



Brighton & Hove Neighbourhood Care Scheme



The Neighbourhood Care Scheme (NCS) enables people to offer support to older people, adults with physical disabilities and their carers who live near them. The main support provided is befriending and help with going out, but volunteers also support people around health and wellbeing issues (obtaining information, signposting to services, helping with medical appointments and encouraging healthy lifestyles). Since 1998, the NCS has grown from a scheme with 23 scheme members and 7 volunteers working in 3 neighbourhoods to one with 600 scheme members and 300 volunteers operating in 10 neighbourhoods of Brighton & Hove (see map). **In each of the last four years**, over 215 volunteers have provided at least 10,000 hours of support to 250+ isolated older people and people with physical disabilities.

In the Last five years

NCS is one of the biggest and most successful befriending schemes in the country, with a remarkable record in recruiting volunteers to provide one-to-one support to vulnerable people. In the last five years:

- 430 volunteers have provided support to over 500 older and disabled individuals.
- Volunteers have made 28,000 visits, providing 51,000 hours of direct support.
- On average we have matched 1-2 new scheme members and volunteers every week.
- We have run a training programme for volunteers that has helped to develop a culture of promoting health and wellbeing within NCS. In the last two years, 200 volunteers have received training, and we have systematically recorded actions they take to enhance the wellbeing of scheme members.
- We have gathered a wealth of data confirming the benefits of our activity for both scheme members and volunteers.

Our work has achieved national recognition (2009, National Finalists in the NHS Health & Social Care Awards, Mental Health and Wellbeing category; 2011, runners-up, *Guardian* Public Service Awards, Care for Older People category). In 2012, we obtained the Approved Provider Standard (APS) certification from the Mentoring and

Befriending Foundation (MBF) which recognises that we are able to carry out befriending work in a safe and effective manner: the assessment highlighted our volunteer and scheme member support processes as examples of good practice.

In the last year, 2013-14

- We have received 163 new referrals and provided 68 new scheme members with volunteer support for the first time.
- We received 145 enquiries about volunteering. We interviewed 82 potential volunteers, and accepted 55 new volunteers.
- 257 scheme members received 6135 and 10,136 hours of direct support from 217 volunteers.

Making a Difference

Scheme Members. Here is what a few of our scheme members said about the benefits of visits from volunteers in our Annual Survey:

*A woman aged 55-60 whose volunteer helps with "gardening and disposes of any rubbish to tip, takes [her] for occasional shopping trips, sewing odd bits and pieces, help with hair colour, listens to problems and many other bits and pieces". Said:
"I would be truly lost without the help I receive from my volunteer who I always look forward to seeing and can rely on her help."*

*A woman aged 85-94 said: "Jenny is wonderful, she comes every Friday, and we have a good talk. She helps with my appointments to the hospital, arranges the transport etc, and she helps me to understand letters and phones if needed. I enjoy her company, and she has been a life-line to me, and I do thank you for arranging for her to come.
I am on my own, Jenny phones often, and always asked if I need anything, as I said above, she is a life-line to me, my daughter lives in Cornwall, and her partner and herself come for visits, Jenny has met them, and I have met her mother, she is a very good person and friend."*

Overall, 90% of scheme members reported a benefit from volunteer visits, 66% generally felt better, 41% felt less depressed and 54% felt more connected to their local community.

There seem to be real psychological benefits to volunteers' visits. Feedback from volunteers as part of the Promoting Community Health and Wellbeing work suggests there are also very real health and safety benefits to scheme members.

Volunteers. Visiting through the NCS is definitely a mutually beneficial activity, with a remarkable 96% of volunteers reporting a benefit. As a result of their volunteering, 58% of volunteers generally felt better, 58% felt more connected to their local community, and 32% felt increased self-esteem. Here is what a few volunteers said:

"[I] visit a 74 year old man at his home once (2 hours) every two weeks. Sometimes go out for a walk or meal, but mainly stay in and chat. [It has] made me a happier kindlier and more positive person."

"[I] befriended someone with spina bifida. We meet on a weekly basis, mostly to chat, but sometimes go out for lunch locally. I also post letters for her and pick up magazines occasionally. Made friends with her and would miss seeing her. Going to see her makes me get out of the house. I have severe arthritis and sometimes have difficulty walking. If I didn't make arrangements to see her I might not get out at all."

This feedback is typical of survey results over the last five years.