



Annual Report, 2021

What a year we have had, who would have thought it would be 2 years since we met together at an AGM. But it has been a time of learning and doing things differently, not just a time of sadness and stress. As a result of Covid, we have had time to reflect on what we were doing, to look again at our structures and governance and to see new things that we would not have dreamed of.

So now have a dedicated general enquiry number and email for all volunteers as well as customer enquiries which is manned by our Community Car scheme Coordinators. This has enabled us to deal with enquiries far more effectively everything from "can you find me a Russian interpreter?" to "I live in Kent but my mother lives in Winslow, could you arrange weekly shopping for her during Covid"? Thank you to Diana and her team. Those jobs we can't do, we pass on via the very effective town referral system to our partner organisations.

It gave us a chance to review our policies and application systems, and as a result we now have a dedicated person dealing with all our new volunteers, who now number almost 130. All our volunteers are individually met, and time is spent understanding what they like doing, as much as telling them what we do and where our vacancies are. We also understood the enormity of the levels of anxiety in the community, and commenced both an accompaniment model whereby a client was matched with a volunteer who over a period of 6 weeks encouraged them to meet their identified goal, much of which was about just getting out of the house. This has been very successful, albeit in small numbers. We also started a pen pal service for those who won't ever be able to leave their house, where a dedicated volunteer will write letters regularly to the same person. We are just waiting now for our first client.

During Covid, we delivered 7,500 prescriptions, matched 120 people for weekly phone calls and also 20 people for weekly shopping. The Covid clinics were set up for 3 surgeries, a mammoth task, but undertaken with professionalism and enthusiasm by all who helped us. Special thanks go to Maggie and the 2 Sues for managing this military exercise. Thanks also Lions, Rotary and WI who helped us, and to Norden House who afterwards donated £450 towards our new wheelchair vehicle. During Covid we also took over the Winslow arm of the North Bucks Hospital Car Scheme, as they were unable to function, and thanks go to our volunteer drivers who continued to operate in lockdown to do this valuable service. We have now handed this back over to them.

We developed risk assessments for all our activities and used a Covid grant from Buckinghamshire Council to purchase a thermometer and PPE, so that we can feel we are providing as safe services as possible.

Since the end of May, we have resumed most of our activities, and some have seen a rise in customers, to our surprise. So our weekly Drop in for families is now almost over subscribed, as well as our weekly Gentle walks which have gone from strength to strength. Families are telling us how the drop in has helped them get to know others, as well as to introduce their Covid babies to the wider world which they had never met before, despite still high levels of anxiety. I'd also like to thank particularly Christine Dodds who now manages the walks for us, but also does so much more behind the scenes for us. We need more walk leaders too, to cope with the varying abilities of walkers we now have.

As we began to look more at our 1:1 offering, we have also started a sitting service, where a dedicated volunteer offers an hour a week to enable a carer to leave home for a while. As always they go way above the call of duty! Similarly we are now offering a decluttering service in an effort to help people make more of their lives. This is slow painful work at times, but always worth doing.

This is always the time to give thanks to our wonderful volunteers for all they do, what an amazing group they are, everything done with kindness and enthusiasm, always happy to go the extra mile. We certainly all get as much out of it as the client does. This time we say good bye on the Committee to Angela who has been with us since we started in 2012. She has worked so hard despite health issues, always cheerful, happy to do whatever is asked. She will continue running the Singing for Pleasure, but leaves us on the Committee. You will be greatly missed. Similarly with

Cathy who runs our family Drop in, who is leaving the Committee, but not the Drop in, after several years of great service. Also to Liz our minutes secretary, who is leaving us and has kept me focussed at the meetings! Thank you all for your wonderful work to enable us to be where we are, as such a successful organisation. We have welcomed Jo this year and recently Tracey as our Secretary, and have vacancies for 2 more. More on that later!

Thanks also to those who have given us donations this year, as well as those who left money in their legacies for us. We have lost so many clients in the last 2 years, or they have moved on to new places, and we miss you all.

Thanks also must go to our partners, including Winslow Lions and Rotary, Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, Winslow Town Council, the Patient Support Service, Carers Bucks, Winslow Community Library and the Community Board at Buckinghamshire Council. We function so much better as a networked organisation with you all.

Thanks also to our clients. They keep us as volunteers going too. They show us how to cope with the daily trials they face, as well as to energise us and who set such an amazing example of daily courage to us., So thank you, one and all. We would not be here without you!

Other activities are now back up and running, too many to mention, but you can see more about our work in the leaflets on the tables. I'd like to single out a few for mention this year. Our unique Telephone Befriending Service now has 48 befriendees and 8 on a waiting list. I hate to hear people are waiting for our services, so if you like people, are a good listener and non judgmental, please come forward to help us . Lives are changed out of all recognition by this service. Doing it on the phone means no time is wasted traveling, and there is excellent training to help support you in your role. Thanks so much to Keith and Marilyn for managing this.

Our wheel chair car service has gone from strength to strength. We now have 6 drivers, and are out and about almost every day including the weekends now. We have enabled a lady to return to full time employment, as well as managed hospital appointments and even grandparents to get to 2 weddings! We are now seeking a grant for a replacement vehicle, and hope to have one in use by March 2022.

Sue and Liz have worked unbelievably hard to set up both a Parkinsons support group and specialist exercise classes for this group of people. With their instructor, Sandra, who has undertaken a very challenging training to deliver this, people are now feeling so much better and motivated to do more. Thank you Sandra!

We have recently been nominated for a possible Queens Award to Voluntary Services, so wait to see the outcome of this.

None of this work during Covid and beyond could happen without a strong Committee, you are my right arm, and nothing would happen without you.

So how can you help us? First of all, please spread the word about our services, especially the newer ones. We can take more clients in most of our services. Maybe think about joining the committee, or helping to co run one of our projects, to help us with succession planning. Please think also about becoming a befriender or a walk leader.

So let's celebrate what we do, always looking to make it better, and be grateful that we live in such a strong community as Winslow. Here's to another good year ahead.

Vron Corben

Chair,

November 2021.

