

Making the most of later life

Age UK Barnet Annual Review 2020-2021

www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet

Contents

Our impact	1
Mission and vision	2
Our aims for 2021-2024	3
Covid-19 response	5
Neighbourhood services	9
Digital Inclusion	9
Befriending	10
Falls prevention	13
Later Life Planning	14
Handyperson	16
Barnet Connect	18
Cookery	19
Walks	22
Volunteering	23
Social Prescribing	27
External providers 2020-2021	29
Income generation	30
Financial summary	30
Communication	31
Looking Forward	31



Our impact

Welcome to our 2020-21 Annual Report, which will give you an insight into the work we have done during this most challenging of years and the way we have supported the most vulnerable older people in Barnet.

2020-21 was a year like no other. The Covid-19 pandemic was difficult for all of us but it had a devastating impact on the lives of older people all over the country and in our borough. Normal life was completely disrupted due to lockdowns and for those who were told to shield, everyday matters such as food shopping became an impossible task especially for those without family or other support close at hand.

As a key strategic partner for the local authority, Age UK Barnet was an obvious place for them to look for support for the borough's older people. We were able to redeploy all our staff as we adapted our services and started new ones to meet the emerging needs of our clients. We will go into more detail about how we did this over the coming pages.

As well as challenges there were many opportunities

- We were bowled over by the number of Barnet residents coming forward to volunteer and many of those who joined us during the first lockdown are still with us today.
- We were fortunate to be successful in a number of grant funding applications which enabled us to develop new projects and reach more people.
- We received unexpected income from Age UK thanks to their national fundraising appeals
- We received five times the usual number of donations.
- Although we maintained an in-person presence throughout in our East Finchley centre, we embraced remote working and virtual meetings.
- We got to grips with technology and delivered sessions via Zoom for cooking, craft and exercise and we put our music afternoons onto our new YouTube channel.

Many of these will stay with us as we look to rebuild and reinvent our services and activities and strengthen our connections with older people.



*Lorraine Barnett
Chair*



*Helen Newman
Chief Executive*

Mission and vision

Our purpose is to be the organisation all local older people trust to support them and enhance their wellbeing and quality of life.

- To empower all local older people to live healthy, happy and more independent lives.
- To combat loneliness and social isolation.
- To support our local partner organisations in providing the best possible age-friendly services.
- To provide an inclusive service that adapts to the needs of our local community, and values all ages, families and individuals.

Our aims for 2021-2024

- Be the **go-to organisation** for older people in Barnet, be the ones they and their families trust to support them through their challenges and to embrace later life.
- Focus on **reaching the most isolated older people**, ensuring that people are visited face to face.
- Increase opportunities to **formally seek the views of older people** and improve the way we **measure impact**.
- **Increase the diversity of our client group.**
- **Invest in new opportunities** for older people to stay active both in person and virtually.
- **Invest in maintaining our high-quality, independent advice offer.**
- Further **develop our home support service** to meet increasing demand.
- Be relevant to and inclusive of younger older people building longevity into our relationships enabling our services to be **truly preventative**.
- **Ensure our systems, infrastructure and investment can support our growth.**

Our purpose is to improve the lives of older people in the London Borough of Barnet

AIM 01

Be the go-to
organisation for
older people in
Barnet

AIM 02

Reach the most
isolated older
people

AIM 03

Formally seek views
of older people &
improve impact
measurement

AIM 04

Increase diversity of
our client group

AIM 05

Invest in new
opportunities - in
person and virtually

AIM 06

Invest in
maintaining
high quality,
independent
advice

AIM 07

Develop the home
support service

AIM 08

Be relevant and
inclusive of younger
older people

AIM 09

Ensure systems,
infrastructure and
investment can
support growth



Covid-19 response

Adapting our services to meet the needs of Barnet's older population

In March 2020 Age UK Barnet was emerging from a significant restructure, which saw our staff team reduced by a third. This was following considerable reductions to our Neighbourhood Services contract with the local authority which were detailed in last year's report. As we were adjusting to this new reality, news of the Coronavirus outbreak was emerging in Britain.

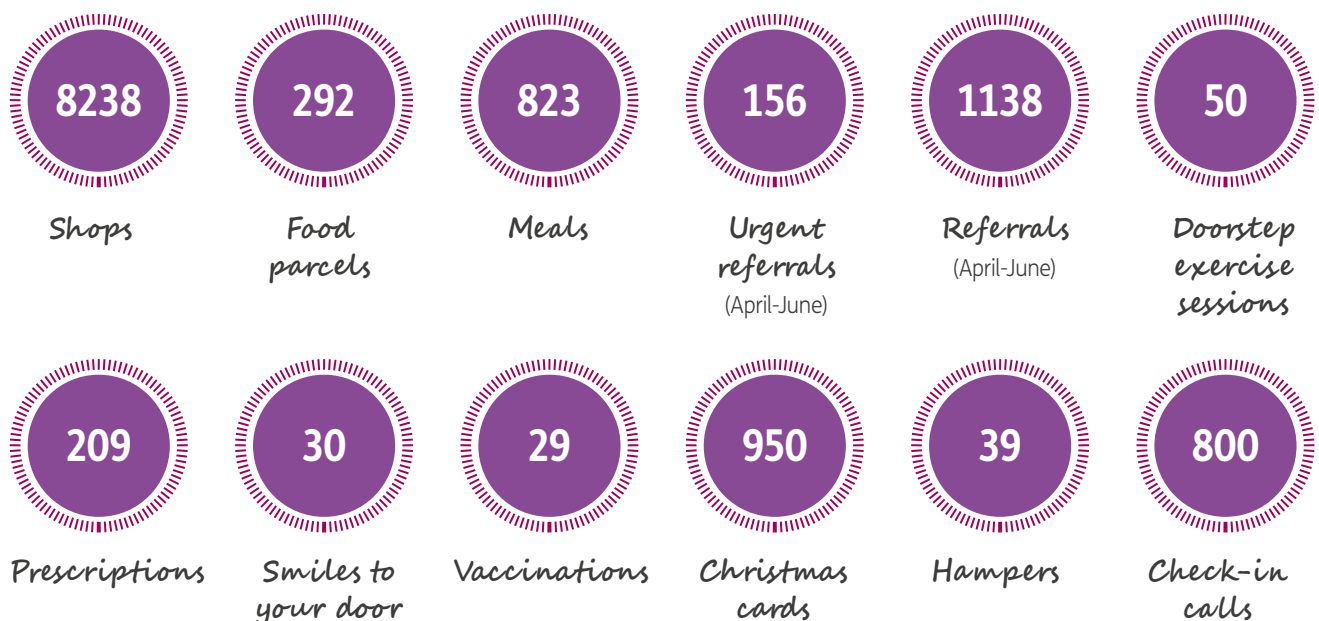
Anxious clients and their families started calling us in early March. They were cancelling their visits to our classes and sessions and looking for support with shopping as panic-buying swept the country. It was clear that we needed to respond.

With a national lockdown imminent, commissioners at the local authority turned to Age UK Barnet as a key partner in the wider community response. All staff were redeployed to our Covid support programme and we received additional

funding to support urgent referrals directly from adult social care.

We set up a shopping service, a food bank and a meals on wheels service, none of which would have been possible without the recruitment of 170 new volunteers. These were local people, students back from university and others who had been furloughed by their employer, and who wanted to support older people.

We received close to 300 calls, emails and web enquiries looking for support every week between then and the lifting of the lockdown in July. The urgent response team managed the cases of those most in need. All these clients had either no food or little food left in the house so emergency food parcels were despatched or a new shopping volunteer assigned for urgent action





Pigeon Post

Reaching the digitally excluded

Many of those calling us were able to support themselves by arranging online shopping but it became clear very early in the first lockdown that people without access to a computer were particularly vulnerable, and most at risk of isolation and lack of support.

They were met with numerous barriers to helping themselves – food deliveries could only be booked online and prescriptions and GP appointments were more easily available to those who could use email or apps. With libraries and other sources of IT support closed, older people, particularly those who lived alone, felt abandoned and subject to increasing levels of anxiety and distress.

A grant from DCMS via the London Community Response Fund helped Age UK Barnet to identify and support local older people who found themselves particularly vulnerable during the first national lockdown, as a result of being digitally excluded.

We helped in two ways:

- We connected with community groups, local faith groups and the new Mutual Aid groups to reach out to those people who were cut off from the online world. Our aim was to ensure these small and emerging groups had access

to the resources, knowledge and networks enjoyed by Age UK Barnet.

- We started producing a monthly magazine called Pigeon Post, aimed at people who have no access to a computer. The idea was to connect, inform and entertain the readers and make them feel part of a non-digital community. As well as puzzles, recipes, interviews with local people and useful tips, we include local information, emergency contact numbers and a details about how we can support them. We encourage engagement with readers who regularly get in touch with us with their stories and tips.

The impact of this work has been extremely positive. Our original target to identify and support, 500 digitally excluded recipients, was exceeded by 100% and the Pigeon Post newsletter is now received by over 1000 older people. It has provided access to vital information, entertainment and social contact during multiple lockdowns. The quote below encapsulates everything we hoped to achieve with the grant.

“I adore and love Pigeon Post - it was a godsend when it arrived and it made me very emotional to read that you were doing this for people who didn't have internet access. People like me are the forgotten ones and your little magazine remembers them and keeps us informed with information that we would otherwise never know about. I just want to thank you for bringing me laughter, communication and information.”

Vivian, reader.

Lockdown Letters

We launched a wonderful book of heart-warming letters and pictures from Barnet pupils to share with some of our older friends. The book is made up of the best entries from a competition we ran in the summer of 2020 when we asked primary school children in Barnet to write or draw about their experience of lockdown. The idea was to reach out to Barnet's older people and help them feel more connected and less socially isolated. Many had been cut off completely from life outside.



'The overall standard was really high and I was touched by how much effort the children made. As well as sharing stories and facts about themselves, they were also very thoughtful and many of them offered words of comfort and positivity,' says Professor Catherine Loveday, Age UK Barnet trustee and one of our three judges.

These shared experiences of lockdown will be a snapshot of these unprecedented times.

Christmas card campaign

In our Christmas Card campaign, over 950 school pupils from all over the borough made Christmas cards with touching messages to the older people we've been supporting. And we were overwhelmed with thank-you messages from the people who'd received them, so many of whom spent Christmas alone.

We also treated some of our regular clients to festive hampers – kindly donated by generous supporters. Earlier in the year, we were overwhelmed by the creative talents of the pupils from Woodcroft Primary School who donated harvest festival hampers. They decorated them beautifully with innovative designs and touching messages for our older friends.

Smiles to your Door

We were excited to be part of a campaign which brought together local community groups and charities in Barnet to support older and vulnerable people in the challenging winter ahead.

The Worshipful The Mayor of Barnet Cllr Caroline Stock kicked off the Bringing Smiles to your Door campaign by delivering goodies to the doorsteps of some of our older clients –including plants, flowers, lovely children's drawings and the latest issue of our very own Pigeon Post!

Working in partnership with The Good Neighbour Scheme Mill Hill and Burnt Oak, JOY - Joining Old and Young, The Flower Bank and The Jewish Association for Mental Health (JAMI), we delivered special treats throughout the winter to help tackle loneliness among our older and more isolated clients.

Combating Loneliness Campaign

The connections made during the Smiles to your Door campaign led to further community initiatives and a group called Combating Loneliness was formed in December. The group included over 30 members representing a wide range of organisations such as AUKB, local councillors, community hubs, Barnet Council and Barnet voluntary sector groups and organisations. The idea was that we were all creating opportunities



and activities to keep people connected during the pandemic and this was a good forum to share information and ideas as well as to explore joint initiatives. The group came together and identified a database suitable for its use, good links were made throughout the borough and connections with the VCS forum were established. Collaborations continue with sharing resources and joint activities.

Doorstep workouts

Our lovely regulars couldn't come to us to exercise so our exercise team took our class to them. A little chat and some great doorstep moves gave everyone a well needed lift! In fact our workout gave one lady the confidence to walk to the end of her road and back for the first time in over two months.

The video of some of the clients exercising on their

doorsteps got over 3,000 views when we put it on our Facebook page, and BBC Radio London gave it a big thumbs up on their afternoon show.

Our exercise team also made some short fun videos for our exercise regulars who had access to a computer - simple 5 minute workouts that people could do around the house or in their gardens.

Supporting loved ones with dementia

Anxiety about the pandemic was particularly stressful for people living with dementia and their carers – even as restrictions began to ease, so our trustee, neuroscientist Professor Catherine Loveday made a video for us about how we can help our loved ones with dementia. The video is available on our website and our YouTube channel.

Neighbourhood services

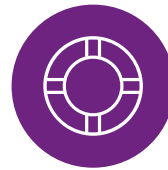
Encouraging older people to increase wellbeing and make the most of later life



Wellbeing



Falls Prevention



Later Life Planning



Home Support

Digital Inclusion

Opening up the online world to Barnet's older people

Age UK Barnet has been helping Barnet's older people get to grips with technology for many years and those online skills proved invaluable over the last year.

As soon as we went into the first lockdown we adapted our face to face support and some of our new volunteers helped clients over the phone with their devices. By talking them through how to use Zoom, they were ready to chat with family and friends, and they also learned how to join online religious services, access pharmacy deliveries, and to get set up for online shopping and supermarket deliveries or click and collect.

We were also given 6 recycled laptops from Age UK London and these were promptly set up and given out to those keen to get connected during the lockdowns.

In November 2020 we launched a campaign to encourage people to donate any unwanted devices that we could recycle to help get lonely and isolated people connected with friends and family online. Some 18 devices have now been wiped, set up and given out. We were also given some EE Wifi dongles which have been well-received by those not wanting to sign up to a long broadband contract until they are sure they are going to make the most of this extra expense.



We have doubled our target to support 500 digitally excluded recipients

Befriending

Making a difference to those facing social isolation and loneliness

The year was dominated by the pandemic. During the first lockdown we had up to 100 people per day contacting our befriending service as they worried about themselves or vulnerable relatives, isolating in their homes and unable to shop online.

As restrictions began to lift in the summer the summer, we gradually split the shopping and befriending services to ensure there was clear and adequate support for all clients and volunteers. We concentrated on ensuring all volunteers, including those taken on as emergency support volunteers got the appropriate level of training and help and those who wanted to could, with confidence, become befrienders.

Some longer standing volunteers formed bubbles with their clients and others used the summer months to visit their clients in their gardens or accompany them on short walks. From June, volunteer support workers could legally enter client's homes so we worked with volunteers and clients to make sure this was done safely by risk assessing and monitoring contact. On some occasions, volunteers took clients to medical appointments they would otherwise not have attended out of fear of the virus. This saved some from undiagnosed life limiting conditions.

Over the second half of the year, as the numbers of people feeling lonely and isolated continued to rise,

Age UK Barnet was successful in securing funding for two befriending related projects. With support from Age UK's Covid-19 Emergency Appeal Fund, we employed a part time Telephone Pal coordinator enabling us support more than twice the 70 matches we had previously. Funding from DCMS via the National Lottery (check) for our Older Healthy Minds project meant we could also expand our service to manage an increase in referrals for older people living with mental health issues. These were both short term, addressing issues caused by Covid related isolation and bereavement. There were also referrals for those with longer term conditions no longer able to access face to face support. The project, was delivered in partnership with MIND in Barnet and involved training over 130 (42 new to us) volunteers in Mental Health befriending and 30 Befriending coordinators from 27 organisations. We supported 122 clients with mental health issues during this period and helped MIND set up their own befriending service for 18-55 year olds. The Barnet Befriending Links networking group restarted this year and enabled representatives from the new Mutual Aid groups and befriending managers from a wide variety of organisations to share information and training.

Age UK Barnet's befrienders and staff responded to the emergency with flexibility, creativity and compassion.



1,270

Individuals accessed emotional and practical support



460

Befriending clients



122

Partnered with Mind in Barnet to support clients with mental health issues





Falls prevention

Activities and services that reduce the risk of a fall

Keeping active, wearing sensible shoes and good footcare all help to reduce the risk of falls as we get older. Unfortunately after being confined to their homes for long periods and being inactive, many of the older people we support now have poorer muscle strength and balance, leaving them unsteady on their feet and at greater risk of a fall. Our doorstep workouts and online exercises helped tackle this, focusing on moves that improved muscle strength, posture and balance.

Exercise Classes on Zoom

Due to covid restrictions, we were not able to offer our usual selection of exercises classes, but we filmed short exercise videos which were available on our website to keep our regulars moving. And in November 2020, we set up two exercise classes on Zoom which have been extremely helpful for the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of our clients. Our participants have told us how important routine is for their mental health and that a regular event - even on zoom - creates a sense of 'normality'. The classes kept people active physically, and so they felt better mentally and emotionally. Chats before and after the session add a social element and help alleviate social isolation and loneliness.

The Friday Movement to Music session, which is open to all abilities and can be performed standing or seated, attracts 20 participants each week. The Tuesday Movement to Music class, a gentle slower paced movement to music class, has 9 regular participants who were originally referred to us by the Falls Clinic. The numbers are capped so the instructor can give each one individual attention. The same group is still going on Zoom.

"I really look forward to Wendy's class - I always feel full of energy afterwards and I love catching up with everyone when the exercise is done."

Alan

Footcare

Footcare is a key part of our falls prevention work and we were glad to reopen our simple nail cutting service. To comply with Covid guidelines, there was 45 minutes between appointments rather than 30 to enable cleaning and avoid clients waiting with others. Both our nail technician Linda and clients wore PPE and clients had their temperature taken and sanitised hands on arrival.

In September a podiatrist joined our team to offer a service to those people with diabetes or those on steroids or warfarin.

Both services ran until the second lockdown in January 2021 and during the second lockdown the podiatrist Owrang was able to continue with home visits.

Later Life Planning

Advice and information on benefits, housing, money worries and more

The Later Life Planning Team faced many challenges and changes in the way in which the service was delivered during 2020-21 as a result of Covid-19.

The team had planned to start the year business as usual - seeing clients in the office and in their homes to support with welfare benefit checks and form filling. However, changing circumstances meant that the team had to quickly adapt their skills and support clients with new needs - accessing food, arranging someone to help them with their shopping, telephone befriending and check-in calls, liaising with social services, providing information on foodbanks and unfortunately advising clients what to do following an unexpected bereavement during a pandemic.



Number of calls, letters and emails handled by our team

Our experienced team were used to dealing with difficult conversations but this became more challenging when our clients could no longer leave their homes or be visited for that face to face conversation.

We are very proud of the way that the team continued to support clients where possible over the telephone with form filling and claiming benefits such as Attendance Allowance, Blue Badge Forms and helping some clients to, successfully, challenge decisions. Some of the appointment telephone calls would take up to two hours.

The Later Life Planning Service also received support from their team of volunteers who made

advice calls, check-in calls, helped clients to interpret correspondence over the telephone and calls to provide re-assurance during such worrying times.

The team which is made up of one Service Manager, Team Leader and two advisers supported over 1408 clients during 2020-21 and between January-March 2021 supported an unprecedented number of clients - 528 the highest supported during any quarter.

We have seen an increase in referrals from social prescribers, which shows that we are strengthening our relationship with GPs in the borough and is an acknowledgment that social issues have an important part to play in a person's health and wellbeing.

We are pleased to report that despite the restrictions in place, the Later Life Planning team have still supported clients to claim in the region of £190,503.40 in welfare benefits. The updates are still coming through and most of the outcomes and appeals have been successful. The figure we are reporting is lower this financial year but as we know this has been as a result of being unable to get our team out to see clients in their homes to support them with form filling and the processing of applications delayed. However, we still feel that the amount achieved during such a difficult time has made a difference.



£190,000

Amount our advice team helped clients claim in owed benefits

Looking at the Future

We already noticing that post lockdowns, clients are finding the confidence to pick up the telephone and call our team to ask for support with money matters, housing queries, end of life planning advice and much more. The team are preparing for a further increase in client enquiries and will continue to use a mixture of telephone, online and eventually face to face support. We will also get our volunteers fully back on board to support the service.

The team continues to work closely with local partners and makes referrals where necessary. These external working relationships have been strengthened with regular on-line meetings to explore ways in which clients can be supported across organisations and statutory services, without duplicating work and making the most of limited resources.

The Later Life Planning Service are also in talks with community venues with a view to embedding advisers in the community, so that the service can be accessible locally across the borough.

What some of our clients say

"Thank you for going that extra step to listen and understand what I needed, I feel better informed about my options going forward"

Mr S, who required general information

"Thank you - the extra money has allowed me to now have a cleaner to help me around my home and your volunteer was very patient with me when completing the very complicated form."

Mrs S who needed help completing a benefit form

"I was very anxious about completing the form on my own, but you have been very patient with me."

Mrs W who we helped with a benefit form

"Your help is very much appreciated; I had no idea where to start or what to do about the sick note. You stepping in took a lot of stress away which is a godsend at the moment. Thank you so much!"

John



Handyperson

Promoting independence and safety at home

Handyperson Service

Throughout the pandemic the handyperson service continued to operate in a limited capacity undertaking urgent and essential jobs only. There was also a reduction in the number of referrals we received due to the risks the pandemic posed to our older client group.



Despite this, we were able to utilise the handyperson service in other ways to support our older Barnet residents during this very challenging time. We introduced a prescription collection service for those who were shielding, and the handyperson assisted with this daily. We also set up our own food bank at Age UK Barnet. The handypersons played a vital role in collecting donations from generous residents and then delivering essential food parcels to those who were shielding and vulnerable due to ill health or disability.

On 1st August 2020 we introduced a charging policy for clients using the handyperson service. We introduced a two-tier system which involved a standard hourly charge of £25 per hour and a reduced charge of £15 per hour for those on benefits. We recognised the need to keep light bulb changing and smoke alarms batteries free of charge as this is a crucial service. This year 610 people used the Handyperson service, 252 of whom were new to us.

The charging policy has been a successful development, enabling us to continue to provide the service, following the reductions in our contractual funding, but at an affordable cost to the clients.

Shopping

Age UK Barnet's Shopping Service evolved out of the pandemic. At the height of the pandemic, we co-ordinated a dedicated team of 150 volunteers who were shopping for 330 Age UK Barnet clients per week. These numbers remained high until the end of July when we continued to support approximately 200 clients per week.

By the end of August 2020 and the easing of the first lockdown we wound down the service to around 100 clients per week. We recognised though that there was a significant need for this type of support, so we made the decision to develop it further as an ongoing service. To make it more sustainable in the longer term we introduced a small monthly charge and an eligibility criteria which came into effect in September 2020. As the lockdowns continued the number of shopping clients remained high into the nineties and numbers only reduced since the easing of restrictions earlier in the year. We continue to review our shopping clients through regular telephone calls offering alternative support such as online shopping if appropriate. In total 550 people were supported with shopping.



8,238

Individual shops



550

Clients



Barnet Connect

Creative, physical, group activities through volunteers and collaboration

Barnet Connect and online activities

At the beginning of the pandemic the Barnet Connect team was unable to run its usual activities and events due to social distancing and the fact that many people were shielding, so we had to adapt quickly to remain connected with our existing clients and continue to make connections with new clients. We started by using modern technology – either Zoom or YouTube for live events – to maintain our activities and introduce new ones.



326

Clients



419

Sessions

We were impressed by the number of people who took up this technical challenge, often helped by one of our digital inclusion volunteers who guided people through the process.

Activities On-Line during the pandemic with 62 volunteers

- Watercolour art class
- Vegetarian workshop
- Indian Cookery Cakes and bakes
- One-pot cookery
- Art Class
- Men's Newspaper Discussion Group
- Wooden Spoon Cookery class
- Book Club Flower Arranging Class
- Knit & Natter
- Christmas craft - felt decorations
- Mindfulness
- Seniors Choir

Seniors choir

In April 2020 the Dementia Choir, which had operated at the Open Door Centre, moved its sessions online and became the Seniors' Choir. Led by Jenny La Touche, numbers rose by 300% up to 25 singers. We had a hardcore group of regulars who submitted requests each week and many of them said it was the highlight of their week in the lockdowns. We had around 30 requests to join the choir from over 55s who were outside the borough and some as far afield as Northern Ireland.

Online concerts

We had many generous offers of free concerts submitted, some previously recorded which we were able to send out to our music afternoon regulars and post on our website too. The World Harmony Orchestra gave us three superb recordings of violin and saxophone concerts which were much appreciated and we brought in professional musicians to perform on our YouTube channel during the Autumn. These were also recorded so clients could view them again or later at their convenience. We also hosted a delightful Victorian Music Hall Afternoon via Zoom with Sue Yager and friends in full costume.

We managed to start a new book club via Zoom with our wonderful volunteer Kato and had 5 regulars and we also offered monthly Mindfulness sessions online with Kamontip, another volunteer.

Cookery

Picking up kitchen skills and bonding over food



164
Clients

The Barnet Connect cookery programme very quickly adapted and a handful of our volunteers started hosting online cookalongs.

The recipes were forwarded to participants a few days beforehand to give those who wanted to cook along the chance to buy the ingredients. Some participants were just happy to watch and cook later in their own time. We had up to five sessions a week ranging from Indian cookery, international cuisine, tray bakes and one pot cooking, with up to 25 people in each session. Although some people found it difficult to make the transition to online sessions, it was a lifeline to many others and we attracted over 50 new participants over the period. We also hosted three face to face cookery

demos for six people a week, following Covid-safe guidelines, which brought together those who were not able to meet online. More than 164 people attended a cookery session during the year.

"I would like to add my thanks to those of others; as a late comer to the group I was made very welcome. I have certainly learned many new things about Indian cookery and especially spices."

Rosemary, online cookery participant

"Your online cookery classes kept me sane. I can't thank you enough."

Sue, who attended all online sessions



Newspaper discussion group

The men's cookery group missed their weekly banter and conversation in their face-to-face cookery sessions with our cookery volunteer Nancy so decided to get together on Zoom each week and talk about the news. 'We talk about how we are getting on, what we've been doing and, especially if Nancy joins us, bragging about what we have been cooking!' says volunteer Des, who organises the Zoom sessions. Victor, another participant, says: 'We talk about everything from slavery, statues, racism and all the latest on Covid-19, of course. 'The hour seems to go by very quickly,' says Des. 'When we finish I already look forward to next week's.' Each week up to 9 people get together online and 3 new participants have joined the group.

Art, knit and natter and flower arranging

Online craft classes were a new experience for a lot of our older users, but with support from some of our volunteers we managed really well. Clients also felt a great sense of achievement not only with using zoom, but in having the confidence to do so.

Knit & Natter class also met weekly online with up to 15 clients a session learning new skills and making new friendships in the process. Participants in our art groups were also happy to meet online, and felt safe in their own environment. We delivered any art materials they needed to their homes, ready for their guided online sessions. We also organised flower arranging in a similar way, delivering flowers from flower re-purposing charity The Flower Bank to people's doors before each session.

One of the few good things that has come out of this past year is that it's has given some people a chance to rediscover things they used to love to do.

"Just wanted to say a big thank you to yourself and Doris and Felix for the last 8 weeks watercolour classes. I have really enjoyed the classes and rediscovered something I had given up in my twenties."

Vivian

"I felt very privileged to take part in the card making project with these two lovely and caring ladies. Apart from card making I learned so much from the way they conducted themselves - respect, patience and kindness. Thank you so much and I look forward to more."

Jenny

Mindfulness workshop

We ran a series of free online Mindfulness Workshop for over 55s throughout the pandemic when stress coach Kamontip taught participants how to deal with stress and anxiety. It attracted up to 22 participants each time who picked up a handful of tools and techniques to cope with underlying anxieties plus the everyday stresses that pull us down.

"I have suffered from depression and anxiety and this course was really valuable for me. It helped me become more aware of what causes anxious thoughts and the importance of acknowledging them - to know that the worry is there but think about now, rather than the past or the future."

Sue

Looking to the future

We are planning to develop our programme, bring back some activities face and put on information events. We have found that the on-line activities remain popular and some participants are still cautious about re-joining live activities. We are reinstating the musical afternoons and hope to be able to combine this with a thank you for all our volunteers' work.

Barnet connect survey!

100 per cent of people who took part on our survey reported an improved connection and involvement in their community. All respondents felt that their wellbeing had improved since attending a Barnet Connect activity



Walks

Getting active in Barnet's open spaces

Funded by the London Community Fund, Age UK Barnet's walking project was launched in January 2020 and aimed to improve older people's physical and emotional wellbeing whilst reducing social isolation. Walks were designed to offer "less active" Barnet residents, aged over 55 years, an opportunity to improve physical fitness and increase active levels by joining a local, friendly, supported group. The walks also offered the chance to socialise and make new friends with an option to stay behind after each walk to share refreshments and a cat at a local café. Age UK Barnet recruited and trained 16 volunteer walk leaders and at least two volunteers were available at each walk.

A walks coordinator led all aspects of the project, identifying suitable parks, planning, routes, carrying out risk assessments, recruitment of participants and volunteers, training, publicity, promotion and liaison.

Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020, just two months after we had started, meant the walks had to be suspended. Although our efforts were frequently interrupted, the walks were the last face to face activity we were able to offer and the first to re-start when lockdown eased. Despite the restrictions six park walks were established around the Borough, in Friary Park, Dollis Valley Greenwalk, Hampstead Garden Suburb, Oakhill Park, Golders Hill Park and Stephens House and Gardens. Over the year, 76 walkers participated in 95 walks with 16 volunteers.

"Walking in green spaces gives people a real boost to their overall health and fitness. Even a gentle walk improves your strength in later life, especially for those living with a health condition."

Wendy, walks coordinator

Future plans

Heath Hands a voluntary organisation working to maintain Hampstead Heath, has offered talks and we aim to encourage host speakers at other walks. We are currently working with Barnet Social Prescribers to set up walks in their areas, particularly in parts of the borough where we aren't running groups.

"Just to let you know that today on the walk I had a lovely chat with a guy that hadn't been to anything social since March. He found the email from you on his Mums laptop regarding walks and thought he'd give it a go. He'd only been in the house with his wife this entire time."

Amy (Dollis Valley Greenwalk Volunteer)

Volunteering

Giving back to the community

Volunteers have always been at the heart of Age UK Barnet but this year we have taken this to a new level.



471

Volunteers

As the pandemic hit we were exceptionally lucky to be swamped by offers of help from local people who wanted to support

our older population. They have been the backbone of our covid support. Both existing and new volunteers truly went that extra mile.

The team of new volunteers during the first lockdown in particular, were a very different demographic and many were volunteering for the first time. We had many more young volunteers and it was so refreshing to talk to young people who just wanted to help at such a difficult time. They really stepped up when it was needed and made a huge difference. Many have kept volunteering with us, and those who are going back to work/moved or moved on have, we hope, had a positive introduction to volunteering and will keep in touch. We also had a fantastic level of support from our existing volunteers who adapted their roles and took on completely new ones.

We managed to support 555 clients during the year who would otherwise not have been able to get regular shopping and prescriptions. As clients and volunteers talked regularly they built up a great rapport and the volunteers were a real source of reassurance to the clients many of whom were extremely anxious and isolated due to the lockdown. Some lovely friendships developed and many of these have continued, often after the shopping was no longer needed.

Many volunteers really appreciated having the responsibility of shopping for someone to keep them focused during the pandemic when they were

maybe not working and not able to go out other than to shop! We often heard volunteers telling us suddenly their supermarket shop was the highlight of their week!

We are continuing to run a volunteer led shopping service which caters for older people who for health reasons are not able to get out and do their own shopping. We have 65 volunteers supporting this service.

Shopping was not the only thing that our volunteers did! We recruited a team of IT savvy volunteers who supported many older people to get online and brush up their skills to a level where they were able to shop online, access online banking and also access zoom/Skype which enabled them to engage with activities and stay connected with friends and family.

Our befriending team made a massive contribution to our pandemic response. Many of the existing befrienders became shoppers as well, and all kept in touch with their clients and responded to their needs while liaising with our staff team. We recruited many tele-pals or phone befrienders who were often shielding and enjoyed being able to do something for other people whilst not being able to go out themselves. Several of these relationships are still ongoing and with the lifting of restrictions, volunteers were finally able to meet the person they have been chatting to all year – albeit socially distanced.

We had numerous creative volunteers who helped run cookery demonstrations/cook along sessions; art classes; knit and natter sessions; choir; newspaper discussions; flower arranging and book clubs. Their energy, enthusiasm and imagination was and is amazing and they have been a massive support in helping people stay engaged and connected. We anticipate that some of our sessions

will continue via zoom whereas some others will return to face to face over the coming months. Our volunteers have been incredibly flexible in supporting the development of these activities and we are extremely grateful to them for sharing their talents.

One of the pursuits that was able to continue the most in the last year was walking and our groups walks have been more popular than ever. Each walk is supported by at least two volunteers so we have quite a team now who have reliably lead walks in all weathers – when it has been allowed under the restrictions! These again have been really sociable activities and the cheerful volunteers have made a huge difference.



In total our volunteers gave over 38000 hours which has a calculable economic value of *close to £500,000.

Future plans

As services begin to open up again we are looking at developing some new roles for volunteers and also planning for volunteering involvement in our new Dementia Services.

A highlight? When my client dedicated her Thursday clap to people like me!

Rikhil's grandparents were self-isolating so he understood the struggle many older people were facing during the pandemic. He decided to volunteer for Age UK Barnet to reach out and help others in the same position.

'I wanted to use my time to do something positive and assist members of the community most affected by the current situation. I also have grandparents who are unable to leave their homes, so understand the struggle and worry faced by elderly members of the community who have had their day-to-day lives, routines and social interaction disrupted as a result.

I was befriending older people over the phone and helping with shopping. This involves having a chat on the phone every week and doing essential shopping for those who are self-isolating. These are important services at this time, particularly as many people are experiencing a reduction in their level of social interaction and ability to leave their homes.

I've really enjoyed building friendships with people in my local area who I would not otherwise have met and seeing how the community and volunteer services are pulling together to help people in need at such a challenging time.

A highlight for me has been building friendships and getting to know more about members of the local community, particularly during our regular phone calls. The essential shopping service also allows me to alleviate some of the worry and stress for people who are unable to leave their homes at this time.

Another highlight was when I delivered some food to a self-isolating couple, and received a call from the lady shortly afterwards who said she would be dedicating her Thursday evening clap to volunteers like myself which meant a lot!





Barnet Social Prescribing Service

Signposting & connecting people to local community activities & services

Social prescribing has taken off in Barnet and despite a challenging year, the service has developed and grown to support the Barnet community and the GP Primary Care Networks. The team support adults in Barnet, offering local information and advice for non-medical based needs that are negatively affecting their health and wellbeing. The most common reasons for referrals for this service over this last year were for social support, housing information, mental health, benefits support, and carers support.

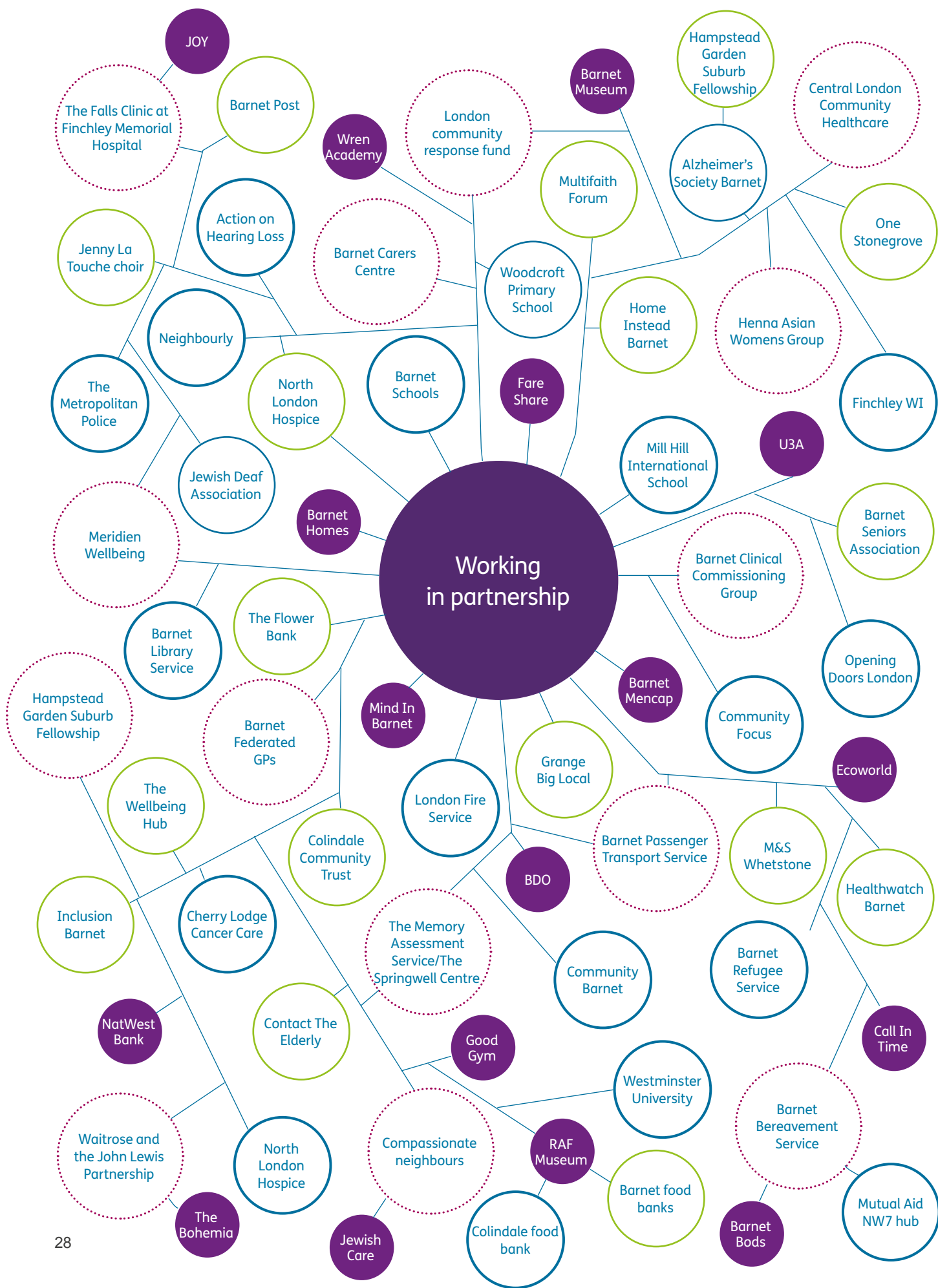
It is a short-term service that listens to patients needs and signposts or refers them to local services that can support them further. They empower patients to help themselves and the outcomes and patient feedback shows both the need for this service and the positive impact it is having. The social prescribers have grown from seven staff members to 17 over the last year and they all worked hard to support the Covid-19 response, whilst continuing to support their patients' cases across the GP practices in Barnet.

In 20-21 social prescribing helped a total of 3224 patients to get more connected to services to support their non-medical needs. The majority of the social prescribers were re-deployed during the months between December 20- March 21 to support the vaccination hubs by booking in covid vaccine appointments, working at the hubs or some were even administering the vaccine itself.

Future plans

Future plans for the service will include increasing our capacity to receive more referrals. We are developing the referral pathway to increase accessibility for more Barnet registered patients.

"I am so happy, without this support I would never have got to where I am. I am so grateful, and I feel so independent and confident now compared to who I was from my first session".



External providers 2020-2021

Working with local community groups to extend our reach

Age UK Barnet's long established partnership with our External Providers enables us to extend our reach throughout the borough and into different communities. Due to reductions in core Neighbourhood Services funding, Age UK Barnet had to make difficult decisions to reduce the number of external organisations it works with. In 2020-21 we worked with Chipping Barnet Day Centre, Barnet African Caribbean Association, Barnet Asian Women's Association, Colindale Community Club, Friend in Need, High Barnet Good Neighbour Scheme and the Good Neighbour schemes for Mill Hill & Burnt Oak. In usual times, these organisations offer high quality services and support to older people and their communities, including lunch clubs, companionship, lifts to attend medical appointments exercises classes.

During the pandemic these groups switched their focus from group activity to supporting members on an individual basis, collecting prescriptions, delivering medication, providing meals, shopping, and vital telephone support to ensure that local people were physically and emotionally supported at a frightening and isolating time. Service were transferred to being online or remote so that members could stay connected and have fun.

Largely volunteer dependent, most of whom are over 55 themselves, our partner groups are living proof of how joint working and utilising the skills and expertise of older people can prove a powerful force for good in our communities.

This year the external providers supported 852 clients and their volunteers gave over 11000 hours of their time.

Income generation

Developing new strands of income has been a key strategic aim for Age UK Barnet as a way of reducing the organisation's dependence on statutory funding and this was particularly important in 2020-21 following the renegotiation of the Neighbourhood Services contract.

Covid-19 overtook our plans to reshape services to fit the new funding landscape though and, with the support of our commissioners at the local authority, we had to respond to the new needs of older people.

We were fortunate to receive increased donations and direct support from local friends such as Hampstead Garden Suburb Fellowship to help us manage increased demand for services such as shopping and befriending. And Barnet Together helped us with our keeping in touch projects such as Christmas cards and lockdown letters.

Our volunteers went to new lengths to support us, befriending volunteer Natalie walked the length of the Northern Line in memory of her friend Joan and Lydia galvanised her work colleagues to fund

a new freezer for us. Others signed up for the Royal Parks half marathon, sadly postponed to October 2021.

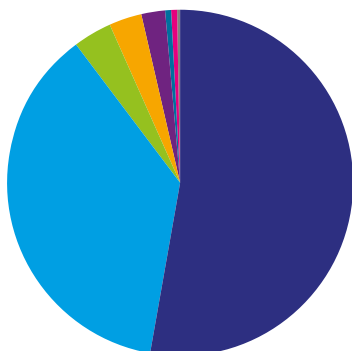
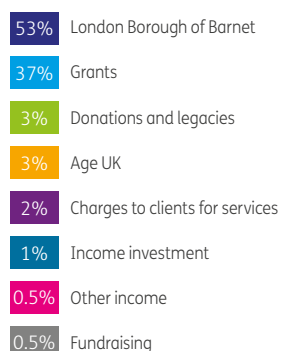
Nationally new sources of funding became available and we were delighted to be successful with our applications to the London Community Response Fund and to the National Lottery for short-term projects.

Age UK also increased their support as a result of their national Emergency Appeal which they shared with brand partners up and down the country and we were able to access funding to increase capacity across our befriending service. This was much needed.

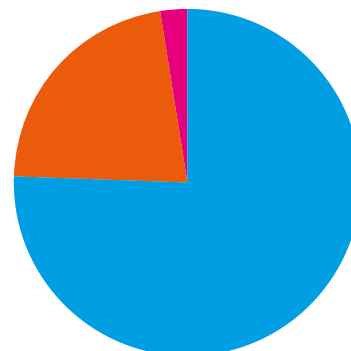
Age UK Barnet also began new arrangements with GPs and Public Health Barnet to deliver social prescribing and with our CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) to provide support to people living with dementia. At the end of 2020 we worked with Public Health to set up volunteer support for people who couldn't access the national covid testing system.

Financial summary

Income



Expenditure



Communication

Our website was our main source of information for older people in the borough during the pandemic and had 160,000 hits. Many of these, some 40,000 were to the scams pages which reflected older people's concerns about rogue traders and scammers, which became a particular worry for older people during the year.

Our social media presence has grown rapidly and in 2020-21 our followers on Twitter and Facebook jumped to over 2,500.

Our average monthly reach on twitter is 16,000 and on Facebook, it's 11,000. Our Doorstep Workout video had 3,500 views on Facebook and a reach of 6,000.

We increased our engagement with local community groups through neighbourhood chat rooms like nextdoor and local Facebook groups. This was particularly effective in our appeal for

emergency food supplies, donations for our Christmas hampers and Smiles to your door treats. Our Instagram account has successfully engaged with local businesses and the number of followers has more than doubled to 950 over the year. We received donations of PPE equipment and food through our Instagram posts.

We delivered our newsletter by email for the first time and sent it out monthly to over 1,200 subscribers, keeping everyone informed about local activities and services and tackling some of the main concerns

For those older people without access to a computer, we produced Pigeon Post, which as well as puzzles, quizzes, recipes and tips, we provided lists of useful local information, our activities and services and emergency help. The idea was to reach out to those most at risk of isolation.

Looking Forward

We are very excited to have been awarded the contract for Dementia Support Services by the local authority, giving us the chance to develop our services and activities programme, and build on years of experience supporting older people in the borough.

In April we launch a vibrant new hub for people living with mild-to-moderate memory issues and their carers at our centre in East Finchley and eventually at a new venue in Hendon.

Our aim is to provide support, resources and information for the whole community, helping all of us to make Barnet a dementia-friendly borough. Our day opportunities will give people living with dementia and their carers a chance to mix with others in a nurturing, welcoming and inclusive environment. We'll have a full programme of fun and stimulating activities and events.

This new venture gives us the perfect opportunity to reach out and make a difference to more older people in Barnet.

A special thank you to



Follow us on social media



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