



Karis Neighbour Scheme

Karis Neighbour Scheme Annual Report 2009 - 2010



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

Registered Charity: 1077200

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REPORT AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE TRUSTEES

The Annual Report sets out to record what Karis Neighbour Scheme (Karis) accomplished in the last year, how it raised and spent its money and the activities it undertook. It includes reports, financial information and statistics. You will also notice that it contains numerous photos of people. This delights me. As Treasurer I can't escape the fact that money is an essential tool to enable Karis to achieve its vision, but it is the people at the heart of Karis that continue to make it successful.

Karis is all about people.

You will read that “We value everyone who we come into contact with”. You will see testimony to the fact that Karis has helped to change people's lives. The stories on pages 8 and 9 show how we have enabled:

Maria to grow in confidence

James to improve his health and become more integrated into the community

Prudence to feed her family at a critical time

Jackie to improve her garden to benefit her neighbours

Belinda to rise above her lift problems

Debbie to begin to enjoy life

Olive to have a friend

However, this comes at price. We need funds to survive and dedicated staff and volunteers to take our vision and deliver it to local communities. I am delighted to report that Karis employs the funds that have so generously been provided, blends the best qualities of our staff and almost 100 volunteers to make something special that impacts the people we meet. I count it a privilege to work alongside such dedicated and caring staff, volunteers and Trustees.

Once again we have been able to offer our services free to the people we meet. We face a challenging future with the impact of reduced income and increasing demand for our services. I am not sure how we will face the coming year, but with the continued support of staff, volunteers, partners and financial supporters, I am confident that Karis will continue to provide excellent services for people in the Ladywood area. Most importantly I believe that we will continue to provide an outstanding return on your investment of time, money and trust. Together we are changing lives.

I wholeheartedly commend the work of Karis to you.

Michael Fuller
Treasurer

INTRODUCING KARIS NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

WHO ARE WE?

Karis Neighbour Scheme is a small community project working in inner city Birmingham. We work throughout various local communities offering support to people facing disadvantage or hardship.

We value 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 try to meet people where their needs are and have worked 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.

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

WHO DO WE HELP?



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 a broad cross-section of the communities in these neighbourhoods through our various projects, however, we have a particular focus on those who are marginalised or isolated. For example we work with a large number of refugees and asylum seekers in the Ladywood and North Edgbaston area, and in Harborne we support mainly older people who are living on their own.

However, we do work with all sorts of people, who are facing hardship and disadvantage in various ways, both material and emotional.

WHAT DO WE DO?

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 furniture and household appliances through donations we receive.

We provide an advocacy and advice service, with drop-in sessions two days a week. A representative from the local neighbourhood office attends one of the weekly sessions. People can also access a phone, fax or photocopier to enable them to represent themselves.

We offer support to lonely and isolated older people through our befriending project, Karis Be Friends. This includes visiting people in their homes and putting on various social events.

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

Our All Being Well project offers support to people struggling with issues such as anxiety, depression, coping with anger, confidence building and emotional needs in parenting. This is through groups, one-to-one support and social activities such as arts & crafts.

OUR TEAM...

TRUSTEES

We currently have a board of four trustees. **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. **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 families in disadvantaged areas. **Mr Michael Fuller** works for the Highways Agency, he is a project manager with a considerable amount of local as well as national and multi-national experience, he has taken over the role of Treasurer. **Mr Steve Watts** is a minister at a local church and has been involved in the area for nearly 20 years, having previously worked as a secondary school teacher, he is also involved in a number of other community groups in the area.

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 nearly 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.

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 22 volunteers in the 18-25 age group, 23 in the 26-35 age group, 13 in the 36-45 age group, 10 in the 46-55 age group, 15 in the 56-65 age group and 14 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 60% are residents in the area we work in, though a few volunteers come from as far afield as Solihull.

Sometimes, those we have supported or befriended move on to volunteering and this is fantastic 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 are also invaluable and contribute a great deal to keeping our work going. This is not just in financial support, though their generosity in this regard is not to be underestimated, but also in offering support in kind such as donations of food or clothing, responding to particular practical needs, getting involved in fundraising and also raising awareness of our work. We do have a formal 'Friends of Karis' scheme, however, we also receive support from others 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



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

around **48** items of furniture and appliances passed on to those in need

more than **249** food parcels given out

16 local residents involved at the community allotment

around **23** visits by the group over the year



277 people given help with advocacy & advice

Over **1000** contacts at our drop-in advocacy & advice sessions

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

we held **2** volunteer training evenings

we had **15** new volunteers start their volunteering





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

had contact with over **260** children

took nearly **35** families with around **50** children on trips during school holidays

84 adults and **83** children came to the 'Welcome to Ladywood' drop-in

132 adults and **59** children came to our ESOL classes

2 day trips on a canal boat for local families



62 elderly people visited in their homes

51 people came to regular Sunday afternoon tea parties

18 older people came to a regular Tuesday morning group



207 people helped by the All Being Well project

we ran **13** groups offering social interaction, personal development & fun activities

over **600** people came along to a Summer Fun Day held in Ladywood



THE STORIES...

This year we've helped seven hundred and sixty two 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 come alongside people 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 not only support them through the lowest points but celebrate with them in the successes and joys as well.

Maria arrived in Ladywood having been forced to flee her country two years previously. She was depressed, traumatised and lonely when she registered with Karis Medical Centre. Her GP referred her to Karis Neighbour Scheme and told her about our English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. It took a couple of weeks for Maria to work up to coming along to one of the classes and was reluctant at first to have Ruth, our Children & Families' Worker, visit her. She felt shy and lacked confidence because she didn't speak English very well.

However, the next week she came along with others from our Welcome to Ladywood drop-in group on a trip that we put on during the school holidays. A number of families went to see a play at the theatre, and although she didn't understand much of the play because of the language difficulties, she was really grateful for the opportunity to go out and do something. Over time she came regularly to a number of our groups, getting to know people, and also had some support from the All Being Well project. It's been fantastic to see a lady who was so fragile and shy when we first met her find a place she can come to and feel safe, to grow in confidence and gradually make steps towards settling into a new community.

James is in his fifties. We first met him when he came to one of the groups run by All Being Well. Some of the issues that came up in the group meant he went on to see one of our counsellors for one to one support. One of a number of things that he wanted to work on was his diet and exercise routine. We were able to refer him to a health trainer who helped him start an exercise plan and look at his diet.

He has since lost a lot of weight and feels much healthier. He has also been taking part in a number of activities and other groups, including coming along to our community allotment. He has also been part of a group of residents who we've been supporting to set up a social group to organise trips and social events for local people to get to know each other. He has found himself becoming less isolated and has really enjoyed becoming more involved in his community and helping others.

Prudence had been waiting for a decision on her asylum case for a number of years. When she was finally told she could stay she also found that her support and housing were quickly withdrawn as she was no longer the responsibility of the National Asylum Support Service. We already knew her through our Welcome drop-in and English classes. We were able to support her through the process of applying for housing and helped her with food parcels for herself and her two young children over the course of about a month until she began to receive her benefit payments.

Jackie

lives on her own and struggles with mental health issues as well as her physical health. Her garden had become overgrown and she had had complaints from neighbours about rats coming from her property, these complaints had also been made to environmental health.

Jackie needed to clear her garden so that the environmental health department could put down rat poison. She was given a date that they would come to put the rat poison down and was worried because she couldn't manage to clear the garden on her own. The grass in her front garden had grown up to waist height and her back garden was so overgrown you could barely get out of the back door.

The day centre Jackie goes to got in touch with us about her situation as there was only a short time before the date Jackie had been given, so she needed help fairly urgently. We were able to arrange for a group of volunteers to go to her house, with a strimmer and loppers, to clear the garden and bag up the waste. This was a big weight off her mind and no doubt a relief to her neighbours as well.

Belinda

has two children and lives on the sixth floor of a tower block. When the lift broke in her block she was struggling to get both her children and the pram for her youngest child down and back up the stairs on their way to and from school. The Ladywood Project, who had known her for some time, contacted us to ask if we could find someone to meet her twice a day and help her up and down the stairs.

We were able to arrange this for Belinda, and thankfully, though she had been told that the lift wouldn't be fixed for a whole week it only took a couple of days before it was up and running again. Without our support Belinda would have had to struggle on on her own as she had no one else to turn to to get help.

Debbie

was referred to us by the local mental health team. She had a difficult family situation, was estranged from her child, and was very distressed. She was isolated, depressed and felt very alone. At first she came to us for some one-to-one support from one of our counsellors. This led on to her coming to several of our groups, arts & crafts, knitting and the community allotment.

These activities encouraged her to enrol on Adult Education courses specifically for people with mental health issues—including pottery and gardening. Some of her work from these courses has been displayed in local venues, even meeting a few celebrities in the process. Over the past year she has really found her feet, making new friends at both our groups and the courses she has signed up for, and trying things she has never done before. She no longer feels isolated, has things to do most days and is much happier in herself. It has been really brilliant to see Debbie beginning to enjoy life.

Olive

is over 90 and lives on her own. She is not as able to get out and about now, but still enjoys baking cookies and looks forward to her befriender visiting each week. She is very alert and enjoys hearing all about what her befriender has been up to, as they are a medical student. She does have family but they are not local and her daughter is very unwell so she doesn't see them very often. She values the opportunity to share how she is doing and enjoys the company of her befriender. Her befriender enjoys the visits as well (and of course the freshly baked cookies too!).

MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

Linden Sanders is the Management & Development Worker. He has worked at Karis Neighbour Scheme for four and a half years. His responsibilities include 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.

Despite the financial challenges we have faced as an organisation over the past year, Karis Neighbour Scheme has continued to shine brightly in this community, responding to people's needs in a variety of ways. As always, it has been a real team effort with staff, volunteers, trustees, friends and supporters all playing a vital role in the life of KNS and I am grateful to all of you for the incredible support and commitment you have shown.

In my role as Management & Development Worker it is a privilege to have the opportunity to see something of all of the various projects and activities that happen at Karis Neighbour Scheme and over the last year there have been some real highlights. These have included...

- A Christmas lunch for more than 40 elderly people, provided in partnership with St Johns Church, Harborne. Here I saw many lonely and often isolated elderly folk having a wonderful time singing carols, enjoying the delicious food and the company of others that they don't often get to see.
- Our community allotment project continuing to flourish (in all senses of the word). This provides an opportunity for local residents, many of whom don't have access to a garden, to grow vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers, make new friends and enjoy the beautiful surroundings – food for the soul indeed!
- The second Ladywood Community Fun Day which was a huge success. Much fun was had by local residents who enjoyed the various stalls, games and entertainment.
- Hosting a visit from the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Birmingham in October 2010. This was a great opportunity to provide them with an insight into the work of Karis Neighbour Scheme and the impact it has in this community.
- Seeing many people assisted with issues such as housing, immigration, finances, and accessing support and services through our weekly advocacy sessions.
- Presenting certificates of achievement to students and volunteers who attend our ESOL classes. Learning English is so vital to those who are settling here and seeing the progress they had made was very encouraging.
- The launch of "Voices of Ladywood", the community newspaper written and produced by local residents with support from Karis Neighbour Scheme.
- Running the Birmingham Half Marathon with the rest of "Team Karis" to raise funds for KNS (over £5000 was raised!)

The list could keep going but hopefully that gives you an idea of the range of activities and initiatives that Karis Neighbour Scheme has been involved in during the last year. We are very grateful to all those who have helped fund this work, enabling us to continue to meet needs and offer support to the vulnerable, marginalised and isolated in this community. We hope that this report will inspire you to support us again in the year ahead and in so -doing, help us to make a difference!

ADMINISTRATION

Harry Naylor has been working in the Project Administrator post at Karis Neighbour Scheme for a little over three years now. The administration of the scheme covers a broad scope of activities including record keeping, monitoring and evaluating, producing publicity materials, welcoming people to the office, answering phones, fundraising and supporting other staff.

Karis Neighbour Scheme has grown considerably over the past few years and there is now, seemingly, always a bustle of activity across all of the different projects and activities we run. While the last twelve months haven't seen any major new projects, it would be misleading to suggest there has been little or no development. There have been a number of new activities across our existing areas of work and the scale of a number of projects, in terms of those we are supporting and the number of contacts we have, has increased dramatically.

There is a great deal of administrative work to keep things running smoothly across the various different projects, such as keeping accounts and financial records, processing new referrals and keeping our database and other records up to date, sorting out references and CRB checks for volunteers, making bookings, stocking office supplies and dealing with incoming and outgoing post. As the scheme grows, so does the volume of this work.

This has been a challenge over the past year, but one that we have largely kept pace with, as testified to, I hope by the great work that has gone on and is outlined in this report.

Thanks in particular to several volunteers I have also had the opportunity to work with on particular projects this year, including re-designing and updating our website, a task which was long overdue. Special thanks to Kijong, who provided his considerable expertise in the field and put in a great deal of time and effort in setting up the new site from scratch.

However, I would also like to say a massive thank you also to all those who have given so freely of their time to Karis' work this year. Clearly a huge amount of hard work has gone in from all our staff and volunteers as we continue to respond to needs locally, having again seen an increase in the number of people we're supporting as well as the amount of support we've been giving.

FUNDRAISING

We have found that, despite a difficult backdrop of reduced funds and increased competition, we have had another largely successful year with regards to fundraising. We are very grateful to the numerous trusts and grant making bodies who have supported us so generously, and a full list of such funders is found at the back of this report.

The Friends of Karis have also supported us generously this year, donating over £10,000. We have continued to keep our Friends in touch through a regular newsletter and this has led to fantastic responses to particular appeals. One anonymous donor kindly supported us for the second time this year, their gift towards the insurance and some other costs associated with running our van was very gratefully received.

We had a number of fundraising events and initiatives this year. We launched 'Give Something Different', a chance for people to send charity gifts to their friends at Christmas, in support of Karis Neighbour Scheme. The hand-made gift cards were well received and raised £335 towards our various projects. Later in the year a team, including trustees, staff, volunteers and other supporters ran the Birmingham Half Marathon and raised a considerable sum over £5,000, thanks in part to match sponsorship of £2,000 from Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund.

Several events were also organised by other groups and organisations in support of our work this year. We gratefully acknowledge the £2,014.24 we received from Anthony Collins Solicitors from various fundraising efforts throughout the year, and also the £1,200 given by St George's Church, Edgbaston, who organised a very successful auction evening.

Thanks also to a number of local churches for their continued support and partnership in our work, special thanks to Church Alive for contributing to our food cupboard, St John's Harborne for holding a Christmas party for many of the older people we work with and BCC and Church Alive for supporting the summer fun day held in July.



ADVOCACY

Our advocacy and advice service is a major part of our work, accounting for nearly a fifth of our total contacts this past year.

This support is mainly offered through two weekly drop-in sessions, on Monday afternoons and Wednesday mornings, open to anyone in Ladywood, Edgbaston and Harborne. However, we also see people on a one-to-one basis, often while on home visits, to help with a particular issue. Our fax, phone, photocopier and printers are also available for use where people want to represent themselves but would not have access to these utilities otherwise.

We have seen an increased need for this service over the past year, and our advocacy sessions have continually been well attended and were at times very busy. We saw an average of 20 individuals a week over the course of the year, with 1057 contact sessions in all. This equated to support for 277 individuals in all.

The large majority of these had attended one of our advocacy & advice drop-in sessions, with 248 people having been to a session. These sessions offer basic advice, help filling in forms, finding information, explaining letters, making phone calls where people struggle with language barriers, and signposting to specialist advice for more complex issues such as debt or immigration.

We have a committed group of volunteers who help run these sessions week in week out, alongside a member of staff. Having this team of four volunteer advocates has been incredibly helpful in keeping this service running and being able to reach so many people.

Throughout the year we have also hosted a Neighbourhood Advisor from the local council run Neighbourhood Office. They have come to our Wednesday morning sessions each week and seen people on an appointment basis. The advisors have direct access to the council systems, which is useful for people with all sorts of issues relating to the council, from housing benefits to repairs. This has continued to work well since it began in the previous year and there has been continued high demand for seeing the advisors, often from people who would struggle to get to a Neighbourhood Office.

We find that being based locally, with a drop-in service that offers signposting where we are not able to deal with issues ourselves, and having the time to sit down with people and talk face to face in order to understand their situation, is of huge benefit to the people who make use of this support.

Many of those we support are refugees or asylum seekers for whom even a straightforward issue can be complicated by language barriers. For others, especially older people, they may struggle with finding information which is readily available online. Often, it is simply the case that issues people have been struggling with for a long time can be resolved relatively quickly when someone else speaks up on their behalf.

Some issues we unfortunately have seen coming up time and time again, such as refugees being left without benefits during the transition away from NASS support, or utilities bills becoming an increasing burden on a families' finances, council repairs not being carried out and so on.

We have seen a number of individuals over multiple sessions, sometimes with separate issues. Around sixteen cases this year have been an individual or family who have needed intensive support over a period of time. In these cases we have often been able to offer further practical support alongside advocating for their situations, including providing food parcels or help applying for grants to furnish an empty flat.

The large majority of these cases we have become aware of out of our other activities and projects where we have built up relationships with individuals. Being able to offer this support is of great benefit to people who may well be facing a great deal of hardship, and any burdens that we are able to ease through coming alongside them and speaking up on their behalf can make a massive difference to their situations.



ALL BEING WELL

The All Being Well project is nearing the end of its third 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. The project has continued to grow and develop over the past year, with lots of new groups and activities. Jude Greenwood and Maria McParland are both working on the project.

All Being Well has had a busy year, helped by the arrival in February of Maria McParland as a Therapist/Co-ordinator for the project. Her organised and professional second pair of hands has enabled more to be achieved, new programmes to be started, and everything to run just that bit more smoothly. It's great to have her on the team.

Depression support and Assertiveness training (helping people to start speaking up for themselves and their needs) were our new programmes for the year, as well as a Well Being Week of fun taster activities in the summer. It brought some new clients into contact with us, as well as people who we knew before, and led on to an exercise programme for people who have difficulties with movement and others who want to make healthy physical choices. A new therapy, Integrative Massage, was available this year and was found helpful by several clients.

Other new activities that we started were the Social Club and the Arts Trail. Lots of people who we meet need a little more social interaction, and the Social Club is a ready made group that people can join in with. The Birmingham Cultural Partnership gave us some money to subsidise great activities that people often had not been able to partake in before. We've been to a play at the Botanical Gardens, to Weston-super-Mare and the Cotswolds, the Cinderella ballet, comedy and music at the Symphony Hall, and still have a few venues left before the money comes to an end in March. And then they plan to continue as there are lots of free and cheap things to do in Birmingham.

The Arts Trail grew out of the community artwork in previous years. A lot of hard work was put in to organise 8 events over 4 days and 6 different venues, each with activities as well as artwork to enjoy. A mural has been painted by the reservoir to join the other artwork from last year. We are looking at doing the Trail again this year.

In May we held a conference, which took the form of a community consultation with local people. It was called 'Feel Good Ladywood'. The event was very participative and led by an external facilitator. There was plenty of discussion, fun and food, and the action from it produced a group of committed people who want to take forward the continued growth of regeneration in Ladywood.

During the year we had 69 new clients, and 19 who came back to us or who we contacted from previous referrals. 58 came on one or more of our programmes and 83 had one-to-one sessions (451 sessions in total); 28 came to healthy lunches with self-development activities throughout the year. Many more enjoyed being creative at our knitting or arts & crafts groups or joined in with gardening or horticulture. 15 people have gone on the healthy inspirational walks.

We contributed to the Grow Well scheme of our partners, Spring to Life, who held 6 sessions over the autumn with 8 local people, working on a flower and vegetable gardening project at the local community centre. People really found it rewarding and they improved the environment where people sit out and chat. They also helped school children to grow strawberry plants and winter vegetables. Many of the children do not have gardens, so great learning and enjoyment for them. The schools are keen to continue in the spring.

This year 54 families and 16 individual children have been helped by Brain Gym. 28 families attended Baby Gym, which helps parents and babies to bond and learn exercises that encourage healthy growth in the babies; 26 families went through the Animal Gym series with their older toddlers, which continues this process and helps children move on through stuck points; and 16 children did Space Travellers in school.

Towards the end of the year we began supporting two volunteers in setting up a Job Club to help local people move towards employment, training or volunteering. Already they have helped quite a few people by signposting them to colleges and courses. We hope the Job Club will help many people find experience and employment over the coming months.

And much, much more! We are very grateful for our big Lottery funding which enables us to do so many activities to grow people's well-being in so many different ways.



ALLOTMENT

The community allotment plot has been well used this year, with two projects making use of the site, offering people chance to try their hand at being green fingered and grow fruit and vegetables which they can also take home and enjoy.

Every week on a Thursday morning we take a group of local residents to visit the allotment plot, weather permitting. This group have been involved in tending the plot, digging the ground, weeding, planting, watering, taking care of the plants and of course harvesting and eating what is grown. Lots of variety of fruit and vegetables have been grown on the plot, such as potatoes, carrots, courgettes, peas, leeks, herbs, tomatoes, garlic and peppers, even a huge pumpkin which was used to make copious amounts of soup.

Everything that is grown is shared out between those who come along each week and anything left over is distributed from our office. This year we had bumper crops of many of the vegetables, and there was plenty to give out, so the produce was enjoyed widely by many people outside the allotment group.

The allotment project was set up to offer a space for people who didn't have their own garden. A big issue for many of the people who live in tower blocks or maisonettes, of which there are a large number in the area. There are many benefits for people being able to spend a morning a week outside, enjoying fresh air in a green space, and getting some gentle exercise.

The current group has doubled in size from last year, now sixteen people, who visited regularly between April and October. They represent a diverse range of ages and backgrounds, with eight different nationalities in the group from across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. Our most hard working member, a seventy year old lady from Montserrat, still attends as regularly as ever.

As well as the benefits of being able to partake in a constructive activity, growing their own fruit and vegetables, the group provides a place for people to meet and enjoy each others company. It is a relaxed environment, in an open space, which makes it easier for people who struggle spending time around others or suffer from social anxiety.

This project is looked after by several volunteers, both of whom have done a fantastic job of encouraging those who come along and have also done well in broadening the group. They have kept the plot well maintained and have put in a lot of hard work over the course of the year which we are very grateful for. We hope to continue on their success in the coming year and see even more people joining the group.

Alongside this well established group, the allotment plot has also been used by the Grow Well project for the second time this year. The project encourages people to take part in producing artwork inspired by nature, alongside more traditional gardening activities. It worked with a number of local residents and pupils from schools.

The art was produced on large boards which then went on display at the local reservoir, thanks in part to sponsorship from The Tower Ballroom who provided protective covers and fittings for each of the pieces. This also led on to a mural project at the reservoir, engaging local people to help improve a run down walkway and brighten it up, as well as discouraging graffiti.

We hope to see the Grow Well project continue again this year and see yet more work coming out of the allotment which will impact the wider community and help improve the local environment.



CHILDREN & FAMILIES

We've supported well over two hundred and fifty local families over the past twelve months through various groups including the 'Welcome to Ladywood' drop-in group, ESOL classes & home visits as well as our other activities. Ruth Fuller is our Children & Families Worker and has been working with the project for two years now.

Our English for Speakers of Other Languages class continues to be well used and well received. Our two hour, weekly class, staffed by incredible volunteers regularly welcomes around 30 students and their children. It's a vibrant and busy atmosphere as people from all corners of the world gather in Ladywood Methodist Church hall to get to grips with the basics of the English language. Sadly many of our local counterparts have had to close in recent months and we've seen an increase in demand as a result. My hope is that the class is distinctive in the way it cares for and welcomes our diverse group of students, facilitating them with the language they need to survive daily life in Britain. Often a long lasting friendship with Karis is forged out of an initial contact at ESOL.

Trips continue to be an important part of the Children and Families work as we endeavour to provide relief and happy memories for the families we work with. During the February half term 14 adults and 28 children enjoyed soft play fun at Treasure Island thanks to some generous funding from the FATE Trust towards the costs of the coach. During the Whitsun holiday we returned to visit what have fast become our friends, at Polesworth Abbey. Our party of 37 enjoyed glorious sunshine and hospitality to match. It was a lovely day where we all took in the countryside and lazed around in the afternoon sun. Later in the summer we went to 'Wonderland' in Telford thanks to All Being Well's sponsorship. We were so grateful that the rain stayed off for most of the day and we had great fun visiting fairy tale homes. It was a precious time together and particularly special for one asylum seeking family who hadn't had a 'day out' since arriving in December 2009. In November I took advantage of the REP's reduced tickets for Ladywood families and took a party of 30 to see 'The Secret Garden' – the music, super scenery and heart-warming story were a huge hit. Many in the group had never been to the theatre before and were really thrilled.

The Welcome to Ladywood Drop-in is perhaps the focal point of the Children and Families work. It's a weekly two hour group where women and their children receive a warm welcome and meet new friends. We normally have a craft activity or an impromptu party and create a space where people can relax and enjoy themselves. The highlights this year were our International Day to celebrate Refugee Week – we all came in our national dress and tried each other's national dishes. We sang and danced and really celebrated our friends and their cultures, and the asylum they had received. We made some superb crumbles and chocolates and made some beautiful jewellery. When the weather got colder we brought out our tea pots and cake stands and had a proper (very English) afternoon tea – we laughed a lot together and ate far too much cake! All our craft practice paid off in the Autumn as we worked hard and made Christmas crafts to sell, together we made £200 towards our next year's trip fund.

I continue to assist clients in the office and out on about on visits with advocacy issues. Helping people write letters, fill in forms and make calls to utilities companies and the Council. Advocacy is a great way to meet new clients and to relieve some pressures and provide some comfort in the midst of difficult situations. It's often during advocacy that I'm able to signpost clients to some of our other services or offer to visit.

Home visits are a great opportunity to get to know clients and offer emotional support, particularly to those who are isolated or new to the country. I continue to be treated to lovely hospitality and so enjoy hearing peoples' stories and meeting their families. Often these visits provide opportunities to organise practical help i.e. gardening or finding baby equipment for those in need, helping people access new groups or helping with odd jobs or shopping. This year I was privileged to attend the birth of the daughter of one longstanding client.

I also really enjoyed organising an awards ceremony for all our ESOL students and teachers to congratulate them on their hard work and thank them for their commitment.

I have great memories of celebrating Refugee week and enjoyed two special days onboard a canal boat with two of our families, courtesy of John and Kathryn Hackett. However, many of this last year's 'best bits' are less definable; they're often to do with seeing women become more confident, families becoming settled after a period of difficulty, a deepening relationship, or in the commitment and kindness of the volunteers I'm privileged to work with. It's been a good year and I'm looking forward to the next!



COMMUNITY REGENERATION

Our initial three year 'Nehemiah' regeneration programme is now into its last year. Annabel Wrangles, our Community Regeneration Worker, went on maternity leave towards the end of the year. Her work is being continued by a number of individuals and the initiatives she helped to get off the ground are still flourishing.

The Community Regeneration Work is now well established within Karis Neighbour Scheme and has built on the momentum generated in the first several years of the project. The focus of the project is all about engaging with the local community and to facilitate and empower local residents to play their part in bringing about long-term, transformational change in this neighbourhood.

Our Community Regeneration Worker has enabled a number of significant developments in this work over the last year that have increased local resident involvement in their own community. Some of the highlights have included:

Feel Good Ladywood! - Community Conference

In May 2010 we hosted a community conference entitled "Feel Good Ladywood" which brought together 23 local residents and 18 representatives from local community groups and statutory organisations to look at questions such as "what makes a place good to live in?" and "how can we take action together to make life in Ladywood happier and healthier?"

There was plenty of lively discussion and lots of enthusiasm for people to work together and play their part in improving their own community. One of the main outcomes of the conference was that 21 people signed up to be part of an action group to take forward some of the ideas and initiatives that came out of the day.

Blondin Group

The action group that formed as a result of the conference has subsequently been named the Blondin Group (named after the tightrope walker who famously crossed Edgbaston Reservoir on a tightrope – there is a statue of him in Ladywood which is quite a landmark).

The Blondin Group have been meeting monthly and have decided to begin by focussing on youth provision (or the lack of it) in this area and are hoping to help initiate some action to address this issue.

They have decided to act more as a visionary/facilitating group rather than a delivery group and hope to identify gaps or needs in the community and work in partnership with community groups, service providers and residents to help make Ladywood a better place for all.

Voices of Ladywood Community Newspaper

This year has also seen the launch of a Ladywood community newspaper called "Voices of Ladywood". The first edition was published in May 2010 and covered various local issues, events, interviews, recipes and a children's page. 750 copies were printed and distributed throughout the area. The newspaper is written and produced by a team of local residents who have a passion for the local area and are keen to communicate this to others in the neighbourhood.



KARIS BE FRIENDS

The Karis Be Friends work supporting older people who are isolated or lonely across Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood, has had yet another successful year. Helen Bell oversees the work as our Elderly Support Worker and is responsible for recruiting, training and matching volunteers to regularly visit older people. She also organises various events in support of this work.

The Karis Befriends work supported 109 older people during the last year in the Harborne, Edgbaston and Ladywood areas. The main focus of our work continues to be providing befriending support for older people in their own homes or through social activities in the local community. Often as a result of these visits and activities we may help an older person with practical tasks or offer advocacy support.

As the Elderly Support Worker I look after the work supporting older people and we have a growing number of volunteers involved. For many this involves regularly visiting older people in their own homes; while others help with social activities, or with one off practical needs. This year we have also had some volunteers who regularly come into our office to help with administrative tasks related to our Karis Befriends work

Our befriender volunteers usually visit the older person they befriend once a week in their own home or accompany them out to access facilities in their local community. As the Elderly Support Worker I visit all the elderly people referred to Karis Neighbour Scheme and match them up with a volunteer when available, or continue to visit them while they are waiting for an available volunteer. This might involve sitting and chatting over a cup of tea, sharing friendship together, sharing news, or enjoying a hobby or playing a game together. The support also extends to accompanying older people to appointments, or going out for walks for the benefit of exercise, or to increase their confidence following a fall, or to reduce anxiety regarding going out. Also we have helped older people to be able to access local shops and other local facilities, for example the Kenrick Centre and Onneley House. We have provided support sorting through post, writing letters, filing and shredding documents where individuals have found it hard to keep up with the correspondence they receive. We have on occasions assisted with particular practical problems, for example where a gentleman with communication difficulties needed help to look at alternative methods of talking over the phone. Some elderly people have benefited from more regular visits while close relatives have been away on holiday. Those who are befriended benefit so much from the support they receive and look forward to the regular visits; and the volunteers also enjoy and gain from providing this vital support.

During the last year we held our annual Christmas Party at St.John's Church in Harborne, with 32 of the older people we support attending. We enjoyed a cooked meal and entertainment from the local Rainbows and Brownies groups. Help was provided from those at St.John's and the local Guides group. Twenty older people also attended a Carol Service at Churchcentral (a local Church) with help from volunteers providing transport, giving those who may not often go out at this time of year the opportunity to get out and enjoy the company of others. Volunteers helped to deliver Christmas boxes to those who were unable to come out to our Christmas party.

We continue to hold our 'Time for Tea' Sunday afternoon teas in partnership with Churchcentral at Onneley House in Harborne. During the last year we have had 5 afternoon teas with between 35-50 older people we support through Karis Befriends coming along. There is always a friendly atmosphere and we enjoy quizzes, lovely food and a variety of entertainment together.

The 'Time for Tea' event has spawned an Alpha course and a Senior Citizens Life Group which meets each Tuesday at the Kenrick Community Care Centre in Harborne. Currently there are 14 older people coming regularly to the Life Group to enjoy support, friendship and fun, as well as enjoying a meal in the Cafe at the Kenrick Centre. This group has enjoyed two day trips to Broadway in the Cotswolds and also provided the opportunity for 3 of the older people to join in with the Churchcentral Weekend Away in Wales, which they thoroughly enjoyed. For one of the ladies, it was the first time she had been away on a holiday for 25 years! We have also had some coffee afternoons in our office for older people who live more local to our office in Edgbaston and Ladywood.

Over the last year there have been many highlights and challenges as the work of Karis Befriends continues to expand and it is apparent that there is more and more need for befriending support in a growing population of older people.



PRACTICAL SUPPORT

There are all sorts of reasons someone may need practical support, an older person is unable to do their gardening, a young mother on her own doesn't have time to decorate her children's bedrooms, a families' benefits have been stopped temporarily and they are struggling to feed themselves, a young man with a low income has been moved into a completely unfurnished flat and is struggling to afford a bed or a sofa, someone with long term health problems has been unable to clean and their home has become unliveable because of the mess, or a couple has had to move house and can't afford to hire a removal van so need help moving their furniture.

These are the kind of needs that Karis Neighbour Scheme was initially set up to respond to. Matching willing volunteers with the right skills, and providing the right tools, to meet the needs of people who are struggling on their own.

We continue to see a great deal of need for this kind of support. We found early in the year that the number of requests we were receiving was more than we could respond to, and our waiting list was continually growing. While we continued to do as many jobs as we were able we found that demand was considerably beyond our capacity.

After the summer, a volunteer joined us for a placement who was able to give three days a week to the project, both to do jobs and to take on some of the organisation and co-ordination of other volunteers. This was a fantastic help and greatly increased the number of jobs we were able to do.

Though this placement was only temporary, another volunteer has since taken on the role more permanently and we continue to see this work picking up pace. We have a small team of volunteers and a number of groups who help with practical jobs in people's homes and we also keep a store of equipment in space in a garage provided by one of our supporters.

In all we helped with fifty five practical jobs over the course of the last year, including decorating, gardening, moving furniture and helping with cleaning, sorting and moving home.

As well as organising individuals and small groups to go out to people's homes for particular jobs we often help with smaller practical tasks in the course of our other work. For example, a volunteer helping to defrost a fridge for the older person they are visiting or putting a stair-gate in for a refugee family who come to our English classes.

Another of the ways in which we provide practical support is in providing food parcels to people who are destitute either for a short time or over a longer period.

We keep a store with basic provisions like rice, pasta, tinned fruit and vegetables, tinned fish, tea, milk, cooking oil and sugar, as well as toiletries and nappies. This store has been well supported the past year. Donations from Church Alive have allowed us to buy a regular stock of supplies and this has been topped up by donations from individuals as well as a great deal of food that was donated to us from various harvest festival collections at local churches and schools.

The past year we saw an increasing need for this provision and gave out around two hundred and fifty food parcels to eighty seven individuals, an increase of nearly a third on the number of individuals we supported the year before.

As well as basic provisions like food we also offer some support with finding furniture and appliances where people have been moved into accommodation with little or no furnishings and lack the means to afford basics like a bed or a washing machine. In some cases we are able to pass on donations to people who we know have a particular need. This year we passed on 48 such items.

Our work as part of the Hope Housing project has also continued over the past twelve months. We have now been a partner in this work for a number of years, since the project started. Hope Housing have four properties that are used to house destitute asylum seekers while they are supported to make appeals. We support this work through making use of our van to move furniture to and from the properties and have also helped carry out practical tasks at the houses.

...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 1st December 2009 to 31st November 2010 (unless otherwise stated):

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Total no. of individuals supported:	478	628	762
Total no. of contacts:	4961	4798	6349

Average contacts per month:	413	400	529
“ “ “ week:	99	96	127
“ “ “ day:	20	19	25

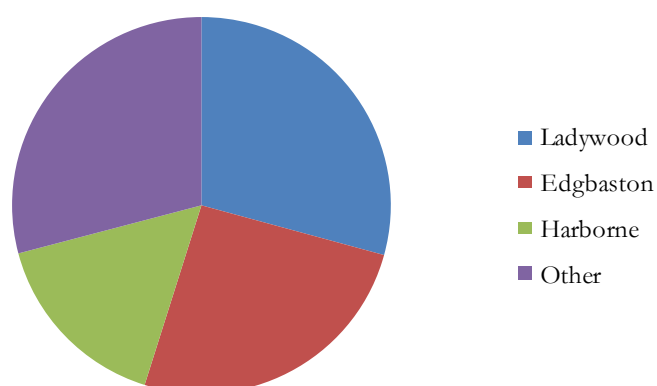
Demographics

	Individuals (%)	Contacts (%)
<i>By Gender</i>		
Male	30	23
Female	70	77

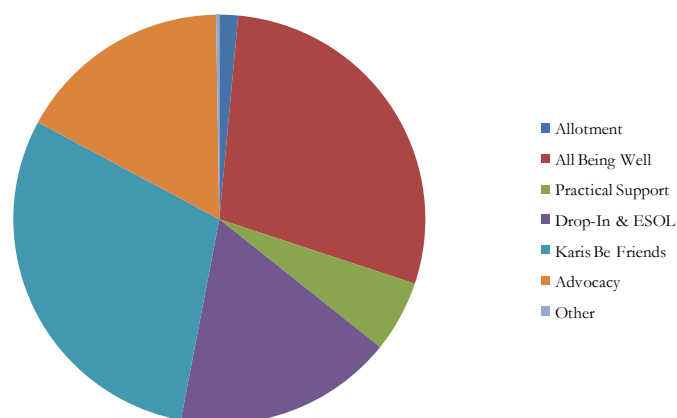
<i>By Age</i>		
16-24	6	2
25-34	20	19
35-44	15	15
45-54	8	7
55-64	5	11
65+	15	31
Undisclosed	31	15

<i>By Ethnicity</i>		
White (British)	20	35
White (Irish)	1	2
White (Other)	7	6
Asian (Indian)	2	3
Asian (Pakistani)	2	2
Asian (Bangladeshi)	>1	1
Asian (Chinese)	4	3
Asian (Other)	4	5
Black (Caribbean)	2	6
Black (African)	25	17
Other	5	5
Undisclosed	28	15

Breakdown of Contacts by Area of Residence



Breakdown Of Contacts By Activity



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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, Brookfields School Choir, Central Ladywood Neighbourhood Forum, Chaplaincy Plus, Church Alive, Church of the Redeemer Edgbaston, churchcentral, Circul8 Credit Union, Cloisters Tutoring Ltd, Community Integration Partnership, Community Transport, computerworld, Deaf Cultural Centre, Harborne Medical Practice, Help the Aged, Jesuit Volunteer Community, Karis Medical Centre, Kenrick Centre, Ladywood Children's Centre, Ladywood Community Mental Health Team, Ladywood Furniture Project, Ladywood Health & Community Centre, Ladywood Methodist Church, Ladywood Money Advice, Ladywood Project, Lordswood House Medical Practice, Meadow Road Allotments, Mentoring & Befriending Foundation, Narthex, Newman Homes Trust, Norman Power Centre, Onneley House, Outreach Shop, Polesworth Abbey, Quinton Neighbourhood Office, Restore, Riverside Church, Shiloh Computers, Sport4Life UK, Spring to Life, Springhill Library, St Augustine's Church Edgbaston, St George's Church Edgbaston, St George's C of E Primary School, St John's Church Harborne, St John's Church Sparkhill, St John's & St Peter's Church Ladywood, St John's C of E Primary School, and the Tower Ballroom.

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We are very grateful for all the financial support we have received.





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