

Brighton & Hove Neighbourhood Care Scheme in 2008-09

Our Most Successful Year Ever

1. Highlights

The Neighbourhood Care Scheme (NCS) is a good neighbour scheme that supports older people, people with physical disabilities, and their carers, by recruiting local volunteers to assist them in a variety of neighbourly ways. The year 2008-09 was the most successful in the history of the scheme. Here are a few highlights:

- Volunteers helped more people than ever before (208 individuals)
- Volunteers provided more support than ever before (7100 hours)
- We recruited a record number of volunteers (92)
- The number of volunteers increased by 50% to 210
- We started the scheme in Patcham and Hollingbury, our ninth neighbourhood.
- We gained Approved Provider Status (APS) accreditation from the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF)
- We attended a reception at 10 Downing Street to celebrate achievements in mentoring and befriending.

2. Achieving our Aims

This year we were working to the aims of our Next Step Project to April 2010. Here is how we performed against those aims:

- **To support more people by extending the number of neighbourhoods in which we operate (to 9) and recruiting more volunteers.** In 2008-09, we enabled 175 volunteers to provide more than 7000 hours of direct neighbourly support to 208 individuals. This is a 37% increase in the amount of support over the previous year. Recruiting 88 new volunteers, we increased the number of volunteers on our books by 50% to 210. By 31 March, we had 15 active volunteers in our new Patcham and Hollingbury neighbourhood.
- **To increase the involvement of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in the scheme.** There has not been a great increase in BME participation in the scheme. However, we have translated our publicity materials into Bengali, Gujarati, Chinese and Arabic. Focused recruitment has enabled us to find a volunteer to support a Gujarati-speaking woman.
- **To pilot new ways of working in neighbourhoods.**
 - Our new development in Patcham & Hollingbury was essentially a merger with a small good neighbour scheme already working in the neighbourhood.

- In Queens Park and Hangleton & Knoll, we worked as part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) 50+ Community Project which was very useful in developing interagency working and cross-referrals.
- We ran neighbourhood-based volunteer induction sessions in Coombe Road, Hanover and Patcham
- Responding to volunteer feedback, in 2009-10 we will be piloting local volunteer support meetings in one or two neighbourhoods.
- We began looking at ways of using key volunteers to take on more tasks in neighbourhoods. We will pilot this in 2009-10.
- **To increase financial and practical assistance from supporters and increase community fundraising.**
 - In 2008-09, we benefited from several successful fundraising events: a sponsored run by a staff member, a pub quiz, a family event.
 - In collaboration with the Impetus fundraiser, we have begun to draft a fundraising leaflet.
- **To use evaluation evidence to attract more statutory- sector funding support.**
 - The report of the 2004-2007 evaluation of the scheme was published in May 2008 by the Health and Social Policy Research Centre at the University of Brighton. Building on this, in 2007 and 2008, we have carried out outcome surveys of scheme members and volunteers.
 - The 2008 survey showed that 94% of respondents supported by a volunteer reported a positive benefit.
 - To date the evaluation data has not attracted new statutory-sector funding, but it has, along with our impressive output increases, enabled us to maintain our current levels of statutory-sector funding.
 - Our success this year has also attracted recognition from elsewhere. In 2008, for the second successive year, we are South-East Coast Regional Finalists in the NHS Health and Social Care Awards.
- **By 2010, to have a neighbourhood care scheme serving a population of c. 100,000 that might serve as a model for other towns.**
 - At the 31 March, with 210 volunteers and 520 scheme members, we were probably the largest good neighbour/befriending scheme in the South-East region. Our success in recruiting volunteers is certainly something other communities could learn from.
 - However, sustainability remains an issue. As the membership and volunteer base of the scheme increases, it is difficult to find the resources to adequately support the work. We are looking at ways of

using volunteers for a wider range of tasks, and increasing the efficiency of our resource use; however, finding even stand-still funding will prove difficult in the current economic climate.

3. Practical Details

Finances.

For 2008-09, our income and expenditure were as follows:

Income	£114,102
Expenditure	£116,893
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Deficit	(£ 2,791)
Reserves b/f	£20,679
Reserves c/f	£17,888

For 2009-10, our budget is £111,437, which includes using most of our operating reserves and cutting staff hours from 98 to 42 in December 2009.

Staffing

At 31 March 2009, the NCS staff team was: The Project Leader (0.8 full-time equivalent); 1 full-time Volunteer Co-ordinator; 1 part-time Volunteer Co-ordinator (0.4 fte); 1 part-time Administrator (0.6 fte).

4. Conclusion

In 2008-09, we were remarkably successful in harnessing the precious resource of neighbourly good will and putting it at the disposal of older people and people with physical disabilities who can benefit from it. However, we are again in 2009-10 in the position of being victims of our own success, having to find the resources to support 50% more volunteers and 25% more scheme members than in the previous year. This presents us with an urgent challenge, which we are addressing on two fronts.

First, we will be seeking funding to prevent the severe staff cuts we will be required to make in December, and so keep our staff team together.

Second, we are looking at ways in which we can work more efficiently, to optimise the use of the resources we do have.

It remains to be seen whether the most successful year in the history of the scheme will be followed by a year of enforced cutbacks and retrenchment from which it will be hard to recover.

Sean de Podesta

Project Leader

6 May 2009