

KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Practical help | Advocacy & advice | Befriending | Emotional support

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



REGISTERED CHARITY
NUMBER - 1133510

REGISTERED COMPANY
NUMBER - 06595341

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
16-19	Children and Families
20-21	Karis Befriends
22-23	KBF Advice
24-25	Ladywood Community Advice
26-27	Listening & Guidance
28-29	Men's Space
30-31	Social Prescribing
32-33	Acknowledgements

ABOUT KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Vision

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

Mission

KNS is a Christian charity in Birmingham that exists to:

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

Values

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

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



At the end of 2024 we had 17 paid staff members. Their weekly hours range between 12 and 37.5 hours with an average of 22 hours. We have 13 project staff and 4 support staff.

STAFF TEAM



Harry Naylor, CEO

Michaela Brookes, Administrator

Hannah Eno, Fundraiser and Babybank co-ordinator

Victoria Yates, Finance & Operations

Ruth Pedzai, Children & Families' Worker (on Maternity leave from August)

Emma Northcott, Children & Families' Worker

Liz Brown, Family Outreach Worker

Helen Bell, Karis BeFriends Project Co-ordinator

Tahlia Green, Karis BeFriends Project Assistant

Katharine Harris, Karis BeFriends Advice Worker

Bram Scott, Welfare Rights Advisor

Lorrie Blake, Welfare Rights Advisor

Helen Watts, Senior Chaplain for Wellbeing

Jane Grimshaw, Chaplain for Wellbeing

Anthea Wright, Chaplain for Wellbeing

Alison Thompson, Chaplain for Wellbeing

Edd Stock, Men's Space Project Worker

Kalbinder Masih, Social Prescribing

Link Worker



CEO REPORT

Harry Naylor



It has been a privilege to have been leading KNS through its 25th year, having myself first gotten involved as a volunteer nearly 20 years ago.

It was fantastic to be able to celebrate this landmark this summer, including welcoming back some of our former trustees, staff and volunteers, and it was wonderful to see so many familiar faces who have been part of Karis' journey over the years.

In those 25 years Karis Neighbour Scheme has undoubtedly had an impact for thousands of individuals and families who we have met at all stages of life. Having been able to come alongside people and been that 'good neighbour', sometimes for only a short while, but in so many cases having journeyed through challenging circumstances until they find their feet or, more significantly, have found a community.

One thing that stood out looking back over 25 years of Karis, is that we have been so consistent and faithful in many of the things we do. Some things have changed shape over time – our Ladywood Community Advice work now does outreach in various 'Places of Welcome' locally, a long way from the initial helping to explain letters and make calls about repairs. However, that basic offer of help is still an important part of what we do, thanks as ever to dedicated volunteers.

Our 'Welcome' group is still meeting in the same place it has been for well over 20 years, and while the attendees and helpers have steadily changed over the years, the welcoming culture and the importance of the group—remains unchanged. There has been huge value in that welcome being passed on, with each new person that comes eventually being a welcome to another.

2024 saw Karis reach another significant landmark, with nearly 2000 people being directly supported by our work. This is up 20% from previous year. The amount of support provided has also jumped significantly, with 11,550 contacts in 2024 (9185, 2023).

And around these throughlines there has been much else that has left a legacy, of shared trip and outings, of being alongside people right up until end of life for many of the older people we've known, of working with others in the community and across the city that has been such a pattern in the way our activities

develop – notably our Baby Bank provision having grown out of close working with the local Foodbank, which is now 11 years on and supporting hundreds of families in crisis each year.

We hope that the newer strands of our work which have emerged in the last year or so, our Men's Space project, which reached the end of its first year in October, and Social Prescribing, which we took on at three local GP practices from August, will themselves have a legacy to celebrate when we reach our next landmark as a charity.



In terms of partnerships we saw a new link with Shelter, delivering regular housing advice sessions from our offices as part of their HSBC funded project. This has been a long-needed provision and their support has been brilliant, even if this can't tackle the fundamental challenges of housing the city is facing.

Looking ahead we continue to face the prospect of the Ladywood Estate Regeneration Scheme, which will affect large parts of the communities where we work. While there hasn't been much progress with the regeneration itself since early announcements, we continue to try and engage where we can and help

communicate updates to residents and their thoughts and hopes for their neighbourhood back to the developers.

Finally, I want to say a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to Karis Neighbour Scheme's work over the past year; -our trustees, our staff, volunteers, partners, donors & supporters, and our participants themselves. - even as the work of KNS grows, it is the same in our 25th year as it has been from the beginning, that it is each individual encounter, or contribution, that makes a difference for the people we meet, day by day. Please do pay particular attention to the stories within the report which highlight the difference our work can make and how we are bringing hope and wholeness into people's lives

YEAR SNAPSHOT



**Worked from 13
community locations**

**Our new Table Tennis
group met 25 times**

**Hosted 2 network
breakfasts**

**Provided 729 bundles
of baby clothes**

Used over 800 stamps

Hired 1 digger!

**Gave out 550 gift and
activity bags**

**706 hours of learning
at our ESOL classes**

**Celebrated 2 participants
99th birthdays**

TRUSTEES STATEMENT

Gillian Harley-Mason

As Chair of the Board of Trustees at Karis Neighbour Scheme am I delighted to commend this year's annual report to you.

It is a wonderful description of all the work that has gone on over the past year - the very many people in the community, whose lives have been touched by the dedicated staff and volunteers who are committed to bringing hope and wholeness in places of brokenness and despair.

The need for the help and support that KNS provides, only continues to increase, and this year the figures show that more people than ever before have been in contact with the various projects.

Excitingly KNS is also growing to meet this demand and with an expanding staff team of 17, there is more capacity to connect with, and journey alongside, those who need assistance and friendship.

As you will read, the staff team are an exceptional group, each with particular specialist skills in the different areas they lead within the charity, and they are deeply caring and dedicated individuals who believe in what they do and give over and above to our beneficiaries. They walk alongside people with faith in the value and identity of every person, hope that lives can change, and love and compassion to enable people to move forwards.

The Board of Trustees are a diverse group of 8 volunteers, with a wide range of skills and experience, some of whom live in the immediate area. It is a privilege to be part of a team who are wholeheartedly committed to KNS and who bring expertise and wisdom to the job of overseeing the work. KNS was proud to receive the IQ standard again this year, and commended for running a high quality system. My thanks go to the trustees for ensuring excellence in governance.

We were sad to say goodbye this year to Steve Watts who has been a Trustee for 20 years and who served the charity faithfully and enthusiastically for so long. And we were delighted to welcome Andy Northcott onto the Board who lives and works locally as a Church Minister, and who has personal experience and insight into the Ladywood Regeneration Plan, which will have a significant impact on Ladywood and the community that is served by KNS over the next few years.

None of this would be possible without the generous gifts and grants from all our funders and I trust this report demonstrates the remarkable outcomes of this year's investment. Your continued partnership has enabled us to respond to growing needs, expand our reach, and make a lasting difference. Thank you for your support. I am happy to respond to any questions or reflections you may have.



YEAR HIGHLIGHTS



This year we have:

- Celebrated our 25th anniversary! We marked this by an event for staff, volunteers and friends at the Nature and Wellbeing centre.
- Said goodbye to Patti Tan from our KBF team and Dilip Patel one of our Listening and Guidance chaplains.
- Gave a warm send off to Ruth Pedzai on her maternity leave.
- Welcomed four new staff - Kalbinder Masih as Social Prescriber, Tahlia Green as KBF worker, Alison Thompson as Chaplain for Wellbeing and Emma Northcott covering for the Children and Families' maternity leave.
- Hosted 2 network breakfasts - bringing together organisations and professionals who work in similar fields.
- Developed new outreach connections with Shelter by hosting and arranging housing advice appointments with their advisors.
- Expanded our outreach to provide volunteer advocates at St Germain's and benefit advice sessions at Your Money Your Way, behind City Road Methodist Church.
- Enjoyed several group trips to the Botanical Gardens through new links with their Head of Engagement & Learning
- Supported our clients to be heard in the uncertainty of the Ladywood Regeneration project.
- Seen Men's Space grow and flourish with new gardening and table tennis sessions.
- Established a social prescribing link worker within the local Primary Care Network.



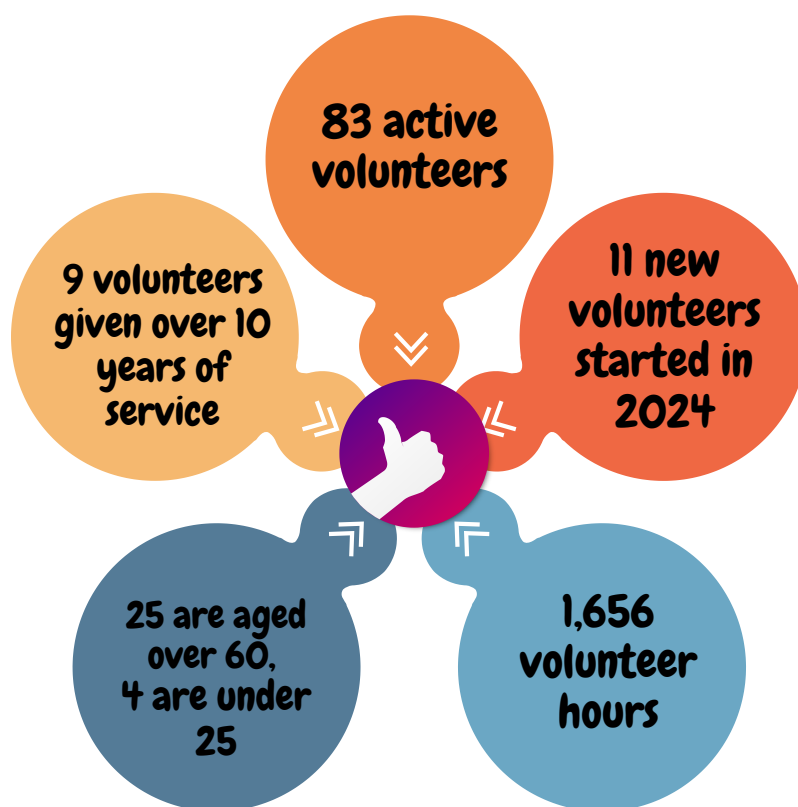
We have such an amazing group of volunteers across many of our projects. This year we had 83 volunteers registered and active - an average of 32 hours every week were spent volunteering!

VOLUNTEERS



Nearly 60% of volunteers live in Edgbaston, Ladywood, Harborne, showing how our key communities are represented in our volunteers.

This year we partnered with St Germain's to train 3 new volunteers in advocacy skills, working alongside our advice team to see clients independently with more confidence. We are excited to see this develop further.



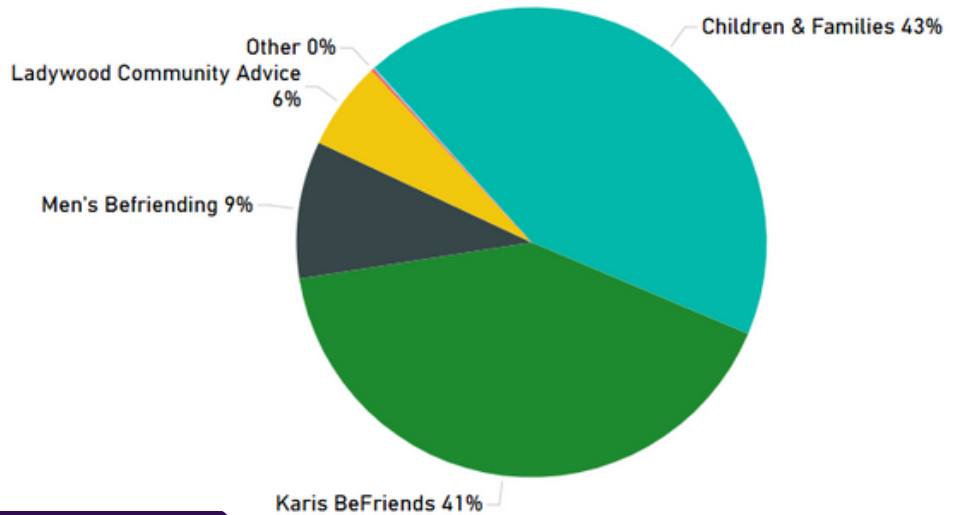
“...I feel connected to the community that's here. I am so proud of all the women who learn English - their persistence and how far they've come” Lucy



"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in." – Author Unknown



Number of volunteers in each project



Karis...is a friendly place to volunteer and the staff are always so appreciative. it is good to give something back to the community



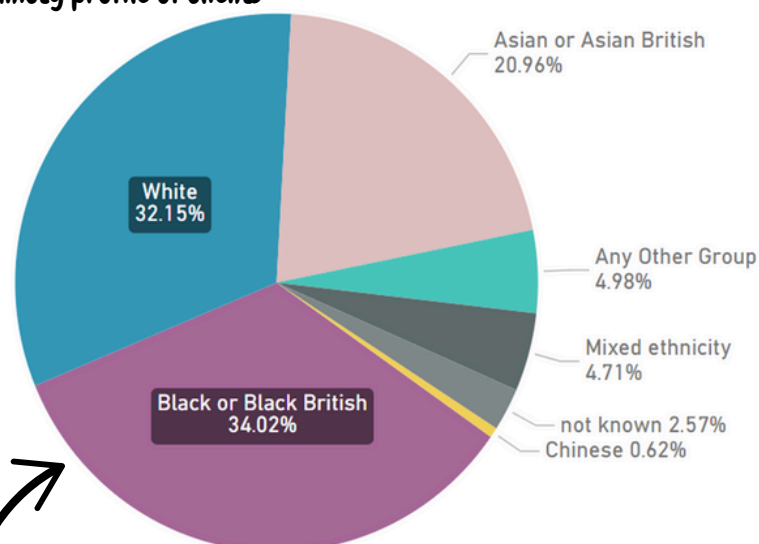
"I love getting to know the women and spending time with them. The lessons are fun and well organised...its great to work with other volunteers too" Helen



SOME STATISTICS

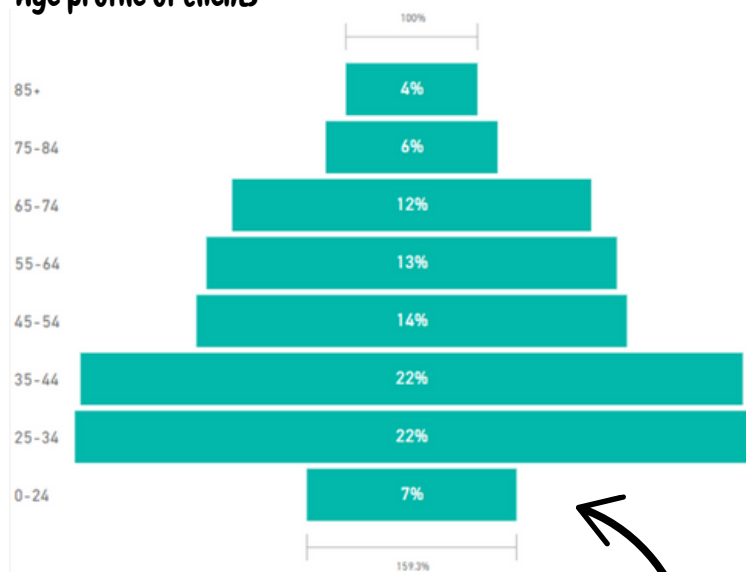
We collect data about the demographics of the clients we work with, although not all individuals will offer all information. This is to report to our funders and ensure we are reaching an appropriate range of our community and in line with our equality and diversity policies.

Ethnicity profile of clients



There is no majority ethnicity group of our clients, with nearly equal split of White, Black and Asian backgrounds.

Age profile of clients



Ladywood and Edgbaston are young wards, with the majority of our clients being under 45

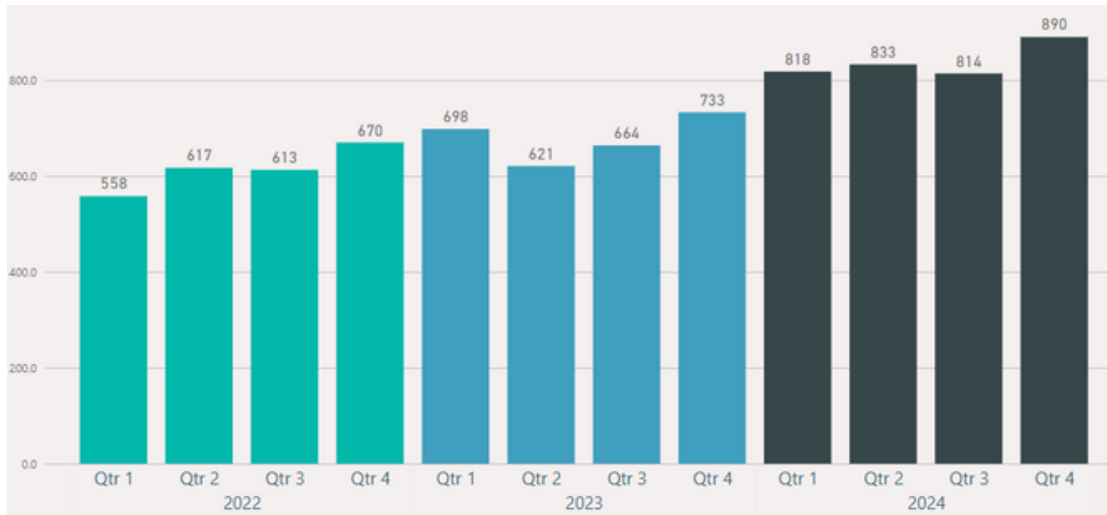
Clients declare their country of birth from over 100 countries across the world, showing the complex diversity of backgrounds in our neighbourhood.

We have clients from
108 COUNTRIES

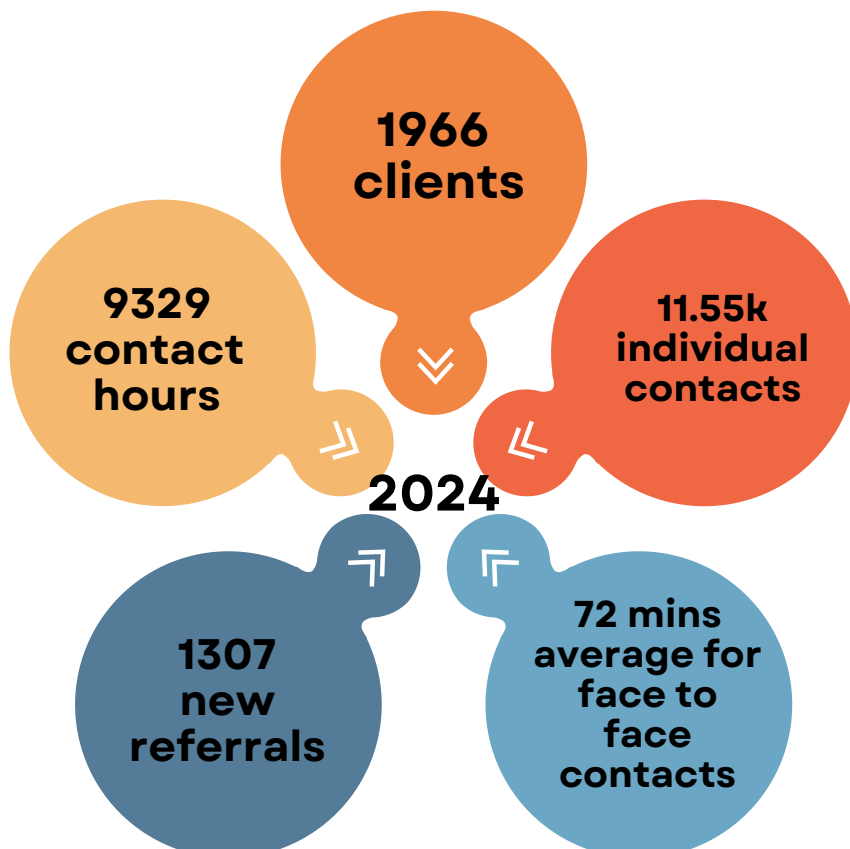


SOME STATISTICS

CLIENTS BY QUARTER OVER LAST 3 YEARS



We have seen a continual increase in the number of active clients across our projects in recent years. This shows the need for our work as well as how we have expanded to reach more people.



In 2024, the fundraising climate was much the same as the previous year – increased competition, fewer available funders with many Trusts closing their doors and yet increased demand for charitable services.

FUNDRAISING



Hannah Eno

We were extremely fortunate to receive two large grants in 2024, from the Trusthouse Foundation and Henry Smith Charity, each of which support specific areas of our work for the next three years. This meant that our Charitable Trust income for our 25th year of operation reached its highest level at over £200,000. We are grateful for every gift that supports our work and especially appreciative of these longer-term funds that help us to plan for the future and provide reassurance that we can support clients in the years to come.

Of our donations, 10 were from funders that were new to us, and 14 were from the charitable arms of local or national businesses. We welcome these new links and are grateful for the interest in and support of our work. Some of these businesses also provided us with volunteers who came and helped at the baby bank too.



This year we joined the Fundraising Regulator, the body that ensures charities operate fairly, legally and ethically with regard to fundraising and treatment of donors. We fully subscribe to the Fundraising Regulator's code of conduct which can be found on their web pages.

We are grateful to all who have supported us, acknowledged elsewhere in this report, and who have continued to maintain great relationships of support with us. The work we deliver that helps individuals couldn't happen without the kindness and generosity of our many funders. In a small charity like ours, every donation, no matter how small, has a significant impact on what we are able to do.

Income sources 2024



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

HOW 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.eno@karisneighbourscheme.org



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



SOME STORIES

Amina has struggled with terrible housing conditions especially damp. Her youngest son was hospitalised several times last year with chest infections and breathing difficulties.

We could see something needed to be done, so we supported and advocated for her with referrals to Shelter and Green Doctors (groundworks)

This is a quote from Amina after they had visited her:

“A massive thankyou for the Green doctor Link. [he] gave helpful advice and information about the flat and how to deal with the landlord regarding the leaking..... he gave me vouchers for the energy and gas, a dehumidifier from tomorrow and an electric duvet blanket...Thank you very much for all your help.”

Bianca who was pregnant and living in a nearby hotel, was invited but was reluctant either to come to the Drop In or to have visits, as she felt very sick and depressed.

Through meeting another lady from the same country and in the same hotel Bianca was encouraged to come to the Drop In and she began getting to know others. She started to come to the ESOL classes regularly and her spoken English and understanding greatly improved.

One day she came to us very upset -she had suddenly received notice of being moved from the hotel to Peterborough suddenly where she knew no one. We were able to advocate for her and she has been allowed to stay in Birmingham where she has started to build up connections and support networks.

Judith was referred to L&G because of low mood and loss of motivation following the death of her partner.

In her sessions with the Chaplain, Judith learnt about the ways grief affects us all, and skills for breathing and relaxing. She was able to tell her story as often as she needed to, and found this helped her to cope and to accept the loss.

Through her session she felt able to move forward and began looking for opportunities to volunteer, hoping to move into paid work as she grew stronger. She appreciated it was ok to take only small steps, and found her confidence gradually returning.

Judith says: **‘I don’t know what might have happened if I had not been able to access this service. It was there when I needed it most because I felt so lost. Thank you.’**

We helped an individual in his 50s living with many health issues, including lower back pain, heart problems, glaucoma, anxiety and depression. His wife was caring for him, as well as working and looking after the family.

We made contact with him through his links with St Lukes church, as his application for PIP had been refused. We helped to request a mandatory reconsideration, made a referral to an Occupational Therapist for some extra equipment and later started an appeal against the decision. We helped to get extra medical evidence and sent this in with the appeal submission.

Even before a hearing date was set, the client was offered an award, which he decided to accept. He has been very stressed by the experience of challenging the decision, so he was very grateful to have a result.

This will mean an extra weekly payments and a backdated payment of over £8,000 for the family. His wife will get extra Universal Credit as his carer, so she will be able to reduce the number of hours she works and be better placed to meet his caring needs.

Anthony had a number of physical disabilities and spent many years coping with his challenges through the use of drugs and alcohol, searching for an escape from his pain. His flat, he once admitted, **“felt more like a prison than a home,”** and the isolation left him battling severe depression.

A breakthrough came when we encouraged Anthony to explore physical activity as a help for both his body and mind. With some hesitation, he went swimming—a small step that marked the beginning of a transformation. Anthony shared, **“It was a bit scary to do the first couple of widths, but a week ago I decided it was time I do a length. It made me feel good within myself, and it was a way of me forgetting about my disability for an hour or two whilst I was in the pool.”**

Anthony now goes regularly to the gym **“Going to the gym gives me more confidence and a better outlook on life,”** he explained.

We visited Gita, a client in her 60s who had requested help with a Housing Benefit review, which we completed online. Whilst assessing this we found she recently had a decision from PIP which reduced the rates she was receiving. We advised that she should be on the same rate as she had been previously and started an appeal, which was successful.

We then discovered Gita had been paying several £100s of NHS Penalty charges for dental costs, because it was thought that she was not receiving a means tested benefit. We helped her to get proof she was receiving the correct type of benefit, and sent it to DECS by email. After much correspondence back and forth, it resulted in some of fines being refunded.

Having dealt with significant bereavement and workplace bullying, Matthew turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism, which contributed to his physical decline and isolation.

Our work together focused on helping Matthew process his grief and consider his future as he had recently retired. Through our sessions, Matthew began to face [his] challenges, noting that, **“I realised that patterns of my behaviour were destructive. When I said things, Edd would remind me, ‘It doesn’t have to be that way, it’s not set in stone.’”**

With time, Matthew decided to renovate his home using his pension and enter into a civil partnership with his partner. These decisions represented powerful steps forward, enabling him to take control of his future and reimagine his life. Reflecting on this transformation, Matthew said, **“I had set up barriers. I’ve realised my world isn’t as small as I thought it was”**

56 year old Stephanie was initially referred for assistance with her benefits, and it was identified that she may benefit from ongoing befriending and some trips out through the Karis Befriends Project.

Her sister expresses the difference it makes: **“My sister has been seeing her befriender for nearly two years. Being low functioning autistic and having to adapt to supported living after moving from the family home has been a huge challenge. However, Helen’s support, who she goes out for coffee or shopping, has provided a valued and much needed companionship.**

[at] Time for Tea she gets to enjoy social time in a safe and supervised setting, which is fantastic. These outings bring much needed relief to an otherwise quite isolated life, we (the family) are so grateful”

This year marked significant change for the Children & Families project as Ruth Pedzai left in August for Maternity leave and we welcomed Emma Northcott. Liz Brown continues as project assistant and completed her 6th year with Karis.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Emma Northcott



The project faced some significant funding issues this year which made planning for the future a little uncertain at times but following a generous donation in the summer, we also heard that we had received Trusthouse funding which secured the work for another 3 years!

Home visits

The Children and Families team usually start our connection to new clients with a home visit, to introduce Karis and find out what support is needed. Visits are also made to ongoing clients as needed.

This year, we made 83 home visits to 48 families, and an additional 28 befriending visits to coffee shops or for a walk.

You helped me to speak on my own on a daily basis, Thank you for everything!



Trips

This year 50 children (30 families) enjoyed trips to The Wacky Warehouse thanks to funding from Baron Davenport and free trips to Botanical gardens thanks to their engagement programme (benefiting 80 people in July and again in October).

We also took 5 families to swim at the Ladywood Leisure Centre in half term. We were grateful to receive funding from the Mothers' Union 'Away From It All fund' to enable a young boy whose Mum had died to go on some summer trips with his family.



Practical help

Our practical support included giving 37 children school shoes and also providing winter coats thanks to a generous donation from an individual. We remain grateful to the Ladywood Project for their Holiday Help scheme, which supplied 15 clients with shopping vouchers over the different holidays.

We have also supported clients into volunteering in their journey towards work, a valuable work of empowering and building confidence. Three of our clients who have helped as volunteers and were looking for work for a long time recently gained employment!

We also offer emotional support alongside challenging situations like court hearings. This year we have supported one long standing client, who has 2 daughters with neuro-diverse needs. Thankfully, their needs are finally being recognised by the council after a long battle - both girls have now been given places in a better school after over 2 years out of school. This is giving mum a much needed break and the chance to give more attention to the third younger daughter.

I am happy to meet you. I did not know anyone before this. I really enjoy coming to church Drop In. Everyone is very nice, friendly and helpful.



Drop-In

Welcome to Ladywood Drop-in continued to meet weekly at the Ladywood Methodist and welcomed 80 families this year.

We've shared food and made things and generally sought to build community. We have enjoyed some focused discussions around Diabetes, Women's health, damp and mould, and our different cultures which has drawn us all together around the table.

ESOL

Our ESOL Class has benefitted 47 students over the year through running three terms of conversation classes developing speaking and listening skills. These proved very popular with ladies from many different countries so the group was very diverse.

We issued certificates for ladies completing the courses with a special mention to 3 who had attended every single session! We have been particularly grateful to have the help of 5 former students who have returned as volunteers with us, caring for students' children and helping with hospitality.



Just wanted to text and say everything you have gifted me has made my life easier by the tenfold and I couldn't be more appreciative to you and the help that you give. You really are doing God's work, thank you for being some light and positivity in my time of darkness...you've helped a mama in need

Hannah Eno took over babybank in September 2024 after a months break, continuing the good work and busy project!

KARIS BABYBANK

Hannah Eno

We saw almost 400 families - some of these come to us multiple times so that number is not reflective of how many times we might see one family.

The most common reasons for referral were low/no income, domestic abuse and homelessness. Where possible, we sat with clients and listened to their situations and challenges, offering help from the other services Karis provides. We provided support to siblings where we could, and continue to care for many of these families.

Our work is only one very small part of a jigsaw of incredible services and staff who support families in the city. So we want to acknowledge with gratitude all the people behind the scenes: city council staff, health visitors, nurses, midwives, doctors, social workers, support workers, charity staff, energy advisors and many more.



I got help with baby clothes, nappies, i had more connections with new people at drop in, i got help with school uniforms.



**Babybank
volunteers gave
157 hours**

In 2024,
Babybank gave out:

40,923 nappies
1,024 packets of wipes
729 bundles of clothing
256 tins of formula
46 buggies
55 Moses baskets
50 sterilisers
300 bottles
64 changing mats
65 baby baths
600 sets of baby toiletries
31 high chairs



Baby Bank Club

Baby Bank Club runs as a mini shop every two weeks where club members can come and purchase essentials for their babies at half the price of the shops - nappies, wipes and formula.

The Club offers six-monthly membership to families who are working towards independence in providing for their baby's needs.

It is lovely to regularly touch base with the members and be aware when additional needs arise. There was a beautiful moment where one established family with twins noticed a new member with twins, and was offering support, encouragement and even generously passed on their own items that were no longer needed!

25 families
benefitted
from the Club
this year

when I arrived at baby Bank Club I was at my lowest, struggling financially and also emotionally... [the team] were soo supportive and encouraged me a lot.



As well as the hundreds of donations from individuals, the following corporapates also gave to Babybank in 2024:

- Midland Telecom and IT
- Apple Store Birmingham
- Zurich Municipal
- ITV
- Birmingham City Council (staff)
- BCC Children and Families Directorate
- BCC Public Participation Team
- GlaxoSmithKline



Your donated items are truly wonderful and have been incredibly helpful for both me and my baby. I was in a very difficult situation and couldn't afford to buy the things we needed. But you gave us clean, neat, and even brand-new products – I'm so deeply grateful.



Karis Befriends offers support to those 50+ in mainly Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood areas, who are isolated or lonely, encouraging older people to connect, participate, contribute and flourish later in life.

KARIS BEFRIENDS

Helen Bell

In June, we said goodbye to Patti Tan after 9 years working with Karis Befriends and in August welcomed Tahlia Green as our new KBF Development Worker.

Supported 174
people through
3,013 contacts



You do a great job, the way you call everyone, it's so appreciated. Always feel refreshed once spoken to you, sometimes it is the only phone call I get



We continue to receive referrals from local GPs, health professionals, social workers, social prescribing link workers, community organisations, relatives, friends or older people themselves.

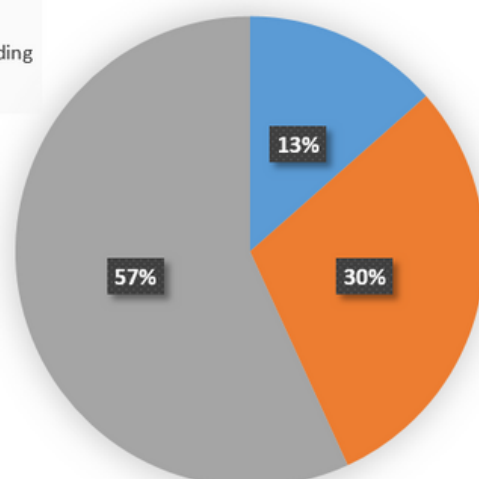
We visit and befriend people in their homes, over the telephone, or accompany them out into the local community, as well as gathering people together through regular social activities and events. Staying in contact with those we support is so important, so we are often sending out birthday cards, newsletters, invitations and information, over 1,000 items sent out this year! As well as this, we made over 1,000 befriending phone calls and at least 550 wellbeing and activity gift bags were delivered.

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. Older people are invited to participate and develop activity that is meaningful for them and build community together.

Throughout the year 39 older participants have been active in enabling activities to happen.

Time spent on key activities:

■ Home visits
■ One-to-one befriending
■ Group befriending



You've made my Christmas time special. Which is a very gift in itself...it is so very kind for you to bless us with this special place to meet, talk and just be.



Senior Life Group

There is a real sense of community and journeying with one another at our weekly Senior Life Group - encouraging friendship, a sense of purpose and belonging.

During this last year, 35 older people have attended, as well as keeping in contact and visiting those who are no longer able to attend. Some have been coming for years, while others are new people joining - everyone is welcomed and encouraged to make a contribution.

There is often laughter, sharing of ideas, maybe tears at times; Sometimes we sing together, are creative, exercise or have a discussion. There are always refreshments, a quiz and opportunity to celebrate birthdays.

This year we have enjoyed trips out to the Botanical Gardens and Winterbourne Gardens and several lunches out together. This is as well as smaller trips out one-to-one to local areas for coffee, walks and appointments.

Art Group

The Art Group has continued to meet on a fortnightly basis and has a regular core of attendees. The group often welcomes new members or visitors. It is led by one of our enabling participants and they have covered a wide-range of projects from linograph printing to sketching and watercolour painting.

I'm very grateful for Time for Tea, because it feels like family, a community I'm comfortable with. I love meeting new people and listening to their stories of life.



Time for Tea

We have enjoyed 6 Sunday afternoon 'Time for Tea' events throughout this year, as well as our Christmas Party, with 78 older participants coming to one or more of these.

This year we have enjoyed various themes at Time for Tea:

- being thankful
- living in our city
- what is important to us as we approach the end of our lives
- celebrating the Olympics
- coping with the changes in our lifetime
- International Older Persons day

At each event everyone leaves with a gift bag with various treats, card, calendar, information, and even some homemade decorations. At Christmas time we delivered over 110 gift bags.

'I enjoy every minute of it! Meeting everyone here and getting me out the house! Good for getting my mind going'



We count it as a privilege to know and journey with people in their later years, often journeying with them right up to the end of their lives.

KBF Advice has continued to provide support to the residents of Ladywood and Edgbaston, particularly to people living with mental health issues.

KBF ADVICE

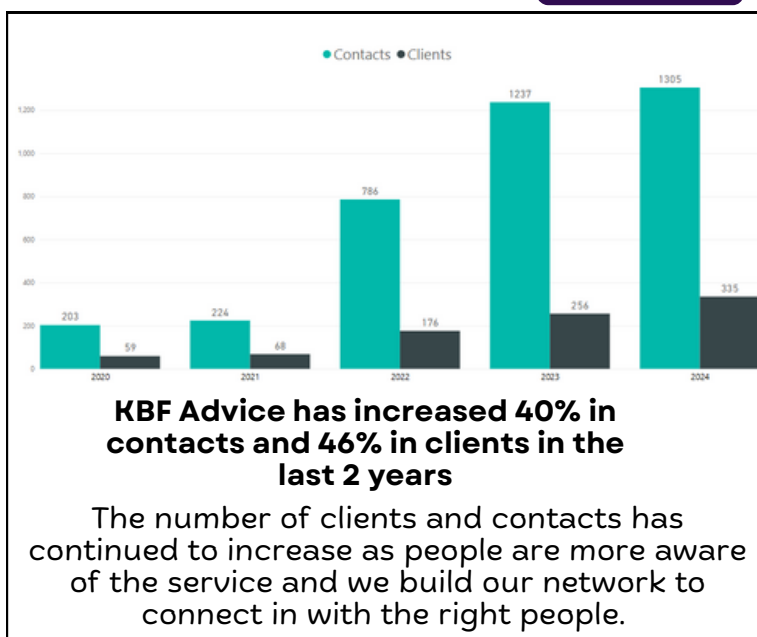
Katharine Harris

We support our clients over the telephone, in office appointments and at home visits - helping with benefit applications, providing advocacy and supporting in times of crisis. We have also represented at benefit Tribunal hearings, and attended local community events.

175 referrals
335 clients
1,305 contacts

Many of our clients with mental health needs are overwhelmed by paperwork, official letters and demands. These clients often need a gentler approach. They may be less likely to have support from other networks, such as friends and colleagues, so having access to a trained advisor allows these concerns to be looked into thoroughly with the right solutions offered.

I can now have the heating on when I need it and buy the food I need. I am very grateful to you for your help. You have changed my life! I am grateful to you, your company and to God.



Our work has increasingly included advocacy issues as well as benefit advice. This includes blue badge applications, explaining letters in plain English and calling utilities companies. As we develop relationship and trust with clients they often ask for further help in these issues that can be quite simple to solve but feel overwhelming to some. For example by getting to know clients during PIP applications, staff are able to look at the whole-person and see where other support could be needed, such as OT assessments or referrals to appropriate agencies.



We have continued to attend drop in sessions at St Germain's Church on Portland/City Road, and take regular referrals from the workers there. This is on the same site as their wellbeing hub with support beyond benefits, for example housing, household support fund and social activities. We also use this as an opportunity to network with other advice providers.

We have started a new advice session in partnership with Your Money Your Way at City Road Methodist Church, and attended a local NNS Warm and Well event.

These locations allow us to make contact with clients we would not otherwise meet. Other support is offered in the same place, including fabulous home cooked meals, and by networking and sharing with staff there we can together find the right support or activities for individuals.

We also network through the South Advice Providers Forum.

We are in a network with B:CAN. This is a partnership with other organisations doing similar work across the city. We are developing better connections with these partners to allow more cross referring and support.



Being able to offer home visits is particularly important for people with social anxiety as well as physical needs. Although the visit is for benefits related issues, a friendly chat can provide an important social contact for an isolated individual.

It has been a much needed help where I thought I was alone. Invaluable service. Katharine went above and beyond. I would recommend your service to anybody needing help.



KBF Advice helped clients gain
£762,000 in benefits
£2,300 in grants



Ladywood Community Advice Service has been operating since 2014 giving advice to those living in postcodes B1-4, 15-16, 18-19 and 21.

LADYWOOD COMMUNITY ADVICE



[LCA is] very friendly and understanding environment which made me feel at ease



Bram Scott

There are two part time welfare benefit specialist members of staff; welfare benefits being the main area of work. Other general advice that requires no legal expertise are carried out by a small team of volunteers.

Advice sessions are carried out at two locations. On Mondays there is a drop in service at St Germain's church on Dudley Road. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays an appointment only system is in place at Ladywood Community and Health Centre on St Vincent Street West

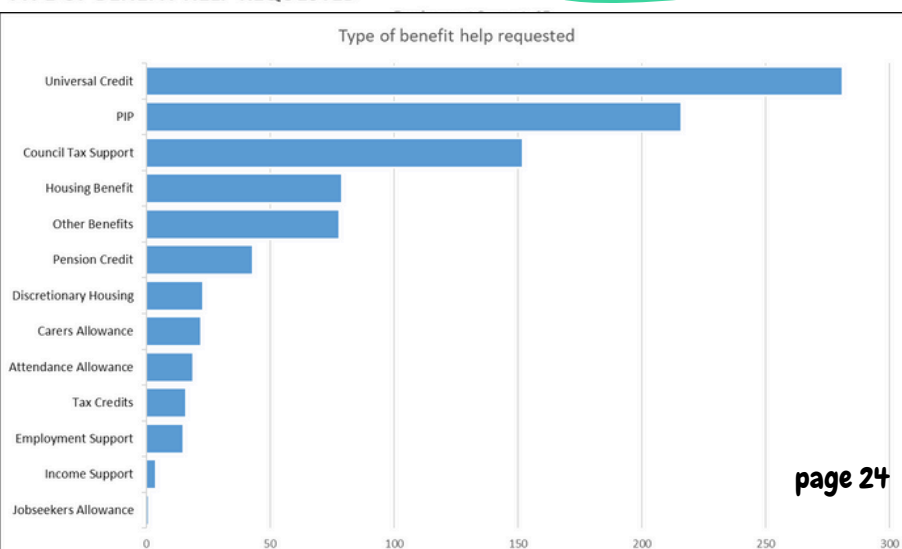
In regard to benefit advice, we offer a service ranging from carrying out benefit checks to ascertain if someone is missing out on a possible entitlement, assisting with completing claims online and form filling, assisting with reviews and disputes and representing at Social Security tribunals.

Interactions with the DWP and council, including making new claims usually require computer skills or the ability to communicate by telephone which creates issues for the vast majority of our service users who have English as a second language so much of our time is taken up with initial claims.

Although more than half our enquiries are from new users we have a cohort of people who require ongoing appointments

During the year we saw 653 residents and identified and assisted to claim £1.5m in benefits

TYPE OF BENEFIT HELP REQUESTED



Our volunteers strive to assist with any non benefit enquiries we receive. Amongst the most common are housing disrepair, applications to the local authority housing register, utility bill payments, parking fines and school placements. Presently we have four volunteers, one doing triage and three advisors. Due to limited space we are only able to accommodate one volunteer a week. There are times when we are unable to offer appointments due to heavy demand.

We have arrangements with Severn Trent water and Birmingham Settlement (debt advice) who both supply advisors to whom we can refer and who share our office space. We also signpost to other organisations such as Shelter and Ladywood Community Project

Having the attendance allowance and the very kind help from Lorrie means that I will struggle less with travel, the gardening and get help with things like that.

In 2024 we took 13 cases to tribunal of which 12 were found in our client's favour.

From February 2025 those in receipt of Employment Support Allowance will be migrated. This cohort will be those with physical, mental health and learning

difficulties issues. They are likely to need more support to migrate successfully and we anticipate more ongoing issues as a result.

Tanya suffers from MS and has specific challenges around mobility. when her PIP application came up for review, she had no one to help her and was running out of time. A phone call to PIP advised her to just write "no change" on the review form and send it back to them. Client did this, and unsurprisingly, her PIP award was cancelled, because of the lack of information.

This had a tremendous knock-on-effect: her daily living award of PIP stopped, this meant her husband was no longer eligible to receive carers allowance. This meant they were no longer eligible for income support and then they were not eligible for housing benefit. They had a total loss of income of £482.28 per week.

Receiving their referral, we completed a benefit check and assisted her with gathering medical evidence, a supporting letter, submitted a mandatory reconsideration request for her (in the required format), and a new claim for Universal Credit.

The mandatory reconsideration was successful: her PIP was reinstated, with an increase in her mobility award to the enhanced rate; the couple obtained £525.06 a week, meaning they were better off then before.

But more importantly, the client felt listened to and supported by us and was helped at a time when she didn't know what to do or where to turn.



Primary healthcare chaplaincy goes from strength to strength!

LISTENING & GUIDANCE

Helen Watts

At Listening and Guidance, we listen carefully to patients who are usually referred by their GP – hearing their stories of loss, change, or challenge.

We care for their wellbeing in body, mind and spirit, acting as ‘companions’ as they find their way towards resilience and 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 love and belonging to people’s lives.

It’s been another busy year for us. We have worked with 308 patients, offering appointments to patients from 7 GP surgeries across 2 Primary Care Networks.

**308 clients
seen at 1,797
appointments**

I have really appreciated the space to air my feelings to breathe and to cry. To be able to see things from a different perspective and make changes in the light of this to make plans to move forward and to pray.’

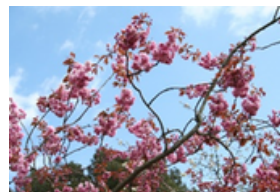
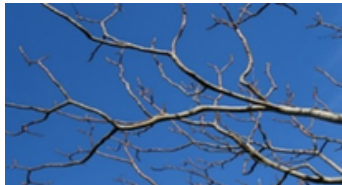


So many people told us just how much the service meant to them – offering a ‘lifeline’ at some of the most difficult points in their lives. We’ve had the joy of praying with many, as well as sharing with them practical tools for relaxation, coping with trauma, sleeping better, connecting with others and so much more. Our links with KNS projects, helped so much by Kal, our Social Prescriber, have enabled onward referrals and signposting.

You’ve been an excellent listener, adviser and source of support for my life. I’m so grateful for your time and care.



A picture we've found helpful recently is one of looking at tangled branches against the sky. When life feels like 'winter' (fruitless and stale), we sometimes can only see the mess and the muddle right in front of us. But through the branches, there is the vast and open sky, and when we shift our focus just a little, we can see beyond these present difficulties to brighter days, to the hope of peace and faith, to the reassuring eternal reality that day will always follow night. The branches (the circumstances of our lives) will change – leaves and flowers and fruit will come again.



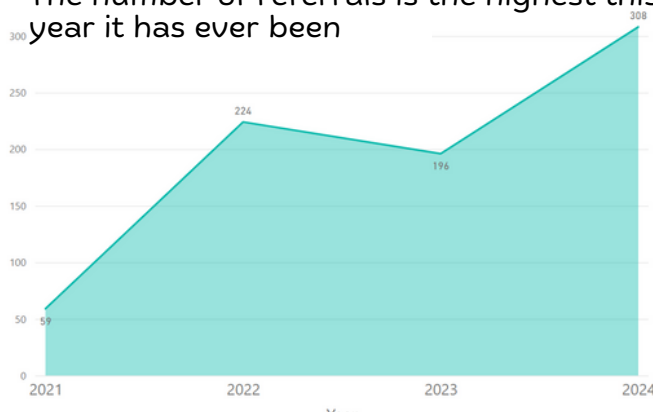
We faced some changes of our own this year, too. Dilip moved on to pastures new, and after a recruitment process where many people applied to join the team, we appointed Alison in the summer. She has wonderfully fitted in, working one day a week at University Medical Practice in addition to her days at Karis Medical Centre. We're grateful for her and all the skills she brings, as well as her sense of fun! So we are once again a full team, the equivalent of two whole-time posts, offering over 55 patient appointments per week.

Despite this, our very high referral rates resulted in a growing waiting list. In a way this is testimony to the success of the service, even though it brings its challenges!

I got relief from some of my grief. Without this help I feel I would still be in a deep dark hole but now I can see light at the end of the tunnel, and I'm so thankful.



The number of referrals is the highest this year it has ever been



We're proud of the difference Listening and Guidance makes. KNS Chaplaincy is a lead example in the country of providing whole-person, spiritual care within primary care in the NHS. A big Thank You to the GPs, funders, supporters and patients who are helping us to champion this kind of care! And we're grateful to God for his unfailing grace.

It's so great to be listened to without just being told it'll be alright, or everyone feels like this. You took me seriously.



The past year has been a period of growth for Men's Space

MEN'S SPACE

Edd Stock

Men's Space has connected with men through one-to-one visits and a range of activities such as the board games café, table tennis group and allotments.

Over this year men have been supported through their isolation and given opportunities for engagement and support.

Home Visits

Home visits were an essential aspect of our outreach, helping to bridge the gap for isolated individuals.

We visited 26 clients at home, averaging over 2 hours per visit. While staff or volunteers chatted with clients they gained a better understanding of their situations, backgrounds and aspirations. As trust grew, some were able to take part in walks or activities in the community or to join a group.



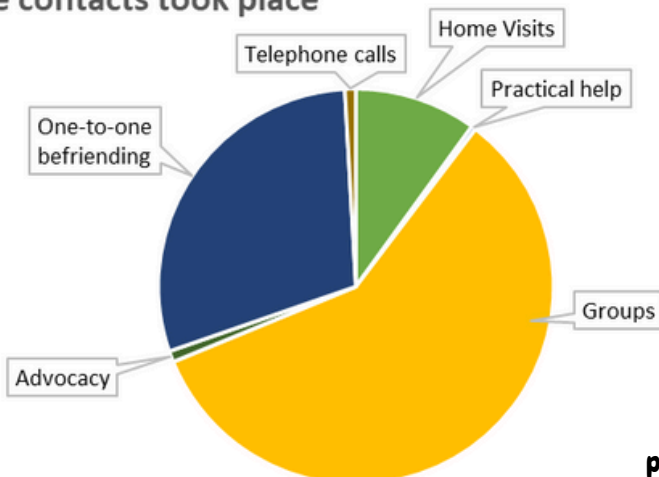
Table Tennis

Table Tennis at Ladywood Leisure Centre launched in spring 2024, supported by an enabling participant, Andy. The table tennis group became a cornerstone activity, steadily growing in attendance and fostering a welcoming environment. A highlight included a client celebrating his birthday with the group, underscoring the program's role in building community and mutual support.

Finding a group has been inspiring for me, it's only one day but it is fulfilling a major part of my week



Where contacts took place



Gardening

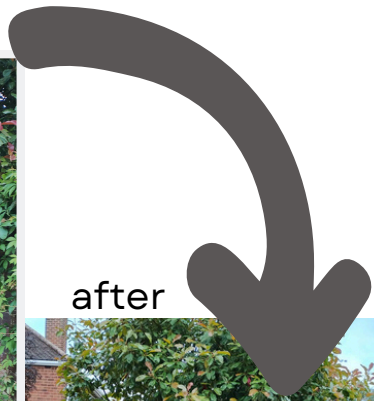
We had the opportunity to create and refresh an allotment at Parker Street, working with clients, Parker Street residents, and Ground Work.

We also gained access to additional space at Christ Church Summerfield, offering further opportunities for meaningful outdoor activities.

5 participants helped with the heavy work of clearing land, digging weeds and setting out the ground for future planting.



before



after



78 participants
543 contact hours



Board Games

In November 2023, we introduced board games to the Monday warm space at St Germain's Community Hub. Scrabble quickly became a favourite, offering a relaxed environment for connection and reducing isolation.

The 2023/2024 year was marked by growth, learning, and impact. Through initiatives, partnerships, and individual support, Men's Space created opportunities for men to connect, rebuild, and thrive.

While challenges remain, they serve as lessons and stepping stones for the future. With continued collaboration and dedication, Men's Space is poised to make an even greater difference in the lives of men across Harborne, Edgbaston, and Ladywood in the coming year.



I was gradually spiralling into an isolated old man. What Edd did was set out possible options.



A new initiative in partnership with the Edgbaston PCN, offering a Social Prescribing service to support patient welfare. This project began in August 2024

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING



Kalbinder Masih

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

Made contact with over 100 clients in first few months

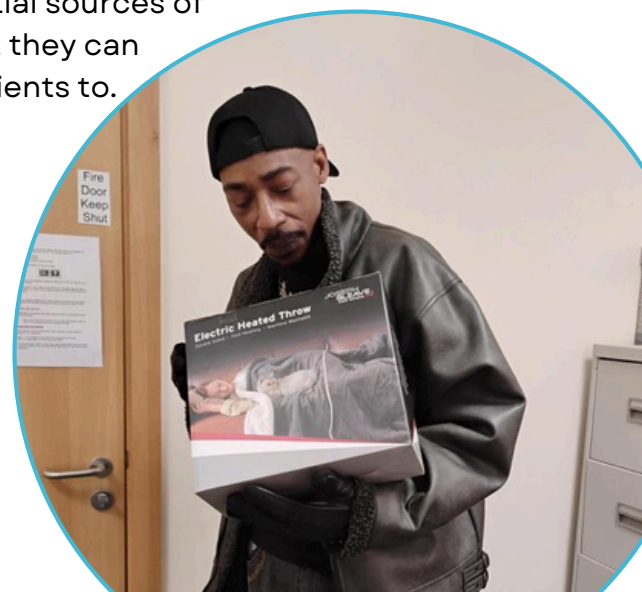
Social Prescribing has become a widespread function across Primary Care since 2019, when Social Prescribing Link Workers began to be recruited widely across England. However, the principle of Social Prescribing – enabling patients to access help & support with social, emotional or practical needs in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

As our Social Prescribing Link Worker, Kalbinder is seeing patients referred by GPs and wider teams at Bath Row Medical Practice, Karis Medical Centre, and The Wand Medical Centre.

Through a number of sessions her role is to understand with the patient what support they may need, what their priorities are, and to help connect the patient to support that is available, most often in their community.

The important principles of Social Prescribing are that this support is personalised – meaning the Link Worker takes time to get to know and understand the person's situation and can help them find the right support for their circumstances, creating a plan that is shared and the patient is able to take ownership of. As well as getting to know patients, part of the Link Worker's role is also to get to know the community groups, charities, services and other potential sources of support that they can connect patients to.

I had trouble with my Benefits and not eaten for 5 days, just living on Herbal tea. Within 24hrs Kal helped me with Food Bank with delivery of food. Thank you so much, for everything you do.



One of the strengths of having a Social Prescribing Link Worker as part of our wider team as Karis Neighbour Scheme is that some of this awareness of the wider networks of support locally can be shared from and with other projects – where we have well established relationships already. However, we are also seeing helpful new links being made as Kalbinder looks to address gaps and/or look for additional support for patients.

Working with the Primary Care Network we are also already starting to look at more pro-active Social Prescribing, which may mean contacting particular groups of patients to offer support rather than waiting for them to contact their GP.

We are excited to see how this area of work will continue to develop in the coming year, working closely with the individual practices and the Primary Care Network, and looking at where we can further build on our strengths in hosting Social Prescribing in a community organisation.



Case studies

“I have suffered with pain some time now, but normally I have medication to control the pain. I met Kalbinder, and she introduced me to making some changes in my lifestyle to manage my pain.

Kal helped me with a ‘Be Active Leisure Card’ and a 3 months free Travel Swift card, along with a heated blanket to manage my pain while I sleep. She has helped me so much, and [I’m] very grateful that my doctors sent me to the Social Prescribing service”

“Kalbinder was patient with me and so understanding. I...have blurry vision, [but] with Kalbinder eyes we were able to fill out forms as I tend to misread things”



We work closely with the following partnerships
and organisations

OUR PARTNERSHIPS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Thank you to:

Active Wellbeing Service, Age UK Birmingham, Asda Solihull, Ashiana Community Project, Baby Bank Alliance, B30 Foodbank, Bath Row Medical Practice, 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, 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, The Project, QAC, Outreach Shop, RE:Future Collective, Real Junk Food Project, The Roundhouse, Severn Trent Big Difference, Shreshack Ladywood, Shencare Community Transport, Shiloh Computers, Small Heath Community Forum, 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, The Wand Medical Centre, Waitrose Harborne, Witton Lodge Community Association, Your Money Your Way, Zurich Insurance.

We are grateful to all our funders, supporters and donors:

Albright Grimley Trust, Ambergate Trust, Apple Store Birmingham, ArmacMartin, Arnold Clark Community Fund, Asda, Baby Bank Alliance, Birmingham City Council Winter Food Aid and Warm Welcome Funds, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Body Mind Spirit Partnership, Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (Rigeons Family Fund), CB & HH Taylor Trust, Charles Hayward Foundation, Citizen Housing Group Local Fund, Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme, Edward and Dorothy Cadbury Trust, Eveson Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, George Fentham Trust, GH Collins Trust, GJW Turner Trust, GlaxoSmithKline, Harry Payne Fund, Heart of England Community Foundation, Henry Smith Charity, Hinchley Trust, Hobson Charity, Home Instead, Hortons Social Purpose Committee, ITV, Joseph Frazier Trust, Joseph Hopkins Trust, Ladywood Neighbourhood Network Scheme, Leeds Building Society, Lillie Johnson Charitable Trust, Living Well, Lord Austin Trust, Martin Carter Associates, Morrisons Foundation, PHP Fund, Property for Kids, Richard Kilcupper's Trust, Roger and Douglas Turner Trust, Saintbury Trust, Sheldon Trust, Skipton Building Society, Tramore Trust, Trusthouse Foundation, Warburtons Community Fund, WED Charitable Trust, Zurich Municipal Insurance.

All our individual supporters who provide cash donations and/or baby bank stock, everyone who buys items from our baby bank Amazon wishlist, and all the volunteers who give their time to our work.

Everyone who supports us through EasyFundraising.



The
Henry Smith
Charity



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