

The summary of our work in 2019 is given on the separate sheet showing our undertakings;

Transport: There has been a dramatic decrease in the number of drives to medical appointments (440 as opposed to 617 in 2018). This is across the board and it is hard to see a reason for it. The number of clients using transport has remained similar, so they have been using us for fewer appointments. The number of times when we were unable to meet a request has dropped to 0.85% of the total drives requested to 0.9% in 2018.

On the positive side we used 3 more drivers than in 2018 and I thank all of our drivers for their commitment.

Good Neighbour Scheme:

There is a slight reduction in the number of clients supported by this programme (18) compared with last year (20). The vast majority are receiving a regular visit at home and I thank all our volunteers who take on this regular commitment, often for several years.

Escorted Shopping: Use of the trip is slightly down on last year. Users are not getting any younger!

Many thanks to Mike for organising and to all the escorts who spend the whole of Monday morning helping.

Weekday social outings: 26 clients attended Christmas lunch at the Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford, with Haslers again providing drivers (8). LVC is very grateful for their continuing support. Sadly there were 9 no shows on the day, and we weren't able to use all drivers who volunteered. Through Tracy's good offices, The Card Factory at Loughton donated 40 diaries for Christmas presents and I thank her and them very much for this.

Weekend social outings: The rise in this number is largely due to the increased number of clients taken to the Fish & Chip lunches at Loughton Methodist Church. We continue to take a couple of carloads to the tea parties at St. Michael's.

Silver Surfer Club: The number of clients attending the 6 week courses was again down at 25 (2018: 30). There are fewer new attendees, which perhaps is due to greater digital inclusion within the demographic; the same people attend all courses and it is seen as primarily social. Many thanks to the congregation at Loughton Methodist Church for welcoming and accommodating us. 2019 saw a larger than usual volunteering presence from local sixth formers and it is a joy to see the intergenerational fun. Thanks to all the volunteers and to Steve and Emma for setting the tone of the club with their light touch organisation.

Games Group: Numbers have held up well for the group (606 visits as opposed to 603 in 2018). As this works out at over 10 attendees a week the 3 regular volunteers June, Malcolm and Julia are kept pretty busy and I thank them for their continuing commitment to the group. For the last couple of years the group now has also enjoyed its own Christmastime lunch, an extra social opportunity for those who use it. I would also thank Loughton Library staff for allowing us to host the group at this busy social hub.

Garden Rescue: In 2019 seven gardens were cleared by the team (2018: 9). Each job involves a short, but strenuous burst of activity and I thank Sam, Ian, Manon and their various helpers for their efforts.

Fish and Chip Lunches: LVC began hosting the Fish and Chip lunches at Loughton Methodist Church in September 2018. So 2019 was the first full year for this project which has proved to be very popular with existing and new clients. There is usually the opportunity for a sing song with the piano (many thanks to John Campbell) or failing that, a quiz. Thanks to the regular volunteers - Malcolm, Ruth, Tracy, Phyllis –and to all the others who have helped out and made the lunches so enjoyable for everyone.

Volunteers: The total number of volunteers used was up by 4 and the number of drivers up by 3. We recruited four drivers, two visitors, two Silver Surfing mentors, two Duty Officers and one shopping escort. Although, as ever, we had to say goodbye to some, including several long-serving volunteers, it is good to know that more are attracted to us and the scope of our work. The now traditional Christmas social event gave volunteers the chance to get to know each other and what they do within the charity. We can never show enough gratitude our volunteers, so I just say, "Thank you all".

Finance: We are very grateful for the continued financial support from Epping Forest District Council, Loughton Town Council and St. Mary's Church. In October we heard the sad news of the death of Rose Bruce, one of the earliest volunteers for LVC which was the beneficiary of the retiring collection at her funeral. The Avenue Lawn Tennis Club kindly chose LVC as their Charity of the Year, giving us the proceeds of their American Tournament, barbecue and raffle. Many thanks to all ALTC members.

Partnerships: LVC continues to work in partnerships with other local groups and we are proud of these links. Many of these have been maintained over many years; some like Loughton Methodist Church, St. Michael's Church and Loughton Library enable us to host or offer activities on their premises. We regularly receive referrals from the community nurses, Alzheimer's Society, St. Margaret's Hospitals, GPs, the Restore Centre and the local Community Agents (Red Cross). In 2019 there was a new kid on the block – Obe, the Social Prescribing Link Worker for the Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell Primary Care Network (GP practices in the local area). Our work complements hers - finding social solutions to problems of isolation and loneliness – and I'm sure this link will also last for many years. LVC continues to represent local people at the Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance and thus also has links with the Alzheimer's Society.

All of these connections improve our service and enable us to offer better support to our neighbours in Loughton. The need remains and again LVC has been able to continue and improve our core services, whilst being proactive in taking on new ideas and projects.

Janet Thomas

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