

The summary of our work in 2020 is given on the separate sheet showing our undertakings.

It's been a year like no other and it's hard to remember how things were at the beginning of 2020. Activities continued normally for January and February, with the games group operating on a weekly basis, two fish and chip lunches and one Silver Surfer course. The office was open as usual. Transport requests were tailing off as hospitals cancelled routine appointments, then everything changed with the first lockdown.

This makes comparison with previous years' figures difficult.

Volunteers

Immediately after the announcement all volunteers over the age of 70 were stood down. Three, including myself, indicated a willingness to carry on face-to-face work, especially driving and have done so throughout, being joined by others as circumstances changed .

28 volunteers were used during the first lockdown; 9 of these were LVC volunteers with enhanced DBS checks, the remaining 19 got in touch offering to help. Some came through Volunteer Essex; the others by word of mouth (including local Covid support groups). 5 had DBS checks through trusted organisations. None of the 19 went through the usual process of checking and so they are not included in the total number of volunteers for 2020 with the exception of 3 who did later go through the checks including DBS - Christine Benbow, Carol Kirkland and Michelle Noel.

Whilst every effort was made to ensure that only LVC volunteers with DBS checks had face-to-face contact with vulnerable clients, a few prescriptions were delivered to homes by other volunteers early in the lockdown when there were difficulties in meeting demand. In practice, the "shopping" volunteers collected shopping and medication, which was then delivered by DBS checked LVC volunteers John McGwyne and Peter King. They both showed tremendous commitment throughout.

Good Neighbour

The Good Neighbour figure for the year is so different that some explanation is necessary.

Volunteers continued to make contact with their regular 1:1s either through the telephone or face to face, as Covid advice allowed (11 users). This is in addition to the new arrangements for telephone befriending (4)

The total number for telephoning is an underestimate as, although our social activities have been in abeyance since March, volunteers involved in them have continued to keep in touch with participants. In particular, I would like to thank Mike Millroy and Jean Eastwood from the Escorted Shopping team and Malcolm Smith from the Games Group for their efforts.

We collected and delivered shopping for 43 people, many on a weekly basis (480 in total) and prescriptions for a further 20, again many on a regular basis (97 in total).

For the brief period in between lockdowns the office was open; for most of the year all contact with clients and volunteers has been done from home, digitally or by using the LVC mobile phone.

Transport: The number of drives to medical appointments again drastically declined (249 as opposed to 440 in 2019). This was due to the lack of out-patient appointments offered by local hospitals especially during the first lockdown; most of the drives we did were for imaging or blood tests. We did have one client who received chemotherapy throughout the year on a three out of four week basis. You can see that the number of times we could not meet requests was only 5 (0.002 of all requests) (and this due to very short notice requests). The number of clients using transport also declined from 123 in 2019 to 79 for similar reasons. The number of drivers used is much more similar to last year (2020: 22, 2019 27) and reflects the normal pattern of use for January and February.

Escorted Shopping: The reduction in figures is because the service only operated for 9 weeks.

Weekday social outings: It was not possible to hold any weekday social outings during 2020.

Weekend social outings: The figure represents the number of clients taken to the fish and chip lunches in January and February.

Silver Surfer Club: It was possible to hold one 6 week course in January/February and 15 people attended. Steve Bailey and Emma Pavett then stood down as leaders due to impending maternity/paternity leave. I would like to thank them for their sterling work over the years, particularly for engendering a friendly and optimistic learning experience which has resulted in many members returning time and time again. We are extremely lucky that Mike Sabin, a mentor of many years standing, stepped up to lead the group. Although we were not able to hold any more courses, I would like to thank him for providing digital support, both in person and by phone, to people who had problems. Over the years many members have become confident IT users and have learned skills which have stood them in very good stead in 2020. I'm delighted that the Club has been such a useful project.

Games Group: I apologise for the absence of figures for 2020. The games group ran as usual in January and February until the Library closed. It is very much missed by the members and would repeat my thanks to Malcolm who has assiduously kept in touch with many of the regulars.

Garden Rescue: The team cleared one garden and another volunteer cut someone's lawn. Many thanks to Ian Collyer and Sam Thomas-Chuula for co-ordinating the hard-working team (who are raring to get going again).

Fish and Chip Lunches: It was possible to hold the lunch in January and February; many people have told me how much they miss them. Again thanks to John Campbell for playing for the singsong and to the regular volunteers. Malcolm, Ruth, Tracy and Phyllis.

Finance: We are very grateful for the continued financial support from St. Mary's Church. The figures this year also show for the first time the extent of the generosity of LVC volunteers who do not claim some or all of their expenses. Thank you to them. We were awarded a grant by Loughton Town Council, but this was not received until after 28th February. Before the pandemic, LVC had talks with EFDC whose officers said they would set up an arrangement by which we could expect £5,000 p.a. Despite a number of enquiries throughout the year, this did not happen, perhaps understandably. On the plus side, we are delighted that Mike Robinson, Duty Officer, has agreed to add the far more arduous role of Treasurer to his portfolio and I thank him for his hard work since the middle of last year. His financial report has been included in the paperwork for this meeting.

Partnerships: During the pandemic our regular partnerships in respect of our social inclusion projects were severely curtailed and I look forward to renewing these as the situation improves. We have continued to receive referrals from a variety of sources - GPs, Social Services, the NHS Social Prescriber, the Red Cross Community Agent, the EFDC Community, Culture & Wellbeing department, community nurses and sheltered housing managers as well as the website.

Client Christmas Present: In a new initiative the Committee decided that all IG10 residents who used our services in 2020 would get a Christmas Card (the brainchild of Duty Officer Helen Reynolds), a present of a potted hyacinth bulb (that of Laura Watson, Committee Member) and a doorstep visit. Accordingly 140 people were reminded at Christmas that they were not forgotten. Many volunteers, including some who were shielding, helped and many recipients have been in touch to thank LVC.

I commend all LVC volunteers for playing their part during this difficult year and would like to personally thank the Committee for its support and guidance. I am proud that, in this time of national crisis, LVC has shown the flexibility, commitment and ability to continue to serve our community. Many thanks to all of you who have made this possible in whatever way!

Janet Thomas

March 2021