

Small things, big difference

A guide to changing older people's lives



The Out and About Project, 2014

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By social isolation, we mean the absence of contact with other people. It is different from loneliness, which is a subjective perception in which a person feels lonely.

Or to put it more simply:

“Isolation is being by yourself. Loneliness is not liking it.”

Introduction

The Out and About project has changed lives! That's a mighty big statement from a small project, but it's true. Just take a look at the inspirational short stories in this guide to see the difference a little thought and helpfulness can make to the lives of older, lonely people.

The idea is simple; give a bit of time and support to help isolated older people enjoy community activities. Local resident + older person + lift or go together + do group together + lift home = **huge positives** all round.

The project came to life when a group of local organisations developing The Fed's 'It's Local Actually' website realised there was potential to support older people and people with restricted mobility or difficulties using public transport to get out and about and enjoy the activities it listed. And importantly, be a little less isolated, both socially and geographically.

The Out and About project ran for four months. Local people who attended activities were put in touch with others who wanted to go too, but who needed support to get there and back.

The idea struck a chord with everyone involved. Seven isolated, older people are now benefiting from being able to go to activities. Eight more were linked with local befriending schemes, The Neighbourhood Care Scheme and Time to Talk.

“Thank you so much, both of you. What would I have done if you hadn't come into my life?”

Let's reduce the number of people who are lonely in our city

There are resources at the end of this guide to help you to do just that. So if you support older people who could be at risk of loneliness or isolation who need support to get out and about, please take ten minutes to read about the difference Out and About made, and think about how you could **do something big** too.

The Out and About project was co-ordinated by The Fed Centre for Independent Living. The partners supporting it were: Age UK Brighton and Hove; The Trust for Developing Communities; Brighton and Hove City Council (including Libraries and Sheltered Housing); Neighbourhood Care Scheme; LifeLines; One Church; Time to Talk befriending.

Accompanying older people to and from activities

Jessie and Janet

Jessie is Janet's neighbor. She is 95 years old and has been attending the Dorset Gardens Art class for the last ten years. She stopped going after a fall and was unable to attend for nearly a year. Janet shares Jessie's passion for arts and crafts, so was happy to take her to and from the class which runs fortnightly.

The first visit "went very well, they were so pleased to see her back and she enjoyed being there again after nearly a years' break."

When one of the sessions was cancelled, Janet took Jessie to the marina and they had a drink and a chat instead, which they both thoroughly enjoyed.



"We are still going to the class and we both still really enjoy it. Jessie has my number if she needs help in between."

Sue and Molly

Sue is visually impaired. She has a passion for cookery and wanted to gain confidence and practical skills to enable her to try different healthy recipes, independently, in her kitchen at home. Molly, who was working with One Church, shared Sue's passion for food and cookery and wanted to help.

Together they attended two of Brighton and Hove Food Partnership's community cookery courses.

They became friends and enjoyed shopping for ingredients and sharing meals together.



“I was looking for a course where the staff would accept me and having support from Molly made it all possible.”

Molly commented:

I enjoyed it a lot and I’m glad I did it. Sue and I became good friends. I now feel able to support other visually impaired people and have learnt so much. This was the highlight of my time spent in Brighton”.

Following Sue’s positive experience at Brighton & Hove Food Partnership’s cookery courses, she went on to work with a dietician, where she had the confidence to suggest ways to make practical advice more accessible and relevant for people with visual impairments. The dietician was so impressed with Sue’s suggestions, she has now incorporated a number of them into her work for everyone.

Beryl and Amy

Beryl is 88, lives alone, and recently lost her independence because of ill health. Amy is in her 30’s and is the Community Involvement Co-ordinator at One Church. Amy and Beryl met each other through the church.



As they got to know each other, Amy recognised it was important for Beryl to have a balance of getting out and about, engage in activities that would stimulate her mind and enable her to meet new and old friends, and ensure she could still make an impact on the social justice issues that have always been close to her heart.

Amy organised lifts and accompanied Beryl to community events organised by One Church and Age UK Brighton & Hove.

“You are a star! Without your amazing support I would have been unable to attend the Age UK meeting yesterday. I had the best day out for a long time and also picked up so much info to hand on to others.”

Amy and Beryl continue to meet up regularly for cinema trips, coffee and chat. They travel together to meetings of mutual interest.

“With Beryl’s wisdom, passion and enthusiasm, and my coordination and networks, we’ve formed a dream team. It’s been an enriching experience for me to learn from Beryl’s life experiences and share our mutual passions.”

Maggs, Jean and Barbara

Jean is 88 and lives with her granddaughter. Barbara is 82 and lives alone. Having a lift from Maggs to attend the monthly Tea Club at the Church of The Good Shepherd has made a big difference to them both as they can be picked up and taken home without the inconvenience of waiting for a bus. They also enjoy Maggs's company.



Barbara said:

“Without Maggs I might not be able to attend as often, especially when the weather is bad. It’s such a caring, friendly and supportive group...we all look out for each other.”

Sing For Better Health

The Sing for Better Health group aims to support people over 55 who have long-term health problems to cope better with daily life. It aims to help to prevent illnesses, prevent physical and/or mental deterioration and the social isolation that may occur as a result. Uditia, who runs the group, explains how volunteer drivers have helped two of her attendees.

“I was contacted by the daughter of one of our elderly group members, telling me that her mother wasn't able to attend our singing groups because of her frailty and the bad weather. She expressed concern that her mother was mentally going downhill since she hadn't been able to attend as she is socially very isolated. One of our drivers now picks her and another lady up from their home, and drops them off afterwards. Both ladies are happy and healthy - the singing group is the highlight of their week!”

Welcoming and friendly groups

Joining social groups and finding acceptance from others can provide a real boost to our sense of well-being. The groups we have featured in this guide: Sing for Better Health; the monthly Tea Party at the Church of the Good Shepherd and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, make a considerable effort to help new members feel comfortable and included, providing social opportunities alongside the activities they run. The groups that cater specifically for older people also look out for each other, and get in touch with members who don't attend to check on their health and wellbeing.

Sing for Better Health

"Many of our group members live in isolation; they look forward all week to our meetings. They form supportive friendships, talk and laugh together, have fun. The tea breaks are an important part of our meetings, and we regularly have lunch together and meet for other social events."



Research conducted by a student at the Medical School of Sussex University found evidence of the following benefits for those who attend the classes:

- 81% created new friendships

"But what is good is we notice if someone hasn't been well for a long time. We ask where they are and if they are alright. We care; we miss the people that aren't here."

- 19% felt able to join other groups

"I think a lot of older people, I know I do, just feel as if they're a nuisance and in the way. When I am here I get over that quite easily."

- 71.4% reported an increased sense of happiness

"It's made me appreciate life and it's good."

Quarterly tea club at the Church of The Good Shepherd

The club now meets every three months at 1.30pm in the church hall. There are activities to take part in and a chance to chat over a cup of tea and cake. The group is a welcome source of company for many people who would otherwise be alone; they support each other by sharing news and stories and visit members when they are in hospital or going through a period of ill health.

Members who are able to drive help those without transport to and from the group. They also get together on outings to local attractions and transport is provided to get to and from these. The photo on the right was taken during a group outing to a local garden centre in the summer.



Brighton & Hove Food Partnership: Community Cookery Courses

Sue has had negative experiences in the past when trying to get involved in activities or courses and had almost given up trying. “The minute you say you’re visually impaired they run a mile”.

Anna was open and enthusiastic about including Sue and her guide dog Sara in their First Time Cook course. They had a detailed discussion beforehand to establish ways in which the sessions could be made accessible, so that Sue could fully participate.



“The group was very welcoming and friendly and Ebenezer Church was an ideal venue – the room used was spacious and easy to navigate.” Anna

“For me it was fantastic. We were able to have an ongoing, and very detailed, discussion with Sue about what worked, what didn’t and what we should change.

“Sue was able to take part in all of the cooking and to

complete all of the recipes even though she chose the most challenging recipe each week. I'm very pleased that Sue is now accessing other food partnership services and attending another cookery course where she'll have the chance to further practise her skills"

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church Art & Craft Club

This class meets every other Thursday at 2pm throughout the year, except in January.

In painting, the group explores colour and its emotional impact; they look at tonality together and study composition; it's a place of discovery and lots of fun. They work mostly in acrylics on board or canvas and have an exhibition each year which follows the "Faith in the City" event.



Crafters do an interesting variety of things: card making of all sorts, decoupage, knitting, crochet, applique, quilting, quilling, bead work, glass painting and mosaic to name but a few! The craft people often bring new ideas for things everyone can have a go at.

There is always a creative buzz going on throughout the afternoon, interspersed with laughter and a most welcome break for tea and coffee with biscuits too.

Befriending

Doris

Doris is 96 years old and lives in a local Sheltered Housing Scheme. She is profoundly deaf and fiercely independent.

She has no friendships within (or outside) the scheme and chooses not to engage in the activities happening there. She doesn't see or speak to anyone for weeks at a time.

Her eldest daughter lives close by but they have a difficult relationship; as a consequence Doris doesn't get to see her granddaughter or great grandchildren. Her other daughter committed suicide in 2008 and her husband passed away in 2005.

Doris has been supported by a Time to Talk Befriender. She was able to join a church nearby which enabled her to participate in events and social activities with like minded people. Doris has also been reconnected with her family.

“Thank you so much, both of you, for giving me so much love and devotion. What would I have done if you hadn't come into my life?”

Edith

Edith, an 87 year old lady, was matched with a retired female volunteer, a member of One Church's congregation. The match is going extremely well and both women enjoy meeting on a weekly basis at the Open Market or in the Lewes Road area of the City.

Marianne

Marianne is 90 years old and lives alone. She had been in contact with Age UK Brighton & Hove's crisis team, and expressed a desire to get out and about and go for a coffee and a chat.

Marianne was referred to the Neighbourhood Care Scheme to match her with a local volunteer who could provide companionship and help her overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness. Marianne is currently experiencing a number of issues with her health, but the scheme is staying in touch with her to offer befriending support when her health improves.

Peer support

Beryl

Beryl is passionate about supporting lonely and isolated people. She loves getting involved in events where she can participate and contribute her views and ideas. She has attended three events on social isolation along with Amy.

“I so enjoyed meeting old friends, being able to voice my concerns re isolation and hearing the concerns and ideas of so many others.”

Amy also arranged for Beryl to befriend an isolated older lady at a sheltered housing scheme where they sit and chat over coffee, or join others in the lounge to play Boccia which she had previously lacked the confidence to do. Beryl has also been linked in with Time to Talk as she is interested in befriending older people by phone, which she can do in comfort from home.

Jean

Jean is passionate about linking lonely and isolated people into social activities. She introduced Barbara to the monthly Tea Club held at the Church of the Good Shepherd. Barbara was lonely before she met Jean, but now they go to different activities together, and speak on the phone a couple of times a week.

“I met Barbara at a bus stop and we started chatting – Barbara’s daughter was keen for her to get out and about more as she felt she was becoming increasingly isolated. Since then Barbara hasn’t looked back...it’s turned her life around”.

Access to information on activities

Shelley and Sing for Better Health

Shelley was referred to the project by LifeLines. She is very sociable and has a good network of friends but wanted to go to a local singing group. The Out and About project got in touch with Shelley and let her know about the Sing for Better Health group listed on It's Local Actually, running from a community centre close by.

“Had to mail you and tell you all how much I enjoyed the singing group; it quite made my day! Thank you for welcoming me and I was delighted at how friendly the people were and enjoyed chatting with them during the tea break. I wish I'd found you a couple of years ago – I guess because living in a block of flats we don't get the local news flyers and brochures, etc. Anyway I'm there now and it quite made day. And long may that continue. I'm already looking forward to next week”.

Time to Talk Befriending & Lunch Clubs

Time to Talk Befriending work with sheltered housing schemes in east Brighton. They received a referral from a gentleman in his sixties who uses an electric wheelchair. He becomes very unsteady and gets dizzy due to a brain condition, so he isn't always confident going outside on his own. He was matched with a female volunteer who introduced him to the Friendship Centre lunch club at Holland Road Baptist Church - an event that he now attends on his own every Friday.

A referral was also received on behalf of four residents who were keen to access a local lunch club. Time to Talk put the scheme manager in touch with the organisers of the Mad Hatters lunch club at St Georges Hall in Mouslecoomb and now all four attend on a regular basis and make use of the transport provided by the club.

Information on both of these groups, and many other groups which provide low cost or free activities, can be found on It's Local Actually - www.thefedonline.org.uk/local

Resources

Volunteer Drivers

If you run a community group for older people, you could reach out to those who have difficulties getting out and about by asking whether any members of your group who drive could give a lift there and back to someone else.

You could also enlist the help of volunteer drivers, as Sing For Better Health do, by getting in touch with the Volunteer Centre. Their website is <http://www.cvsectorforum.org.uk/volunteering>

The Volunteer Centre can be contacted by phone on 01273 234826 or by email at volunteercentre@bhcommunityworks.org.uk

Insurers who do not charge extra for volunteer driving have signed up to the ABI's volunteer driving motor insurance commitment. This can be found at <https://www.abi.org.uk/Insurance-and-savings/Products/Motor-insurance/Volunteer-drivers>

Some of the insurers listed require you to tell them that you are using your vehicle for volunteer driving, even though they do not charge an extra premium. The commitment covers 54 insurance brands (over 85% of the motor insurance market). Many of the companies on the list no longer require a letter to inform them a policy holder will be starting to volunteer.

Befriending Services

If you know someone who would benefit from regular visits from a volunteer befriender, you could tell them about the befriending schemes we have featured in this guide.

To find out more about them, visit their websites or get in touch using the contact details below:

Time to Talk Befriending

<http://timetotalkbefriending.org.uk>

Contact Emily Sinclair (scheme coordinator) on 07775865845, or by email at emily.sinclair@timetotalkbefriending.org.uk

The Neighbourhood Care Scheme

www.bh-impetus.org/projects/neighbourhood-care-scheme Telephone 01273 775888

A good neighbour befriending scheme that supports older people, people with physical disabilities and carers by recruiting local volunteers to support them in a variety of ways.

Groups and activity providers



There are over 1,000 low cost or free activities happening across the city every week, as well as those featured in this guide. To find out what's going on, visit www.thefedonline.org.uk/local. Groups can also register their activities on the site for free.

Sing For Better Health

<http://betterbreathing-singing-groups.blogspot.co.uk/>

Five of their weekly singing groups are for older people and those with long-term health problems (eg breathing difficulties, Parkinson's, depression, Alzheimer's, MS, stroke, heart conditions, cancer, mental health problems etc.) They run a six weekly group specifically for people with mental health issues.

Contact Udita Everett on 01273 556755 or 07969 129992

Email: uditamusic@gmail.com

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

<http://bhfood.org.uk>

Tel: 01273 431700

Email: info@bhfood.org.uk

Tea Club at the Church of the Good Shepherd

<http://www.goodshepherdbrighton.org.uk/teaclub.htm>

Contact Sheena Richardson 07932 591172

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church - Art & Craft Club

<http://www.dgmc.org.uk/community/church-activities/>

Contact Angela Millanzi on 01273 605502 or by email at office@dgmc.org.uk

One Church

Various projects to increase wellbeing and reduce isolation in our city, including: a winter night shelter; Chomp - a school holiday lunch club for children experiencing food poverty; LifeTimes - social activities in sheltered housing schemes; Connecting Our City - a catalyst to bring people together to reduce isolation in our city; projects working with young people - mentoring, after school clubs, job club and youth groups.

Contact Amy Goodwin on 01273 694746, or email info@onechurchbrighton.org

<http://onechurchbrighton.org/>

LifeLines

<http://lifelinesbrightonhove.org.uk>

LifeLines is a local volunteer-led project which aims to improve the health and well being of isolated and vulnerable older people living in east Brighton. Anyone aged 50 or over can volunteer or take part in their free activities which range from art classes to Tai Chi. They take place at Patching Lodge on Eastern Road.

Volunteers run group based activities that help people get more out of life. The activities are introduced and developed by the volunteers themselves and are things they feel passionate about. Volunteers also support people on a 1-1 basis with computer lessons or getting out to activities.

I can't speak highly enough of it. I feel better when I'm in there. You can feel the affection in the group. They are like family."

Kath, 91 Nostalgia group member.

Contact Gwyn or Alan on 01273 688117 or by email lifelines@csv.org.uk

Support services and advice

The organisations who worked on the project also provide a range of support services and advice for older and disabled people. Here's how to get in touch with them:

The Fed Centre for Independent Living

The Fed is a user-led organisation that promotes independent living for all. It offers support for disabled people, older people, their carers, families and friends.

www.thefedonline.org.uk

Tel: 01273 296747

Age UK Brighton & Hove

Age UK Brighton and Hove offer a range of support services for older people.

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/brightonandhove/>

Tel: 01273 720603

The Trust for Developing Communities (TDC)

The TDC help community groups to respond to local need, like establishing food banks & drop-ins; accessible community gardens & allotments; activity clubs for communities of interest, identity and place; as well as supporting neighbourhood events and festivals.

<http://www.trustdevcom.org.uk/>

Contact the main office on 01273 262220, or by email info@trustdevcom.org.uk

Brighton and Hove City Libraries Books at Home Service

If you know someone that finds it difficult to get out to a local library and would benefit from having books delivered to their home, give them a call on 01273 294599.

Food for thought

What is loneliness and isolation and why do we need to do something about it?

30% of older people say they would like to go out more often

Nearly half (49%) of those aged 75 or over live alone

Nearly 40% of people aged 85 or over face social exclusion

Nearly 200,000 older people don't receive the help they need to get out of their homes

Around 1 million older people speak to a friend, neighbour or family member less than once a month

9% of older people feel trapped in their own home

We know that being lonely or isolated is harmful to health. Research shows that **lacking social connections is as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.**

It is also associated with **high blood pressure, depression and a 64% increased risk of developing dementia.** Individuals who are lonely are between **two and five times more likely** than those who have strong social ties **to die prematurely.**

Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation or loneliness due to loss of friends and family, income, and a decline in health or mobility.

It is estimated that **around 10% of UK residents aged over 65 are lonely most or all of the time,** with many more at risk of loneliness.

The number of people aged 85 or over in the UK is growing dramatically as life expectancy increases, doubling in the next 20 years and nearly trebling over the next 30. It is this group who are most

severely affected by loneliness and isolation, with nearly half experiencing this some or most of the time.

There are around **27,000 people aged between 65 and 85** living in Brighton and Hove and **8,900 are aged 85 or over**. Based on national statistics, it is estimated that around 7,000 local residents aged 65 or over are lonely most or all of the time.

Brighton and Hove has higher than average numbers of older people living alone, with **14,468 households occupied by people aged 65 or older**. Local statistics show that older people living in Hollingdean and Stanmer, East Brighton, Westbourne and Moulsecoomb and Bevendean are particularly vulnerable and at risk of isolation and loneliness.

Further, round **half are living with long-term health conditions or impairments**; this figure rises to **nearly 70% amongst those aged 85 or over**.

Even people living in communal settings such as sheltered housing schemes, which do offer opportunities for socialising and the potential for greater contact with neighbours, can still struggle to feel a sense of belonging and social connectedness. **Research conducted in 2013** with residents **living in sheltered housing** schemes across the city revealed that **30% felt lonely or isolated**.

Getting out and about is a basic necessity that many of us take for granted. It isn't always so easy for older people who may have mobility issues and find it difficult to use public transport. With transport often being unreliable, infrequent or not available at all, this is one of the main barriers which prevents older people (particularly older people over 80) from taking part in activities and prevents them leaving their homes. Enabling people to get out and about more often not only makes them feel less lonely, it can also increase life expectancy.

Access to information on social activities is also vital in connecting people to what is happening locally; It's Local Actually facilitated this and includes information on over 1,000 citywide low cost or free activities.

www.thefedonline.org.uk/local



The Fed Centre for Independent Living would like to thank all the partners who made Out and About work so well: Age UK Brighton and Hove; Brighton and Hove City Council (including Libraries and Sheltered Housing); LifeLines; Neighbourhood Care Scheme; One Church; Time to Talk befriending and The Trust for Developing Communities.

And not forgetting all the volunteers and people who took part in the activities; enormous thanks for their time, enthusiasm and energy for the project.

