



Karis Neighbour Scheme

# Karis Neighbour Scheme Annual Report 2008 - 2009



Offering practical support, friendship and advocacy  
in the local community through volunteers

Registered Charity: 1077200

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## REPORT AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

We live in a world of rapid change where there is an increasing awareness both of human needs and of the limitations in resources to meet those needs. This is the context in which Karis Neighbour Scheme works, and it is again my privilege to recommend their work to you.

In the pages of this annual report you will find financial information and statistics, but you will also get a glimpse into the lives of many people in need, whose lives have been impacted by the work of this unusual organisation. Karis Neighbour Scheme has its roots in a vision of whole person care which developed in a local medical practice more than two decades ago – a care which values the uniqueness of each individual life while also recognising the complexity of the communities in which they live. The roots of this vision for whole person care, in fact go back much further in time, to a different era, but an era where human need seemed much the same. Two centuries ago a Jewish Rabbi, Yeshua, taught his followers about the uniqueness and significance of every human life. He modelled care for the individual, especially the suffering and disadvantaged. He made time for and reached out to society's outcasts and gave hope and value to the downcast.

So you will find in this report the outworking of this vision for whole person care. You will find descriptions of activities which range from personal counselling and individual practical help, through to group activities and engagement with factors that could lead to regenerating whole communities. Empowering individuals, building self esteem, removing aloneness and seeking genuine partnership working are themes which underpin what Karis Neighbour Scheme does.

In commending this report to you, I also thank those of you who have supported Karis Neighbour Scheme financially or through the gift of valuable time. I want to thank the inspirational staff who work in Karis Neighbour Scheme and my fellow trustees, but I especially want to thank the unsung heroes in this work - the many volunteers who have given so freely of their resources, their time, their skills and their compassion. Together you have demonstrated that valuing the individual and caring for the whole person is still the most important response to human need.

# INTRODUCING KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

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## WHO ARE WE?

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a small community project based in Ladywood, Birmingham. We work throughout the communities of Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne offering support to people locally.

We have always valued working in relationship with people and seek to offer friendship and emotional support as well as helping in more practical ways. As an organisation, from the staff team to the growing number of volunteers who give their time to support our work, we value everyone who we come into contact with and try and demonstrate this in how we work.

We are keen to meet people where their needs are and are continually trying to 'fill the gaps' where services do not exist in the area. Over the years this has led to the development of a number of projects offering a broad range of support within the community.

However, we are aware that as a small organisation we are not always best equipped to deal with every problem. We work closely with other community groups, charities and local services to ensure that we can point people towards the help they might need if we are not able to offer it ourselves. We do not want to compete with, replace or duplicate existing services.

## WHAT DO WE DO?



Currently, we offer support with practical tasks such as gardening, decorating and DIY. We offer food, toiletries and other essential provisions to those most in need as well as some limited provision of small items of furniture and household appliances.

We also offer an advocacy and advice service, with drop-in sessions two days a week. Our office is open throughout the week for those who may have an issue which is particularly urgent or who may simply need access to a phone, fax machine or the internet and may be unable to otherwise.

We offer support to lonely and isolated older people through our befriending project, Karis Be Friends.

We also run several groups during the week. The *Welcome to Ladywood* Drop-In group and English for Speakers of Other Languages classes offer social activities and help with learning English to a number of asylum seekers and refugees. A group of local residents enjoy weekly visits to our community allotment.

We are looking at providing support around emotional well being through the All Being Well project. We've been running regular groups looking at issues such as anxiety and stress, anger, readiness for work and emotional needs in parenting as well as offering one-to-one support and social groups to encourage people to continue growing and moving on.

## ...AND WHERE?

We currently work across the Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne areas of Birmingham. The communities in these areas face different challenges and have a diverse range of needs. We support people from across these different communities and tend to come alongside those who are particularly marginalised or isolated.

## OUR TEAM...

### TRUSTEES

We currently have a board of three trustees, all of whom have worked in the local area and have good links locally. **Dr Ross Bryson** is a GP at the Karis Medical Centre, he has been at the practice for over 20 years and has been a trustee since Karis was set up in 1999, he is currently the Chair of Trustees. **Dr Mike Forrest** is Senior Partner at Karis Medical Centre and is involved in several other charitable organisations both locally and nationally. **Mrs Rebecca Cuthbert** worked at Karis for several years as the Children & Families' Worker, she is currently an Extended Schools Cluster Co-ordinator and has a great deal of experience of working with children and families.

### STAFF

We have a team of seven staff who oversee and co-ordinate Karis' activities. **Linden Sanders** is the Management & Development Worker, **Jude Greenwood** is the Project Development Manager for All Being Well, **Ruth Fuller** is the Children & Families' Worker, **Helen Bell** is the Elderly Support Worker, **Annabel Wrangles** is the Community Regeneration Worker, **Maria McParland** is Project Co-ordinator for All Being Well and **Harry Naylor** is the Project Administrator.

### VOLUNTEERS

We rely on a team of around a hundred volunteers, who give their time in various ways, to provide the friendship and support Karis offers, whether this is giving time to visit someone in their home, helping look after children at the ESOL classes, clearing someone's garden or helping at the office. Without their considerable efforts and commitment so much of what we do would simply not be able to continue and we always seek to recognise the key role each and every volunteer plays.

Our volunteers represent a broad range of backgrounds and come from all different walks of life. There is a fairly even spread across different age groups with 24 volunteers in the 18-25 age group, 23 in the 26-35 age group, 13 in the 36-45 age group, 11 in the 46-55 age group, 12 in the 56-65 age group and 15 in the over 65 age group.

Having been set up as a community group, out of the concerns of people living and working in the area, we have always sought to maintain our grounding in the local area and build and strengthen links within the community. Most of our volunteers live in the south west area of Birmingham and 55% are residents in the area we work in, though a few volunteers come from as far afield as Solihull.

It is important to recognise that as well as getting involved in the local community, volunteering can also be a great opportunity for volunteers to learn new skills and gain valuable experience. We provide initial training for all our volunteers and are always happy to find placements on further training courses where it is felt they would be of benefit.

Sometimes, those we have supported or befriended move on to volunteering and this is always great to see, especially when people who were isolated or lonely or lacking confidence or struggling when we first met them, have become settled or confident enough to then go on to help others in similar situations.

### SUPPORTERS

Our supporters also provide a great deal, not just financially but in offering support in kind such as donations of food for our store, responding to particular practical needs, getting involved in fundraising and raising awareness of what we do. While we have a formal 'Friends of Karis' scheme, we also receive support from a large number of individuals who give freely of their time and resources. We are also grateful for the support of a number of local churches and the partnership of the other organisations and groups we work alongside.

## A SNAPSHOT OF THE PAST YEAR

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**44** practical jobs done for local people including gardening, decorating and DIY

around **45** items of furniture and appliances passed on to those in need

more than **220** food parcels given out

**8** local residents involved at the community allotment

around **25** visits by the group over the year



**253** people given help with advocacy & advice

over **100** volunteers have given their time and skills to Karis Neighbour Scheme

we held **2** volunteer training evenings

we celebrated our **10th** birthday, opening our new offices





more than **250** local families supported in various ways over the year

had contact with over **200** children

took nearly **30** families with more than **50** children on trips during school holidays

**100** adults and **109** children came to the drop-in

**108** adults and **44** children came to our ESOL classes

**3** day trips on a canal boat for local families



**90** elderly people visited in their homes

**50** people came to regular Sunday afternoon tea parties

Christmas gift boxes given out to **29** older people



**93** people helped by the All Being Well project

we ran **3** social groups encouraging interaction & creative activities

over **500** people came along to a Summer Fun Day held in Ladywood



## THE STORIES...

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This year we've helped over six hundred people from the local area. While a number of people need help with a particular problem and we only see them once or twice, there are many who are facing ongoing hardships or difficult circumstances.

We try to come alongside people in their situations to offer friendship and support, especially those who are isolated and don't have help from anywhere else. In doing this we have the privilege of getting to know people and supporting them not only through the lowest points, in difficult and distressing circumstances, but in the successes and joys as well.

**Lisa** struggles with social anxiety and depression and finds it difficult to get out of her flat. She was taken to hospital for related health issues and when she came back to her flat it took her several weeks to recover, she didn't have anyone to help with cleaning and the flat got into a bit of a state. Not long after her mother unexpectedly passed away and things continued to get out of control.

She contacted us as she was overwhelmed by the state the flat had gotten into and, because of all the difficulties she was struggling with, she couldn't sort it out on her own.

A couple of volunteers were able to go and spend a day cleaning the flat and tidying up, which made a huge difference. Having the flat back in a manageable state was a pressure taken off of Lisa who was able to keep on top of the cleaning and cope better with the other challenges she faced.

**José** is a refugee, he had until recently been an asylum seeker and had been supported and housed by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). We knew him as he came to our advocacy and advice sessions sometimes for help calling the home office or faxing papers to his solicitor.

When he received his leave to remain he had his support from NASS stopped, they withdrew his accommodation and stopped providing him with the vouchers he had been receiving for food. He had to make a homeless application to the council and sign up for benefits.

It took several weeks for his benefits to start and his other support had already stopped so he had no income. We supported him with food parcels and other basics during this time and he came in to the office to use the phone and fax while sorting out his benefits and housing.

When he did eventually move into permanent accommodation the flat was empty and he had no way to pay for furniture on his benefits. We helped him apply for a grant from the Newman Homes Trust in order to buy the basic things he needed like a bed. Throughout this transition we were able to offer practical help and support to Josee which enabled him to become settled and established.

**Keith** lives on his own in a warden supervised block of flats, his wife had been ill for some time and was at a hospice. Every day he would walk to visit her and spend as much time with her as he could but he found it lonely being in the flat on his own.

He began coming along to our Time for Tea events at Onneley House where he enjoyed spending time with people and making new friends. It was at one of these events he was introduced to Sarah, one of our volunteers, who began to visit him regularly for a chat and a cup of tea.

It was not long after this that his wife passed away. Sarah continued to visit him and encouraged him to get out of the flat. He would pop in to see us for a coffee and to talk to someone, and sometimes just to sit on our sofa while the busyness of the office went on around him. It has been a difficult time for him but we have, in different ways, been able to come alongside him and offer him company, extend kindness and go some way to meeting his needs.

**Michelle** had been suffering from depression for some time. About two years ago she had reached her lowest ebb, as she described it, and struggled just to get through each day. She struggled to see any way out of the depression and couldn't imagine things getting any better.

Just before she moved into the area the GP she was leaving told her about Karis and suggested she get in touch with us for support. She found it difficult to believe anyone could help but decided to contact us after seeing a poster for one of the courses run by the All Being Well project aimed at helping people better cope with their emotional needs.

She found the Stress-Less course really helpful and started to come to the Get Together lunches for further support after it had finished, the lunches offered opportunities to keep moving forward and chance to meet with others who had similar issues. She now sees herself as on the way to recovery and in her own words, 'life these days is made up of more good days than bad'.

**Sara** "I moved to Ladywood in 2003 when my son was 18 months old. I didn't know anyone but I saw the Church and ladies going in with their children. I went in and I met Gwyneth in the shop, she told me about the Drop-in and she asked Rebecca to visit me. She came to my house and told me all about the Drop-in and English classes. I was very happy.

All I knew how to say was 'thank you' and 'please', at the Drop-in they offered me coffee and I said 'no please' and confused everyone! But I found kind people. I learnt some English with them and then I was able to go to college and then finally to study childcare. All of this came from the Drop-in. I learnt English and that place helped me to become what I am today. Even if I moved away I would keep coming. You see lots of people who have moved away but they come back again because they don't find anything the same as the Drop-in and the people at Karis. Very warm people.

Sometimes I go to the office and always they help me. They do their very best. I always plan in my diary to come to the Drop-in. In 2007 I became I volunteer. I got certificate it was very special. I volunteer because maybe I help people. I know what it's like to be alone in this country with young children. It's hard to manage. I help them from my heart".

## MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

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*Linden Sanders has been the Management & Development Worker at Karis Neighbour Scheme for three and a half years now. He has responsibility for overseeing the scheme as a whole, the staff team and the various projects we run. He is also involved directly in the advocacy & advice drop-ins, the allotment and our practical support.*

In my role as Management & Development Worker it has been fantastic to see another great year at KNS with several new developments emerging and a continued strengthening of existing services. There have been challenges along the way but as a team of staff, volunteers, trustees and friends we have pulled together and KNS continues to serve the needs of many people in this locality.

Some of the highlights over the past year have included:

- Receiving funding through Cross Pollinate to purchase a small van. This has helped enormously with our practical work, and many people have had gardens cleared, rooms decorated and furniture moved, aided by the Karis van.
- In August KNS along with a group of local residents organised a community fun day in one of the local parks. This initiative was headed up by Annabel, our Community Regeneration Worker and saw local residents, organisations and churches come together for a day of music, sports, games, food, face painting, bouncy castles, fire engine demonstrations, book stalls, jumble sales and much more! A great time was had by all and we are already planning this years event.
- In April 2009 we moved to our new office premises at Church of the Redeemer. We are now fully settled in and enjoying more space and improved facilities. We are very grateful to Kavita Oberoi, the “Secret Millionaire” who generously donated funds when she visited us to help cover the costs of the move, installing new phone and computer equipment and to help with rent. Kavita kindly came back to officially open our new offices for us at our launch day last spring.
- KNS celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday in April 2009, which coincided with our launch of the new office premises. It has been amazing to look back over the last 10 years and see how KNS has grown and developed; from the early days of one part-time worker to now, where we have 6 staff and over 100 volunteers. So many different people have played significant parts during this time helping along the journey to where we are now. What has remained central to the organisation is meeting needs that are not being met elsewhere, filling the gaps in service provision and supporting those who have little or no other support.

Once again, we are indebted to all our hard-working volunteers, who offer their valuable time, energy and resources, often going above and beyond the call of duty. We are really thankful for your dedication, concern and care for this community. We are also extremely grateful to all our funders whose support and generosity is vital in maintaining and developing the work of Karis Neighbour Scheme. Without your contributions this project could not continue. As a team we are excited by all that the coming year has in store and hope that you will continue to join us in this venture.

## ADMINISTRATION

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*Harry Naylor has been working as the Project Administrator at Karis Neighbour Scheme for several years now. The administration of Karis covers a broad scope of activities including fundraising, gathering and compiling information, looking after the office, welcoming people and supporting the other staff in various ways.*

The administration of Karis Neighbour Scheme continues to be an engaging task. As the All Being Well project has continued to grow and the Community Regeneration work picks up a pace there has been more and more going on at Karis and with a broader group of people.

The office is often busy and while I find the bustle of people coming and going is great, and gives me chance to get to know many of the people Karis supports, it does present its challenges in getting the administrative tasks done. From keeping the accounts and financial records up to date, maintaining the database and making bookings to stocking office supplies, there's a lot to be done to keep things running smoothly with the work of our various projects.

Towards the end of this year I've had help from several volunteers who've very generously given up some of their time to help with administrative tasks, which I'm aware is probably not everyone's first choice of activity when volunteering! This has helped a little in easing the administrative burden and has freed me up to focus on priorities like fundraising.

As well as my administrative duties, I also have the privilege to get out and see what's happening across the project as I photograph a lot of the work. I'm not a keen photographer outside of Karis but I really enjoy capturing and cataloguing snapshots of what goes on here and the sense of community amongst the people we support and our volunteers, to the extent that people are starting to groan when I turn up with my camera!

A huge thanks to everyone who has been involved this year across the whole of Karis.

## FUNDRAISING

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It has been a challenging year for fundraising. Due to cuts in their budget our SureStart funding was reduced considerably and a sizeable grant from the Tudor Trust also came to an end. However, we have been well supported this year, and generously, by a number of charitable trusts. There is a list of all those who made grants to our work at the back of this report.

Our Friends continue to give generously as well, and we have seen a lot of people sign up to give financially in the past year, with Friends contributing nearly £10,000 over the last 12 months. The Friends of Karis scheme sees supporters receive regular updates about our work and what's going on through a newsletter. Friends contribute a huge amount to the scheme not only financially but also through giving gifts in kind, responding to particular appeals and raising awareness of the project.

As well as those who give regularly, we also received a number of sizeable one off gifts from individuals and churches. Of note this year we received over £15,000 to purchase and insure a brand new van, these donations came through the Alvor Charitable Trust and Stewardship following our invite to present at the Cross Pollinate event in London.

Local churches continue to partner with us in our work, both financially and in people giving of their time to volunteer and help out with the work. We are very grateful to Church Alive for supporting our food cupboard, to St John's Church Harborne for putting on a Christmas party for many of the elderly people we work with, and to BCC and Church Alive for their help in running a Community Fun Day in Ladywood over the summer.

As a team we had a quite year with regards to fundraising events, with nothing to rival the Three Peaks Challenge or the Coast to Coast Cycle which we've undertaken in recent years. However, we were supported by Catherine & Dave who chose to do a sponsored walk to London, in the space of three days, to raise funds for our work. We had helped Catherine earlier in the year and they decided they wanted to give something back, their efforts raised over £200 and earned them a picture in the Birmingham Mail.



## PRACTICAL SUPPORT

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A large part of why Karis Neighbour Scheme was initially set up was to try and respond to practical needs in the area, especially those around people's homes. Poor quality housing was, and still is, a big issue in the area and many people, for one reason or another, are unable to find the help they need elsewhere.

While repairs and maintenance are the responsibility of the council or other landlord, some flats become run down, dingy and generally unpleasant places to live. Others find they struggle to keep their gardens under control, either because of health issues or having to look after young children on their own. Some, because of age or ill health, simply can't do the little jobs they used to, such as odd bits of DIY.

One of the main areas of our practical work is helping people who find themselves in these situations by providing volunteers and the right tools for the job.

We have a small team of volunteers and a number of groups who help out with practical jobs around the home. Other staff and volunteers do help out with smaller tasks while out on visits, especially with the elderly.

We keep various equipment, from lawnmowers and strimmers to paint brushes and wallpaper strippers, to enable our volunteers to carry out these jobs. This year we were blessed to receive funding to purchase and run a van, allowing us to transport the tools and equipment more easily to and from practical jobs.

We've carried out forty four practical jobs over the past twelve months, including decorating, gardening, moving furniture and helping with cleaning, sorting and moving home. We have also helped with smaller tasks like helping change light bulbs or putting together flat-pack furniture.

We keep a food store at Karis Neighbour Scheme, with provisions like tinned vegetables, rice, tea, milk and sugar as well as toiletries, baby food and nappies. We support a number of individuals who are either temporarily or permanently destitute. While many of these are asylum seekers there are people who, because of a problem with their benefits or a lack of entitlement have no income at all coming in.

In these situations we provide food parcels for as long as they are needed, either weekly or fortnightly, depending on if it's an individual or a family. There has been a big increase in the need for this kind of support in the last year, many asylum seekers who receive their leave to remain find themselves without support for weeks or even months while they apply for benefits, and economic migrants from the EU have no entitlement to benefits whatsoever.

The past twelve months we supported sixty six individuals and gave out two hundred and twenty food parcels, which is an increase of around a third from last year.

As well as providing essentials like food we try to support people who need more expensive items like furniture or appliances.

Often people are moved into empty flats and left to fend for themselves, setting up a home on benefits can be incredibly difficult, so where possible we pass on donations of larger items to people who need them. We have passed on nearly fifty items of furniture over the course of the year. We also refer on to other groups who can help with these provisions such as the Ladywood Furniture Project or Narthex. In particularly desperate situations we have helped people apply for grants from trusts or from the Social Fund, to purchase the household items they need.

We've also continued to work in partnership with other organisations across the city to help run the Hope Housing project. This project seeks to house destitute asylum seekers while they are supported to make appeals. The project now runs four properties providing temporary accommodation for people who would otherwise be homeless or dependent on the hospitality of friends. Karis helps carry out practical jobs at the houses and our van has been used to move furniture to and from the properties when needed.



## ALLOTMENT

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Our community allotment plot at the Meadow Lane site offers local people the chance to get some fresh air, enjoy being green fingered and grow their own fruit and vegetables. Each week through Spring to Autumn we take a group to the plot every Thursday morning, weather permitting.

The group get involved in all aspects of taking care of the plot, digging and weeding, planting seeds, watering and picking and eating what we grow. The plot has been used to grow all sorts of fruit and vegetables, with crops of potatoes, onions, garlic, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, peas, herbs and even a huge pumpkin.

The residents who come along help decide what to grow and everything is shared out between those who come, any leftovers are brought back to the office and given out.

The people who come to the group range in ages and backgrounds considerably, from a family with a young daughter aged four to our most regular member, a lady from Montserrat who at sixty-nine is still one of the most hard working individuals to help take care of the plot.

We initially set up the allotment project to provide a space for people who lived in tower blocks or maisonettes without access to their own gardens. It is of huge benefit to the people who come for them to be able to spend a morning a week outside in a green space and to be doing something constructive.

Seeing the plot develop, especially into the summer months when flowers are blossoming and the first crop of vegetables is nearly ready to harvest, gives the people involved a real sense of pride in what they've achieved. It is a very visible (and edible) demonstration of their hard work.

We also find that the group provides much needed social interaction for a number of the individuals who come. In some cases people who find it difficult to be in groups or around lots of people find it easier spending time on the allotment, partly because it is such an open space and partly because there is a focus on getting on with tasks like digging or watering.

This year we visited regularly between March and October. The group has been small, eight people in all, but they have gotten on well together and been well supported by Jo, a community artist and gardener, and several volunteers.

We will unfortunately be losing Jo next year as she is moving on to more work with schools, she has been fantastic at helping look after the allotment and develop the plot. She has worked with the group to build raised beds, put together a composting heap, mark paths and give the plot some shape and character. We are sad to lose her and her gardening know-how but the group will continue to be looked after by one of our volunteers and we hope to see numbers increase next year.

As well as the regular Thursday morning group the plot was used this year by another project, which went on several visits over the summer to produce artwork inspired by nature. This was part of a wider project involving local schools and other residents, culminating in a display of all the artwork produced at the Ladywood Health & Community Centre during the autumn.

It has been great to see the allotment being used in different ways by a number of groups this year and we are looking for more ways of using what is a fantastic resource as we move ahead into the year to come.



## ADVOCACY

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We offer advocacy support to people in the Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne, mainly through two weekly drop-in sessions. However, we also see people on a one-to-one basis, often during home visits, particularly to the elderly who are sometimes housebound or less confident about going out. We also make our phone, fax, photocopier and printers available to local residents if they need access to these facilities but would be unable to use them otherwise.

This past year we have continued to see a great deal of need for this kind of support, with our advocacy sessions often being very busy. On average we have supported over 23 individuals a week over the course of the year, providing in total 1156 contact sessions and supporting 253 individuals.

Of these, 236 individuals attended our advocacy & advice drop-ins based at the Karis office. At the drop-in sessions we offer basic advice, help filling in forms, finding information, explaining letters and making phone calls where people struggle with language barriers and signposting to specialist advice where more complex issues such as debt or immigration are involved.

This year the sessions have been well supported by volunteer advocates and most of the time we have had a staff member and a volunteer at each session. Three volunteers in particular have given their time regularly over the course of the twelve months and we are extremely grateful for their commitment and hard work.

At one of the two weekly advocacy sessions we have begun to host a Neighbourhood Advisor from the council run Neighbourhood Office in Edgbaston. The advisors have direct access to the council systems and this has been a great resource, especially for those with problems with, for example, their council housing or benefits. While our sessions are run as a drop-in we have had to run an appointment system for the Neighbourhood Advisors and they are limited as to the number of people they can see each time, however, this has been running well and has benefitted a lot of people over the course of the year.

We find this kind of support is particularly a need for many refugees and asylum seekers, often language barriers mean people find it difficult to talk to someone on the phone, or struggle to understand letters they have received. Having someone willing to take the time to sit with you and explain a letter or talk to a service provider over the phone relieves a burden for people who would struggle with these tasks on their own.

Also, by being able to talk to someone face to face about a problem and look over any papers and documents, it can be much easier to understand an issue than for someone to try and explain it over the phone. We have helped with all sorts of issues over the course of the year, from calling the council on someone's behalf about repairs, to helping a young mother get support after being made homeless.

Through the various groups and activities we run, we often build up relationships with people, and sometimes become aware of issues that people may have otherwise struggled with on their own. We are also able to offer advocacy support in people's homes through volunteers, and our befriending work with the elderly will occasionally include helping them make phone calls or read letters where they're not able to come to our drop-in sessions.

We sometimes see individuals over a number of sessions, often with separate issues. This year there have been around 12 instances where an individual or family have needed quite intensive support over a period of time and in these cases as well as coming alongside them and advocating for their particular situation we have also been able to offer practical help where appropriate.

Being able to offer this support is important, even issues that seem quite small can cause a family or individual a lot of stress, and impact on other areas of their life. For others we have been able to help them through particularly difficult circumstances, for example several families who've had their support stopped suddenly and been made homeless during the transition from NASS support to mainstream benefits. In these situations it makes a huge difference to have someone speak up on their behalf and help advise them on where they need to go and what support they can get.



## CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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*We've supported over two hundred and fifty local families over the course of the year through various groups including the 'Welcome to Ladywood' drop-in group, ESOL classes & home visits as well as our other activities. Ruth Fuller has overseen this work over the past year.*

It's been a busy and exciting year in which I've got to grips with my new role and had the pleasure of getting to know many families in Ladywood. Much of the work continues to be with people from overseas who've left frightening and difficult circumstance and their families back home. It's a joy to be able to be a friendly face and a support amongst the confusion and stress of learning English and making a new home in the UK.

Throughout this year we've continued with our normal format of tea, company and activities at the Drop-in. It's over our craft activities that we support one another, laugh and deepen friendships and I am indebted to our kind volunteers who take time to listen and care for the ladies that come along. Many of the craft activities are 'in-house' with those talented ladies amongst the group organising sessions and teaching us new skills. However, we've also enjoyed sessions run by the Ikon Gallery, the Red Cross, Spring Hill Library and other groups in the area. We've continued with our 'Know the Culture' programme, which aims to give people who are newly arrived to England a handle on British customs, systems and etiquette. This year we've looked at first aid and how to call for an ambulance, had visits from both the police and fire service, enjoyed a cream tea on St George's day, laughed a lot as we learnt about the British love for queuing, learnt about the benefits system, Guy Fawkes and British birds and flowers.

We've also had great fun learning about and celebrating the cultures and countries we all represent – with women from Somalia, Albania, Pakistan and Colombia sharing about their countries complete with food and occasional dancing! The value of these celebrations not only lie in learning about the cultures we represent but in encouraging the women in organising and running these sessions.

ESOL continues apace! No matter how organised we are ESOL always seems charmingly chaotic! We have such a mixture of students from all over the world, some with us for a short time, others accessing the class sporadically over many years, some able to speak several language and others with very little education. Our teachers do a sterling job often graciously abandoning lesson plans and coping with a mixture of students at different levels. We're indebted to our crèche workers who occupy anything from 3 to 18 children with all manner of activities while their parents get their heads down to study. The classes seem to be for many, a stepping stone on to more formal and full time learning, but for a handful they are also an important social outlet and their only source of teaching. I'm constantly impressed with the way our volunteer teachers take time to care for the students, often going the extra mile to help with advocacy or practical issues.

During this year we organised five trips; we braved the cold at Sandwell Park Farm and the rain at the Nature Centre and were rewarded with glorious sunshine at Polesworth Abbey! Some of our families enjoyed a really special time with John and Catherine Hackett who put on day trips along the canals on their lovely barge. We also made it along to the Think Tank and the REP too. Trips continue to be really important to our families, especially in the holidays when money may be tight and children can get bored. In particular our friendship with Polesworth Abbey has been such a joy over the year with some of the members there joining us at the Nature Centre and supporting our Christmas party.

Visits are a really precious part of the Children and Families' work in which I am able to deepen relationship with clients and follow-up those who seem lonely and isolated. I am often treated to superb hospitality and left wondering who was caring for whom! However, over this year I have turned my hand to a few practical things – I've helped ladies decorate their living rooms, go shopping, get to other charities and agencies, use the bus for the first time, delivered donated furniture, accompanied clients to make appointments as well changing light bulbs, fixing buggies or making calls to the council! More often than not though, it is during these times that women share their stories and I listen, not to offer any practical solution, but to be a friend.

As well as helping regularly at the Wednesday morning advocacy and advice drop-in, I often do advocacy throughout the week with clients during visits. Over this year I've helped two clients apply for grants to help them furnish their flat, receiving my first grant on behalf of a lady who required help with purchasing various house-hold goods. Other highlights have been putting two mums who both spoke little English in touch with each other as they both spoke Chinese, both the ESOL and Drop-in end of term parties, face painting for four and a half hours at the fun day, three of the women we supported getting leave to remain, making a first birthday special for the daughter of one of the ladies on one of our trips and teaching a client to make chocolate cake!



## KARIS BE FRIENDS

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*The Karis Be Friends project began in Harborne in response to high numbers of lone pensioners and concerns from local GPs surgeries about their isolation. Since then the project has grown considerably and now supports people across Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood. Helen Bell oversees the work of Karis Be Friends.*

The Karis Befriends work has continued to grow over the last year with our aim continuing to be to support older people who are particularly isolated, whether because of being housebound, infirm, or lacking confidence to get out and who may not have the support of family and friends living nearby. Referrals often come from local GPs surgeries, Social Workers or older people themselves, mainly requesting befriending support, though we offer practical and advocacy support if needed. For example we may help sort through post, make phone calls, contact other agencies on their behalf, help move furniture or lend a hand with small DIY tasks or clearing a garden. We have occasionally helped with household tasks or accompanied someone shopping, but we are unable to do these regularly and do not want to duplicate existing services which can already offer this help. The main need though is still for befriending support and visits in peoples' homes, which is well provided for through our volunteers.

We have supported 121 older people during the past year in the Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood areas of Birmingham. During the course of the year there were 34 older people referred to us and we have matched up 24 older people to a befriender to visit them regularly.

A lot of our befriending support involves volunteers visiting an older person regularly, usually weekly, sitting and chatting over a cup of tea, sharing friendship together, catching up on each others' news, or enjoying a hobby or playing a game together. Those who are befriended benefit so much from this and look forward to the regular visits, and the volunteers also enjoy and gain from providing this vital support.

As well as visiting in the home some befrienders have helped accompany people to hospital, doctors and dental appointments or helped them get out to the local shops and local community facilities where they lack confidence to go out on their own or need support to continue to do these activities. We have also had opportunity to introduce people to the Kenrick Community Care Centre and Onneley House in Harborne, and also encourage a number of the older people we support in the Ladywood area to enjoy meals at the Norman Power Community Care Centre over Christmas.

This year we have had the opportunity to organise a variety of social events, which help to support those older people who are awaiting a befriender to visit them regularly. It is great to have these events and to see those who come building friendships and seeking to support one another too, for example some people have exchanged phone numbers so they are able to keep in contact in between events.

In December 2008 we enjoyed our Christmas Party again at St. John's Church in Harborne, who put on a lovely meal and entertainment for nearly 50 older people. Our volunteers delivered 30 gift boxes to those who were unable to attend the various events around the Christmas period. We were able to organise transport for 18 of people to attend churchcentral's Carol Service, and volunteers from the church have hosted 6 'Time for Tea' Sunday afternoon teas throughout the year at Onneley House in Harborne, each one attended by 30-40 older people. We enjoy a lovely tea, some entertainment (maybe a sing-a-long, some poetry, live music or even songs from an elderly gentleman in his 90's who attended, who used to perform on the stage), some quizzes and the company of others. We also partnered with churchcentral in running an Alpha Course for Senior Citizens held weekly at the Kenrick Centre in Harborne, there were 11 older people attended the group regularly and they stayed on for lunch at the Centre. It has been good to see the older people being given the opportunity to discuss and consider their faith, which can often be physically difficult later in life, as well as accessing local community facilities like the Kenrick Centre and Ring and Ride transport.

Over the summer we held three tea parties and a coffee morning at some of our volunteers' houses, this was much needed at a time when relatives and friends are not able to give as much support due to the holiday period. We also held a Coffee morning at the Varsity, which the Harborne Village Manager helped organise. Another volunteer held a games morning for some of the elderly men we support, who tend to be reluctant to attend social events. A group of Physiotherapy students organised an event for us at our new offices, which allowed us to invite older people we support in the Edgbaston area. It has been good to be able to hold many types and sizes of social events in the different areas where those we support live and add further benefit to the befriending support we provide.



## ALL BEING WELL

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*The All Being Well project is coming towards the end of its second year. It is being funded by a four year grant from the Big Lottery Fund and is looking at improving people's well-being in the Ladywood area. Jude Greenwood has been overseeing the project.*

All Being Well's second year has been very busy. We have continued to help reduce people's levels of anxiety, depression and stress by running group programmes, seeing people on an individual basis and putting on activities to provide people with interest, achievement and community.

The Stress-Less and our Anger Management programmes have run several times this year. There is no provision for Anger Management in the local area and particularly for women in South Birmingham. Our programme is open to both sexes, thus filling a need.

Other programmes we have offered include: Step-Up (a back to work programme), Parent Pods, a conflict management course for the local library staff and Community Researchers' training. People come and go within the project, some participating in more than one group. In all this year:

- We have had 72 referrals, 27 from GPs, 2 from other health professionals, 4 from the Community Mental Health Team, 30 self-referred, and 6 from other community organisations.
- Over 100 people have been registered on our programmes
- 290 individual sessions have been held.

This year on our programmes, using a WEMWBS (Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well-Being System) evaluation, the average improvement in well-being for an individual over all programmes was 26%. With individuals we saw on a one-to-one basis, monitored using Core 34 at the beginning and end of the sessions, the average improvement was 40.8%.

We have also tried to help improve people's quality of life by offering constructive activities, such as the Knitting Group and an Arts and Crafts Group, both twice a month, and we have supported the Art Class at the Ladywood Community Centre which would otherwise have closed down. Our lunch club, called Get Together Grow Together, has been running all year, twice a month. 16 people have attended fairly regularly for a period of time and it has provided a social lifeline for some of these people, and provides activities to help people to live well and encouragement to continue with the progress made on the programmes or in one-to-one sessions.

Our partners, Spring to Life, ran an art and horticultural project, Grand Nature Designs, over the summer/early autumn and two of our volunteers were involved. 26 people in all created projects around a Nature theme. Three schools joined in and made 'Nature on a Plate' creations towards an exhibition of all the work in the Ladywood Community Centre. Painted boards created as part of the project have been put on permanent display at the local reservoir, and swap tables that participants crafted have been put out in the community as well. The project also took six trips out into the countryside, taking 39 adults and 6 children in all, and this had a huge benefit to their well-being. Some of the participants also tackled an overgrown garden for another individual who took part: therapeutic all round!

Volunteering is very good for well-being: it focuses the mind away from the self and gives back into the community, helping others. We encourage it, and couldn't manage without our volunteers.

A number of people were recruited in April and trained in community research methods. They then undertook research of 1) how best to disseminate well-being messages to the community and 2) the activities that people knew about and used, and what more was needed. This has been a valuable experience for them and has given them new skills and experience while providing useful information for the benefit of the local community.

Our service has been valued by many people this year, and several people have left us with quotes that show their appreciation, my favourite of which has been; "Nice of you to improve my life".

The different things we do "combine to address so many aspects of our needs and the particular learning styles of the diverse range of participants. I think this is a real winner which you simply wouldn't get with conventional NHS treatment."



## COMMUNITY REGENERATION

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*We are now nearly half way through the three year 'Nehemiah' regeneration programme. Annabel Wrangles, who we are hosting as our Community Regeneration Worker, has been working to bring local people and organisations together to provide a voice for improving the area and coming up with long term solutions.*

My work is part of initially a three year project to put in place the foundations for long term change in one of the communities Karis works in, focusing on an area of Ladywood and North Edgbaston. Our aim is, over time, and through building relationships with local residents and organisations, to create a vehicle to hold a long term vision for improving the area and be able to drive it forward.

We want to make sure that local people are included in all stages of this process, that they have the skills and confidence to be involved in shaping any regeneration efforts in the area and that they can hold statutory bodies and other groups and organisations working in the area to account in a real and meaningful way.

I have now been in post for over a year – these are some of the highlights of how the project has been going over the past twelve months:

### *Baseline report:*

I produced a report on Ladywood and North Edgbaston, drawing on statistics and local views, and highlighting the key problems locally, including low income, unemployment, fuel poverty, mental health, housing and crime. This has been useful as it provides a comprehensive picture of life in the area and helps understand how various issues can impact on each other rather than looking at each in isolation.

### *Consultation:*

We held a series of interviews and creative workshops to draw out how people feel about living in the area and what they see as the main things which need to be addressed. Both the feedback from the consultations and the baseline have been really useful for identifying the priorities for work in the area and the results have been shared with lots of other local organisations as well as informing other areas of my work.

### *Bringing residents together for community action:*

Active local people are the key to bringing about long term change in areas which have suffered neglect over the years – so I've focussed on bringing residents together for positive community action. As well as lots of smaller activities a particular highlight was the community fun day in August – this was organised by local people, and lots of local organisations supported us with stalls. Hundreds of people turned out for a really colourful and fun day. We hope to make the fun day an annual event as activities like this can do a great deal to build community spirit and a sense of pride in the area.

### *Building partnerships of people who can work together on the most pressing issues:*

This is long term work – encouraging organisations and residents to work together to address the issues that have already been identified and to be more aware of the wider community. I've spent a lot of time building relationships with other workers in the area, and so far I've been able to support other groups to work towards tackling debt, fuel poverty, setting up a breakfast club and provision of school uniform for children in need.

## ...AND THE STATISTICS

We collect a range of information about the people we've been supporting and our contact with them over the course of the year. In presenting this information we've tried to pick out the headline facts and figures that will be most informative, relevant and useful.

The following statistics cover the period from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> November 2009:

	07-08	08-09
<b>Total no. of individuals supported:</b>	478	628
<b>Total no. of contacts:</b>	4961	4798

<b>Average contacts per month:</b>	413	400
“ “ “ <b>week:</b>	99	96
“ “ “ <b>day:</b>	20	19

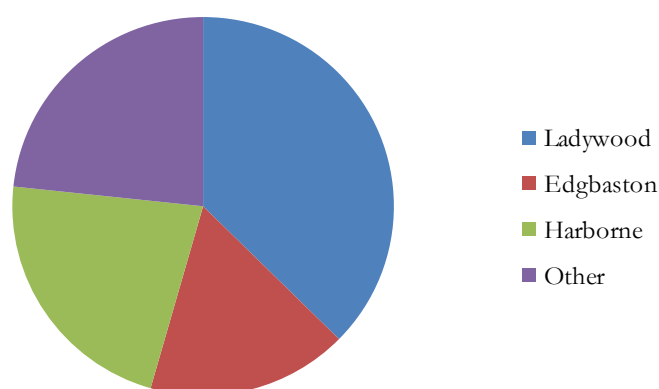
### Demographics

	Individuals (%)	Contacts (%)
<i>By Gender</i>		
Male	31	24
Female	69	76

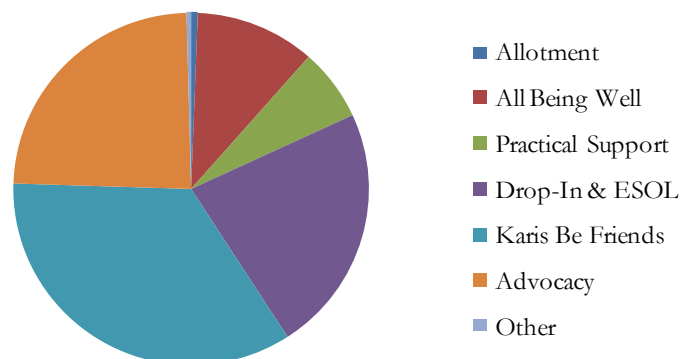
<i>By Age</i>		
16-24	7	5
25-34	20	25
35-44	16	17
45-54	8	8
55-64	4	6
65+	17	31
Undisclosed	28	8

<i>By Ethnicity</i>		
White (British)	19	31
White (Irish)	2	4
White (Other)	8	7
Asian (Indian)	2	2
Asian (Pakistani)	2	3
Asian (Bangladeshi)	1	1
Asian (Chinese)	2	1
Asian (Other)	4	6
Black (Caribbean)	2	3
Black (African)	25	24
Other	5	6
Undisclosed	28	16

### Breakdown Of Contacts By Area Of Residence



### Breakdown Of Contacts By Activity



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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First and foremost, a huge thank you to all our volunteers and supporters.  
We couldn't do it without you!

*Thanks also to,*

Age Concern, Anthony Collins Solicitors, ASIRT, B1 Church, Birmingham Christian Centre, Birmingham City Council Housing Department, Birmingham Institute for the Deaf, Birmingham Churches Together, Birmingham Law Centre, Birmingham University Anglican Society, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, Broadening Choices for Older People, Church Alive, Church of the Redeemer Edgbaston, churchcentral, Cloisters Tutoring Ltd, Community Integration Partnership, Community Transport, computerworld, Credit Union, Deaf Cultural Centre, Harborne Medical Practice, Help the Aged, Jesuit Volunteer Community, Jo Jones, Karis Medical Centre, Kavita Oberoi, Kenrick Centre, Knowle Parish Church, Ladywood Furniture Project, Ladywood Health & Community Centre, Ladywood Methodist Church, Ladywood Money Advice, Ladywood Project, Lordswood House Medical Practice, Mentoring & Befriending Foundation, Mother's Union, Narthex, Newman Homes Trust, Norman Power Centre, Onneley House, Outreach Shop, Polesworth Abbey, Restore, Riverside Church, Shiloh Computers, South West Birmingham Community Association, Sport4Life UK, Spring to Life, Springhill Library, St Augustine's Church Edgbaston, St George's Church Edgbaston, St John's Church Harborne, St John's Church Sparkhill, St John's & St Peter's Church Ladywood, SureStart Ladywood and Wolverhampton Voluntary Service Council

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