

# Helping local older people make more of later life

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Annual report 2019/20



## Chairman's report



**Sue Graham**  
Chairman

### Board of trustees

Sue Graham (Chairman), John Goodman (Vice-chairman), Anne Parris (Honorary Treasurer) [until 4/6/20], Meg Bates, Paul Blatern [until 4/6/20], Janet Deeley, Lesley – Anne Hamilton [until 4/6/20], Peter Lazard [until 22/4/20], Jan McMeekin, Diana Payne MBE, Stewart Jones, Dr Tony Watson [until 24/10/19]

### Mission statement

Age UK Milton Keynes works with and for older people to make a real and positive difference that contributes to their wellbeing and quality of life.

Last year was another difficult year for the charity sector. The continuing confusion over Brexit and reduced funding led us to review all our services and develop new procedures to reduce our overheads. With the help of our dedicated staff and volunteers we were on track for a good “year-end” figure when the pandemic struck, and lockdown in March 2020 resulted in the closure of our shops and most of our services.

Our staff and volunteers quickly adapted to the new conditions and with the help of local shops and businesses we were able to provide essential packs of groceries and household items and meals to some of the most vulnerable older people in the borough. We also maintained contact with our clients by telephone. Although the end of the year has been traumatic for us and our clients we have much to be proud of.

In the past year we re-organised our Independent Living Service to provide a more “joined up” service for clients. To achieve this, we have retrained staff so they can offer a wider range of help. Clients are happier having to deal with fewer people. For example, we have gardeners who are now able to carry out minor house maintenance jobs. Until lockdown we were running seven lunch clubs each week at a range of locations, including sheltered housing, community halls and at The Peartree Centre. Our dedicated staff and volunteers provide a two-course meal and activities for our clients and for many this can be the only time they leave their homes to socialise. Our two Peartree Memory Clubs have also been popular with both clients and carers. Around 30 people with a diagnosis of dementia enjoyed a regular weekly session in a supportive group environment.

I am sad to report that our Snack & Chat cafe and I&A office in the Food Centre in Central Milton Keynes have closed following notice from the landlords of their intention to demolish the building. We looked at alternative accommodation within centre:mk but, regrettably, were unable to afford the cost of “fitting out” an empty shop unit, especially in these uncertain times.

### The way forward 2020/2021

With the help and commitment of our staff and volunteers we are determined to adapt to the “new normal” and continue to help older people in Milton Keynes. With some of our shops still closed and services suspended we are faced with a reduced income, and we are having to make some difficult decisions to enable us to move forward.

Our extended and revamped furniture store in Kiln Farm is performing well and online selling is proving popular. We are working hard to reopen our group activities, lunch clubs, befriending and memory clubs in a way that is safe not only for our clients but for staff and volunteers. We are also investigating ways in which the Peartree Centre can be more fully used by the local community.

The pandemic has given us the opportunity to pause and reassess what we do and how we do it. We are engaging with our clients and the wider community to ask what services and activities they would like us to offer. We are investigating ways to offer a new dementia service. We continue to work with our NHS and Milton Keynes Council colleagues to offer a more ‘joined up’ and targeted range of services. This report illustrates how Age UK Milton Keynes helps older people and changes lives for the better. Next year will be difficult but I am sure we will succeed. I am proud to play a small part in this wonderful organisation.

**Sue Graham**, chairman board of trustees





## Befriending

The number of people using our befriending service continues to grow with referrals coming from a variety of sources, especially Social Prescribing, Hospital Aftercare Service and the Independent Living service.

89 clients are currently matched with befriending volunteers.

- Occasional coffee mornings bring befrienders and clients together to share stories and provide feedback to develop the service.
- We had a waiting list of 62 clients at the end of March and volunteer numbers were increasing before the coronavirus hit - we responded quickly, moving to telephone befriending. Clients tell us how the calls lift their spirits and it's good to know that Age UK Milton Keynes is there to support them.

## Walking Befriending

This service continues to grow. It can take a while to match the right volunteer with a client, but time invested pays dividends, when we receive positive feedback from our clients and volunteers. This service is funded by Sport England so in October we were delighted to welcome their CEO Tim Hollingsworth at The Peartree Centre to meet our service users and hear about the positive impact the service has had on their lives.

Clients report their fitness levels have improved, they are going for increasingly longer walks and feel the benefits of getting out in the fresh air. The coronavirus pandemic affected the service at the end of March but our wonderful volunteers have stepped up during the crisis. 41 volunteers switched to providing a weekly telephone befriending service, which was very much appreciated.

- Number of walking befrienders at April 2019: 15; number at March 2020: 61
- "My husband now had a new lease of life and looks forward to his walks with his volunteer."



## Information & Advice Service

This service continues to be busy, both in the outreach venues and with requests to Community Home Visitors for support. Both teams attend regular training, invite other support groups to team meetings and promote our service by giving talks to other organisations.

Outreach sessions have continued in the same venues as last year, with some changes: Stony Stratford reduced from three sessions a week to two sessions. The partnership with Woburn Sands Town Council came to an end, with the last session being held in March. Three office sessions are covered by three paid staff, two volunteers and emergency cover is provided by a zero hour employee. We are leaving our Central Milton Keynes Office in the Food Centre and will be looking for suitable premises nearby. This year our volunteer has represented clients at seven PIP appeals and was successful in all cases. Community Home Visiting continues to be maintained by our wonderful team of seven staff, officially covering 94–100 hours each week but regularly working more.

- £1,588,280: estimated value of welfare benefits claimed by clients with the help of the Community Home Visitors and Outreach officers and volunteers over the year
- 6,300: approximate number of telephone calls made and received
- 610 new referrals to home visiting, 656 to outreach offices, 300 referrals to The Peartree Centre
- Clients age 65–74 years: 28%, age 85–94 years: 16%

## Advocacy Service

We were sad to say goodbye to our long-time Advocacy Manager who retired after many years with us as both an employee and a volunteer. The service, which is provided by a team of volunteers, is now managed by the Volunteer Services Manager, with day to day operations overseen by the information & Advice Service Manager. 63 people were referred to the service during the year and our dedicated team continues to offer support for as long as is needed.



## Lunch Clubs

Our lunch clubs continue to provide older people with a much needed opportunity to socialise. We operate seven clubs across the borough of Milton Keynes area, in sheltered housing schemes, community halls and at our own Peartree Centre in Peartree Bridge. For many of our clients, visiting our lunch club is their only trip outside their home during the week. Our cooks and volunteers work hard to provide a warm welcome, as well as refreshments, a freshly cooked two-course meal and entertainment during their time with us.

- 33% of lunch club members are aged 85 - 94
- Around 30 club members are over 95 years old



## Central Milton Keynes offices (including Snack & Chat cafe)

Our offices and cafe in the centre of Milton Keynes provide many services to people aged 55 and over. The location opposite the main shopping centre ensures our vital services are more accessible. The Information & Advice Service carries out benefit checks, fills in forms. We also offer regular IT training as well as drop-in IT support. All volunteer recruitment operates out of these offices, offering a central point for queries. We aim to help every person who comes through the door with a query, either solving the issue ourselves, or signposting them in the right direction.

Two knitting clubs meet at our cafe and it is also a meeting place for outside groups. Our menu offers traditional fare as well as a hot meal at lunchtime Tuesdays to Fridays. Our hot meals are by far our most popular offering as for many customers this saves them having to cook a hot meal in the evening. Our customers also appreciate the cafe as a safe venue where they can socialise and make new friends.

Sadly the building we occupy is to be demolished so our offices and cafe have now closed, but we hope to have a presence in Central Milton Keynes in the future.

## Peartree Memory Clubs

From April 2019 the club changed from fortnightly to weekly sessions: two hours on Mondays, three hours on Fridays. Inevitably we lose club members over the course of the year but by March 2020 over 30 people were attending on a regular basis.

Highlights of the year include:

- Fun Day held in May to launch Dementia Awareness week, Summer picnic at Linford Manor Park organised with The Parks Trust in June, specially composed for people with dementia club members recorded a CD singing a specially composed song by volunteer Dick Evans in July, an outdoor BBQ was held in August, two collages made by club members were framed and presented to John Lewis to celebrate their 40th anniversary in CMK and Bletchley British Legion, volunteer Teresa Watson has designed and printed greetings cards featuring artwork by club members to raise funds. In January club members, volunteers and Co-ordinator Di Broadbent gave a magnificent performance of the pantomime "Rinderella", for relatives and supporters.

## Volunteering

Age UK Milton Keynes continues to benefit from an amazing group of volunteers who give their time willingly and wholeheartedly. The majority of our volunteers are over retirement age and find that they still have much energy and commitment to give. They bring with them a wealth of experience and wisdom, which improves the quality of the services we provide that depend on volunteers.

We could not function as an organisation without our wonderful volunteers. Most areas of our work tend to be fully staffed, and using social media and other online communications helps us to reach a younger audience of potential volunteers. The range of services we provide means we can offer a variety of volunteering opportunities. Whether someone prefers a regular, weekly routine or a more ad hoc role, there is something for everyone. At the start of 2020 we had just under 400 volunteers.

We offer our volunteers the same training opportunities as paid staff, and we promote an inclusive working environment. We welcome comments and feedback on all aspects of the organisation and encourage innovative ideas.

- 139 volunteers in shops
- 51 volunteers at Lunch Clubs
- 38% of volunteers age 65+, 8% age 16-34 years

## Independent Living Service

This was the first full year of running an umbrella service, covering shopping, cleaning, appointments, collecting prescriptions, handyperson, gardening and footcare. We temporarily closed the gardening service over the winter to focus on new processes and develop improved procedures, re-opening in February 2020. All services were reviewed and new processes were implemented to increase efficiency and provide clients with effective plans.

Changes to the Independent Living Assistant (ILA) role have meant the service we offer clients is more flexible, providing a holistic approach to their support plan. This has led to improvements and has cut the long waiting list for the service dramatically. We can usually assign an ILA to clients within one to four weeks. We continue to provide regular visits and the improvement in staff retention means that clients benefit from having the same worker on a regular basis, building stronger client relationships.

- 17% of clients live in Bletchley, 9% live in Great Linford, 5% in Newport Pagnell
- 32% of gardening clients age 75-84 years
- 28% of gardening clients age 85+

"Thank you for the support you give my mother by keeping her home clean and tidy. I know that your staff frequently take the time to chat with her and even make her a cup of tea. This might seem like a small thing, but for people with dementia and Alzheimer's, they help keep them connected to the world around them."

## Social Prescribing

### LiveLife

This is a broad Social Prescribing scheme, required to work with the 27 GP practices in Milton Keynes, Mental Health and other care providers. There was a huge increase in referrals to the service in the last year and we reluctantly had to introduce a waiting list for the first time. The type of support needed, and the people needing it, varies greatly and our four link workers are gaining in experience and expertise all the time clients, finding out the most appropriate places to refer their clients on to.

- 561 referrals to the service
- 96% of clients say that the service had met their needs.



### Primary Care Networks

From 1st July 2019 GPs have been able to employ a social prescriber within their Primary Care Network. Four networks approached us to do this on their behalf. These Link Workers are in regular contact with their colleagues in other networks and also LiveLife, sharing knowledge and experience and also asking advice and guidance when needed. We have recently joined the National Association of Link Workers which provides online training and information and also training events for both LiveLife and embedded link workers alike.





## Hospital Aftercare Service

The contract for the Hospital Aftercare service was re-commissioned by the CCG for another two years. They were not able to increase our funding and asked us to increase the value of the contract by visiting patients on the ward when they were ready to be discharged.

Client numbers remained steady throughout the year, thanks to a mild winter. Milton Keynes University Hospital introduced a new patient discharge leaflet and we are grateful that the service is mentioned for the benefit of patients. We produced posters to promote the service and they are currently displayed in the new Emergency Department waiting room and throughout the hospital. In November we were successful in obtaining five months of Winter Pressures funding from NHSE via Age UK. This enabled us to provide support to an additional 92 patients, who would not normally be covered by the service, such as taking patients home out of area or home to residential care.

## Deep Clean Service

This year we took the decision to close the deep clean service to external referrals as the number of clients not paying for the service meant we were making an unsustainable financial loss. A long waiting list for the service also built up as hospital referrals needed to take priority over other referrals.

The service was kept open just for referrals from health agencies, where the deep clean was needed to enable someone to be discharged to their home. Our team visited to assess the amount of work needed to make the home safe and hygienic to return to. Once the patient or their representative gave us authorisation to carry out the work we collected payment in advance to avoid any bad debts. As well as cleaning a property we will also source new items of furniture and household items such as beds, mattresses and linen if needed. Many clients have told us, that having a clean house to come home to gives them the incentive to change their ways and maintain their home in the condition in which they find it.



## Technology Help Service

The service has continued to support people in their own homes with 205 visits to sort issues not only around computers, but also to televisions, smart phones and tablets. Clients wanting one-to-one training were able to go to our CMK Offices in The Food Centre for a four week training session. We provided this support to 32 clients.

Technology Help was able to secure two funding grants this year. One grant enabled us to offer a free Energy Switch service which was used by 21 clients and the other, from the Police Property Act fund, enabled us to work in partnership with Thames Valley Police to make us a “Friends Against Scams” organisation and increase Cyber Crime awareness.



## Trading

“A challenging year for our retail stores, made even more challenging by the debilitating impact of Covid-19.”

We went into 2019-20 knowing that our high street stores were going to find it difficult, due to the continuous year on year reduction in footfall seen on the high street. This proved to be the case with the majority of stores struggling to reach their targets. On a positive note the Furniture Store in Kiln Farm and Bletchley Home store hit their targets, even with the impact of Covid-19, a terrific result all considering. The closure of all stores on the 16th March due to the unexpected coronavirus crisis, had a huge impact on revenue. We managed to sell some items through our eBay store in the last few weeks of March. This showed that an online e-commerce site can work, and with the current coronavirus climate, and change in customer buying habits, will be essential for the future of our retail proposition.



## Fundraising and donors

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our kind donors, corporate partners and individual fundraisers and supporters who have assisted us over the year, either financially or by getting involved in person. We really do appreciate your support, as without you we would be unable support older people in Milton Keynes.



We'd also like to thank all those people who have left a gift in their will to Age UK Milton Keynes. Their generosity will help us to help those who need us the most.

The 2019 Winslow show was held on an extremely hot day, which impacted the footfall to the show but our volunteers and staff pulled together magnificently in very difficult circumstances. We held a Summer and a Halloween quiz and both were well attended. Two teams of corporate volunteers kindly assisted with both events. Once again we took part in the MK Community Foundation's Charity Car Raffle and we say a big thank you to our trustee Di Payne who compiled her annual Christmas quiz which was as popular as ever.

Introducing a Santa's Grotto and Christmas-themed afternoon teas helped make our fundraising Christmas Fayre a successful family event. We say a huge thank you to the residents of Kennington Close, who along with our volunteer Simon Page, put together their magnificent Christmas lights display and raised nearly £9,000 which was shared between us and Willen Hospice.

This year our magnificent team of knitting volunteers who joined in innocent's Big Knit fundraising campaign went above and beyond, knitting an amazing 15,540 hats, which was 3,540 over our target and raised £3,885.

Our charity's purposes, as set out in the Objects contained in the Company's Memorandum of Association, are to promote the relief of elderly people in any manner which now or hereafter may be deemed by law to be charitable in and around Milton Keynes (hereinafter called "the area of benefit").

The Executive Committee (Chairman: Sue Graham, Vice chairman: John Goodman, Meg Bates, Paul Blantern, Janet Deeley, Lesley-Anne Hamilton, Stewart Jones, Peter Lazard, Jan McMeekin, Anne Parris, Diana Payne MBE) constantly reviews the major risks to which the charity is exposed. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Significant external risks to funding have led to the further development of the strategic business plan which will allow for the diversification of funding activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects.

Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

The figures in this annual report are as accurate as we can make them at the time of printing.



#### Age UK Milton Keynes

The Peartree Centre  
1 Chadds Lane  
Peartree Bridge  
Milton Keynes MK6 3EB

t 01908 550700

[info@ageukmiltonkeynes.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukmiltonkeynes.org.uk)  
[www.ageukmiltonkeynes.org.uk](http://www.ageukmiltonkeynes.org.uk)

Registered charity 1079773  
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Age UK Milton Keynes



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**Together** we can help everyone in **Milton Keynes**  
make the most of **later life**