

## Bristol Join-Up

### Coronavirus Community Support Fund

*Between October and April 2020/21 we were awarded additional 6-month funding to support our response in our communities to the Covid-19 pandemic from The National Lottery Coronavirus Community Support Fund.*

#### What we did

**The Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group soon to be known as the Chinese Community Wellbeing Society** used this funding to deliver culturally appropriate food parcels for those who were struggling in the most recent lockdown to go out. They included face masks in the food parcels and at Chinese New Year included red envelopes.

**Bristol Pakistani Welfare Organisation** used this funding to provide a lunch club for women and men in their community, mostly those who are older or were feeling lonely. They delivered fresh home-cooked meals to them. Previously most of their projects have focussed on women but after feedback that the men in their community wanted an opportunity to engage, they were able to open this project up to them.

**Bangladeshi Bristol Women's Group** used the additional funding to organise a weekly cooking session and supply the ingredients and an evening online coffee session. They were able to increase administration time to work on guidelines for their Facebook page. The cooking sessions became a family affair with husbands and children joining in. It has given people the confidence to join in with their other activities.

**Local Friends** have been organising volunteers to make deliveries of groceries and prescriptions. There are increasing numbers of requests for befriending. Volunteers need support to perform these roles. With this funding, they have been able to employ another part-time person to support the volunteers.

**Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing** have used this funding to establish online workshops for people who have had recent hearing loss. For those who need them, they have tablets and internet access that they can distribute. They are working with Age UK Bristol to have a volunteer for technical support. The workshops cover communication (lip-reading), equipment and mental health and wellbeing.

**Bristol Older People's Forum** completed focus groups following on from their initial research on the effects of lockdown on older people in Bristol. They have met with Bristol Macular members and Somali elders, amongst other groups. The funding allowed them to share key findings to influence policy. The Care Forum and Bristol Older People's Forum are working with **Alive** who we have funded to research the effects of the pandemic on care home residents and staff.

## Case studies

A community member CQ had been having a difficult time during the pandemic. Due to the pandemic CQ had lost her job and because of this as well as the strains of being in lockdown she begun to feel depressed. Also, as her husband had tested positive for COVID-19 he has had to take time off from his job and then go back to reduced hours as he has been recovering from the virus. As well as this her family has encountered financial difficulty as her son is still a full time student at university currently. Receiving the food parcel has really helped in providing them with the basic necessities they need which due to their situation they had struggled to buy or go out to get. CQ was extremely grateful that we provided her with a food parcel which she said would last her a long time so she would not need to worry about buying groceries. CQ mentioned that not having to worry about these essentials had taken a burden off of her and made her feel encouraged to find a new start for the family after lockdown. She also thanked the project for showing her and her family such warmth during this difficult period for them.

This case study relates to a husband and wife who had recently both had serious health issues necessitating periods in hospital. This was followed by the Covid-19 lockdown. The couple do not have children and aren't in touch with family members so felt isolated with no-one to share personal matters with.

They were put in touch with the service because they hoped talking to someone on a regular basis would help them to feel less isolated and provide someone to talk to apart from each other.

Their preference was for each of them to have their own dedicated volunteer calling them on a weekly basis, so each were allocated a volunteer.

The clients reported that in practice, they don't mind which volunteer they talk to and that they really appreciate the weekly calls as they provide a: 'link to the outside world' and an opportunity to: 'Speak to someone different'.

As a result they no longer feel so isolated and know that if they need additional help with shopping and/or prescriptions, they can get this easily via *Local Friends*.

Comment from volunteer: 'They both seem to appreciate my contact, and we find things to chat about.'

This client lives alone and suffers from serious health issues. He was referred to Local Friends during the Covid-19 lockdown. He also suffers from PTSD due to time serving in the forces and struggles with other issues.

This client commented that he: 'Would very much appreciate someone to talk to over the telephone and especially if they have an interest in motorcycles/Harleys but happy to chat about all sorts'.

A volunteer has been phoning him regularly and the client has found it 'really helpful' and commented that 'It's great to have a bit of conversation now and then.' He also confirmed that it has helped him feel less lonely.

During our contact with him, the client began to really struggle with getting shopping as he was finding it harder to drive his car and his motorbike. Help was offered, although in the end he managed. He has since sold these vehicles and obtained more than one mobility scooter. This has helped both with shopping and also with giving him a new project to work on i.e. tinkering with his mobility scooters and enhancing their performance.

Our volunteer observed that the client seems to be feeling much more positive and cheerful lately.

This client was referred to us because he was feeling very low because of lockdown – he says he ‘got to the stage where I just wanted to give up.’ He lives alone and is disabled. He gave up his job to care for his mother for a long time until she passed away and he commented that he didn’t get any help from other family members. So he has concluded he has no close family he can rely on and he also mentioned that he doesn’t feel he can trust his neighbours due to a number of negative experiences with them.

A volunteer has been phoning him regularly and our client says these regular calls have definitely helped. He particularly appreciates having somebody ‘trustworthy’ he can talk to.

This client has a lot of great stories to share about his life experiences and he is now able to look forward to being able to meet people, including his befriender, face to face for a chat and a coffee.

His volunteer says that he likes talking to his client and that he is ‘fun to speak to’. His client tells him ‘endless amusing anecdotes, and appears very savvy about old and new technology’. He goes on to say that ‘In non-covid times, I think he would be great in a meeting of people we support through local friends, he is so savvy and willing to help fix up anyone’s old technology.’

This client was referred for telephone befriending and Local Friends were informed that he lives in supported accommodation and is quite isolated other than staff check-ins. He does speak to a few friends by phone and finds this always improves his mood and day. He is also quite vulnerable, for example he has fallen into significant debt using chat rooms (this is being managed). The client is well supported by a support worker and is quite positive at the moment and very grateful for any involvement from *Local Friends*.

We allocated a volunteer to support him via the telephone.

The client reports that it has ‘definitely helped having (volunteer) phoning him’. He does still get lonely but it really ‘cheers him up’ to talk to someone. However, he says that lockdown is really getting him down now as it has gone on for so long.

Our client’s volunteer says he feels the relationship is ‘going very well’ and that they are ‘having good relaxed conversations as and when - no pressure’. They communicate both by texts and calls.

Local friends hope that when the lockdown has ended, our client can get out in the fresh air and maybe have a coffee and operate his radio-controlled drone and cars with his volunteer, as this is something he has told us he enjoys doing.

This client was referred to us because she needed temporary help with walking her dog. At the time, she was recovering from long Covid and she also has ongoing serious health challenges as well as small children and a husband who is often away with his job.

Two volunteers were identified to help walk her dog and although our client's husband is currently back home and she has also recovered sufficiently from long Covid to be able to manage the dog, she reports that she may well need help in the future when her husband is away again for a few months from April. Our client commented that 'it is so good that you keep in touch and check if I am OK' and that she really appreciates this.

This client was referred to us because she 'would so appreciate someone to visit me at home for a chat and a cuppa.' Our client is pretty much house bound as she is disabled and unable to operate the recently installed heavy fire doors between her top floor flat and the lift to enable access to the outdoors. She also has other health issues to contend with.

One of our volunteers is phoning this client regularly for a chat and 'virtual cuppa' as due to the Covid lockdown, it is not yet possible to meet face.

She enjoys reading, but cannot manage the small print in many books now. We suggested that she explore getting an ebook reader which will enable her to access many more books and to set the print size she needs. She is intending to follow up this idea with her brother.

The volunteer commented that she really enjoys their regular 'virtual cuppa' and that although their backgrounds and some of their life experiences are rather different, they have still found much common ground to talk about and all sorts of topics are covered. 'We often find that we have chatted for more than an hour. I really admire my client for her attitude and the way she deals with her current challenges. She often makes me smile and my day is always brighter after we've spoken.'

Our volunteer hopes that it won't be too long before it will be possible to meet her client face to face for a real cuppa, going on to say 'We've already had a discussion about the most suitable biscuit to have with a cup of tea and luckily we find we are in agreement!'

## Quotes

"I thank BACWG for their care and concern for me and this lifted my heart. I felt happier."

"We have not gone out to Chinese supermarket for a long time because my husband is too old to drive. It was so good that the food was delivered to us. The food is just what we need. Now we have a good supply and it can last us some time. Thank you very much."

"helps me keep in touch with people"

"makes me more active, keeps me happy"

"Helped me to reach out and socialise"

"I like the sense of togetherness that I'm not alone"

"Makes me feel good plus I also get to know a lot of information otherwise I wouldn't of known"

"Keeps me connected with the wider community"

"Keep me physically and mentally fit"

"It helps me keep fit, socialise and good mental well being"

"The service helps me combat loneliness, boosts wellbeing"

"I like the sense of community and fun fitness activities"

"Helps me to link with different people and service providers"

"Activities make me feel happy and healthy"

"helps me get rid of loneliness and keep mental health balance"

"I like getting to know others from same community"

"They help me if I need any help"

"the service helped me have contact with others"

"it is so good that you keep in touch and check if I am OK"

"the phone calls are a link to the outside world"

"Helps with physical & mental health"