



HOUSING FLOATING SUPPORT PROJECT REPORT

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Housing Floating Support Officer
2019-2020



Loneliness and isolation have a major impact on people's mental state and members of the BME communities suffer in silence because of their cultural norms.

My confidence has improved,
I love going out

Trip out to the Akamba Tropical Garden Centre



INTRODUCTION

Walsall Black Sisters Collective has been working for over 30 years to improve access to mainstream services and address cultural barriers. Delivery of services is undertaken at grassroots level, working closely with other voluntary and community organisations as well as statutory bodies, such as; Walsall NHS, Walsall Council, Walsall Housing Group, Accord Housing and many others to deliver opportunities under the organisation's key delivery strands. Where appropriate, we sit on a number of boards and steering groups to represent the views of our client group and communities.

WBSC was allocated funding in July 2015 from the Big Lottery Community Fund to provide BME Housing Floating Support to over 60's within the Walsall Borough. The project provided housing floating and health related support to address inequalities and improve the health and well-being of vulnerable adults within Walsall's BME communities, primarily the African and Caribbean communities, so they can live independently in their own homes and feel safe within the communities they lived

The Housing Floating Support Project would assist with housing related support, financial management, care plan support, benefit claim support, budgeting support, provision of elderly day care, mental health support, a befriending service and setting up other initiatives pertinent to identified needs.

Executive Summary

The Housing Floating Support project was delivered between July 2015 to June 2020. It has certainly made great progress over the life of the project in line with the project plan, and has continued to provide an extensive outreach service to address inequalities and improve the health and well-being of vulnerable adults, primarily to the BME communities, but not excluding other communities who required the support. Our main target group was reaching

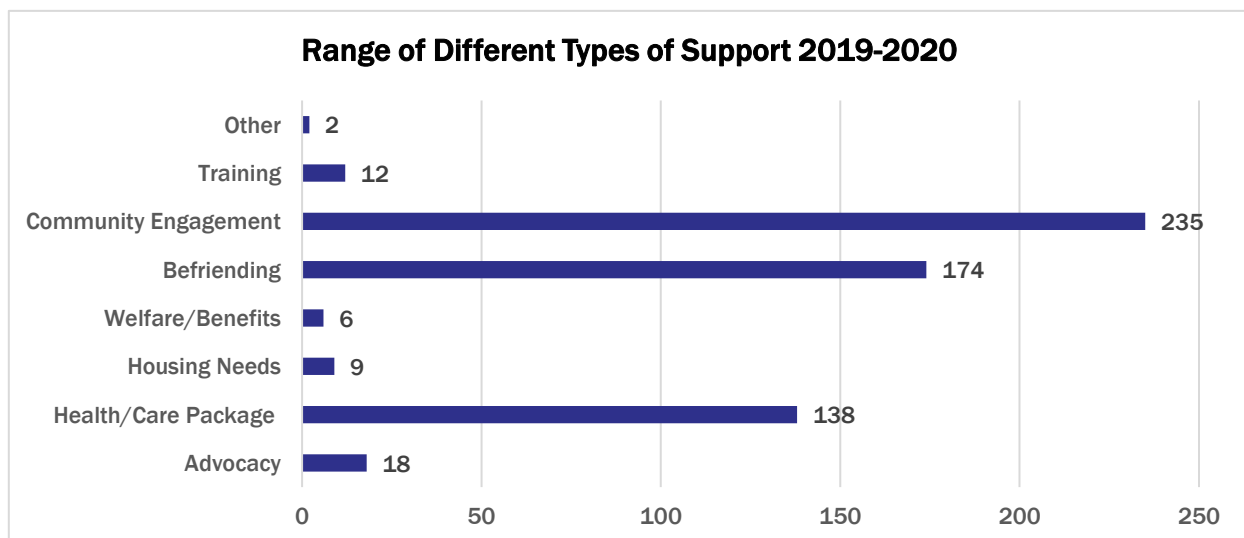
people over 60 years within the borough of Walsall. However, the project has also reached out to others outside of the borough due to beneficiaries being relocated to areas such as Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sutton Coldfield.

We have been proactive in addressing disparities in health and wellbeing service deliveries to ensure our beneficiaries were informed and educated, and had been directly involved in the decision-making processes which affect their lives, also ensuring that they were able to access services confidently.

This project report will look at the services provided, showcase success stories, highlight outcomes and what we have learnt.

We have provided support in the following areas:

- Personalised support packages
- Financial management
- Housing related support
- Completion of benefit forms
- Support to access health related services
- Advocacy
- Advice and guidance
- Being the bridge to break down barriers between service providers and communities
- Referrals to other organisations
- Adaptations so clients can live safely in their homes
- Face-to-face befriending Service
- Telephone befriending
- Day care and external activities
- Women's Support Group
- Mental Health Support Group
- Feeding the homeless

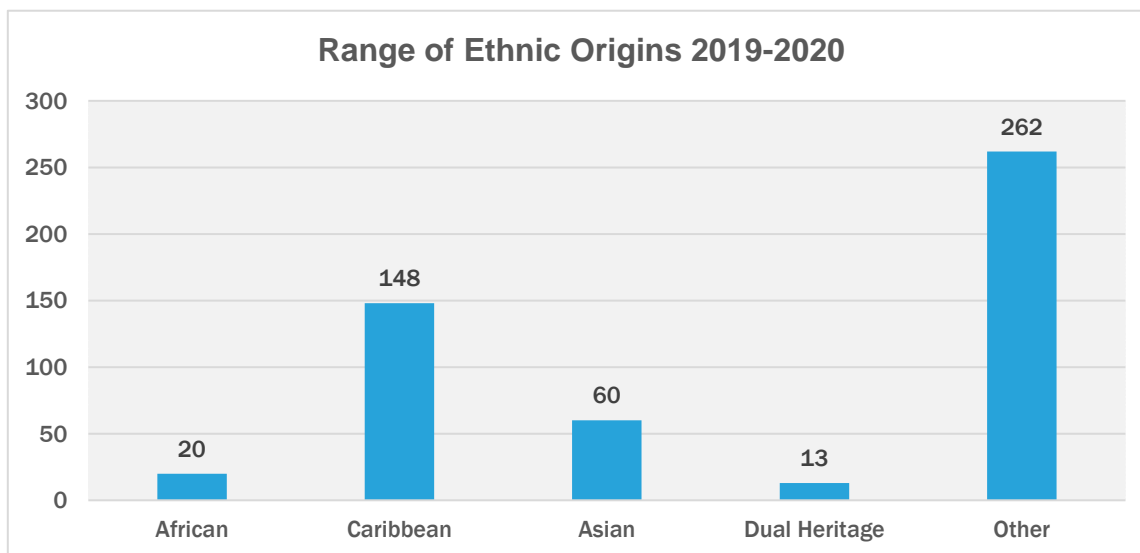


PROGRESS REPORT

Through evaluation reports and surveys undertaken, periodically and throughout the life of the project, we are reporting on how the project has progressed, the difference have made, what we have learnt and any changes we have had to make

Our HFSP has provided one-to-one support, awareness raising events and partnership working with other organisations to ensure that beneficiaries are supported and informed and feel confident in maintaining a good quality of life. We have also had to adapt our services to meet the changing needs of the communities which we serve.

Overall, we have exceeded our agreed project outcomes because the older population are living longer and there is a decline in services available to them from statutory organisations. Therefore, community projects such as ours are receiving more and more referrals to support the most vulnerable, from sources such as statutory & voluntary organisations, community groups, Churches, family, friends, neighbours and also self-referrals. Although our main target group are BME communities, we received a lot of referrals to support White British elderly and other ethnic groups, which we always welcome.



ELDERLY DAY CARE & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUP

Our Elderly Day Care and Mental Health Support provision takes place every week on Wednesdays and Thursdays. We have continued to offer beneficiaries the opportunity to meet others, engage in health and well-being activities, and access support for their mental and physical health needs.

Our day care provision has grown with new members joining over the life of the project due to over 60's experiencing loneliness and isolation at home. We provide a holistic approach meeting all needs, ensuring that individuals engage in stimulating activities, have a hot nutritious meal, and receive support with personal hygiene and toileting. Beneficiaries also engage in health and wellbeing awareness topics to keep them informed and educated. Working in partnership with other organisations has helped to diversify our member and activities.

Our mental health support service provides a person-centred approach. We support individuals to find appropriate coping mechanisms pertinent to their cultural needs. Our beneficiaries engage in activities which stimulate positive thinking and conversation on topics which are thought provoking and interesting.

We believe that maintaining a good positive mental health, individuals must ensure that their mental, physical and social health are maintained. This is done by having meaningful purpose, connectedness in the community, and vital energy. Our mental health support encourages individuals to do things they enjoy, maintain good social relations and help take control over their life and living conditions.

Other Activities Provided Through the Service

- International women's day celebrations
- 12 Hydrotherapy sessions at Walsall Bath
- Chair exercise with Walsall Council
- Art and Craft sessions
- Dementia awareness
- Wiltshire Farm food taster sessions
- Visits to other centres – Birmingham and Wolverhampton
- Hollybush Garden Centre
- Picnic at Walsall Arboretum
- Trip to Southport
- 24 Life with Art sessions
- Coffee mornings with the Ahmadiyya community
- Healthy weight program



- Yearly community Christmas party
- Talking Therapy Awareness
- Llandudno Community Day Trip
- Memory workshop
- Black History month celebrations
- Brain health workshop
- Emotional breakthrough session
- 8 sessions of Extend exercise sessions (supporting fall prevention)
- Vegan healthy eating/demonstration session
- Visit to Birmingham Botanical garden
- Narrowboat trip to Staffordshire
- Trips to Akamba Tropical Garden
- Awareness session from the Blind Society
- Community day trip to Bournemouth
- Alternative Breakfast talk & demonstration
- Reminisce
- Music Therapy session
- IT for over 60's in partnership with Walsall College
- Art & Craft in partnership with Walsall Art Gallery
- Hearing Loss presentation from Hearing Loss organisation
- Estate management awareness sessions
- Health Watch survey completion
- Evaluation event



Narrowboat Trip to Stafford

I had a wonderful
day out at the
Hollybush Centre



Hollybush Garden Centre



Dementia Awareness Session



**12-week Life with Art sessions, exploring different ways of producing
art pieces from various materials**



Long-serving service user showing her raffle prize win, at our International Women's Day Event

BEFRIENDING SERVICE

The demand for befriending services has increased greatly because loneliness and isolation amongst older people are a huge concern locally and nationally.

Over the five years of the project running we have befriended well over 400+ elderly people, who have received face-to-face befriending and ring around support and the majority of these referrals are for elderly white British individuals. We receive referrals from 4 MCW (Making Connections Walsall) Hubs, statutory and voluntary organisations, family and friends. However due to lack of human resources it was often difficult keeping up with the demand.

We currently have 2 sessional befriending workers who both work 8 hours per week and each visit 6 people each per week, spending at least an hour with everyone. We also had volunteers and staff members carrying out visits to meet the demand for this service.

One of our challenge was breaking down racial barriers and ingrain prejudice from elderly white individuals who are not familiar with mixing or talking with black people. Therefore, befrienders had to adopt a resilient approach maintaining a patient and understanding manner, and who did not take offence to negative and hostile mannerism.

The other challenge we face was keeping up with the high demand for this service when individuals were requesting weekly visits and other home support. We recently conducted a survey to ascertain what other services lonely and isolated elderly people need and want in addition to the befriending service.



Befriending Service Survey 2019

The Making Connections Walsall Befriending Programme, is part of the Walsall Together Healthy Resilient Communities workstream to tackle the loneliness and social isolation of older people, improve their wellbeing and reduce preventable health service and social care usage. A survey was carried out to obtain feedback on the experience of the current Befriending Service run by WBSC and one of our partners OHPP (Old Hall People's Partnership). Both OHPP and WBSC with partners have helped to deliver a highly successful service reducing loneliness and isolation whilst supporting vulnerable adults in the community to lead a more effective life.

The questions from the survey were aimed at identifying and developing areas of any additional needs and services which WBSC and OHPP together as partners can incorporate to enhance their operational processes. In addition to this WBSC and OHPP foresee having a closer connection with the community whilst providing essential services to individuals and communities today and in years to come. The results would also provide evidence of need for future funding bids by both partner organisations.

There were 127 completed and returned surveys, and the following analysis is based on the questions which were completed in the survey, omitting any errors or unreadable data. The survey's objective is to gain an insight into the needs from the local community.

The results of the survey conducted by independent analyst (TD ...) are as follows

Equality and Diversity

Question 1 - Gender

The percentage split for gender shows that 76% were female and 24% is Male. This will mean the majority of the service users are female.

Question 2 - Age Group

When looking at the age groups the first highest outcome is over 75 at 62%, the second biggest group is 60-74 (20%) and then third 40-59(17%). The second and third combined total is 37%.

This means most of the service users are over 40 years of age.

Age Group	% Split
16-19	0%
20-39	1%
40-59	17%
60-74	20%
Over 75	62%

Question 3 - Do you have a disability?

This shows that 75% have a disability.

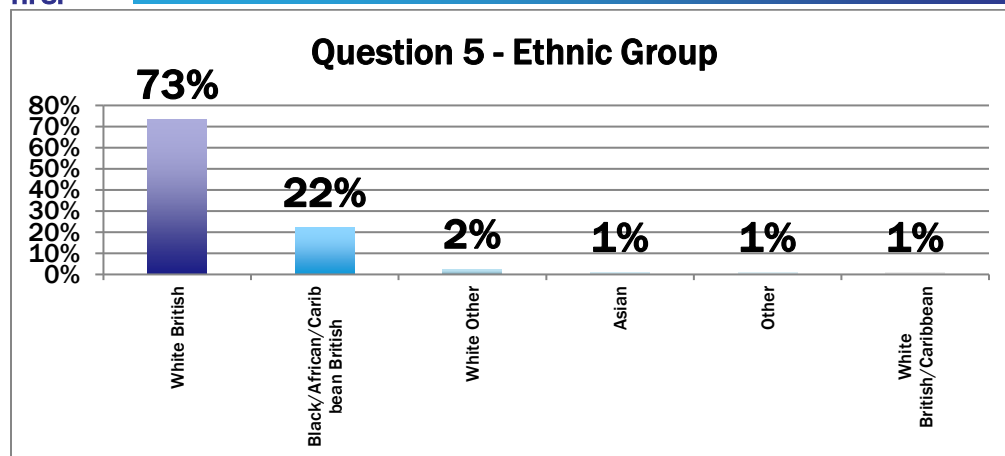
Answer	% Split
No	25%
Yes	75%

Question 4 - Are you a carer?

Out of those who answered the question 17% of the service users are carers themselves.

Answer	% Split
No	83%
Yes	17%

Question 5 - Ethnic Group



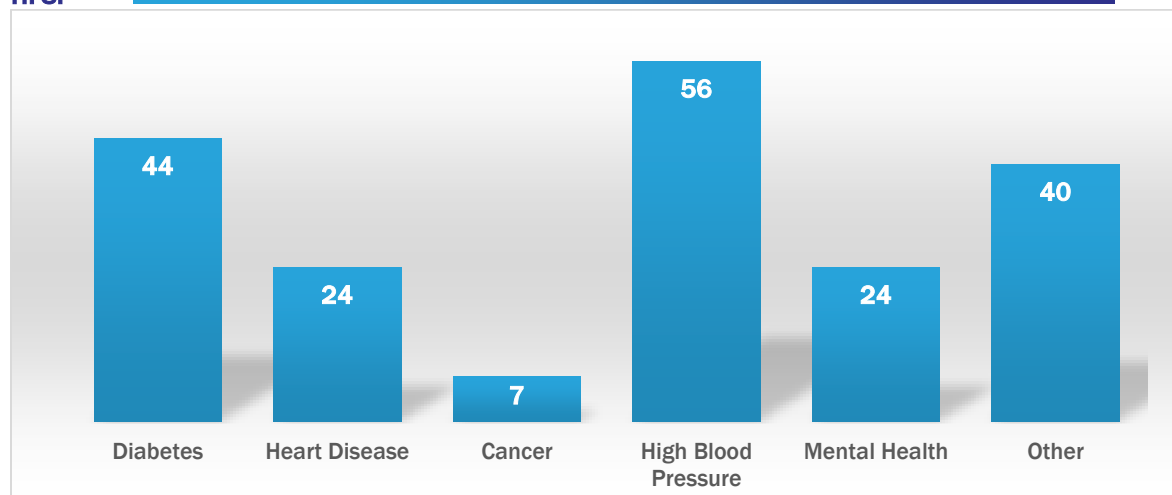
The biggest Ethnic group completing the survey was White British at 73% and the second biggest Black/African/Caribbean British at 22%. When comparing to the Walsall 2011 census WBSC are above the census for Black/African/Caribbean British. The ethnic area the befriending service could venture out to, is more of the Asian community which currently is around 1% and the census shows there are around 15.2% Asians in the Walsall community. This does reflect on the main communities WBSC and OHPP supports, with scope to incorporate other ethnic communities.

Ethnic Group	Total	Ward %	Walsall %	E&W %
White: British	6,171	41.1	76.9	80.5
White: Other	446	3.0	1.9	5.5
Mixed	767	5.1	2.7	2.2
Asian	6,725	44.8	15.2	7.5
Black	708	4.7	2.4	3.3
Other	197	1.3	0.8	1.0

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/images/importeddocuments/census_2011_pleck_profile.pdf

Question 6: Do you suffer with any of the following conditions?

From the answers given this will mean a lot of the service users have various medical conditions and will need support. There are various other conditions listed under other, examples are Arthritis: COPD, Parkinson Disease, Stroke etc. Possible improvements could be having workshops to give better understanding of long-term health conditions in the community and how service users can manage their health care better e.g. healthy eating, physical activity and appropriate access to support services.



Question 7 - On a scale 1-10 how do you find the befriending service?

Majority of the score is 8-10 in relation to the befriending service. With no score below 5 the befriending service is doing very well, and beneficiaries value the service.

Some of the positive comments were:

- Good to talk to somebody. Somebody who can listen and engage in a conversation
- Very friendly and helpful
- I think it's a good service as it highlights those that are isolated and lonely
- Befriending can be a life saver for those who are on their own - just a little support and a listening ear.

Some of the negative comments are:

There were no negative comments

Although there were a small percentage of lower scores the comments were positive

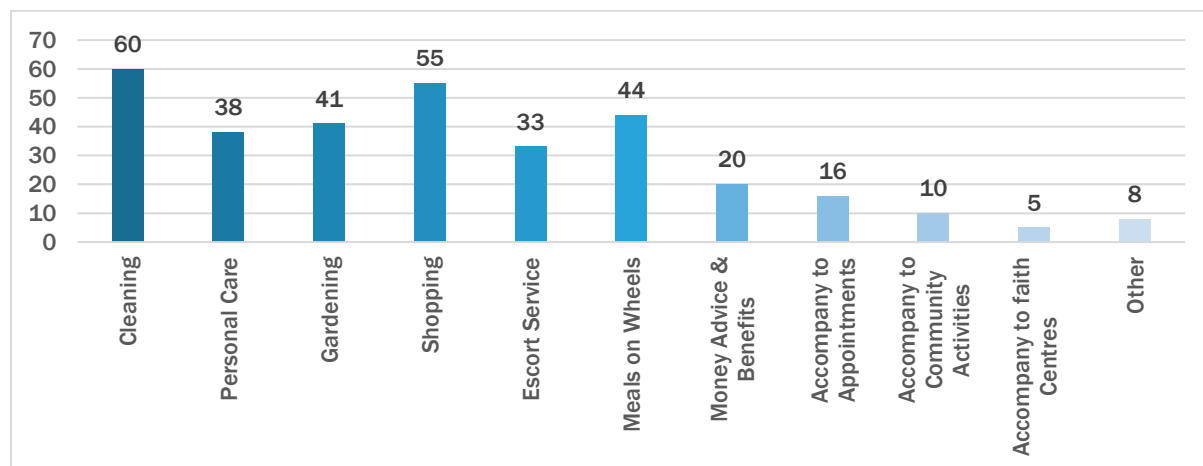
Score	% Split
5	3%
6	4%
7	4%
8	18%
9	15%
10	56%

Question 8 & 9 - Question 8 - What other services do you think are needed as part of the befriending service & Top 3 services needed?

The analysis shows overall there is a mixed of various needs which the service users and community will require and top three needs are shown below as well. Those who require getting out and about are restricted by transport and funds. Therefore, a vital service could be having a minibus service to transport the service users and also potentially having additional staff and volunteers from WBSC & OHPP going out to do home visits on a more

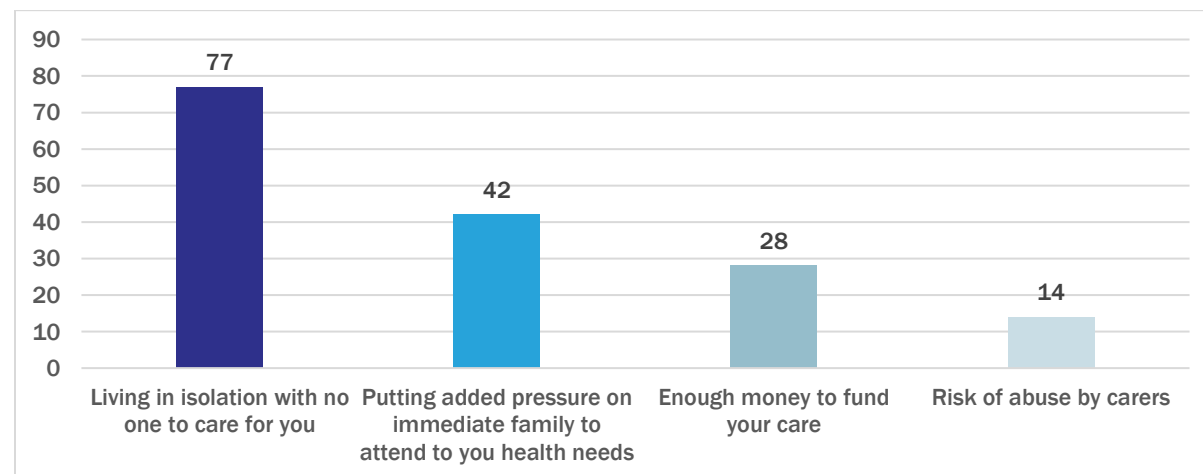
frequent basis. Additional services could be offered by WBSC / OHPP to cater for the service users' needs at home e.g. cleaning, shopping, gardening, cooking meals etc.

Top 1	Cleaning
Top 2	Shopping
Top 3	Meals on Wheels



Question 10 - What are your fears about growing older, with the current national changes in health and social care?

The top areas of fear about growing older are as follows: living in isolation with no one to care for you being the biggest concern, and second biggest is adding pressure on family/friends. Other major concerns are not having enough money and risk of being abused by carers. This shows how important the current befriending service is and how it can help deal with lots of the major issues of concern from communities, not just in Walsall but across the country on a national level.



Any other comments about your experience of the health services that you think we should know about, that will help you to live comfortably and feel engaged in the community?"

- Worries about the cost of having to pay for carers 4 x daily
- Affordable transport to get you to activities. People are lovely because transport is expensive. Especially taxis for wheelchairs with lowering ramps cost more than for able bodied people.
- Would like to access the community activities to make new friends.
- I would be very interested in attending coffee mornings, but due to restricted mobility unable to get out.
- By having more visitors in the home as I'm wary about going out in the community
- Wants to access the community - wheelchair bound and lacks confidence
- There are lots of sick and disabled people in the community who don't know what services are out there or where to start. When somebody come to visit, they can talk and encourage them.
- Easier access to doctors and other services. The country makes us feel like a burden as everything you hear about elderly people is how much we are costing the government.

Conclusions of Befriending Service survey

As an independent analyst of the data provided, I can provide the following unbiased conclusion.

The current befriending service demonstrates validity via the positive results, and the feedback from the surveys reflects how service users are really feeling. In addition, the data shows what else could improve their overall experience. The current service brings satisfaction and inclusion to many service users.

The additional focus for WBSC could be around the following improvements. These improvements ongoing and additional funding would be required.

- Targeting more of the Asian community and making them more aware of the support being offered. Possibly the need to have different language leaflets to cater for other Asian dialects.
- As there is a large percentage of disability, WBSC could ensure that everyone is aware of the support services in place from the Local Authority. Also, the WBSC facilities and building are equipped for current and future needs. This could be through leaflets or having information workshops.
- Long-term Health condition management workshops.
- Continue with the current befriending service.
- Providing more transport services.
- Offering additional services for the service user at home and in the community.



WBSC COMMUNITY OPEN DAY

The aim and objective for the event was to enable WBSC with our partners to showcase all the relevant services available to people in Walsall in the form of information stalls. The day was about connecting people and services, because we wanted to enrich the lives of BME communities and others to improve access to services.



Organisations in attendance:

- Age UK
- One Walsall
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Ahmadiyya Muslim Association
- NHS Walsall
- WM Police
- Walsall Health Watch
- Bethel Lighthouse
- Falls Prevention
- Healthy Eating service
- Vegan Cuisine

Evaluation

The day was very well attended by approximately 57 members of the community who took part in activities and found out more about services which are of interest to them. The general feedback received was that the day was well organised and informative.





OLDER PEOPLE'S HEALTH & WELLBEING CONFERENCE

The aim of the day was raising awareness of some of the health services available to older people and awareness of criminal activities and how to prevent becoming a victim of crime. Our objective was also to raise community confidence by giving them the opportunity to get involved in decision making processes which affect their lives.

Various organisation's attended the event who had information stalls, plus we had keynote speakers giving presentation on various health related topic pertinent to the older generation.

Organisations in attendance:

- Cervical cancer service
- Bowel cancer service
- Health Watch
- Walsall Older people's services
- West Midland Police
- One You Walsall
- Here to Help Project
- Old Hall People Partnership
- Pathway
- Falls Prevention
- Making Connections Walsall
- Manor Farm
- Bloxwich Community Partnership
- Black Country Women's Aid
- Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

The day was very well attended by 70+ people who informed us that the information available was extremely useful and the presentations by service providers was excellent. Feedback also highlighted that people learnt new things which would help to improve their quality of life



COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

According to the latest research from Age UK under one million older people in the UK will feel lonely over Christmas. The study also noted that: One-fifth of this total have been widowed, 1.4 million older people don't see Christmas as 'special' and the day just passes them by, 873,000 over 65s don't socialise with anyone for days during the festive period. 55% of these people rely on the TV for companionship, therefore Christmas events for older people are crucial for bringing these heart-breaking figures down and ensuring elderly people get the attention they deserve during the festive season.

Each year we plan and organise a Community Christmas Celebration event for our service users, family and friends, as well as for partner organisations within and outside of Walsall, with whom we have established links. Approximately 130 people attend each year.

The aim of our Christmas Celebration to bring people together and alleviate loneliness and isolation. Statistically older people find Christmas the loneliest time of the year; therefore, we ensure that our Christmas Celebration is well decorated and special for everyone to enjoy. The group enjoy a three-course meal, catch up on the year and take part in a raffle where everyone gets a prize. There are also lots of entertainment, quizzes and sing-along to Christmas carols. Social events such as this can help stave off loneliness.

School children singing Christmas carols to our service users



EVALUATION EVENT

As we were approaching the end of our 5-year project we had a project evaluation event, facilitated by One Walsall, the local umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector. We invited beneficiaries of the project to find out about their experience and feed-back on:

- What was good about the project
- How the service has helped them
- What was not so good
- Gaps in service
- How could it be improved



Feedback from Event:**1. What is your experience of the HFSP services?**

Positives	Negatives
Helps take away loneliness and isolation, by going to the day centre	Day care activities was decided and planned by staff I had no involvement
Good service helps me to link up with other people	Would like more activities (some of us take our own craft activities)
Learning about other people's experience	Do not feel changes are listened to
Friendly atmosphere	Need to be more accessible
Received lots of mental support	At times although you can speak to staff privately, you do not have their full attention because of other priorities
Good staff team – always take the time to help/support	Didn't feel listened to or understood
Caring atmosphere – nothing too hard for staff to do for me	
I don't live in Walsall, but staff has helped and supported me	
Very happy with elderly day care and all the activities provided	
Fairtrade food from Tesco has helped me	
Helpful home support	
Staff give 100% and more	
It's very good	
Warm friendly and welcoming	
It listens to what you say and takes you seriously	
Responds to individual needs and support with social care	
Befriending – good thing as it has got me out of the house	
Transport service – good, gets us out of the centre, without this we would not come out	
Day trips. Going out to the arboretum was good, overall trips are good, but not everyone can go because of mobility	
Visits have been helpful in discussing problems	
Its good company – approachable, friendly	
The service accommodates my request for assistance with shopping	
Positive friendly staff	
Cross fertilisation of ideas	
WBSC is more open than other organisations in Walsall	
Aids with integration with other groups (e.g. ethnic diversity)	

WBSC visited McMillian Coffee morning at
Ahmadiyyah Muslim Women, Assoc

2. How has the service helped you?

Positives	Negatives
Helped to eliminate loneliness and isolation	
Mental health support	
Day centre service	
Transport to access day centre	
Care support	
Go on trips	
Volunteering	
Visiting groups outside of Walsall	
Meeting new people	
IT training	
Support to attend appointments	
Encourages me to get out of the house	
Home visits	
Support with bills etc	
Something to look forward to	
Supporting my volunteering	
Liaise on my behalf with other service providers	
Meeting people and making new friends	
Gets me out of the house	
Improves my mental health	
Adaptations were sorted at home	
Hearing a friendly voice, telephone calls	
Improved my confidence	
Feel safe through escort service	
Volunteering opportunities	
Lunch provided or can bring your own	
Helped problem solve	
Practical support e.g. benefits	
Advocate support	
Provided voluntary work opportunities	
Helped to form friendships and networks	
Helped to link with other community organisations locally and regionally	
It is a community base and referral agent to other services	
Reduced social isolation through the befriending service links into day centre and victim support	
Provides guidance, ow and information	
We started working with them years ago	
We are growing together; our elderly members really enjoyed the coffee morning in day care	
We are enrolled in different programmes	

Open day – NHS health and mental health conference, women international day, homeless feeding, food bank, coffee mornings	
Sister to Sister group (we always enjoy the group)	
Making new contacts, neighbourhood issues, street problems, physio, yoga, cleaning programme	
Making friends from different faiths, groups and backgrounds	
Welcoming	
Easy to approach them	
Real people, honest talk	

3. How were you involved and prioritised in the delivery of your support/care?

Positives	Negatives
Felt that I was treated as an equal partner	
Treated fairly with respect	
Treated like a human being	
Felt valued and important	
Understanding personal circumstances	
Building up trust with staff/vols, being confidential	
Personal shopping, money management	
My views were considered	
I was allowed to visit day care before I decided to attend	
When I do give my views and options, I do feel listened to	
Yes, I feel I was involved in the delivery of support I received from WBSC	
Good when there is a leader volunteer there	
Potentially selling opportunities	

4. How do you feel that the service could be improved?

Provide other opportunities for other agencies and professionals to come in and offer basic skills training e.g. reading, writing, paying bills etc, especially regarding mental health and autism	As a community service it needs to ensure that facilities are fit for purpose, i.e. functioning toilets, toilet facilities that work i.e. taps, trip hazards removed
Provide support to individuals re confidence building and improving self-esteem	Service user experience could improve at breakfast time if we have equipment that worked e.g. toasters, water urn, fridges
Increased funding	It's resourceful, but more staff are required
Healthy eating and diet sessions	It needs more funding to keep pace with its development

Yearly exhibitions of work done	In order to maximise referrals and respond to calls the office needs to be covered during business hours
Activities sensitive to disabled users	Us who have mental health issues need to be enabled to have a voice
Mind games	The service needs to increase its awareness and understanding of MH issues
More exercises	Restart the new beginnings programme
Shopping trips	The service needs to be trained in welfare and benefit advice (pip)
Music and songs/disco cater for everyone	More people are getting older, so more support services are needed
Expand day centre from two days to three days	Need more people at day care
Make more things to sell to raise money for the group	Would like more variety of activities
More volunteers, practical support	Would like to have more regular opportunity to feedback
Change menu, cut prices	New minibus
Improve venue for day centre	Update equipment at day care
Provision to support me as I grow old, i.e. shopping and meals on wheels	Meet spiritual needs i.e. prayer meetings etc
More community help	Start day care with devotion
Sustainability of resources	More staff to deliver more specialist services

5. What is missing locally?

- Homes for the homeless
- Supported transport for those who live at a distance
- Cleaner environment
- No seats in bus shelters
- Low level social care support i.e., luncheon clubs, meals on wheels
- A Black Sister's branch/arm in the north of the borough
- Libraries
- Black Sisters to bid to take over a library building
- Police presence
- Volunteering service – escort services – community transport, practical help
- Mental health services on grassroot level
- Services for the elderly
- Community trust and respect
- Local amenities – more adverts – information, directory, newsletters
- Leisure centres, drop-in centres, advice and information
- Access to GP
- Lack of information on benefits
- Access to social services/use of care packages
- Financial protection/online safety/safety in the home

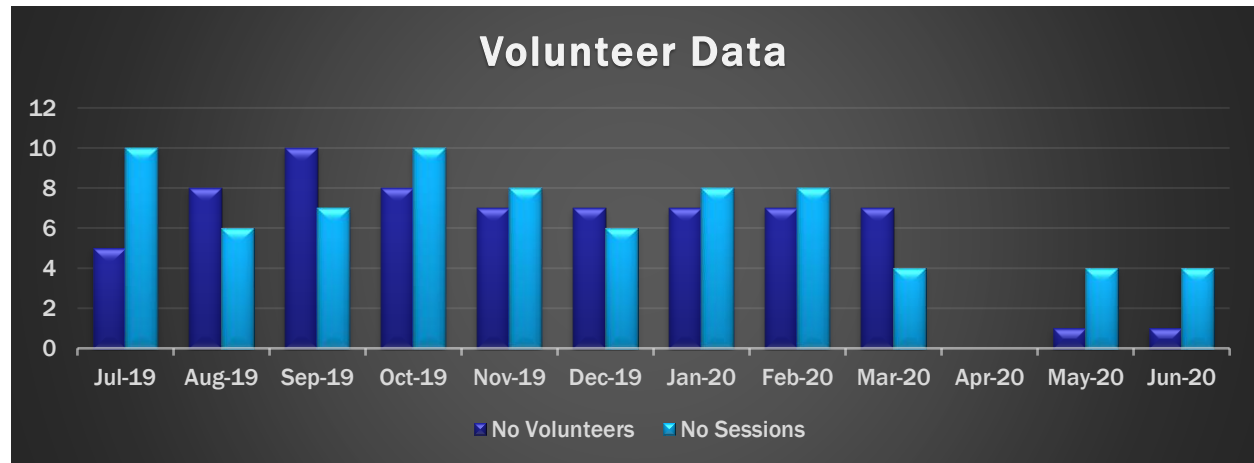
- Don't feel safe when out
- Local amenities, i.e. chiropodist, dental, have to travel to get there
- Meeting place for the elderly
- Community Centres especially for the youth, to keep them off the streets, so that older people feel less vulnerable
- Trust and friendship

6. What is important to you?

- Friends
- My Christian faith
- Health
- Socialising
- Equality
- Peace and harmony
- Integration in diversity
- Women's empowerment
- Healthy society
- Good mental health
- Education
- Reading
- Family
- Rest
- Conversation
- Love for all – hatred for none
- Travel, outings, day trips
- Good food
- Ethnically diverse friendships
- Skills learning – new skills
- Faith (learning other beliefs/practices)
- Black history month
- Windrush – e.g. neutralisation/compensation
- Feeling safe (anti-social behaviour, knife crime)
- Community cohesion
- Expert on immigration issues
- Employment and job security
- Trips and outings

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers play an integral role in our organisation. We currently have 10 active volunteers who add great value to our organisation and help us to achieve our mission and strategic objectives. They also help keep the doors open to enable us to deliver vital programs and services.



Our volunteers lend their expertise on the board of trustees, fund-raise, support our weekly activities, services and other special events. Our volunteers have gained great benefits from volunteering such as increased self-confidence, alleviated stress and depression, and obtaining a sense of purpose.

We always strive to give people opportunity to volunteer and many college students have volunteered in various aspect of our work, and have expressed that the experience has given them a sense of achievement, in meeting people from different cultures and learning new skills. It is so rewarding when through our work, beneficiaries want to give back and volunteer their time to the organisation.

Our volunteers have obtained training in the following areas, and some volunteers have gone onto further learning opportunities:

- Manual handling
- Falls Prevention
- Basic Food Hygiene
- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Food Hygiene
- GDPR (Data Protection)



"I was diagnosed with paranoid Schizophrenia and volunteering at WBSC has helped me put something back into the system which helped me"

"I get satisfaction helping older people and I have learnt a lot from the staff"

PARTNERS AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working is key to meeting the changing needs of the communities in which we serve. Our relationship with partners has strengthened due to our reputation for delivering effective and efficient services over the many years our organisation has been active.

We have learnt over the years the great benefit that partnership working brings to organisations. It enables us to develop a coordinated and holistic approach in dealing with issues affecting the community and also breaks down barriers between organisations.

Some of the key partners we work with are:

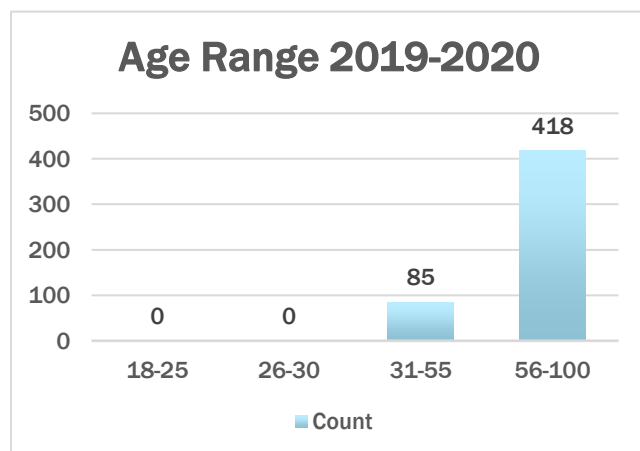
- Making Connections Walsall
- Walsall Council
- West Midlands Police
- Walsall Housing Group
- Adult Social Services
- Walsall College
- Mental Health Services
- Manor Hospital
- Falls Prevention
- Ahmadiyya Muslim Association
- Old Hall People's Partnership



Working jointly with our partners locally has helped to enhance our work and to reach a wide range of people. Working closely with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association has helped to break down negative perceptions of Muslim people, because there are so many current issues and deeply held beliefs that are tearing at the fabric of our communities. Hate and fear appear to be the emotions of the day, therefore we have learnt the importance of working to break the cycle of anxiety and distrust of people who are different from us.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Nationally and locally changes in the social and economic climate, policies, and cuts in services have had an intense effect on vulnerable communities, like the elderly population,



who are the main beneficiaries of the project. Seeing, first-hand, many essential services disappear, has resulted in WBSC receiving more referrals to support more complex and multiple needs.

As a community organisation we have had to adapt and be prepared for the future, putting in place mechanisms to cope with the demand, and at the same time know our limitations.

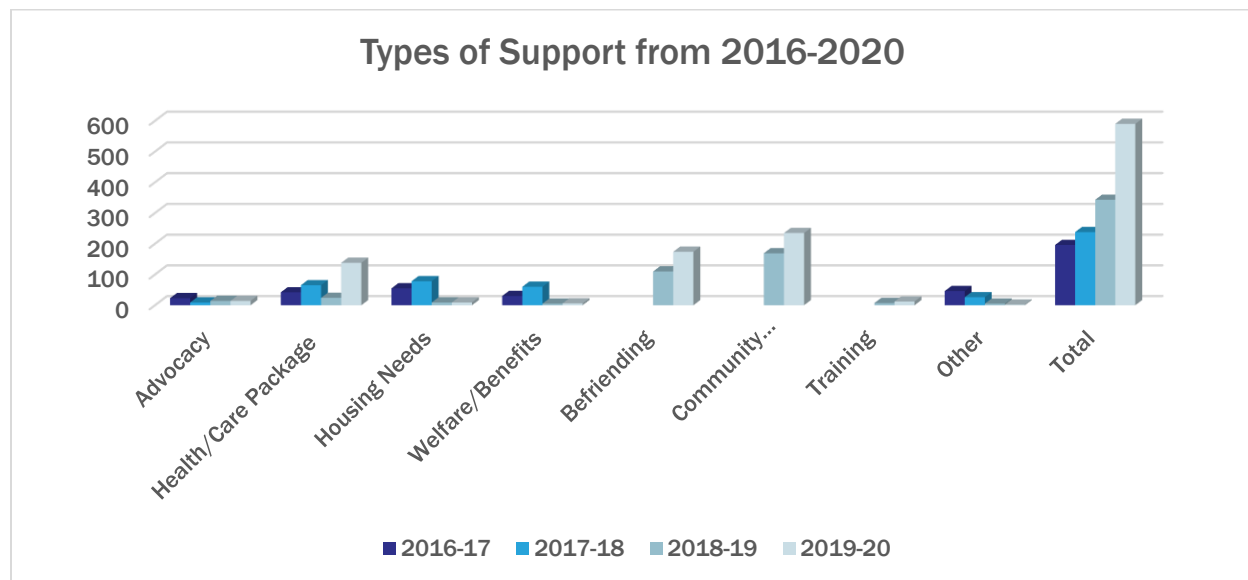
One of the areas where we have seen the greatest demand, is around befriending. We know, nationally, loneliness and isolation amongst older people is a huge concern, as it brings on other health and mental health conditions, such as obesity, heart disease, anxiety and depression. The results of our Befriending Survey confirm this. The results show that most of the respondents have various medical and health conditions and require support in areas that the project did not cover - areas like cleaning, shopping, gardening and meals on wheels. Befriending, through the HFSP, is a service that has opened up a can of worms of needed support to people who live alone, have no family friends and can no longer do things for themselves. A service in the future has to take into consideration all these needs. We are very much aware that members of the BME communities suffer in silence because of their cultural norms.

It is important to involve people in the work we do, we have learnt that this is an important element to our work, and has always been part of our ethos, giving users a place to express themselves. People love to talk to each other about things that matter to them and this is something we aim to continue to do. We have found that the more our community feel that they are being heard, listened to, and valued, the more likely they are to remain on our platform.

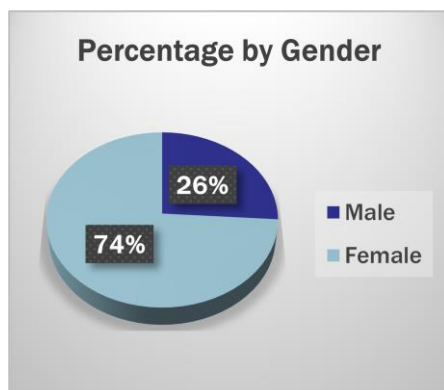
COVID-19 greatly impacted the project. 3 months before the project end date everything had to change to respond to the pandemic, ensuring that our beneficiaries and vulnerable people in the wider community were kept safe, well, and not at risk of the corona virus. This we were able to do and we saw a surge in the number of people we were supporting. We adapted by setting up a food bank, and a food parcel delivery service. Although we had to change our face-to-face befriending to telephone befriending only, this also saw numbers increase greatly.

SUMMARY

Overall, the HFSP has delivered to the beneficiaries highlighted in our original application. Year on year we have seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries and the support provided.



As stated previously, the project has highlighted changing needs around befriending, and the support that is so desperately needed to those who live alone and are isolated within our communities.



We have engaged well, by enabling many to get out of their homes to attend sessions around day care, trips, and community events. For those who cannot come out, we have provided a service that has been a lifeline. By regular engagement and knowing we are at the end of a phone, they can live safe in their own homes, and not become reliant on other services.

We have encouraged volunteering amongst our service users and given them a voice, empowering them in decision-making processes, for example, involvement in WBSC's Management Committee of the organisation.

The outcomes achieved are:

- People have reported having increased confidence
- People have better coping strategies and is able to manage a crisis
- Reduction in the use of crisis or emergency services
- People feel less isolated
- More people take part in social activities
- People are more informed

The project has been very successful in its delivery. From our data collected we can report that we have delivered over 3000 sessions, through the various services that has been provided through the project.

Finally, the work has made people aware that although WBSC is a Black organisation, catering to the cultural needs of the BME community, we are an inclusive organisation that promotes integration and community cohesion

