

2019-2020 Impact Report

Supporting older people in Westminster since 1947



Foreword by Chair of Trustees, Fiona Healy-Connelly

Since 1947, our mission has been to improve the lives of older people in Westminster and help them make the most of their later years. We are rooted in Westminster; it is a thriving community which continually rises to social and economic challenges. With Coronavirus, the needs of our beneficiaries changed virtually overnight. We had to radically change the way we delivered existing services and introduce new ones.

It was heart-warming to witness people looking out for each other and many volunteered. Despite the difficult circumstances, the pandemic has brought us closer. Though, we have experienced significant financial pressures too. But our Chief Executive, Mehfuz Ahmed and his team have responded by finding new income sources and identifying innovative ways of supporting vulnerable clients.

Thank you to all our staff, volunteers and supporters. And the tremendous generosity of people who donated funds or volunteered. 2021 is also likely to present us with a difficult operating environment. But with your help, we can face the future with confidence.

A Message from our CEO, Mehfuz Ahmed

This report is designed to set out our achievements and showcase the difference we make. We are immensely proud of what we have achieved in 2020 and how we have continued to deliver essential services.

We had to significantly ramp up our efforts to tackle digital exclusion, arranging a series of “iTea” computer training sessions, funded and conducted by supporting companies and organisations. Covid-19 has meant we have had to trial new ways of working, reinforce the benefits of digital technology and find ways to improve our future services.

My heartfelt thanks go to our staff and volunteers for their dedication and to our community for pulling together in the face of the greatest health crisis we have ever experienced.

2,628

clients obtained £656,600 in welfare benefits & discretionary grants with support of the I&A team.



"I spoke to the Age UK Westminster advisor and she assisted me with applying for Attendance Allowance. I received the decision letter and was awarded the higher rate! They also gave me some back payment."

-Mrs O, client

Age UK Westminster is one of the leading partners in the Westminster Advice Services Partnership and a leading Advice provider for older people in Westminster. Our team covers a wide range of issues including welfare benefit entitlement, debt, health & social care, Taxi Card applications, charitable grants, utility bills, pensions and correspondence.

Between Oct 2019 - Sept 2020, the I&A team responded to:

***197 home visits *240 appointments**

***2,628 total enquiries**

***The reception triage team also dealt with 815 enquiries.**

We match people with a friendly, local volunteer who commits to visiting lonely older people weekly. During these visits, befrienders provided much-needed social interaction and emotional support, even encouraging them to be more active on short walks and running errands. Due to the pandemic, face-to-face befriending had to be adapted and moved to the telephone.

The need for our befriending service increased dramatically as a result of Covid-19. From March to September 2020, we matched a further 400 clients with volunteer befrienders who made over 27,000 calls to ensure clients were okay and

receiving some regular social contact. We also have over 465 clients who received a less-frequent 'well-being' Check and Chat call. These calls enabled us to establish any needs and direct them to other services.

501 successful matches made

27,000 befriending calls

465 well-being Check & Chat calls

"Until you called me the first time, I had not spoken to anyone in seven days."

-88 year old local resident



Age UK Westminster depends massively on its dedicated volunteers in every aspect of its work. The pandemic has proved the importance of their involvement and the support we have received from them has been incredible.

The number of volunteers increased dramatically as the demand increased. In particular, the befriending service saw one of the biggest rises, needing nearly 200 volunteers by September 2020. The new food service also needed 70 volunteers.

Volunteers who choose to volunteer do so for a variety of reasons. But one thing that all our volunteers have in common is that they are

motivated by the positive impact their contribution has made. We certainly wouldn't be able to achieve as much without their support.

599

volunteers,
including 45
aged over 60+

22,055

volunteer hours



"Making contact with people who are on their own gives me a sense of community, particularly as we get older."

-A befriender to 6 clients

752

 deliveries

From the start of the pandemic, we have delivered 752 weekly or bi-weekly emergency food parcels to 159 clients. The parcel is well stocked with a variety of non-perishable food items, plus fresh eggs, bread, long-life milk and fresh fruit and vegetables. The parcels are designed for preparation of four or five meals.

The emergency food service has been a lifeline for many of our clients. The service provides not only the security of knowing that food was available but a friendly face and some much-needed human contact.



We also introduced a personal grocery shopping service for clients who were shielding and unable to go out or were not able to access online shopping.

To support clients who were unable to prepare themselves a nutritious meal without their usual support system, we piloted a “meals to your door” service to 40 vulnerable local older adults, delivering 960 nutritious meals between November – December 2020.

Covid-19 has brought into sharp relief the reliance most of us have on digital technology. But many older people often suffer from “digital exclusion” because of unfamiliarity with the technology, fear of getting it wrong or cultural differences. Often, they don’t have the social networks which might help them overcome these barriers.

We received a generous donation of 23 laptops from Social Box and 20 mobile phones from GiffGaff.

“What I enjoyed most about today’s session was the friendliness of the team. They gave us dinosaurs the 1:1 help that we sought over a lovely tea party.”

-Local Resident

To bridge this ‘digital divide’ and social isolation, we developed a comprehensive programme of ‘iTea Parties.’ These sessions are designed to help older clients increase their capabilities.





420 Christmas lunches

Age UK Westminster runs an annual Christmas Lunch project in conjunction with St Paul's Boys School. Usually, students and family members would deliver a Christmas lunch, gifts and company to over 357 older people on Christmas day. This year, we delivered a gift bag containing a bone china mug, chocolates, shower gel, shortbread biscuits, a card and an M&S voucher.

This was made possible by contributions from corporate sponsors, Halcyon Days, Moulton Brown and Caroline Gardener. We would like to extend a special "Thank you" to Pamela Harper of Halcyon Days, who arranged these donations which brought so much joy. The project was also supported by St James Piccadilly, the Edward Harvist Trust, Paddington Charities and an anonymous donation.

In December 2019 the volunteers were joined by our CEO, Mehfuz Ahmed and Outreach Assistant, Vesna Jendruh, who both visited older people on Christmas Day, brightening their Christmas Day with a lunch, a gift bag and companionship.

In the run-up to Christmas, we also held Christmas lunches that was attended by over 150 guests with huge help from our partners and sponsors at venues across Westminster including The Elgin Pub, The Alice House, The Constitution, The Real Greek, York House (hosted by GIC Singapore) and Park Plaza Hotels (hosted by United Arab Emirates).

Many older people experience a form of visual impairment. Our aim is to ensure this doesn't limit their quality of life. This specialist service includes a befriending service, Advice & Advocacy sessions and home visits for those who are housebound.



It enables us to support with:

- Using telephones and computers.
- Applying for welfare benefit cheques and grants.
- General housing, home adaptation and social care enquiries.
- Writing letters and advocating on their behalf.
- Applying for a Certificate of Visual Impairment, Freedom Passes, Taxi Cards and disabled permits.

The project has made a huge difference to many older people. Our weekly Forum for the Visually Impaired is popular and has provided guest speakers from the Macular Society, Transport for London, Fight for Sight London Vision and National Rail.



The population of Westminster is extremely diverse, and we provide much support to Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. This is of particular importance with issues related to the poor health of older people in BAME communities and the relatively high proportion of older people living alone. But our achievements extend far beyond the provision of advice, support and guidance. Our strength is based on inclusive voluntary relationships and the trust they generate. This gives us the ability to reach groups of older people most likely to experience poverty, deprivation or poor health.

"I was struggling to clean my home and to take care of my personal care. Age UK Westminster's adviser assisted me to apply for Attendance Allowance. I am now able to pay for a carer who comes in twice a week. I have gained my independence and self-esteem. I am now in control of my own care."

-Mrs M, client

Staying active

We are passionate about creating as many opportunities as possible for our clients to socialise with other residents.

When Covid-19 appeared, we responded quickly and created a range of online alternatives to our traditional programmes, including a poetry group, chat meetings, cookery sessions, sing-along sessions, virtual tours, a men's group and exercise programmes.

After the first lockdown, when restrictions were lifted, we hosted socially-distanced outdoor activities, including a Regent's Park walk and a visit to London Zoo. Both were well attended, and clients were happy to be out again.

Our programme of online activities has been tremendously popular, and have provided much-needed social stimulation for our clients.

"I wanted to thank you for organising our ZSL tour yesterday. It was so lovely to be out and about again. I look forward to other visits."

-Local resident

1200

attendees





In 2021, we want to:

- Continue to strengthen partnerships with organisations and communities.
- Build collaborative partnerships.
- Develop joint funding applications.
- Build on the growing relationships with local CCG's, Local Authorities and Council to meet gaps and support delivery of services.
- Increase our trading income to improve sustainability. We have already secured funding to provide Basic Footcare and Podiatry, Practical Support, Personal Care and Power of Attorney support.
- Re-establish face-to-face activities through building confidence and creating a combined service of online, phone and in-person activities.
- Use what we have learned in the pandemic to offer our clients what they need going forward.
- Continue to grow and develop what we offer our older residents.

Get involved



You can support the vital work we do in a variety of ways:

- volunteering
- making a donation
- fundraising as an individual or team
- leaving a legacy
- helping with our campaigns or events
- sharing our news on social media

Whatever you do, your help will be much appreciated.

Find out more by looking at our website:

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westminster/>

Or contact us on:

020 3004 5610 / enquiries@ageukwestminster.org.uk

F: [facebook.com/ageukwest](https://www.facebook.com/ageukwest)

T: [@ageukwest](https://www.instagram.com/ageukwest)

Insta: [@ageukwestminster](https://www.instagram.com/ageukwestminster)

Thank You!

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GROSVENOR



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