



Impact Report 2020



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Founder's Message

2020 has certainly been unprecedented. The people we have supported over the past 4 years are more isolated than ever. Yet, despite difficult circumstances, our team continues to show compassion and courage - the social impact and progress we have seen is testament to their hard work.

With thoughts now turning to the long-term effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the No1 Team has been working to find innovative ways to keep up connections. By launching the Virtual Events (p.18) and Bringing Hope (p.20) projects, we are making sure that isolated people in Scotland have somewhere to turn to, while building connections and confidence. At the height of lockdown, the Reminiscing Project (X) helped volunteers and their befriendeds take a break from isolation with a trip down memory lane. Over 85 people participated in our telephone befriending matches.

'Lockdown loneliness' means that, now more than ever, wellbeing has moved to the forefront of the agenda. It is widely shared that connecting with other people, building new skills, and giving helps to build a sense of belonging and self-worth. Acts of kindness such as befriending provide opportunities to build relationships and support each other through the pandemic. Befriending is a magical gift where: you give the gift of time, you receive the gift of experience and improved mental wellbeing.

Through personal experience, I have found that the opportunity to engage deeply gained from caring and befriending adds wisdom that cannot be taught. It can only be experienced. Over the years I have often seen friendships formed through befriending break the barriers that age and culture can create.

I end on a note of thanks. We could not do our work without the support of our staff and volunteers. Over the period from September 2019 - September 2020, over 130 volunteers have participated in various roles in the organisation, ranging from befrienders to musicians at virtual group events, contributing nearly 4,000 hours of befriending in the community.

So, whilst appreciating the present, we look forward to the future where The No.1 Befriending Agency contributes to a diverse, vibrant and inclusive social economy.

Audrey Mutongi
Founder & CEO



2020 - A Year of Resilience

Covid-19 is already having an impact on businesses across the country and social enterprises are no exception. We know these next few months are going to be ones of uncertainty and fear for all the challenges we are facing.

As an organisation, The No.1 Befriending Agency is embracing the opportunities that Covid-19 has offered us. We have already needed to learn new systems and ways of working, and our activities must continue to evolve.

Social resilience is all about connectedness; we are all in this together, as a team and as a community. We are regularly talking to our existing networks, exploring new partnerships, sharing and learning from each other. We will continue to be responsive to our clients and with our volunteers and staff team, our organisation will be stronger and able to expand and widen our reach to provide people with a way to connect and be connected.

Thinking about the future The No.1 Befriending Agency's biggest challenge is proving to be pivoting an established organisation so it's fit for the future and making it sustainable after the recovery phase and returning to a new normal.

A lot of our services will run online in the foreseeable future, which is dependent on access to technology for some of the most vulnerable in our society. We are therefore fundraising to give socially isolated and lonely people the opportunity to learn how to use digital equipment to get connected with family, friends and their community via technology and where possible provide them with the equipment as well if they do not have the means to pay for this.

We believe that by incorporating our values - compassion, respect, happiness and independence - into our work, and by keeping on communicating the impact of our work to our stakeholders and the wider society, we will be able to tackle whatever lays ahead.

Sheila McPherson
Managing Director



About Us

Our Vision

To create connections and build confidence in and through the people we work with.

Our Mission

Promoting fullness of life and reducing loneliness and isolation through friendship and companionship in Scotland.

Our Values

Compassion, happiness, independence, respect, courage

The Organisation in Numbers

September 2019 -September 2020

47 one-to-one visit matches*

45 regular attendees at our group befriending events

Volunteers

91 Befrienders

11 other volunteers (fundraising, peer support, admin, ect.)

85 telephone befriending matches

15 attendees at our virtual events***

30 Group befrienders (min. one session)

*(until March 2020)

** (until February 2020)

*** (started August 2020)

One-to-One Befriending

One-to-one befriending continues to be the backbone of our organisation, in March, however, our face-to-face befriending service had to revert to telephone befriending to ensure our befriendees' safety. With the help of Befriending Networks, we have quickly adapted our befriending policies and volunteer training and support processes to the new situation.

The negative effects of loneliness and isolation among older people are increasingly recognised in society. According to Age Scotland, approximately 200,000 older people in Scotland will go half a week without a visit or call from anyone, and loneliness is said to be as dangerous to one's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day!¹

Research worldwide, however, shows the success of befriending programs in alleviating loneliness and isolation. It also is shown to go farther: increasing confidence, connectivity and wellbeing among participants², especially when a meaningful, mutually trusting relationship is developed.³ Taking the evidence-base into consideration, we believe that befriending can

1. Reduce loneliness
2. Increase confidence
3. Increase feelings of self-worth and as a result, level of activity and
4. Increase connections.

In the following report, we explore our social impact through the prism of these outcomes. We believe that befriending changes two lives: the befriender's and the befriender's. That's why we include some statistics from our volunteers as well.

We could not be more proud of our dedicated team of volunteers, without whom our organisation could not achieve any of its impact.

Thank you!

Care

11 total care clients

Hours of Engagement****

75 hours of group befriending

3,970 hours of one-to-one and telephone befriending

**** (minimum hours)

1. Age Scotland. Tackling Loneliness. Published 2015.

2. Cattan M, Kime N, Bagnall A-M. The use of telephone befriending in low level support for socially isolated older people - an evaluation. Health & Social Care in the Community. 2010;19(2):198-206

3. Janine Wiles, Tessa Morgan, Tess Moeke-Maxwell, Stella Black, Hong-Jae Park, Ofa Dewes, Lisa Ann Williams & Merryn Gott (2019) Befriending Services for Culturally Diverse Older People, Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 62:7, 776-79

Social Impact Statistics

After the lockdown, we decided to redo our baseline measurement with existing befriendees. We realised that the level of loneliness, confidence, and connectivity prior to lockdown could be measured in comparison with the experience during the lockdown period, thus assessing the impact of our work in combating the social effects of the pandemic.

While we wanted to be fair with ourselves, we also wanted to be as objective in measurement as possible: we used measurement tools from international research linked to each of the outcomes and measured people's 'state of mind' at the moment of completion.

Although these stats are important, we also believe that if we cheered even one person up and helped one person become more resilient throughout these difficult times, our job is done.

Clients

All statistics are compared with the baseline.

Loneliness

40% of our clients were less lonely based on the UCLA Loneliness Scale.

Confidence

47% of our clients reported increased self-confidence based on the New General Self-Efficacy Scale, which is an 8-item measure that assesses how much people believe they can achieve their goals, despite difficulties.

Skills

33% of our clients reported increased confidence in their ability to learn new skills, based on the New General Self-Efficacy Scale.

Connectivity

47% of our clients reported increased connections and social participation, based on the 'Social' domain of the WHO's Quality of Life for Older People measurement tool.

Other statistics (based on our client survey):

- 95% of our clients look forward to the weekly phone calls.
- 100% of our clients enjoy the weekly phone calls
- 96% of our clients said that having a volunteer helped them cope with the pandemic
- 71% of our clients felt that having a volunteer improved their confidence
- 96% felt that their voice was valued by the organisation
- 96% felt that their befriender valued the time they spent together



Volunteers

Based on our annual anonymous volunteer survey

52% of our volunteers felt more connected to their community or like they belong as a result of volunteering.

63% felt that volunteering has allowed them to meet new people that they wouldn't have met without the Agency.

60% felt that volunteering has improved their general health and wellbeing.

66% felt that volunteering has helped them gain new skills.

56% felt that volunteering has helped them in their personal development (e.g. increasing their confidence, self-esteem or helped them in self-management).

Quotes from Clients

Less lonely

"If George wasnae phoning me, I wouldn't be talking to anyone." Betty

"After I've had the talk I come off the phone and I feel really, really good. That lasts me for a couple of days" Rachel

"I am looking forward to Rachel's phone calls. She is lovely. She is great! I can tell her anything and she always cheers me up. She listens to me and I feel I can tell her anything. She is the only one who genuinely thinks about me." Margaret

"The phone calls make me feel like I am not alone." Constanta

More confident

"[Having a befriender] just helps me cope with life and certainly the lockdown. Makes me feel like I'm still alive, that I'm a person, that I matter." Karen

"[The phone call] improves my confidence for a few days." Rachel

"It cheers me up. Makes me feel better about myself. I feel good after every Tuesday phone call." Walter

"My befriender teaches me Spanish, little words, which give me confidence. I am knitting things for his sister who is expecting a baby. It is going to be a surprise!" Angela

"It's like a tonic to me. Better than a dose of medicine." Ruth

More connected

"I enjoy the calls. He makes me laugh. All I dae is laugh. I get a laugh with him, you know. I feel as if I've known him for ages, you know." Betty

"Zoe caled me yesterday when I felt a bit down and she cheered me up. Weekends are sometimes too long, but she always cheers me up." Betti

"Becca's half my age and it gives me confidence that I now know I can converse with younger people." Walter

"I really enjoy finding out things that we have in common, like we both used to visit youth hostels back in the day." Angus

"Ingrid [my befriender] is very friendly and helpful. We have a laugh. She is a good person." Ruth

Quotes from Volunteers

"We don't run out of things to chat about, family, friends as well as how she is feeling about Covid, doing her zoom groups, music etc. My befriender said she feels it is making a difference and it certainly gives a positive start to my day."

"I live by myself too so it has been good to stay in touch with someone."

"Befriending has helped me cope during difficult times and to have a structure to my week."

"Befriending helps me feel connected."

"During normal times it is difficult enough for an elderly person living alone but the pandemic exacerbates this and it is helpful for both of us to be able to talk to someone who is not family about worries and concerns."

"My befriender feels less lonely now and has someone to talk to. She feels able to tell me about her feelings without risking upsetting anyone as I feel she doesn't feel she can complain to her family."

"My befriender repeatedly tells me how important the conversations are and how she feels she can tell me anything and get any worries off her chest. I benefit too - she's lovely!"



A Volunteer's story: Rachel

"I feel that I have come to know Margaret, my befriender, very well and can tell within a couple of seconds of her answering the phone how she is coping with issues in her life. When things are difficult for her, I know that it helps her to offload them in our conversations and hopefully I can provide her with some reassurance on her concerns. She's a real worrier although now I think she sees that she worries way too much sometimes and she laughs at herself. Especially when she looks back on things she was losing sleep over (like changes to medication) that are now second nature to her.

I feel that she is always happy to hear my voice which allows me to switch off from my own family concerns. I feel that she brings me out of my shell to be honest. She has certainly helped my listening skills.

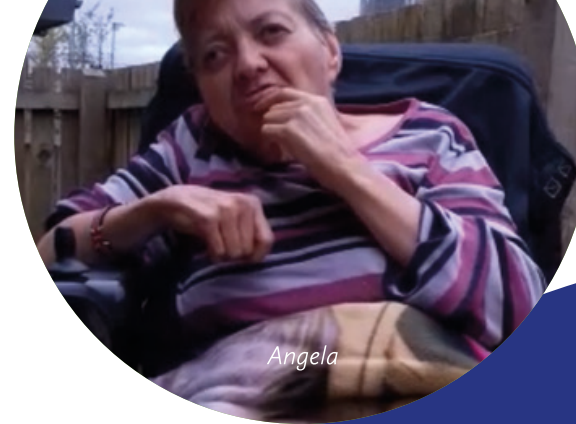
She shows genuine concern for my mum and loves to hear what I get up to in the garden or how well my dog is behaving. We regularly talk about food and plants – always swapping recipes and gardening tips. It's quite incredible that I don't even know what she looks like and yet I feel I know her so well. She broadens my mind too. She has travelled widely and has experienced a lot and shattered my innate prejudices.

And we are both looking forward to meeting face to face and having our long awaited curry together!"

Marketa, Rachel and Margaret's coordinator:

Rachel approached us during the lockdown because she saw the urgency and seriousness of the situation. Being already trained but never matched she was a little bit nervous about her first call. However, her worry was needless as her genuine and caring personality could win anybody's heart.

Despite never meeting Margaret in person, they are very close and cherish each other's company. Margaret confides in Rachel who is always there to listen (even when she is on holiday!), give a little advice or simply to share a delicious recipe. I feel that they couldn't have found a better friend for themselves.



Angela

Client stories

Angela & Geoff

Geoff, volunteer

I wanted to become a befriender because I saw that loneliness and the desire for connection is such a correctable problem. It can be really fulfilling in your own life to have someone to talk to week by week. So the fact that I could be that for someone else, it was really a no brainer.

Since the beginning of lockdown, it has been different. But it's still been very fun. Me and my befriender, I think we have a good blend of being able to have upbeat conversations – we talk about music and stories that have happened in her life which is really fun. But also we can balance that with the more difficult conversations if she's going through a more difficult time. And I just love how I've been able to find her and she's been able to find me! And we would never have otherwise met which is just really cool. I'm so excited to return back to that when we can resume the face-to-face meetings because she has recently bought a Wii and we have promised that we are gonna be playing Sonic and Super Mario... so very excited to do that. Although we've only been matched for less than a year, I feel like we are each very grateful for one another and we are better people because we have been introduced to one another. I'm very grateful that I became a volunteer."

Angela, befriender

"I like the befriending scheme because Geoff's so good with me! I would like to see him properly because he's so good. We tried to meet but we haven't met yet! I would be miserable if he didn't call back! I would miss Geoff."

Volunteer Coordinator (Marketa)



Geoff

"When I was planning the first matching visit with Angela and Geoff, I did not expect this match to be as successful as it is. Angela and Geoff are both bubbly, full of life. They are creative and love learning from each other. I can see the difference in Angela's life since she was introduced to Geoff. She cares for him a lot and worries about him when his call is a little bit delayed. Recently Geoff's sister had a baby for whom Angela knitted a little jumper. I am aware that this particular time is very difficult for Angela, but I personally think that knowing that she will see Geoff again keeps her going."

Jennifer & Janette

Jennifer, volunteer

"Janette is absolutely superb. We've never met in person because I was matched with her at the start of the pandemic. Even through the telephone her enthusiasm, her character and her strength come through. She just has the same passions and just all-round goodness that she would have had 50 years ago. And it's just been really great to see that as we get older, that innate part of ourselves keeps us strong and keeps us going and makes us who we are and we can pass it on to younger generations, which I'm benefiting from. So thank you."

Janette, befriender

"I was introduced to The No.1 befriending service before the pandemic, and I was thoroughly enjoying all the things that I was asked to be involved in. But then the pandemic came and – could I just say that that was a lifeline. A lifeline for myself and I know a lot of other people would feel that as well. Because I was already struggling with my husband being in a nursing home and not being able to see him. That had a big impact on me.

But then, along came Jennifer! And Jennifer is just a lovely, lovely girl. She's bright, she's sunny and the age gap between us makes no difference, absolutely no difference! And I feel she's my friend. And we talk and talk and talk and talk. And it's so easy, it's not forced or anything like that and what we've started doing is a little quiz. Maybe just three questions each. Just topical questions, historical questions, it's lovely. You're never too old to learn, that's what I say! I learn from what Jennifer's asking me and I know she's learning from what I'm asking her. She's lovely, just a ray of light and I always feel uplifted after speaking to her and I so, so appreciate it."

Volunteer Coordinator (Marketa)

"Jeanette used to visit our Cup of Friendship events every month but she never expressed a wish to have a befriender. When the pandemic hit, we were concerned about the clients like her who were left without any support. I asked her if she would like to be befriended and she surprisingly agreed! Jeanette was matched with lovely Jennifer, our colleague and volunteer and they make a great team. They love talking to each other, even when Jennifer is on holiday. If I had to think about a positive thing that Covid-19 brought, it would be exceptional relationships that were created during this challenging time, which would never have a chance to happen otherwise."



Janette



Shonagh

Walter & Becca

Walter, befriender

"Initially I didn't want a befriender. It was friends that kept on at me to try it. Eventually I caved in and said, 'Yeah Ok I'll give it a go' and it turned out to be the best thing I ever did. It's been fantastic. I remember the first call was on a Thursday night and I was a bit nervous. And when Rebecca phoned me, oh it was so easy to talk to her. It was brilliant. She was first class and I remember thinking, 'yes, I've made the right choice in signing up for this. This is going to be good.'

[Now] there are no barriers up. It's so free and easy. It's like we've known each other for years and we can talk about anything and we laugh a lot. It's as if we have known each other as close friends for years. Becca [my volunteer] is one fantastic lady. Easy to communicate with and she takes a genuine interest in me and what I do and I do the same with her. It's my highlight of the week. Tuesday at half 5, the phone call. She is fantastic and although we've never met personally. We both agree it's a friendship that was built up on the phone and that makes all the difference."

Becca, volunteer

"I've done a lot of reading on the impact on loneliness across the UK and was quite taken aback by the figures. It absolutely broke my heart. So I looked into befriending and came across The No.1 Befriending Agency and I just thought – although I can't obviously solve it altogether, even if I can speak to one person and get to know them individually then that's the best thing I could do.

In the beginning we didn't really know each other that well, but I could tell that we were going to get along just from that first phone call. We're just like old pals now! He absolutely cheers me up, and I think we've identified that we have the same sense of humour, and what our interests are. Honestly, it's one of the highlights of my week."

Volunteer Coordinator (Shonagh)

"It has been a delight witnessing the development of Walter and Becca's relationship. From that first nervous introductory phone call the relationship has developed organically and become a source of great joy for both of them. They both eagerly await the time they can physically be in each other's company and I'm hoping I can 'gatecrash' and share in their happiness when the time comes!"

Group Befriending

Cup of Friendship

Prior to the pandemic, we held monthly group events in two locations in Glasgow, where older people who would otherwise not be able to experience going out could come together for a wee chatter, cup of tea and live folk song music. The Volunteer Coordinators, with the help of volunteers, delivered a variety of activities each month, including quizzes, arts and crafts sessions, reminiscing discussions etc. Every month we would have a sing-along, which was very popular and cherished by clients.



Plate of Friendship

For Christmas 2019 we were able to host a lovely 'special edition' of our monthly Cup Of Friendship events: the Plate of Friendship. The event was a real coming-together for three completely different organisations: the space and the chef and some attendees were brought by Yoker Parish Church, the ingredients for the meal by The Real Junk Food Project, the entertainment by the No.1 Gospel Choir, and precious gift-packages for all attendees by John Mckay Jewellers. The result was an excellent three-course Christmas meal for some of our befriendeds who would otherwise have been completely isolated over the holidays, and an event that was just buzzing with joy, laughter and a festive spirit.



Virtual events

Our project to start up virtual events to replace Cup of Friendship was funded by the Scottish Government's Wellbeing Fund as part of the Connecting Scotland initiative, and its purpose was to connect socially isolated and vulnerable people while they were self-isolating or unable to go out. A project and an events coordinator were recruited as well as a project administrator with an IT support role. The project really hit the ground running from August, offering a variety of events from day one. Attendees were given the IT equipment and received IT training so there would be no barriers to participation.

Of course, it wouldn't be a 'No.1' project without the involvement of extremely talented and passionate volunteers, and a variety of ideas to keep people engaged. We had political discussions with MSYP and Social Sciences student Catherine, fitness sessions with occupational therapist Scott, 'live' music with professional musicians Pete Parisetti and Crawford Smith, arts and craft sessions with Charlotte from Impact Arts, virtual walking tours, murder mysteries, creative writing sessions...the list goes on. Occasionally, a pet also joined us to steal the show!

Here is what some of the attendees had to say:

"I don't know what I would do without family, friends and these clubs. I call your club 'Gloom Buster' as it takes a gloom of Alzheimer's away." - Rena

"I wish I had known how to do this months ago. I never thought I'd even get this far. It's amazing." - Anabelle

"I really enjoyed the zoom [yesterday] and it brought back memories. Today is the 8th Anniversary of my husband's death and he always sang one of the songs that Crawford sang today - Wild Mountain Thyme. It was a song we always sang together." - Lesley

"[My mom] is enjoying your virtual events SO much. She was at the disco yesterday and being able to request tunes that are special to her and share Bob (the Shih Tzu) with everyone else means a lot to her. She was so upbeat in my call and was inviting me along to Friday's Cup of Friendship so I can meet Bob!"
- Email from attendee's daughter



Examples from a facilitator's notes

13 August

Catherine, a volunteer, was delivering her first presentation to the group of places to see around Glasgow. We saw House for an Art Lover, Pollok Park, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow City Chambers and Pollok House. Rebecca, an attendee, reminisced about working with a children's group and visiting Pollok House and, whilst there, being given period clothes to dress up in to get the full experience! This is something our volunteer, Catherine, did in her P6 too. Everyone said they really enjoyed revisiting the memories and going through the photos, especially as it's hard to get out and about at the moment.

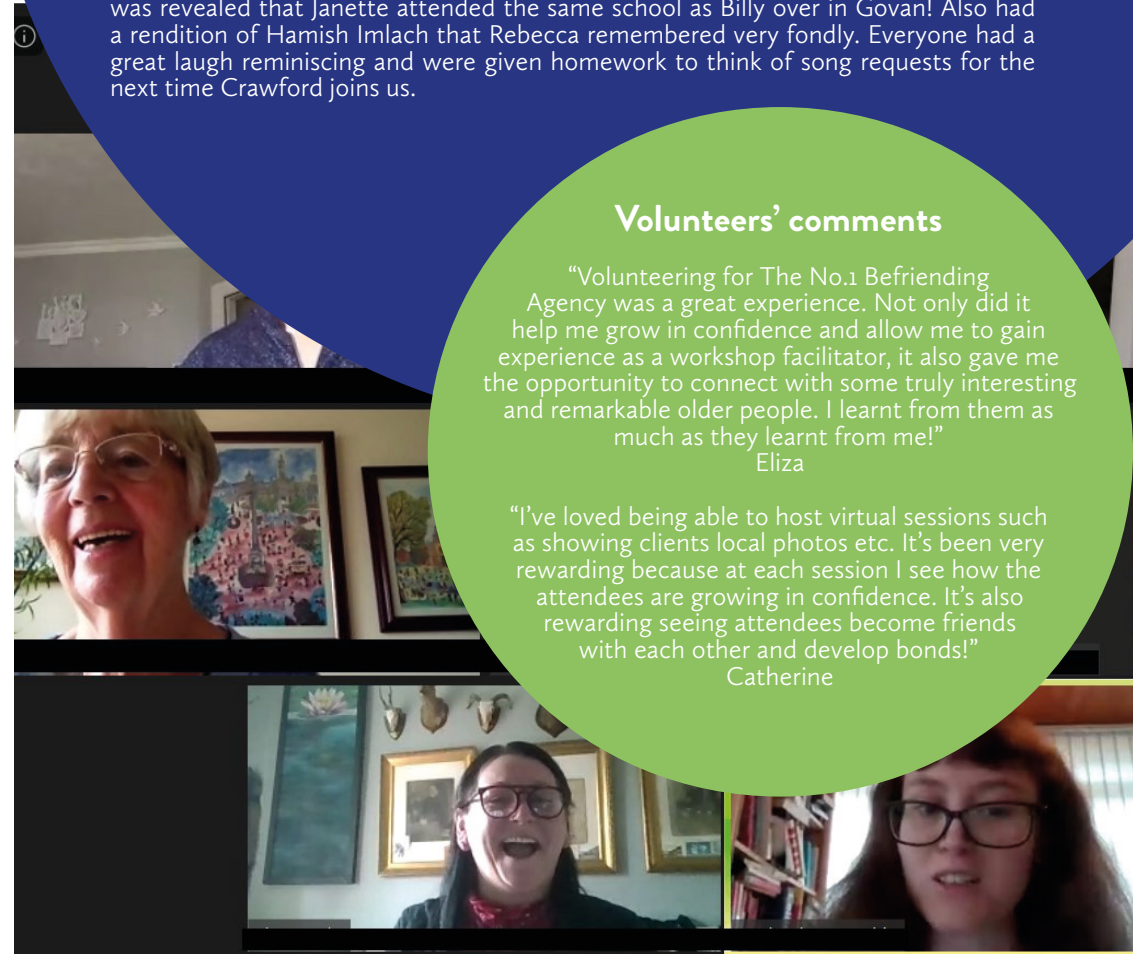
2 September

We had our usual fitness workout from Scott (Mr. Motivator) which got everyone raring to go. Then welcomed Crawford Smith for the first time to our events - who brought with him an amazing repertoire of songs to perform for us. This included Elvis, Steeler's Wheel and even a tribute to Big Yin himself after a performance of "I Wish I Was in Glasgow" with one of Billy's more sentimental performances - after which it was revealed that Janette attended the same school as Billy over in Govan! Also had a rendition of Hamish Imlach that Rebecca remembered very fondly. Everyone had a great laugh reminiscing and were given homework to think of song requests for the next time Crawford joins us.

Volunteers' comments

"Volunteering for The No.1 Befriending Agency was a great experience. Not only did it help me grow in confidence and allow me to gain experience as a workshop facilitator, it also gave me the opportunity to connect with some truly interesting and remarkable older people. I learnt from them as much as they learnt from me!"
Eliza

"I've loved being able to host virtual sessions such as showing clients local photos etc. It's been very rewarding because at each session I see how the attendees are growing in confidence. It's also rewarding seeing attendees become friends with each other and develop bonds!"
Catherine



'Bringing Hope' Project

In June 2020 we received emergency funding from the National Lottery Community Fund for three months, to reach as many new clients as possible and match them with new telephone befriending volunteers, as well as to recruit shopping volunteers and provide a shopping and prescription pick-up service to help ease the practical problems of lockdown. Twenty new matches were made and, after seven months, twelve of those continue today. (The impact of these matches can be found in the one-to-one befriending section of the report.)

Jennifer, project-volunteer coordinator:

"I think that the difference this project made was huge. Many conversations I had with potential clients who did not ultimately go ahead still involved me putting their minds at rest and being a sounding board - so the whole process went further than just the befriending outcome.

Some of the stories I heard will stick with me, because they show how the impact the service can make on an individual's life can be huge, even if we just look at it on a case-by-case basis.

The matches I made were of high calibre volunteers. Due to Covid furlough/unemployment etc, people were very engaged in reconnecting with their community and had a real appreciation for older people. This meant there were more volunteers, so close matches could be made - which was really important seeing as how many older people were in desperate need of companionship and finding things so tough."



Govan Unity Outreach Project

This was a short-term project with funding secured from the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund, awarded to organisations working under the Govan Thriving Places heading. The aim was to utilise our befriending services and build collaborations with key stakeholders in the community. Holly, the Outreach Officer working on this project has created 15 partnerships in the local community, as a result of which we managed to reach 7 new clients and 21 new volunteers from isolated or vulnerable communities, all in just a month. We have provided seven devices to clients, to facilitate telephone and virtual communications with their befriendees.

Holly, Outreach Worker:

"It has been great to see the community come together in this challenging time and help each other to reduce loneliness and isolation in Govan. I'm looking forward to seeing the impact of this project as partnerships continue and where this work takes the No.1 Befriending Agency in the future."

Elderpark Housing Association - Food Befriending Project

The Elderpark Food Befriending Project marked our partnership with Elderpark Housing Association and the Befriending Food Experience and launched in February 2020 to tackle loneliness among elderly and socially isolated residents in Govan. It is an ongoing project with the aim to provide companionship and increase connections and confidence. The idea for the project was initially that the volunteer befrienders would be visiting the person they were matched up with in their home to cook and share a meal, however, these matches are now going on via the telephone until home-visits are considered safe again. Our colleague, Marketa, works on this project three days a week, using our robust volunteer recruitment, training, matching and support procedures and befriending policies to ensure the project is running smoothly and everyone is supported.

Marketa, Volunteer Coordinator:

"Hearing the news that Elderpark Housing Association and Befriending Food Experience wanted to have a partnership with us made me really excited. Unfortunately, before things had a chance to really move forward, the pandemic hit. However, we decided to face this challenging situation and continue with our services in the form of telephone support. Since then, we were able to establish a couple of new matches and witness these relationships growing into something precious and special. With the current situation and increased need for human contact, I hope we will be able to reach out to even more lonely and isolated people."

Care

We are a company that exists for a social mission. In addition to befriending, we provide personal care services across Scotland. These are paid-for services and profit from them is reinvested into the organisation to create positive social change through befriending.

At The No.1 Care Agency, we employ the same ethos and practices as our well-established befriending service, matching service users with a hand-picked carer who not only caters to any medical, physical or mental needs, but can offer friendship and companionship that reflects their uniqueness, individuality and life experience. We deliver care services in several local authorities and we are commissioned to provide care around Scotland.

Our support at home service is a tailored person-centred care service for people who would like to receive the care they need in the warmth, safety and familiarity of their own home. There are three categories of this service:

- **24-hour care:** day and night care in service users' homes.
- **Sleepover care:** overnight support duty for all night, with morning assistance if needed.
- **Half day care:** minimum of 3 hours each visit. Can include shopping, household tasks and going out and about, personal care, companionship.
- **Befriending Plus:** based on companionship and can include certain elements of care, such as going for a walk or accompanying people to a social event, but does not include personal care. This service combines the best from both care and befriending. Through Befriending Plus, we support vulnerable people that are most at risk of loneliness, and empower them to live their life to the fullest and to be active in their community.

From a customer

"The No.1 Care Agency has been excellent in the care my mum has received. Audrey was able to quickly arrange 24hr care when we needed it urgently and the 2 carers my mum had were lovely. It was such a relief knowing my mum had a lovely carer with her 24hrs when we were unable to provide care ourselves. Mum's anxiety was greatly reduced and she felt safe and secure in her own home again. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the Agency to anybody who was considering home care or a befriending service for a loved one. Excellent company to deal with and lovely staff."

For more customer feedback and comments, visit our Trustpilot page.

From our carers

"As a carer, I spend time with the service user and the family to understand their goals and aspirations. This helps me to assess the service user's needs and what they are going through and how best I can support and care for the individual. This mindset helps me build a relationship with the service user and their families. I find it very rewarding to see the health and wellbeing of the individual changing for the better. The No.1 Care Agency's focus is on the difference the care service makes to an individual's life, rather than measuring service effectiveness by service volume, or number."

-Susan

"I have worked for different care agencies, but I found The No.1 Care Agency to be the best in meeting care needs of the clients as well as giving support to the carers. They are No.1 indeed!"

-Abigail



What's new

Amazing Woman Awards

Audrey, the founder and CEO of The No.1 Befriending Agency was nominated for and won The No1 Amazing Community Contribution Award at the No.1 Amazing Women Awards in March 2020. This is an annual award ceremony that celebrates the contribution of women to Scottish society.



Mental Health Training

Our volunteers received mental health awareness training and our staff mental health first aid training, in order to help us better serve our users and to clarify some of our misconceptions about mental health. One participant wrote: "I have learnt so much during this session. It's one of those things where you think you don't need it because you know enough already and come out thinking 'I can't believe I didn't know this before.'"

Volunteer Events

We aim to have a social event for our volunteers once every three months at least, and we kept this up in 2020. These events are entirely informal and offer a chance for our volunteers to meet and get to know each other, and also to meet the whole staff team. We almost always have something to nibble on and something to drink, as well as some entertainment in the form of live music. Our last two events were no exception, except that they were online, over Zoom.



Angela's prize

A quach, or 'cup of friendship' was awarded to Angela at our annual Volunteer Awards ceremony for her unwavering and generous spirit. Angela has been a befriender for a while and after the pandemic hit, she started fundraising for us. Every time we call her, she starts off with telling us how much she's already raised! When not out talking to people and fundraising in her neighbourhood in Maryhill, Glasgow, she is recording music and sings. She is an inspiration to us all!

Fundraising

We launched a fundraising campaign called a "Caring Cuppa" in July 2020 with the aim to raise funds to take our short-term projects, such as our virtual events, in the longer term. We also wanted to get equipment for more people, so they would be able to join our events online. Three fundraising volunteers joined the fundraising team.

Connie, our fundraising volunteer said:

"I began volunteering only recently, however, during this time I have brainstormed many different ideas. I have also been helping to remodel the database to make it easier to view and analyse donations and contributors. In the coming months I hope to help increase the visibility of the organisation. Through volunteering, I am already improving a number of skills, particularly using Microsoft access, as well as developing my creative and fundraising skills."

If you would like donate, please visit our website at www.befriend.org.uk/donate

Blog and website

Over the summer, we launched a new blog and a new website. Our blog is available on www.befriend.org.uk/updates and offers weekly updates on what we are getting up to.

Reminiscing with befriendees

In the height of lockdown, our volunteer coordinators came up with a toolkit for volunteers for reminiscing with their befriendees. The idea was to get people's mind off the stress of lockdown for a wee while and take a trip down memory lane, benefiting the volunteers as well as they got to enjoy the stories and learn about history and about life. A list of topics were provided and explored phone conversation. And who knows, maybe the result will be a No.1 book publication soon... We will keep you all posted!

Chair's Message

It's difficult to sit here, as I work in isolation from home, and describe the events of 2020. Since the turn of the year, the coronavirus has disrupted all aspects of our lives and placed unprecedented challenges on our health services, our economy, and our society more broadly.

It is the broader societal impacts that can be, in my view, often overlooked during times such as these, but they are there and they are lurking. For example, the national and local lockdowns have forced many of us into long periods of isolation to the point of feeling lonely. The mental health effects of being trapped with negative thoughts is now clear for me and I'm no longer ashamed to admit it. It can touch us all – regardless of age or size of family – and it's not a position that anyone wants to be in. The difference is that when the restrictions eased, many of us re-engaged with our family and friends as far as was practicable, and things got slightly better. However, there were many more who remained in isolation because that's the way of life for them, pandemic or not.

It is societal challenges such as these where organisations like the No.1 Befriending Agency are providing the most remarkable silent service. In the short time that I've been involved with the No.1 Befriending Agency I have been amazed at the team behind the organisation, and the role that it is playing in my hometown during such difficult times. I feel that it is my duty to help bring this impact to life each and every day, and I hope that I can encourage you to get involved by either volunteering, referring individuals who are lonely, or giving a small donation.

The case studies presented earlier in this report provide a small glimpse into this impact the No.1 Befriending Agency has on those that where, or indeed are, isolated and lonely. Engagements need not be long, nor need they be frequent: even a weekly phone call from our volunteers can help reduce loneliness, build connection, and make our clients feel supported. But what is remarkable for me when reading through these case studies is the growth in self-confidence and empowerment that such interactions have. Something so little can often be the highlight of the week for our clients - you can't put a price on that.



None of this would be possible if it wasn't for our remarkable volunteers. I had the pleasure of speaking to some of them during a virtual awards ceremony and really enjoyed listening to their befriending experience and why they got involved. What is clear to me from such conversation was that befriending has just as positive an impact on our volunteers as it does our clients. While the case studies above put some colour on this, you really need to hear it from the volunteers themselves to truly understand. How many times each week do you have a conversation when the other person is truly present and is genuinely interested in what you have to say? Even in a crowded room we can be lonely and volunteering is as good a way as any to help.

Finally, my deepest of gratitude goes to all the staff within the organisation. A changing environment can be a challenging environment and in the last six months I have seen the staff manage changes to the operations, the organisational structure, and the Advisory Board. It is refreshing to see everyone pulling together during these times to help support those in need. While there is no doubt that these challenges will persist throughout 2020, we have every confidence in your ability and determination to come out of this pandemic stronger and better able to tackle loneliness in Glasgow and throughout Scotland.

David Satti
Chair



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