficult seasons of their lives, and to enabling all 7 of our partner practices to make the most use of the service.

Assets connected with NNS in 2021

Neighbourhood Network Scheme

Jeanette Derbyshire (Nettes) is our Neighbourhood Network Scheme (NNS) Support Worker for the Ladywood and North Edgbaston Wards. NNS has been a pilot scheme across the City and we have worked in partnership with Birmingham Settlement (lead), Nechells POD, and Soho First CDT to deliver the project in the Ladywood constituency, building closer links between the community and social work teams in the city.

The Neighbourhood Network Scheme was set up to support groups (community assets) working with the over 50's, providing access to funding, training and networking. The scheme then connects social workers and GP social prescribing link workers to enable them to guide citizens to groups that can best support them.

Here is a little taster of the work we have been doing during the changing times of 2021/2 as we have seen many local groups continue to rise to the challenge of supporting people through Covid and beyond.

It has been hard for many groups to come back in person, and we have been able to fund one elders' group to have access to tablets and training so that they can meet together virtually. Other groups that NNS funded have included an elders' "Move it or lose it" and a dominoes group, and IT class supporting those who have found it difficult to use the internet to be able to make the most of technology, and an elders' sailing programme.

One asset, Aspergers' Heroes, were able to link with an "Older Aspies" group to put on a whole online series on "Ageing Well on the Autism Spectrum" incorporating a number of hybrid sessions were some of the group gathered at the recently re-opened Roundhouse. One particularly well received workshop was by KNS's own Tasha Ramrous, who explained the wide range of benefits that may be available to older people on the autism spectrum.

The summer saw the completion of the Big Red Shed on Birmingham Settlement's field by Edgbaston Reservoir. As well as Settlement starting up a number of groups themselves a few of our assets have been able to work out of that space, most notably North Edgbaston Running and Wellbeing Group, who have a running and walking group meeting there each Sunday morning supported by Incredible Surplus.

We have also worked closely with Eat Make Play providing the local community with a wide variety of activities from sewing and arts to exercise and singing.

Wider links
In addition, over the course of the year we have supported Birmingham Ceremonies Ltd to bring employment and volunteering opportunities around the Commonwealth games and have linked with Near Neighbours engaging assets on a Covid vaccination awareness programme, and a consultation with the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital.

During the course of the year we have identified 11 new assets locally and supported 10 groups to put in funding applications. Nettes has held 6 local asset networking meetings via Zoom, and has also attended 20 Social Work ward meetings, introducing 8 assets to the Social work team.

Practical Work

We have continued to see a big disruption to our practical work due to COVID-19, with periods of lockdown and concern for those who are more vulnerable meaning we haven't always been able to offer the same 'neighbourly' help that we would usually.

However, we have tried wherever possible to continue to provide this helping hand to those in our communities who need it, particularly those who don't have the support of friends or family nearby that we would so often look to for this kind of help.

A lot of this support is delivered through our befriending activities, in connection with people we know and are supporting in other ways.

There are three main ways we provide practical help:

- Firstly in helping people to access practical help from elsewhere. This is mainly referrals to the foodbank, or a fuel crisis fund run by the Ladywood Project, another local charity. However, we were also involved in a number of holiday hunger schemes this year, aimed at providing additional help during school holidays to families who would normally receive free school meals during term time.

  One scheme ran in the half term, organised by a church with connections to the one of the local schools, and similar schemes ran during the summer and Christmas breaks, co-ordinated by a number of local groups including the Ladywood Project. We provided some help with the latter, mainly by helping make deliveries where families were unable to collect themselves.

- Secondly, we help to meet similar practical needs through provision we can distribute ourselves. Over the period of Covid we have increasingly been working closely with hotels along the Hagley Road which are providing temporary accommodation for families on behalf of the City Council.

  We've responded to some of the needs that families have had, including providing starter packs of basic cooking equipment and organising school uniforms for children in the run up to the new school year. We've also helped families with other needs where we have been able to, including helping with a wi-fi hub for one family to help them with accessing school remotely during lockdown.

- Thirdly, we offer 'neighbourly' help to those we are supporting, providing that helping hand that others may look to their friends and family for. We have a small team of volunteers who can help with these kind of tasks. In the past 12 months we've helped assemble wardrobes for a family newly moved into a property, passed on donations of furniture, helped with collecting prescriptions, delivered food parcels, and passed on a donated washing machine and helped plumb it in.

In one instance we were contacted after a mum had found her bedroom door wouldn't open, most of her baby's things were inside and so it was quite urgent for her to get back in. Several of our volunteers were able to go at short notice and see if they could get the door open, we were and found the door handle had broken. We were able to take the mechanism out so the door wouldn't close itself again until mum could get a new handle. It's this kind of 'call in a crisis' help that is really valuable for families who otherwise don't have friends or family nearby.

In 2021 we supported over 80 individuals/families with some form of practical help in over 200 instances.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, a huge thank you to all our volunteers and supporters.
We couldn't do it without you!

Thanks also to,

• Age UK Birmingham • ASIRT • Birmingham Carer's Hub • Birmingham Central Baptist Church • Birmingham Central Foodbank • Birmingham City Church • Birmingham City Council • Birmingham Mother's Union • Birmingham Settlement • Blue Coat School • Body Mind & Spirit Partnership • Christ Church Summerfield • Church Alive • Churchcentral • Circul8 Credit Union • Cobden Hotel • Community Network Support Officers • Companions for Hope • Eat Make Play • Edgbaston Palace Hotel • Gateway Family Services • Glasspool Charity Trust • Harborne Medical Practice • Hope Projects • Incredible Surplus • Karis Medical Centre • Ladywood & North Edgbaston Social Work Team • Ladywood Children's Centre • Ladywood District Office • Ladywood Health & Community Centre • Ladywood Helpers • Ladywood Methodist Church • Ladywood Community Project • Ladywood Leisure Centre • Living Well Group • Londonderry Baptist Church • Lordswood House Medical Practice • Mental Health Providers Forum Network • Narthex • Nechells POD • NCVO • Newman Trust Homes • Oasis Church • Onneley Centre AgeUK • Oratory RC Primary School • Outreach Shop • Queen Alexandra College • RE:Future Collective • The Real Junk Food Project • Ring & Ride West Midlands • The Roundhouse • Severn Trent Trust Fund • Shencare Community Transport • Shiloh Computers • Soho First • St Augustine's Church Edgbaston • St George's Church Edgbaston • St George's C of E Primary School • St Germain's Church Edgbaston • St John's Church Harborne • St John's & St Peter's Church Ladywood • St John's C of E Academy • Suited for Success • Thrive Together Birmingham • Waitrose Harborne.

Funders

• Birmingham Settlement • Birmingham & Solihull CCG • Birmingham City Council • Body Mind and Spirit Partnership • CB and HH Taylor 1984 Trust • Church Alive • Churchcentral west • Churchcentral south • Friends of Karis • Gateway Family Services • Heart of England • Hinchley Charitable Trust • Joseph Hopkins Charity • Karis Medical Centre • Ladywood Methodist Church • Living Well UK • Prevention and Communities • Richard Kilcuppe's Charity • South Birmingham Friends • St Augustine's Church Edgbaston • St George's Church Edgbaston • The Arnold Clark Community Fund • The Eveson Charitable Trust • The Grantham Yorke Trust • The Grimmitt Trust • The Henry Smith Charity • The Harry Payne Fund • The Roger & Douglas Turner Charitable Trust • Thrive together Birmingham • Trusthouse Charitable Foundation • Waitrose.

We are very grateful for all the financial support we have received.

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

0121 455 7524

admin@karisneighbourscheme.org

www.karisneighbourscheme.org