



# WINTER WELLBEING

**2017/18 EVALUATION REPORT**

## Contents

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Objectives**
  - 2.1 Types of intervention
- 3.0 Approach**
  - 3.1 GP surgeries
  - 3.2 Hospitals
  - 3.3 Pharmacies
  - 3.4 Local businesses
  - 3.5 Local partners
  - 3.6 Sheltered housing units
  - 3.7 Door-knocking
  - 3.8 Re-engagement
  - 3.9 The project in practice: Streatham
- 4.0 Project in numbers**
- 5.0 Case Studies**
- 6.0 Evaluation**
  - 6.1 Project strengths and improvements
  - 6.2 Recommendations for future projects
- 7.0 Conclusion**

## 1.0 Introduction

**2.9 million older people in the UK feel they have no one to turn to when times are difficult**<sup>1</sup>. Winter is often the most difficult time of all: long, dark nights and icy pavements can make leaving home doubly challenging, while higher energy bills can bring added financial strain. That's why this year South London Cares ran its **fourth consecutive Winter Wellbeing project**: supporting people over 65 to keep **warm, active, healthy and connected** to people around them and also to the help they need, not just when times are difficult, but before they get difficult.

This year the project has been more crucial than ever. This is partly down to the extremity of this year's winter – “the Beast from the East” brought substantial snow in London long into March – and partly due to the mounting pressure on local services. In 2015, it was predicted that the over 65 demographic in Southwark would grow by 32% over the next ten years – the fastest-growing age group in the borough<sup>2</sup>. In Lambeth, it is projected there will be a 43% growth in the 60+ age group by 2031, compared to a 16% projected growth for all ages<sup>3</sup>. With the ever-rising cost of living, it is reported that one in 20 older people are unable to heat their home<sup>4</sup> and in Lambeth a quarter of people above retirement age are living in poverty<sup>5</sup>. Public sector cuts continue to affect care for older and disabled people; between 2011 and 2016 local authority spending on these groups fell by 11%, meaning **“growing numbers of people are outside the system, struggling with basic needs”**<sup>6</sup>.



Such **social, financial and environmental** conditions have the potential to create a crisis for older people: they can increase morbidity and mortality amongst an already at risk group, deepen pre-existing medical conditions, and have a serious negative effect on **mental and physical health**. They also make socialising or visiting relatives more difficult, impacting on **wellbeing** and adding to vulnerabilities.

South London Cares' Winter Wellbeing project has therefore been designed and delivered to ensure that a **community infrastructure** is in place to support a growing number of potentially vulnerable older neighbours to stay warm and well

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<sup>1</sup> Age UK, No one should have no one

<sup>2</sup> Southwark Demographic fact sheet

<sup>3</sup> Page 12, *Lambeth: State of the Borough 2012*

<sup>4</sup> Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report, 2015

<sup>5</sup> Lambeth State of the Borough 2016, p.34

<sup>6</sup> Elderly Britons bearing brunt of cuts to social care, report says, *The Guardian*, 15 September 2016

within their own homes – and to make services more accessible and relatable to people’s needs.

The project aims to reach isolated and people over 65 in Southwark and Lambeth. By identifying some of the most isolated neighbours within our community, we can be proactive, addressing concerns and providing reassurance and a sense of community during an otherwise difficult time of the year. And this sense of community continues year round: a 2014 survey of older people regularly engaged in our model found that **86% were better able to appreciate the world and 73% said their isolation had reduced** as a result of being part of activities. The benefits of community interaction and involvement is evident.



### **Our 2017/18 Winter Wellbeing project has been our most successful to date.**

We’ve reached out to more older people *and* gone onto provide interventions to a larger number of people than ever before, with a higher quality and variety of support. From October 2017 to March 2018 we spoke to **1,420 people about the project and the support we could offer, of which 367 people went onto receive further specific help with a combined total of 715 interventions.** This support has ranged from distributing grants so people could stop worrying about choosing between heating and eating, to delivering warm items to people’s homes, to connecting people to carers or helping them get online.



Of the 367 people receiving deeper support **283 were completely new to South London Cares.** One of those people was David, 67, who we met through Norwood Foodbank in the height of the February snow. He could not afford to pay his gas bill, and as a result was about to have his heating cut off, despite the fact that his doctor had instructed him it was imperative he keep his home

warm due to his multiple medical conditions. **That same day we were able to provide him with a grant so he could keep the heating on** – and we’ve also organised long-term financial and energy advice.

We’ve seen immediate as well as ongoing benefits from our interventions, as our older neighbours join in with South London Cares’ year-round Social Clubs and Love Your Neighbour (one-to-one friendship) programmes as well as other local activities. By strengthening neighbours’ social networks, we’re helping people to become **better connected to the rapidly changing world around them, and supporting people to become more resilient and better able to respond to future challenges.**

**Working more closely with primary care and local organisations and businesses has helped us to better identify people who we'd previously found hard to reach.** Our outreach at GP surgeries has increased by 40% since the last project and we've had more referrals from local organisations than in previous years. **Our partnerships with other organisations supporting vulnerable older people have strengthened** too, meaning we were able to more directly and efficiently get people to where they needed to be to lead happier and more connected lives.

*"It's so nice that you come to meet us in person rather than just getting this information through the door. It makes people much more excited and likely to get involved."* **Elizabeth, who we met at Guy's Hospital**

This report outlines the **objectives, method and impact** of this ambitious work. It evaluates what worked and what did not and compares it to previous projects to highlight the directions in which the project has grown and adapted and could further improve. Our hope is that this evaluation will **help us to reach and support even more older neighbours, even more effectively, in the years to come.**



*Some names used in this report have been changed to protect people's privacy.*

## **2.0 Objectives**

The core aims of South London Cares' Winter Wellbeing project are to identify people over the age of 65 at risk of isolation or struggling with the cold, and to offer **practical and emotional support holistically.**

This means:

- Enabling older neighbours to stay **safe and warm** within their own homes through **preventative** activities targeting exposure to **excess cold and fuel poverty;**
- Improving **access** for older neighbours to health and housing services and grants and benefits that they may be eligible for, through **information and direct referral** into local authority and third sector services;
- Ensuring older neighbours who are **socially isolated or at risk of isolation are identified and linked into community networks and activities** such as South London Cares' **Social Cubs** and **Love Your Neighbour** programmes.



## 2.1 Types of intervention

In order to fulfil our aims and adapt to the needs of older people in south London, this year we offered a wider range of interventions with more substantial support than in previous years. This year we:

- Offered a face-to-face visit or phone call to talk about our winter support and connections to free activities with South London Cares' **Social Clubs** and **Love Your Neighbour** programmes;
- Delivered **blankets, gloves, hats, thermal socks, thermos flasks and scarves** to neighbours struggling with the cold;
- **Awarded small grants of up to £100** for people facing fuel poverty or rapidly changing circumstances related to winter which might deepen isolation and/or anxiety. The grants could be used to pay for gas and electricity directly, or towards items such as heaters, duvets or winter coats;



- Helped with **energy saving at home** in partnership with the Seasonal Health Interventions Network (**SHINE**) which provided home visits to:
  - Install insulation adaptations;
  - Help people to understand their energy bills and switch energy suppliers when they could be on a lower tariff;
  - Check if people were eligible for money off their water bills;
  - Share tips on how to be energy efficient;



- Referred to **Age UK Lambeth and Age UK Southwark and Lewisham's Safe and Independent Living (SAIL)** schemes which provided holistic help looking at **social connection, benefits advice, house adaptations, occupational therapy needs, social care provisions and health advice**;
- Applied to grant giving bodies such as **Friends of the Elderly** and **Aft Aid** for people facing ongoing financial hardship;
- Supported people with computer repairs at home through **Ability Net**;
- Referred to local authority-provided services and other agencies (including Adult Social Services, Black Prince Trust, Centre 70, Citizens Advice, CoolTan Arts, Connecting U, GoodGym) to address issues such as complex **mental health needs, social care, legal and housing issues and wellbeing**;



- **Signposted** to organisations ranging from Tai Chi classes to local transport support;
- Gave people **information** and leaflets outlining good winter health through:
  - Flu vaccinations;
  - Heating checks and home insulation;
  - Ensuring sufficient food is in place;
  - Preventing falls.

### **3.0 Approach**

Unlike our sister charity North London Cares, which this year ran its seventh consecutive Winter Wellbeing project in close partnership with Camden and Islington’s Public Health department, South London Cares was unable to obtain access to lists of addresses of neighbours over the age of 65 from our partner local authorities (due to differences in data protection approaches). We therefore thought creatively about how we could identify older people who were struggling and/or isolated in the colder months, building on innovations we had tested in our three previous years delivering this project.



**Given that by the age of 65, “most people will have at least one long-term condition and by the age of 75 most will have at least two”<sup>7</sup>**, primary care providers work with some of the most vulnerable older people and potentially the most in need of support. The project in 2016/17 was the first of its kind to prioritise GP surgeries and pharmacies in order to reach more vulnerable older people. Building on this, we began this year’s project a month earlier. This enabled us to strengthen our relationships with primary care, not only **linking in with more GP surgeries and attending flu jab clinics across the boroughs, but also hospitals** to connect with people who are otherwise hard to reach.

As the interventions we offer have deepened and expanded, we recognised we could further support people living in sheltered housing schemes which we had visited during previous Winter Wellbeing projects. We therefore re-prioritised **door-knocking in sheltered housing**: reconnecting with schemes we had not visited for two years and door-knocking at sheltered housing units we had previously never visited.

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<sup>7</sup> *Making our health and care systems fit for an ageing population*, The King’s Fund, David Oliver, Catherine Foot, Richard Humphries <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/making-our-health-and-care-systems-fit-ageing-population>

Over 6 months, from October 2018, we prioritised 9 areas in Southwark and Lambeth:

- West Norwood;
- Camberwell;
- Elephant and Castle/Walworth
- Streatham;
- Dulwich;
- Clapham;
- Peckham;
- Brixton;
- Bermondsey.

In previous years, we tried to fit all the outreach for one area into one week. However, it was common for partners to get back to us once our area of focus had moved on, or to be unable to accommodate us in the week we were hoping to be in the area. Therefore, this year we took a more flexible approach and worked in waves of engagement focusing on partners rather than areas. Each wave identified and connected with the following groups in the order presented below:

1. GP surgeries;
2. Hospitals;
3. Pharmacies;
4. Private and council supported sheltered housing schemes;
5. Supermarkets;
6. Cultural and religious groups;
7. Previously uncontacted community groups.

Our outreach work within each of these groups is highlighted in the next section.





### 3.1 GP surgeries

This year our **innovative partnerships with GP surgeries** were an important part of the Winter Wellbeing project. We aimed to connect with two or three GP surgeries in each area by emailing or writing, outlining the project and offering to come into the surgery to promote public health winter messages, as well as talking to older patients about different ways that we and other services could help.

This year we began the project a month earlier, in October 2017, and had been contacting GP surgeries a month prior to this date to spread awareness. As a result, for the first time since South London Cares' Winter Wellbeing project began in 2014, we were able to work alongside GP surgeries at **flu jab clinics**. Flu jab clinics begin towards the end of September and are concentrated in the month of October. As the effects of the flu can be more pronounced and potentially life threatening for people over the age of 65<sup>8</sup> the NHS offer free vaccinations every year for older people.

As well as allowing us to reach more people, tapping into these flu jab clinics deepened our partnerships with GP surgeries across the boroughs, opening up opportunities for **different types of surgery outreach**. We spoke at festive gatherings, self-help week and Patient Participation Group (PPG) events, as well as staff meetings, and set up our own information stands in waiting room areas. This **pro-active and visible approach** allows us to be preventative in our efforts by reaching people before they become emergency cases and reassuring those who may need support in the future.

During this year's Winter Wellbeing project, we've worked with 12 GP surgeries in total. As a direct result, we spoke with 156 people over the age of 65 of which 30 have received deeper interventions.



Dougie, 76, who we met at the Hurley Clinic Warm and Well event told us **“All my friends are dead or dying. I worry I’ll then be alone”**. He’s since signed up to our social clubs where he’ll be able to come along to free regular film clubs, technology workshops, quizzes and much more.

*“We know that loneliness is linked to an increase in use of NHS services and is a serious public health issue. This is why it is important that health services and charities offering support to older people work together to identify and reach the most vulnerable. This early offer of support is essential to help reduce strain on local services this winter.”<sup>1</sup> Marcus Rand, Campaign to end Loneliness.*

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

## Case Study

*We met Muriel, 89, at a flu jab clinic in Crown Dale surgery, West Norwood. She told us that she loved her garden but was feeling less confident on the steps with winter approaching and hoped to have a hand rail installed so she could continue enjoying getting outside. We were able to support her in contacting the council and then Age UK to get a rail installed by their Handyperson Service.*

### 3.2 Hospitals

As a result of strengthened primary care connections, we were invited along to Guy's and St Thomas' Older People's Day event in October. It was here that we met Kathleen, 69. Upon hearing about our free social clubs she told us, **“This has made my day, I didn't know activities like this existed for people like me!”**

At the event we were invited to **partner with Guy's Physiotherapy Department**. Since November 2017 we've been speaking regularly at their Strength and Balance classes about the support we and other local organisations can offer. We've spoken to 32 people and counting through this type of primary care outreach which will now become a part of our year-round engagement with older people in the two boroughs.

While we are unable to reach every older person who is admitted to hospital, we have been able to reach more people through dedicated members of staff, keen to learn about opportunities for patients in the community which they can refer directly into. During this year's project we have been along to talk to occupational therapists at St Thomas's and Dulwich Community Hospital. We've also linked up with King's College to talk at one of their Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings.



## Case study

We met Nerissa on our very first day of the project at Guy's Hospital. She told us that she missed how active and social she used to be, but now because of her painful arthritis she can't do what she once used to. As she often stays indoors, and doesn't get much of a chance to make new friends, we gave her a **blanket** to help her keep warm at home, referred her to **SAIL** for local exercise classes and have put her in touch with **GoodGym**, who are looking to find Nerissa a local buddy to visit her for a chat and a cup of tea each week.

## 3.3 Pharmacies

This year we decided the most efficient use of our time was to ask to leave leaflets and posters in local pharmacies. Through our connections with the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC), we were given a list of all pharmacies in Southwark and Lambeth. This enabled us to contact local pharmacies, 15 of which agreed to display Winter Wellbeing posters and leaflets.

We continued to also visit Hills Pharmacy throughout the project, a long-standing partner of ours since May 2016. This type of pharmacy outreach saw a member of staff embedded within the pharmacy for a couple of hours, to identify older people by connecting with customers through conversation. We replicated this approach with five other pharmacies.



## New partnership with Day Lewis

Historically we've struggled to work with larger chain pharmacists due to restrictions from their head offices, **but this year, for the first time, we were able to work with Day Lewis Pharmacies**. This relationship was set up through a South London Cares volunteer who manages five Day Lewis Pharmacies in our boroughs, highlighting how valuable our connections across the different South London Cares programmes can be. As a result of this outreach we spoke to 19 older people.



The importance of this engagement with the community was underlined when we met Moosa, 72. He was worried about how high his fuel bills had been over the last three months, and the mould that had developed and spread throughout his house. Though his landlord agreed to repaint it, Moosa was aware that this would not solve the problem. We've been able to refer him to SHINE for a visit from an energy doctor who has helped him to look over his high bills and offer advice on how to heat, insulate and ventilate his home more affordably.

### **3.4 Sheltered housing**

Over the course of the project we visited 29 sheltered housing units, compared to 18 last year.

The majority of our interactions in sheltered housing units this year were door-to-door, one-to-one. Typically, we created a flyer, which the scheme manager circulated to all the neighbours in the unit a week before we visited. This meant people were more receptive to us: they knew we were coming and had already had an introduction to South London Cares' activities and vision – and the objectives of the Winter Wellbeing project – making them more likely to answer the door and be open to a chat.

On a few occasions, where we had previously visited sheltered housing units and where managers did not want us to go door-to-door, we were invited to speak at their tenants' meeting and/or coffee mornings were set up. In these settings, there can be difficulties getting people to talk about any problems they might be facing with other people around them listening in. To tackle this, we outlined that we were available to speak one-to-one after the group meeting or at a later date.

#### **Case study – sheltered housing**

**107 people we met through sheltered housing engagement received an intervention.** That includes Agatha, who we met while door knocking. She shared some challenges she was having with her flat, including a cooker that was being held together with duct tape. We successfully applied to **Friends of the Elderly** for a grant to buy a new cooker on her behalf. She is now looking forward to spending weekends cooking with her grandkids. We also put her in touch with **Age UK's Handyperson** scheme, which is helping with some minor house repairs and we delivered Agatha a **hat, gloves, socks and a fuel grant** to help her keep warm at home. To make sure she stays warm at home longer term we've linked her up to **SHINE** to install energy saving measures and ensure she is getting the best deal on her bills.





We also met Jan at her sheltered housing coffee morning. Jan was keen to meet more people in the area, but was hesitant at first to get involved. After finding out that there were people from all walks of life involved she was excited to meet new people at our free social clubs. That very same week she joined us at a cinema social club we had organised at The Ritzy, and also met up with her younger neighbours at our Kennington Pub Club.



### **3.5 Local businesses**



We spoke to staff at over 90 businesses in Southwark and Lambeth who agreed to publicise the project: as a result **we received 35 calls from people who had seen our poster or leaflet in a local shop.**

For the second year in a row, our partners at Team London Bridge encouraged professionals in their network to donate new warm items of clothing – which were then delivered to older neighbours who had told us that they were feeling the chill at home.

Through our relationship with Team London Bridge, we were introduced to Essentia who similarly donated new warm items for us to hand out to older neighbours through the Winter Wellbeing project. Another corporate partner, Octopus Investments, donated 30 large umbrellas to help keep older neighbours dry.

We also organised eight outreach events at four different supermarkets across the two boroughs during this year's project. We found that supermarkets were a particularly effective setting for reaching high numbers of older people, particularly those who might not already be linked up with services.

### **Case study: supermarket outreach**

We met Leo, 67, in a supermarket in December 2017. He was sat by himself in the café and at first seemed sceptical of the help we could offer. Eventually he told us that he had recently swapped energy providers and as a result had missed out on this year's Winter Fuel Payment. He relies on this money to be able to afford his gas and electricity and was worried about paying his bills. We gave him a grant to help him pay for his heating, and made a referral to SHINE for a home visit to ensure his home was energy efficient and bills were kept to a minimum.





### **3.6 Local partners**

An important part of the Winter Wellbeing project is connecting with other organisations across Southwark and Lambeth dedicated to supporting their communities: and we've seen the **positive impact made by working together**. An awareness and understanding of each other's resources and services enables us to help our older neighbours access the type of support that is right for them.

In fact, of the 715 interventions we made, 237 involved signposting or referring to charities and community groups including:

GoodGym, Age UK Southwark and Lewisham, Age UK Lambeth, Centre 70, Brixton Advice Centre, British Red Cross, Time and Talents, Home Cooks, The Clapham Park Project, The Black Prince Trust, Connecting U, Friends of the Elderly, Silver Line, Alzheimer's Society, Southwark Carers, Opening Doors, CoolTan Arts, Link Age Southwark, Contact the Elderly, The Posh Club, Ability Net, West Norwood Foodbank, and the Salvation Army Church Southwark.



And it works both ways: we made **28 deeper interventions** as a result of referrals to us from partner organisations. Meanwhile the Alzheimer's Society donated 10 warm blankets to the project.

Brian, the Director of local charity Centre 70, told us, **“It is of tremendous importance that community organisations work collaboratively to provide the full holistic wrap-around help needed by people, and to reach those most vulnerable, who otherwise might not access services, like the elderly. Our impact includes increased access to rights and entitlements and improved mental health and wellbeing; through working with partners such as you, we are able to achieve that.”**



We are also active members of the *Keep Warm, Keep Well* group in Southwark – bringing together representatives from organisations such as Citizens Advice, Southwark Council, Age UK Lewisham and Southwark, Red Cross and Time and Talents, to share resources, discuss plans, and report on progress in supporting older people during the winter months.

In Lambeth, we regularly attend the North Lambeth Local Care Network meeting which is made up of statutory and third sector organisations, and have played a

part in the discussions shaping the new “Lambeth Together” initiative aimed at helping people in the community get to where they want to be in a holistic way.

These initiatives set up in the two boroughs ensure that the brilliant and diverse help offered in Southwark and Lambeth addresses gaps, is more coherent, and better publicised.

**“The cheque of £100 that you sent to our client has made a huge impact on their wellbeing. They were able to top their electric meters and keep warm during the cold spell of last month. I think that working with different agencies enables us to offer better support to our clients.”** Flutra, Information and Advice Worker, Age UK Lewisham and Southwark

### **3.7 Door knocking**

One of the weaknesses identified in previous Winter Wellbeing projects was that a large proportion of time was spent engaging people in sheltered housing units, who in most cases already had access to practical support. We therefore wanted to reach more older people outside of sheltered schemes this year, but we were also aware that our approach of focusing outreach in GP surgeries, pharmacies and supermarkets could exclude people who were not able to get out of their homes – often the least active, healthy and connected people – so we also wanted to continue trialling ways of targeting people in their homes.

Last year, we worked with Springfield Estate to reach older people living there. This year we were able to connect with four Tenants and Residents’ Associations (TRAs) across the boroughs we work in, which helped us to reach isolated older neighbours living in social housing.



#### **Case study: Lindley Estate TRA**

We were invited along to door knock by Rose, the chair of Lindley TRA. Rose is well-known on the estate, and this – along with her knowledge of the older neighbours within the estate – meant we were able to target people, and gain their

trust, more effectively. She also led us to people she knew needed support such as Rosa and Liz: they had both been living alone without much social interaction. They are now signed up to receive our social clubs programme through the post each month and look forward to taking part in local activities. We also attended the Lindley Estate Annual General Meeting (AGM) where we were introduced to a member of Southwark Council who agreed to pass on our Winter Wellbeing message to all TRAs across Southwark. Hopefully, with these connections we can further expand our work to reach more people in the community.



### **3.8 The project in practice: Streatham**

In Streatham, we **spoke to 238 people over the age of 65** and 29 people received further help. These interactions took place in a deliberately wide variety of settings, including:

- Four visits to Streatham Common Sainsbury's;
- The flu jab clinic at Dr Masterton and Partner's;
- A stand at Streatham Ice and Leisure Centre's Celebrating Age Festival;
- Door-knocking at Cherry Tree Drive sheltered housing unit;
- Door-knocking at Ashley House sheltered housing;
- Running a Christmas quiz at the Valley Road Surgery with their Patient Participation Group (PPG);
- Speaking at a Warm and Well event run by a consortium of Streatham GP practices;
- Chatting to older patients at Day Lewis pharmacy;
- Talking to neighbours at Corpus Christi Church bi-monthly luncheon;
- We also put posters up and/or left leaflets in three corner shops, one café, four pharmacies, one betting shop and two other stores.



### **3.9 Re-engagement**

In September, **we wrote to the 982 older people** on South London Cares' Social Clubs mailing list, to introduce the Winter Wellbeing project, to offer help, and to mobilise advocates that helped us spread the word about the project.

During last year's Winter Wellbeing project, we piloted re-engaging with older neighbours on our mailing list through phone calls. This year we expanded this to call everyone on our mailing list who had never attended a social club or who had not been along for the past six months. Our aim was to encourage people to come along to clubs and offer winter help to people who needed it – and in the form of the call, help people to feel connected and visible during the winter.

We spoke on the telephone to 200 neighbours who are part of South London Cares' Social Clubs and Love Your Neighbour programmes. Of this number, 59 people received deeper winter related support. A further 249 letters were sent out to those we couldn't reach on the telephone.

*"Thank you for calling me... it's great that you show love and interest in your members."*

**Alhajie, 81 who received a re-engagement call and who we subsequently delivered a hat, gloves and socks to.**

#### **Case study: re-engagement calls**

We met Joan back in 2015, and caught up with her through this year's re-engagement calls. She told us that her arthritis meant it was now too hard to make it to our social clubs. We spoke to her about our **Love Your Neighbour** programme and she was thrilled to hear that she could still meet someone new even if she could not get out. In February 2018, we matched Joan up with younger volunteer Lauren, 27, and they've since been catching up once a week and bonding over their mutual love for David Attenborough documentaries and board games.





## 4.0 Project in numbers

Through South London Cares' Winter Wellbeing project in 2017/18:

- **1,196 face-to-face conversations** were held and **224 telephone conversations**;
- **367 older neighbours** received **further specific help**;
- **715 deeper interventions** were made in total;
- **165 people** received **more than one form of intervention**;
- **283** of the people who received deeper interventions were completely **new to South London Cares**;
- **2,750 leaflets** containing cold weather advice were given to older people in Southwark and Lambeth;
- **30 small grants of up to £100** were given to those in most urgent need – £1,890 in total;
- **277 blankets, hats, gloves, thermal socks** and other items of warm clothing were delivered to **118 people** who felt cold in their homes;
- **91 businesses** displayed South London Cares' Winter Wellbeing posters – further spreading the message of the importance of seasonal health;
- We gave Winter Wellbeing talks at **50 community events**;
- We had conversations with older people in **29 sheltered housing units**.



## 5.0 Case studies

Numbers are important, but they do not tell the whole story. Part of what makes the Winter Wellbeing project important is its highly personal approach: we treated every person we met as an individual, spending time listening to their problems (with no time limits to conversations, and follow-up calls), and helping people to access what they needed – regularly helping to make sense of confusing forms or online processes that are so fundamental to navigating the modern world.



Here are a few of those stories.

### Lupita

Lupita is going through a compulsory purchase order and due to the legal fees she is struggling financially. We successfully helped her apply for a Friends of the Elderly grant. When she heard the good news she told us, **“I’m delighted, it’s wonderful! This will make such a difference. Finally I’m going to be able to switch off for the first time in ages, this really eases my worries.”**



### Omar

We met Omar, 73, while door-knocking in Streatham. He was new to the area, though had previously lived close by in Brixton for 50 years. He initially was only interested in a blanket, hat and scarf to tackle the chilly weather. But as he got to know us he warmed to the idea of having someone visit once a week for a chat. In March 2018, we matched Omar up with younger volunteer Matilda, 24. They have a shared passion for cooking and also found out that they both have relatives living in Canada.

### John

We met John through **Norwood Foodbank**. They told us of John's difficulties with his home and his high heating costs. That same day we were able to send him a small grant which he could put straight towards his fuel bill. We also put him in touch with **SHINE** who offer free energy saving visits – they can install energy saving measures in the home, help with switching energy suppliers and give advice on how to reduce and save on bills.



### Dudley

Dudley dropped in at our office in December. He was cold and did not have many layers on, so we gave him a **hat, scarf and socks** to keep warm. He then came along to our Winter Party social club and Men’s Pub Club. We were also able to help Dudley with a **Dial-a-Ride application to help him get out and about**, and put him in touch with SHINE who arranged for an energy doctor to visit and **help him get a discount on his bills**.

## David

Initially David was introduced to South London Cares by a friend who suggested he might like to get involved with our social clubs. As soon as we had sent him the programme of events he signed up to Choir and Men's Pub Club. After chatting with him about the Winter Wellbeing project he shared with us his troubles keeping warm at home. We were able to deliver him a blanket, hat, gloves and flask.

## Maria

We met Maria at a flu jab clinic. She said that she was warm enough and had no worries about winter but her only concern was that she couldn't get her computer working properly. She had tried different companies but said they were all asking for £100 to just come out. We were able to link her up with an organisation called **Ability Net**, who do free IT support home visits for older people in the UK.



## 6.0 Evaluation

South London Cares' Winter Wellbeing 2017/18 was the fourth project undertaken in Southwark and Lambeth and in many ways the biggest project to date.

Over the years we've developed and adapted the project to ensure our work is relevant and responding to the needs of local people. Though we've made significant improvements we also recognise there are ways we would seek to improve it in time for winter 2018/19.

The following sections highlight strengths of this project, and acknowledge areas where we need to improve and develop.



## 6.1 Project strengths and improvements

Our Winter Wellbeing project is both ambitious in its scope and personal in its approach. This combination of breadth and depth makes it a challenging project to deliver, but the benefits for older people living in Lambeth and Southwark are clear. Specifically, we believe that this project was the best yet because:

- We focused on reaching older people without family or community support networks – people who are often more difficult to identify – and still managed to reach more older neighbours than in any previous South London Cares Winter Wellbeing project;
- We connected **367 people** to our own activities and other local community and statutory services – with a total of **715 interventions**;
- Between the start of the project in October 2017 and the end in March 2018 we've seen **121 new older neighbours attend social clubs** which translates



to a **24% increase in attendance** to social clubs during the Winter Wellbeing project this year (a 17% increase on last year's project);

- Starting a month earlier, in October, allowed us to participate in flu jab clinics across the two boroughs, taking a more preventative approach than ever before and raising the project's profile in the community and within primary care;
- The interventions we provided were thorough and efficient: people received more comprehensive interventions which were sorted faster. In part this was down to the strengthened partnerships we have with local community groups and organisations; in part it was due to a dedicated Outreach Officer working four days a week (rather than the two and a half days a week they worked in previous projects) – but it was also down to the **personal approach** and **lack of bureaucracy** (for example avoiding creating confusing forms for older neighbours to fill out), meaning people could relate to the project on a human level;
- Every older neighbour involved with our one-to-one Love Your Neighbour programme – the majority of whom are housebound and living alone – received a call to see if they needed any help over the winter months. As a result we made 56 interventions: a considerably higher take up than in previous years when we sent letters instead of calling;
- This year we worked with the Little Angel Theatre to coordinate performances of their new show 'Me and My Bird' for our Love Your Neighbour friends. So far, they've performed to seven of our Love Your Neighbour matches in our older neighbours' homes, making theatre accessible to older people who struggle to get out;
- We were able to execute the project **efficiently and to time**;
- We could offer a **greater variety of practical warm items** which could benefit more older neighbours throughout the winter months;
- Due to the generosity of our funders London Catalyst and supporters donating to The Big Give Christmas Challenge, we were able to offer **30 small grants** (10 more than last year's project) to people struggling with the cold;
- We made changes to our literature, creating posters as well as leaflets that gave more comprehensive public health messaging;



- This year the Winter Wellbeing project benefitted greatly from closer links to the Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE) and Age UK's Safe and Independent Living (SAIL). Both organisations quickly assessed our referrals (**42 to SHINE and 56 to SAIL**). The South London Cares team attended training so we knew exactly what a home visit would entail, and we had regular meetings with Age UK to keep up to date with progress and capacity on each side;
- The number of visits we've made to GP surgeries for outreach has increased by 40% since the last project and as a result we've seen an increase in interactions and interventions from primary care;
- We continued to **innovate** – using the team's expertise and knowledge to **re-engage with 449 older neighbours** who we had not heard from for some time, many of whom are now looking forward to being involved in our activities again.

## **6.2 Recommendations for future projects**

There are a number of challenges in delivering a project of this scale, and with so many people and moving parts involved. As a result, we have made many changes to the Winter Wellbeing project across the four years that it has been running in Southwark and Lambeth: it is adaptable to the changing needs of our communities and we are constantly looking to improve it. Below are some of the challenges we faced in delivering the project in 2017/18 and some recommendations for improving the project further in future years.

### **Reaching neighbours most at risk of isolation**

- Our focus on outreach in the community means we don't reach many people who are housebound.
- Hospital outreach enables us to reach those we perhaps usually wouldn't in the community; however it also leads to interactions with people living outside Southwark and Lambeth. As we don't have experience and connections in other boroughs it can be hard for us to signpost to relevant support.



**Recommendation:** We should work on improving the links we have with Tenants and Residents' Associations and housing estates, offering to do more community engagement within estates through leaflets, letters, door-knocking and attending meetings. This way we can hope to meet those who we may not meet out and about in the community while ensuring they live in the areas where we know the support and where we run our own programmes. We should also continue to work with hospitals, though a shift in focus towards engaging with members of staff to make direct referrals may enable us to reach more people who live in our boroughs who will benefit from what we can provide.



## Improving planning

- At the start of the project we were underprepared for how many offers we would receive from surgeries inviting us along to flu jab clinics. The majority of clinics take place over the same time frame in October, so we didn't visit as many as we would like to in the future.
- Supermarkets are a valuable venue for outreach; however we spent a lot of time at the beginning of the project trying to set up these partnerships. Getting hold of community champions is time consuming and the relationships can be hard to maintain as the community champion role comes second to their everyday function.
- By expanding the variety of warm items on offer we had much more interest in this type of intervention and as a result we had many more deliveries to make. On occasion we therefore struggled to get the items to people quickly. This issue was further exacerbated when one of our suppliers delivered blankets over two weeks late.



**Recommendation:** We should contact GP surgeries about flu jab clinics in early September to prepare our diaries for October. We should also ensure that the strong relationships that we have built throughout this year's Winter Wellbeing project are maintained throughout the year, focusing on maintaining and growing relationships at supermarkets, for example. In the planning stages of the project, we should also create a spreadsheet to help us with deliveries by location, and consider delivering items while doing outreach in an area or making deliveries via social clubs.

## Reaching new areas

- This year, part way through the project, we were given a list of all sheltered housing in Lambeth, and though we were pleased to see we had contacted many of these units, there are still many we weren't aware of and have yet to visit. This will likely be the case for Southwark too.
- Some of the areas we focused on this year either had no South London Cares social club nearby or only one per month. As a result, the number of outreach engagements that we held in these areas was significantly lower – such as in Bermondsey, Dulwich and Clapham.



**Recommendation:** By continuing to work closely with South London Cares' Social Club and Love Your Neighbour Programme Coordinators we can better identify the areas in which we generally engage with fewer older neighbours. In the areas in which we have less of a presence we should strongly consider increasing our Winter Wellbeing engagement efforts. Even if social clubs are too far away for people to attend, the message about keeping warm and the many forms of cold weather support we can provide will be beneficial, and we will likely reach more people we've never met before. We should also continue to seek out and engage with sheltered housing units we have not worked with before.

## **Interventions**

- This year due to increased funding we were able to distribute more small grants than before, which allowed us to widely promote them to other organisations who work with older neighbours at risk of falling into isolation or ill health as a result of the cold weather. However, it became clear that some of the referrals made to us were unsuitable, raising doubts about the understanding of what or who our grants were for.
- Our offer of warm items for people who were struggling with the cold was sometimes misconstrued to be "Winter Packs" (previously provided by Age UK) which were free for anyone, including people under the age of 65.

**Recommendation:** When working with organisations we should clarify exactly who our items are for: this could take the form of a crib sheet to send out to organisations who make referrals to us to show clearly eligibility and exactly what we could offer.

## **7.0 Conclusion**



South London Cares has run its most successful Winter Wellbeing project to date over the winter of 2017/18. Not only have we diversified and improved the ways we reach people who are hard to reach, we've also expanded and deepened the support our older neighbours have received.

Many of these successes have come from strong partnerships, whether that is linking up with hospitals and flu jab clinics for the first time – strengthening the ways we work with primary care – or connecting more closely with local Age UK branches, foodbanks and advocacy services to make referrals both ways. We are clear that to best support people, and to identify practical, social and emotional issues before they become emergencies,

it is vital to work closely with trusted community partners.

During the harshest and most isolating months of the year, the importance of our face-to-face outreach, embedded where people are – in supermarkets, at the doctors, or on the doorstep – is clearer than ever. **25% of the 1,408 older neighbours we spoke to took up an offer of help. Over a quarter of those people asking for help received more than one form of intervention.** Talking to someone person-to-person, building trust and rapport and checking in regularly helps people to feel connected and more likely to ask for help. This embeds a preventative and proactive approach, giving people the support and connections they need to live more fulfilling lives.

*“Thank you for coming to visit us – meeting face-to-face is really the best way to get to know someone.” Dadoo, 80*

It is clear that this project – which values conversation over tick-boxes, agility over bureaucracy, and combines passion with professionalism – is valuable. As well as providing interventions that both help to prevent and solve problems, the project received an overwhelmingly positive reaction from those who didn’t require further assistance. It is evidence that our project is a means of providing reassurance and strengthening ideas of community. Due to the success of this approach, this form of outreach is something South London Cares prioritises year-round, although we know its special value during the winter.

As we look to the future, we believe that the project has the potential to make an even bigger impact. Focusing efforts on engaging with people who live outside of sheltered housing units and within areas of Southwark and Lambeth where we have less of a presence will help us to reach even more people we have yet to connect with: perhaps those who are most in need of support. By strengthening lines of communications with local partners and organisations we will be able to work with greater efficiency when getting older people the support they need, whether that is referrals to or from South London Cares.



The Jo Cox Loneliness Commission recently reported that 200,000 older people in the UK had not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month<sup>9</sup>. This is why our people-centred outreach approach is so important: pro-actively striking up conversations and listening – rather than waiting for people to call us – is crucial in reaching and supporting our disconnected neighbours. For the investment that goes in, the outcomes are far-reaching. In the coming years, and taking forward the recommendations in this report, we hope to connect, support and bring the best parts of life to even more of our older neighbours across our rapidly changing boroughs.

**April 2018**

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to-government-wide-drive-to-tackle-loneliness>