

Chorlton Good Neighbours Care Group

A Profile of Volunteers' Motivations, Feelings and Perceptions

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Executive Summary

The aim of the profile was to gain the views and feelings of the volunteer team of Chorlton Good Neighbours. The volunteers are engaged in a very wide range of activities and commit a great deal of their time to the group. This profile explores and analyses; what they felt worked well about their volunteering, what the challenges were, their views on the support they had and what they felt they gained personally. In addition, some groups were asked how being involved in a number of services contributed to their overall understanding of how the group functions.

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Introduction

Chorlton Good Neighbours is located in Wilbraham St. Ninians Church and supports the people of Chorlton and Whalley Range. It offers a wide range of services for older people including exercise classes, Sunday teas, coffee mornings and art class, trips and parties, monthly history talks, gardening club and social afternoon for older men, and a weekly Melodics singing group. The Tuesday Group runs for parents of young children.

A central part of the organisation is the range of volunteer support it offers within the centre and out in the local community. These services include; visiting, shopping support, dog walking, wheelchair pushing, small practical jobs and transport to appointments and regular telephone support.

Background to the Evaluation

In the autumn of 2011, 80 users of the service were surveyed on areas such as, how much did the group help them maintain their independence and well being and the value they placed on having connections with the local neighbourhood care group. It was agreed with the local council funders that an equally in depth survey of volunteers would be carried out in 2012.

A previous volunteers' survey was carried out in April 2004 which looked at support and training needs, services offered and the reasons for volunteering. This survey gave a basic overview of the volunteering context. However, in the light of the current development and expansion of the group's services and activities, together with increasing accountability to funders it was felt that a more detailed and deeper analysis of the motivations, feelings and perceptions of volunteers was needed. Areas explored would focus on capturing the essence of what volunteers get out of their involvement and the personal reflections, which painted a very complex picture of volunteering which is rarely captured. (even in this report it is difficult to capture it) Another important motivating factor for carrying out the survey was the Group Co-ordinator's desire to check the adequacy of support systems in place for the volunteer team, given its size and skill mix.

Profile of the Volunteer Team

The organisation has a total of 72 active volunteers as of November 2012, contributing their time, energy and skills to the organization. The following gives a clearer picture of who these people are and what they are currently doing.

Gender: 21 out of 72 are male = 29% of the total. This corresponds to the 2004 survey. The recent employment of an older men's development worker, through Lloyds TSB foundation is looking to increase numbers of both male users and male volunteers. Research suggests men are more likely to want to 'work' and do things rather than be a recipient of a service. This is backed up by the 18% figure of male service users. i.e. more men are volunteers than are service users.

Blurring the lines of Volunteers and Users. 18 out of 72 volunteers = 25% use or access some of the services such as the exercise classes, the Melodics singing group and the Be Well Age Well groups. CGN is always looking to blur the lines between user and volunteer so that everyone feels ownership of the group, and people can both receive and invest. It is the ethos of CGN that it looks to repay the time and kindness volunteers have given by supporting them when they need it.

Geographical Recruitment areas : 42% of volunteers live in the Chorlton ward, 11% in the Chorlton Park Ward and 21% in Whalley range i.e. 74% live within the area funded through our main grant.

26% live outside these wards – many living in adjacent districts such as Old Trafford, Stretford, Sale and Urmston. A small number live further away in Levenshulme, Withington and Cheadle but originally lived locally and wish to maintain their involvement.

There are some challenges of operating on the borders with another local authority: Just as the group might support a number of users who live just outside the MCC boundaries (and thus cause some concern for funders) groups like CGN benefit enormously from residents from across the border who volunteer for groups like ours.

Ages: 22 out of 72 are 66 years + which = 31% but if you include those a few years younger from 61 + then the percentage of the total volunteer group goes up to 57% i.e. over half are likely to be retired or in part time employment. 7 volunteers are under 30 years. 9 volunteers are over 76years + which = 12% .

When most older people of this age might consider themselves to be in need of services there is a small group of volunteers here who have a desire to continue to give as volunteers, whilst some are beginning to access services. This is supported through a flexible approach to volunteering where roles can be adapted to meet the needs of the volunteer. CGN has managed to create a seamless service where a smoother transition can be made from being purely a volunteer to a mixture of both user and volunteer, and eventually just a user.

Length of time as a volunteer with CGN :

Recent (less than 3 years involvement) 32

Medium term (3 to 5 years) = 10

Medium to long term (6 to 10 years) = 12

Long term (10 years +) 18

30 out of 72 have been with the group more than 5 years = 42% , this means there is a solid core building up experience etc. 16 out of the 72 are relatively new, but there is a usual turnover each year as people suffer declining health, move out of the area, have too many commitments or there is a change in circumstances.

Ethnicity 76% indicated they were white British, 11% white Irish, 3% black British, 3% white other and 7% did not wish to indicate.

Monetary Value: in this one snapshot - 537 hours per month from 72 volunteers. If paid £6 per hour = £3222 per month = £38,664 per year worth of work for free for the local community. The Community Development Foundation have set the rate of £11.09 per hour so this would equate to £71,464 pa. although some services e.g. surveys/business plans would be paying consultants much more.

Specifics from the volunteer spreadsheet : Volunteers were asked to indicate where they helped out from a range of 14 activities from being a committee member to community 1-1 support like visiting / transport/odd jobs, to helping in the office, and on site activity (such as the Thursday coffee morning, Tues group / Sunday tea)

60% of the volunteer workforce are involved in more than one activity eg they might visit someone and help out with occasional transport, or they might volunteer on the committee and also help out at Thursday coffee mornings. 22% of the total indicated that they helped out with 4+ activities and this relates to volunteers who have become more heavily involved e.g. one volunteer does some regular Friday exercise transport, helps on the day trips, does other occasional transport and helps out in the office.

40% of the volunteers who indicate involvement in one activity are most likely to be the younger people who have full time work and can only commit to regular visiting or helping at Sunday tea.

Being involved in numerous activities and tasks hopefully increases volunteers understanding of the whole organisation and its operations, and can demonstrate to them the need for their help. For the committee members, being actively involved in service delivery tasks must influence their understanding of how the charity needs to function strategically, and ensures focus is maintained on the needs of the local service users.

Grass roots information: this was deemed to be those volunteers who brought in information from the community either as members of other organizations or those attending various meetings such as Whalley Range Forum/ Towns Women's Guild/ Rotary/churches. This has proved a vital way of gathering information for the Co ordinator so that a broader picture is gained of what is going on locally.

Context of the Survey

The organisation has 72 volunteers in total, 55 of which took part in the survey; this means that 76% of the volunteer team have contributed, giving a sense that the information collated is a true and accurate reflection of the views of the volunteer team.

This was conducted through face to face interviews, focus groups, some email questions and general observations from being with the group over a long period of time.

Eight different focus groups met together in order to gather the information. These were:

1. Home Visitors
2. Drivers
3. Practical and Miscellaneous Volunteers
4. Office Volunteers
5. Management Committee Volunteers
6. Sunday Tea Volunteers
7. Tuesday Group Volunteers
8. Coffee Morning Volunteers

General points for discussion within the focus groups and with individual feedback.

- What works well?
- What are the challenges?
- Views on support?
- What do you gain personally?

In addition some groups were asked how being involved in a number of services contributed to their overall understanding of how the group functions.

Analysis of feedback from each volunteering group

1. Home Visitors

'There are challenges to building rapport, sometimes this is connected to pride but I hung in there and it is now happily established'

Context

There are 26 people who volunteer to visit older people within the local community. The people they visit are often unable to leave their own homes sometimes feeling lonely and isolated. The team are able to work out with their client the best times to visit and the frequency, it usually being once a week. They all reflected very different visiting experiences.

What works well?

Overwhelmingly the analysis highlighted the significant impact the visitors make to the lives of those they see. There was a real sense of a mutual exchange of reward within the visiting demonstrated by volunteers being clear that they gained a great deal personally from the exchange whilst clearly recognising the impact it made on the life of the older person. For example, one volunteer said she *'Likes the feeling of bringing your world to them'* They also liked how flexible the volunteering was, choosing mutually convenient times for each other and making changes as necessary. It was clear that each visitor had shaped their visits to be the best for the person they visited. Some listened more, some spoke more and some engaged in nice activities like playing cards or sharing a take-out curry!

What are the challenges?

The volunteers all arrived with good expectations of the situation and were flexible and insightful in their approach to each of their visiting roles. The challenges were predominantly around the nature of building relationships in an 'artificial' situation and maintaining boundaries.

The group were very impressive in their resolution of what could appear very complex challenges around relationship building. Two strangers in effect are coming together and the volunteer has to use all their skills to ensure this could happen in a successful, sensitive and supportive way. One volunteer spoke of the challenge of building rapport, going on to say that it was connected to the pride of the client before concluding *'but I hung in there and it is now happily established'* Similarly, another volunteer spoke about her client and their reluctance to acknowledge that their loneliness could be alleviated through a visit from an outsider, she struggled with *'over-coming her acceptance of the situation'* and also *'at first I got mixed messages which was confusing, did the client really want me to return'* It became evident that volunteers engaging in befriending/visiting needed characteristics of persistence, empathy and commitment to developing and sustaining the relationship.

Many were very insightful about saying they let the older person take the lead about what they wanted from the visits, and the volunteers were flexible to meet those needs, e.g. *'My client has chosen the 'feel' of the visit and the role I am to play'*. For many they grappled in our discussions about the boundary between volunteer and friend. This is a challenge for many volunteers and not one that is easily resolved. It seems there is a spectrum which stretches from those who maintain very clear boundaries and both parties are clear about the volunteering role and expectations around it. For others, at the other end of the spectrum, they clearly identified their client as a friend and did not necessarily identify themselves as a volunteer visitor whilst still working within the good neighbours volunteering team, e.g. *'It does feel like a 'friend' relationship'*. Someone else saying *'some people we really get close to'* This spectrum is likely to exist within all organisations where individuals are getting together and forming relationships. The management of the complexities of this are still supported with training and through the support of the co-ordinator.

One significant outcome of this was the recognition that visitors meeting more regularly was clearly very valuable, and it was agreed more feedback sessions would be arranged throughout the year.

Views on Support

Direct comments on support fell across a positive range of experiences. Some clearly not feeling the need for support and saying such things as *'I feel the support is there if needed but I'm lucky that I'm O.K with what I do'*, Others felt it was adequate. In addition many spoke about how they had felt that having the meeting for the evaluation had in itself proved very supportive to the visiting team.

There was a reassurance gained that everyone had the same challenges and successes as each other and it felt cathartic to share their experiences with others in the same situation. There is a plan to make this an on-going aspect of support for the visiting volunteers. Finally the training was noted as being helpful to the visitors.

What do you gain personally?

'I now think about getting old in a positive way'

The feedback here gave a wonderful reflection of the diverse ways in which people gain rewards through their actions. In essence the range included, appreciation for their own lives, paying back to others, enjoyment gained, wisdom received, skills utilised alongside the development of a greater sense of community.

Volunteering with older people appears to give people a sense of re-affirming what they themselves have. People spoke of appreciating their own family and life, as for many it greatly contrasted with the lives of the people they were visiting. One person said, *'they look at life in a new way'* This self-reflection included how they could consider themselves growing old and how they now viewed this more positively. One person noting *'I feel pre-warned'*

People were clear they gained a lot for themselves personally, talking of a *'good chance to relax'* whilst visiting, finding it interesting and enjoyable and a way of learning about the past and gaining from the older person's wisdom. In addition people felt it gave them 'a sense of purpose'

People felt good that they could *'give something back'*, offering out their spare time to someone. This linked to feelings of contributing and connecting with the community. People connected readily with the impact of the experience with one person saying *'It's nice to be part of something bigger than yourself'*

Finally, one person loved that they had gained the companionship of both an older person and a dog!

Analysis of this aspect of volunteering

Overall the analysis highlighted a team of highly skilled volunteers, all with very good levels of communications skills who had readily stepped into the homes of strangers and slowly over time, built strong and supportive relationships with older people. They benefited greatly from meeting together as a group as they are by far the most 'independent' of direct support from the co-ordinator due to the off-sight/out-of-hours nature of much of the work. They welcomed an opportunity to share their 'visiting journey' and frustrations, and be reassured that their experience was not unique to them.

All volunteers, particularly the visitors, are given induction training around boundaries and confidentiality. However, we came to understand that individual situations needed a degree of flexibility and creative thought. The volunteers understood the importance of maintaining basic instructions like not giving their own phone numbers out, but training that is too prescriptive runs the risk of not working, as people need to be fairly flexible in their approach.

2. Volunteer Drivers

'I am 70 and how nice to feel young because I give a lift to a woman of 90!'

Context

There is a regular team of volunteer drivers who undertake many tasks; picking up and dropping off clients to the coffee mornings, to the Sunday teas, Friday exercise class, to the snooker afternoon and for the group to go on trips. Drivers are also called upon to take clients to GP's, Dental and Hospital appointments. There are around 12 to 15 regular drivers and many others will step in on an occasional basis. The large number of drivers means some of the most frail, anxious and vulnerable older people can access the on-site activities and feel supported when they attend appointments.

What works well?

From this focus group's perspective they felt there was a valuable 'monitoring' aspect to their work. Drivers could feed back information about the client to the co-ordinator so that she can more closely monitor that person, for example, when someone's eye-sight is getting poor. Also they found it helpful that Helen can tell the older-person the cost of the journey then they don't have to say themselves, and equally if they don't collect the money they know it will be done by Helen.

What are the challenges?

Many of the challenges highlighted were practical and organisational, and equally were ably managed as they arose. Organisational challenges were: Knowing that if someone lived in sheltered accommodation where were they likely to be waiting, as some wait at the front,

others at the back, and some had previously been missed. It's also helpful to know if they are bringing a zimmer frame then people can clear their boots. Sometimes people ask to be taken further than is originally planned. There is a general acceptance that this happens from time to time and volunteers use their discretion. Some clients always want the front seat and volunteers have to ensure they are fair, and those who need it for physical reasons are prioritised.

It can be challenging when a volunteer arrives to pick someone up and they aren't ready as this makes them late for the others on the pick-up run and sometimes people arrive not getting the seat that they want. This for some can be an on-going challenge.

Volunteers were very attached to the people they brought regularly to Good Neighbours. One person said *'I do feel a deep sense of obligation about driving and often feel I let people down if I go away and they have to rely on someone else'*

Views on support

The views on support were a mixed bag. Someone felt that it can be occasionally difficult to speak with the co-ordinator directly in her office as it is frequently really busy. Another always felt supported by Helen and felt they could always take their issues to her and she would take responsibility for them. There was a general sense that the meeting itself (to gather this information) was really helpful as people were able to talk through their concerns and issues and be clear on good practice.

What do you gain personally?

'I like to hear the stories that the older people tell, I remain amazed by the ages of people and how youthful they appear'

Yet again people found a wide range of benefits to the volunteering. People felt it *'kept them young'* and that they *'liked to feel connected to the community'* The volunteering helped them meet new people and make new friends with other volunteers and they liked hearing the stories of the clients. It also provided them with the opportunity to care and to share their good fortune, like having a car and being able to use it for such a good purpose, being able to get people out of their houses. They appreciated that most people demonstrated their gratitude.

They also gained rewards from seeing how much the older-people gained from the services, such as: *'I like that we get to see the change in people from seeing how they are in their own homes and then how they change when they get to CGN and are engaged in the groups, they often look so much better'* They liked seeing them smile, how they have such camaraderie with each other when they get them to a group. One specifically said *'I love seeing how they dress up when they go out on trips'*, recognising the value they place upon these events'

For some it again helped the volunteers reflect on their own lives and gave them a healthier perspective on their own well-being and personal situations. One person spoke of how the

work helped them feel young 'I am 70 and how nice to feel young because I give a lift to a woman of 90!'

3. Practical and Miscellaneous Volunteers

'I see I am part of something intergenerational which builds positive connections'

Context

These volunteers were unable to attend the specific focus groups but wanted to take part in a feedback session. They carry out a range of differing roles such as; occasional driving, basic D.I.Y, occasional hospital visiting, helping out with trips.

What works well?

From an organisational perspective this group of volunteers felt there were a range of aspects that worked well; the appropriateness of requests and the flexibility with time and commitment.

Being given requests in plenty of time was helpful and receiving them by email for one volunteer was proving very effective. Similarly, it was felt that good information was given before going out on a job. Knowing the boundaries and having them in place works well, based on good training and being asked to do a task that suits you as a volunteer is helpful. Alongside this, knowing that volunteers can say no and it be totally acceptable helps the volunteering work well. The flexibility works well, *'I can be flexible about volunteering, can give as little or as much as need be'*

These volunteers too liked what working with other volunteers brought, with many saying friendships and connections were formed. They liked the other volunteers, finding them a nice group of people and the experience of being with them an enjoyable one.

Volunteers liked using their skills then they don't feel they are festering, and similarly another said *'feel I am continuously learning, really feel I am developing more interpersonal skills'* For one person they felt that the participation in the volunteering was enhancing their well-being.

Others spoke of the effectiveness of the co-ordinator and more established volunteers that helped them feel supported. They saw Helen as a *'good team leader'* and that her continuity in the role inspired confidence.

What are the challenges?

For the miscellaneous volunteers many of the challenges they articulated related to the specific well-being issues of the service users. These included: Struggles with communicating with people with hearing and/or visual impairments. Also, the challenges of supporting a person with dementia, for example, giving them a lift if they themselves don't know where they live. Also, supporting people with physical challenges and knowing the best way to support them. In

a similar way they felt they were challenged by the range of safety issues they were presented with. An example given was of *'not switching off the gas and worrying'* Similarly when it came to depression, knowing how best to support them can be a challenge, and the difficulty of trying to support them to be more involved.

The volunteers expressed occasional concerns about the attitude of some clients when they say inappropriate things and volunteers wonder whether to challenge this or not. Also when three people think they will be picked up at the same time and then aren't happy.

For the volunteer there is the challenge of accepting the issues the client faces, one person said *'coping with the struggles that the client has with their pain, and yet still having to be O.K with it'* Similarly, volunteers have to deal with the on-going challenge of seeing changes the client experiences.

Boundaries and getting these right can be challenging at times, sometimes needing to remember to encourage the client to organise any work via the office and not them personally.

For the volunteers they too could recognise other challenges for themselves, one person saying 'To be reliable is a challenge in itself'. Fitting it around work and not taking too much on is a challenge. Also, for some, seeing the clients and being with them brings about feelings of *'seeing themselves in the future'*

Views on Support

The support gained again met the needs of this group of volunteers. Regarding the co-ordinator the volunteers were happy with the level of support provided. One volunteer spoke in more depth of how the support was not intrusive, that the co-ordinator placed a lot of trust in her volunteers, and when visiting for example, they weren't called after every visit but there was a more gentle review of how things were going. Again one found email helpful as a means of out of hours support and also with regards to talking with Helen over anything she always knew what to say.

In a more general way people felt the training had been supportive, noting specific skills gained on dealing with people with challenging behaviour. One volunteer said they had gained support to over-come challenges and work more effectively.

The volunteers found the clients feed back and enthusiasm an encouraging part of their volunteering, along with established volunteers who they could learn from. In a wider sense someone said the *'reputation of the organisation is a support, I feel it is a blue print for the whole of Manchester'* Similarly being involved gave them a sense of community spirit which they felt was uplifting and encouraging, and they liked how the organisation was innovative and open to change, and they were well informed by the regular newsletters.

What do you gain personally?

This group spoke of a very diverse and extensive range of rewards they all gained from the volunteering.

People felt they were making a difference, however small. They were proud to be part of the provision of a high standard of service within an organisation with a good reputation and were proud to be giving something back. They felt good in helping, and that on the whole the older people appreciated what they did. They saw this as a contribution to the life of the community. They found it rewarding and one example given was of a volunteer helping an older couple get a rail fitted. They then named the rail after the volunteer they now have '*Bernard's rail*'

Others spoke more about the benefits gained on a personal level of the direct connection they have with older people saying: It is helping them prepare for older age and also they appreciate their own health and what they have. They have also been able to '*get to see the older person as a person in a way that I wouldn't have done had I not volunteered here*' They liked that older people and volunteers alike had a good sense of humour!

One said '*feel I am contributing to a non-judgemental approach to older people*' and indeed with the volunteer team being mainly older people that too was challenging people perceptions of older-people. They liked that the exercise class could challenge our stereo-types of what older people could do. In return they had learnt interpersonal skills from others, and from the training, and were inspired by more challenging activities.

One spoke of the reciprocal nature of volunteering that they can contribute now but hopefully in the future gain the service for themselves. They acknowledge it has improved their own well-being knowing '*there is so much altruism in the world*' that they like working with others with shared values who are kind. They were inspired by the knowledge, wisdom and achievements of older people. Conversely it was good that older people too had the chance to be with younger people whom they might not necessarily see. For one it has fully filled a gap in retirement and they were grateful for the opportunity to volunteer.

4. Office Volunteers

'I have learnt about people and how isolated they are and how in need of this service they are'

Context

A number of volunteers support the co-ordinator in the Good Neighbours office. This work can involve a range of activities such as: telephoning housebound older people to have a chat and check if they need anything. Administration, answering the telephone, counting money, welcoming guests and making them tea. Making calls to remind people of their activities. Phoning volunteers for pick-ups. There are 9 volunteers who support the work of the office ; a

couple on a semi regular basis, the rest as and when needed, and to cover the Co ordinator's holidays.

What works well?

The office volunteers found many positives here. They were pleased with the '*front room*' feel to the office as they know it feels welcoming and homely so that people feel comfortable when they come in. They felt the space works for the volunteers and the volunteers are all clear on their tasks which helps increase their confidence. They also said it acts as a space where volunteers can see each other.

They felt the office performed a great information gathering role, when visitors came to the office they were able to bring information in about the local community to help keep the co-ordinator informed of what is going on locally.

The volunteers also felt there was another aspect to their presence in the office that was helpful to the co-ordinator. They were themselves able to get a feel of the visitors to the office. They were able to give feedback to the co-ordinator about how visitors and potential volunteers responded to them as volunteers. They felt that '*how they respond to volunteers reflects their approach and values*'

They again, like other groups, liked the idea of getting together (in this meeting) to review and evaluate what they did.

What are the challenges?

There were a number of logistical challenges highlighted by this group about the office. Many felt it was sometimes difficult to be on the phone when the office was busy and the office is clearly often very busy. One person said they felt the demands of so many people in there at once needing attention was sometimes excessive. Linked to this was the issue of privacy that if a volunteer wanted to speak in confidence this wasn't always easy. In addition, when all the workers were in, there is competition for space.

Someone spoke of the office positioning that it is difficult in relation to the hall as it isn't easy to see what is going on. Also not having an out of hours service was seen as a challenge.

The volunteers could also recognise challenges that came from the clients themselves. For example, making requests too late, i.e. needing a driver for that afternoon. Equally there has been acceptance that we are not able to meet all the needs but this still can feel difficult.

Some felt the office had a number of limitations; these included; being too hot or too cold, poor storage and the need for up-dated equipment, needing improved tea-making facilities, in need of decorating and the space generally being too small for purpose. Closely related to this is the nature of being a tenant and needing church approval for any changes.

Views on support?

The office volunteers all highlighted a high level of satisfaction with the support they received and were very articulate in highlighting some key aspects of this. For example, they were aware that Helen was sensitive of the needs of the volunteers when she knew that something was going on for them in their personal lives. Also, she was very encouraging of her volunteers in that she would often say *'you can do it'* and therefore people could challenge their own perceptions of themselves. They felt the co-ordinator had a good balance when leaving volunteers to take more responsibility and also when on hand she was always ready to give support. They felt she knew what people could achieve, feeling that she was good at assessing people's skills and also at matching volunteers to clients. They felt her support was excellent and that she always showed her appreciation of what they did.

They found clarity of roles supportive as it means they are always clear about what needed doing. In addition to the support of the co-ordinator, many found that other volunteers were very supportive too.

What do you gain personally?

This group of volunteers had a powerful sense of well-being connected to their volunteering experience and were clear in the impact on them personally. One found it a *'life-line'* another saying *'the organisation can become a part of your life in a really positive way, I have become attached to people and I get a lot out of it and can give a lot back'*. Another person said *'Friendships have blossomed'* and people have felt that the opportunity to keep busy has filled a gap in their life. One spoke of how *'feeling useful is lovely, I feel valued and an increased sense of self worth'*. They could recognise value in differing age ranges, younger volunteers can use the opportunity to build career prospects whilst older people can feel good about contributing.

They could also see that being involved in the group was a good opportunity to learn to co-operate with a diverse set of people. The work has helped built a connection to the local community and one person said they found it good to bump into people they knew through the group when out in Chorlton.

Wider perspective on the organisation based on being an office volunteer

The office provides this set of volunteers with a rather unique insight into the entire service and many were fully able to appreciate this. They could see *'how big the service is'* and additional how crucial it is to those who use it. One said *'Nobody has any idea of what is really going on in the organisation until they work in the office'*. They also could recognise the isolation some people felt and how much they needed what was on offer.

The office volunteering also gave another deeper perspective about how wider issues are impacting the organisation, such as how other services are increasingly being stretched which then places ever higher demands on Good Neighbours.

Two comments reflected how volunteers could endlessly contribute but a balance had to be struck between the group and the outside world. One said *'it could take over as there is so much to be done'*

5. Management Committee Volunteers

'Having the range of skills needed for an effective committee is always a challenge'

Context

The CGN Management Committee is made up of 14 members including 8 representatives from local churches. They are a mixture of experienced and new members. Most of the members undertake some hands-on volunteering which gives them evidence and powerful insights into the best ways that the group can run. This ensures they then are better informed to make strategic decisions. One or two older members also access some of the services, such as the Friday exercise class, trips and the positive living groups and this helps them to give critical feedback to inform good practice and forward planning.

What works well?

The group could find many positives to the operational aspects of the Management Committee, alongside thoughts on the experience of volunteering and their commitment to the roles.

Regarding operational aspects there were a number of areas that were seen as running well such as; good minutes, well-chaired meetings, sub-groups work well, clear direction coming away from the meetings, good preparation of information and all received on time, meetings start on time, are well attended and people are punctual.

The group felt they were always well informed of the activities of the organisation with communication with the co-ordinator being very good.

Many spoke of the skills and experience of those involved. People speak openly in meetings with lots being said, one view was that *'people are open-minded to new ideas and are willing to innovate'* The management committee are friendly and work well together. They felt that each member brings their own experiences to the meeting that then can be drawn upon. Also, related to this it was felt that the mix of volunteers, being both long standing and new was balanced, and made for a good and positive mix. Similarly this positive mix was also felt to relate to volunteers from a number of churches, balanced with volunteers with non church affiliated members.

What are the challenges?

There was a range of diverse challenges brought to mind when the committee reflected on this. As a group they felt many of the challenges were on-going day to day challenges faced by many committees. These encompassed such things as; finding funding, finding a treasurer, being on top of the expanding legal responsibilities, meeting the demands of external targets, monitoring and evaluation, and in essence having lots of plates spinning all the time.

They also reflected on there being challenges connected to the make-up of the membership itself. A few committee members are 80+. Having the right range of skills for what the committee needs to do is challenging. One person said *'I sometimes don't volunteer to do things in the committee not because I don't want to but because I don't always feel I have all the skills to do what is asked for'*. Equally as important, a few members expressed their concerns about the committee not being representative of the local community as it has no younger people or people from BME groups.

They questioned organisational challenges such as how to support the co-ordinator as effectively as possible and to try to address the over-reliance the organisation as a whole has on her. Connected to this is the need to find cover for the office in her absence.

Finally they spoke of other matters relating to committee meetings such as the space of the office sometimes feels too small for working, making the group 'too cosy' and also there is a challenging relationship with the landlords of the building, where Good Neighbours has to negotiate for spaces to change or develop.

Views on Support

Again, as with many other groups there were no concerns raised about the level of support. This group, like many others seem very self-sufficient regarding not really needing support yet being happy to approach the co-ordinator should they need to. If there is a problem it can be handed over to Helen and it is known it then will be in safe hands. Some spoke of the support that they gained from other volunteers too. Training is seen as valuable in increasing the skills of the volunteers.

What do you gain personally?

The group spoke of a range of rewarding aspects they found in volunteering on the committee. They like meeting interesting people, using skills and learning new ones, having a sense of purpose and structure, giving them a sense of achievement.

Some are older volunteers and for them they specifically appreciated the sense of feeling useful and having something to get out of bed for.

Finally, it was felt that being on the committee supports people to be better informed about the work of Good Neighbours and about new issues and innovations.

6. Sunday Tea Volunteers

'Some people only come to the Sunday Tea and it is really important to them'

Context

The Sunday tea is an afternoon social event provided for older people in the local community who do not have much local family where a meal, entertainment and the chance for company are provided. There are 11 drivers the majority of whom stay to support the afternoon and there are an additional 3 or 4 volunteers. Each month around 35 older people attend the afternoon. They are provided with transport where possible from the team of volunteers and the afternoon is an opportunity to enjoy the company of others, have a cooked meal, enjoy some entertainment and a raffle.

The Sunday teas have a relaxed, welcoming feel to them and like many of the services provided by the volunteers, there is a sense of everyone knows what is expected of them and the afternoon is itself a 'well-oiled machine' It is also one of the few group based activities that enables full time workers to contribute to the charity. One volunteer comes to the tea specifically to do washing up – and never misses.

What works well?

The overwhelming perspective here is that the afternoon is run really well. Drivers get the information they need, the afternoon has a good flow of activity that runs smoothly from meals being out on time to people being dropped off and picked up promptly. In addition the volunteers were all aware of the fact that the older people really enjoy themselves and value having something to look forward to at the weekend.

What are the challenges?

Few challenges were noted with this group and what was noted was felt by the volunteers as minor. With transport, it can be frustrating if drivers arrive to pick someone up to bring to the afternoon and they are not ready or have forgotten, equally, should the afternoon over-run then drivers can't get away on time. The logistics of the afternoon are not perfect but with so many variables in place the over-all perspective was still a positive one.

Being involved in the afternoon as a volunteer has some slight frustrations to over-come. There are many volunteers involved and it was noted that they had to use their 'emotional intelligence' to establish where they fit in. When all the tasks are being dealt with volunteers could use their time to sit and speak with the service users and ensure they were O.K.

Views on Support

Regarding people's perspectives on the support they received everyone either said they felt the support was good, or they didn't need it. They additionally spoke of the 'support' that is the

outcome of the good organisation of the afternoon. For example such things as; someone said they *'always get good notice'* regarding who to pick up. Additionally *'Helen's super organisation makes it easy'* It seems that the group are pretty independent of the need for support and it was helpful they could recognise that as the afternoon itself was well-organised it reduced the challenges the volunteers could face and by definition their need for support.

What do you gain personally?

This question generated the most prolific responses of all the categories for this group. It was very clear that being able to be involved in the Sunday tea gave volunteers a great deal of personal satisfaction and a high level of rewards. On the whole these fell into two distinct areas, one being gains for themselves, the other being gains brought about by them 'giving' to others.

Volunteers spoke of enjoying coming, liking the entertainment, having a good laugh, meeting different people and getting out of the house. Others spoke very articulately about how rewarding they find the afternoon personally. They were proud of the service and could see how much people got out of it. One person said *'some of the people only come to Sunday tea and it is really important to them'* The volunteers know they are helping the community and can see how worthwhile the service is. One said *'I get pride out of it, seeing how much people get out of it'*

Volunteers felt a sense of reward from seeing the people all getting on. It presented for one person a very real sense of *'giving something back'* which clearly felt important and rewarding to them, whilst another spoke of how being involved meant they promoted the volunteering to others.

7. Tuesday Group Volunteers

'It is a nurturing place where we welcome and support the parents as we recognise it is a life line for them'

Context

The Tuesday Group volunteers facilitate a weekly parent and toddler group that is co-managed by Chorlton Good Neighbours and Wilbraham St. Ninian's Church. The volunteer team consists of 10 volunteers. The aim of the group is to support new parents who may have struggled initially with parenting due to multiple births, depression, anxiety or because they may feel isolated after becoming new parents. The numbers attending are restricted to provide a high standard of service and a high ratio of volunteer to parent and child. People can refer themselves or referrals are made by professionals such as nurses or health visitors. In addition the group is unique in that parents are given some space to meet and chat away from their children whilst they are cared for by the volunteers.

Along with the other group-based services, there was yet again a very real sense of the morning being really well-organised, having a flow to the activities and a lot of thought having been taken to ensure the service parents and children received was of a really high level.

The volunteering group is a mix of very long established volunteers and also fairly new ones. One had previously used the service as a parent and wanted to give something back to the group. They were very good at their analysis of the following areas and one outcome of the meeting was that the group decided to update the guidance for volunteers and parents.

What works well?

The volunteers here spoke very positively about the welcoming and supportive space that is created for parents to gain something very substantial from the experience. They also spoke of the cohesion and competence of the volunteer team.

The volunteers felt the parents would find it a nurturing space and a life line, being a supportive space for those under stress. It was also believed to a non-judgemental space where lesbian parents particularly have always felt welcomed. Volunteers were really clear that all the parents benefited from the time away from their children and along with this the *'parents placing a high level of trust in the volunteers'*

The volunteers felt that the volunteer team was highly skilled and well organised and were all clear on their roles. There is also longevity to the volunteer team that instils confidence in those new volunteers joining. They were proud to say they had heard of the group described as the *'Rolls Royce'* of play groups. The team works well together and they all have a good level of empathy. They enjoyed the time spent speaking with both the volunteers and the parents.

In addition, they could see benefits beyond the daily provision of the service. They liked how many service users would then become volunteers and give something back to the group. They could also see that the group helped bring parents together who then formed their own cohesive groups independent of the Tuesday group and met up in the holidays and socialised together.

What are the challenges?

Organisationally, considering there is lots to co-ordinate and many people and children to support, the challenges seemed few and small. One was around getting the children to settle when their parents were away having their coffee and chat. This brings obvious challenges but here the group relied on their good team work to do their best. Supporting the child to become able to spend some time away from their parent was known as a good stepping stone to independence for the child, and all volunteers were fully on-board with this. Rarely would they not be able to settle a child and have to call a parent out from their coffee break. They also spoke of how the volunteers *'have to encourage other parents to be non-judgemental'* and in addition were unsure of how much the new parents knew about how the group runs. The discussion from this formed a newly written guidance to be given to new parents.

Volunteers could also reflect on the challenge they had personally of seeing the parents and children move on. The volunteers are very committed to the welfare of the parents and children, and this was really evident in the group's discussion. They had seen parents grow and feel better, and their babies grow into children getting ready for school, so the point of leaving could be difficult and yet rewarding too. They also spoke of a similar challenge of a volunteer moving on, particularly as the group has a significant number of long-standing volunteers. They recognised the group would feel different, and they did question how any skills gap would be filled within the group.

Views on Support

In the day to day operation of the Tuesday group the volunteers were on the whole self-supporting, they said *'we all support each other'* In addition they knew they would always phone if they couldn't make it and they felt that it was O.K to do so. They liked the communication through the newsletter and annual report so that they were more informed of the bigger picture of services provided.

They liked the provision of a Positivity course for the parents to attend, it seemed to reflect an investment in the group that they appreciated and could see the benefits of.

What do you gain personally?

The volunteers gained an over-whelming sense of pleasure on many levels from their involvement with the group. There was much satisfaction gained from the direct contact with the children and many just loving being with them. Volunteers spoke of how lovely it was to *'nurse the children'* and get their *'baby fix'* whilst another spoke of having the chance to play, which was a great counter balance to their other commitments.

They felt there were good rewards to be had with the intergenerational contact. Some of the children would not always have the opportunity to see and have contact with older-people. At least 4 of the volunteers are 65years and over, including one who is 87.

The volunteers spoke of the very personal sense of rewards they gained from their involvement which included; a great sense of well-being, better mental health, the feeling of connecting with each other and *'knowing I am doing good'* One spoke very enthusiastically about how it *'balances out my life as I like to be with the children, feel their energy and vitality'* They appreciated how good it felt to be trusted by the parents to care for their child.

They also reflected on how they liked the feeling of giving back their knowledge and skills, how they could sign-post and empower the parents. This group certainly could draw on a great deal of personal rewards that the Tuesday group gave them, and they reflected a huge enthusiasm for this volunteering work.

9. Coffee Morning Volunteers

'When people arrive they are really well supported to make connections and start to build friendships'

Context

The coffee morning runs at Chorlton Good Neighbours on Thursday mornings with older people arriving around 10 o'clock and leaving 11.30pm. At each morning around 45 older people come along to meet up with friends and have tea or coffee, 28 of whom are brought in by volunteer drivers. There are additionally a range of activities they could be involved with including; an art group, curling, listening to speakers and also having monthly access to a 'hear to help' service for hearing aid users.

The work of the morning is supported by 14 volunteers who cover a range of tasks including, driving, running activities, being on the door to welcome, making tea and coffee, serving the tea and socialising.

What works well?

People had a very clear sense that, as the group has grown and developed, the co-ordinator / volunteers have paid close time and attention to ensuring the morning is run in a caring, efficient and effective manner. There was much said about how well-organised the mornings are with many elements coming together in a smooth and competent way. People felt all the volunteers who contributed to the mornings were all clear on their roles and tasks. There was also a great sense that a lot of time was spent on *'attention to detail'* matters as we shall see right across the board.

Starting with pick-ups, these are well organised and offer lovely continuity as the same volunteers try, as far as possible, to pick up the same people. On arrival people are greeted by their name which helps them feel valued and *'looked after'*. Much thought and focus has been put into the seating of the older people. It was well articulated how people like to sit in the same seats with the same people to support their friendship groups. However, when new people arrive the volunteers will take time to consider how they can be introduced to new people to help them settle more readily and start to build friendships. Once seated they are again well looked after, one volunteer saying *'they get a lovely personal service, with volunteers remembering the way they like their tea and coffee'*

In addition if people didn't arrive who usually attend then others in the group will follow this up and check that people are O.K. Showing a real sense of community and care with the people who attend.

Again with regards to the attention paid to new attendees, the volunteers spoke of how people who have never been before give really good feedback about how they have been treated on their first visit. For some, the chance to connect with those they know is important, for others they can listen to the speakers, play curling or be involved in the painting. The painting group

was specifically highlighted. It appears well run by the tutor with attention paid to the differing abilities of her group with a new piece of work demonstrated each month to aid progress. There is a light-hearted feel to the painting group which feels positive.

What are the challenges?

Over-all the challenges were small in number and generally organisational matters such as; speakers making themselves heard with a big audience, people parking in the car park who don't have mobility problems leaving others struggling to park close, and the art tutor being able to make herself heard.

One noted the role of a carer who attends and brings her husband who has Alzheimer's whom she cares for. The volunteers support him to enable her to attend the art session and receive a little respite. Volunteers seem very adaptable to face new challenges and meet presenting needs.

Views on Support

With all of the services on offer by the group, the coffee morning volunteers reiterated many previously held views on support. Being involved itself was seen as supportive to the volunteers rather than a direct giving of support. They spoke of the good sense of '*camaraderie*' among the volunteers, how they are helpful to each other and can step in in an emergency, information flows and the drivers form a good back up of support if more help were needed.

Some spoke of the support provided to new volunteers. Arriving in as a new volunteer can be quite daunting as the morning is well run, involves large numbers of people and finding a role can be a challenge. Others were really well supported by other volunteers one saying '*I was introduced gently as a volunteer and was put with a volunteer who was really warm and supportive*'. Another on a similar note spoke of being encouraged to socialise in the open space after '*hiding*' in the kitchen.

Regarding support from the co-ordinator, as with many services, people spoke of not really needing it because the sessions are well established and run to a fairly specific routine however, they valued being able to give feedback to Helen on the well-being of certain individuals.

The painting tutor feels she is happy with little support as it works well for her. She sees that the members of the group all support each other.

What do you gain personally?

Many felt the work for the coffee morning was personally very fulfilling. They spoke of the gratitude that they received from the people and how they felt at knowing they were making people feel happy, knowing they were making a difference. Also, how they are learning from the experience, saying they can '*recognise they are human beings not just elderly*'. One

volunteer spoke of the gains being that they '*meet people who I wouldn't normally meet, my circle doesn't have older-people in it. Like to hear stories, the lives of older-people, the lives they have led, it is good to have that intergenerational element*'

People spoke of rewards gained from working alongside other volunteers, gaining guidance and instruction on how best to do things, also gaining friendship from other volunteers. One spoke of gaining status by becoming a volunteer now they were retired.

Someone spoke of how much deeper their connection to the community has become as they now see people when they are out and about in Chorlton that they have only met in the coffee morning, so they feel their work continues outside.

Impact of being involved in more than one activity at CGN

Whilst the group could see that being involved in more than one service gave them a broader picture of the activities of the group, the main insight it gave was a clearer more holistic picture of the well-being of individual service-users themselves.

Many of their observations were about the differing views gained of a person in their home and in a social setting. They understood how you can gain a clearer picture of an older persons needs when you see them in different contexts i.e. at home and in the coffee morning. They spoke of how perhaps at home the picture of their need is perhaps more real and honest and when people get to the group they may then mask their needs, putting on a brave front as it were. Often they can be more challenging at home but easier to be with in the group setting as they can be more light-hearted and more enjoyable to be with.

Volunteers could also compare the experience of one to one work and group volunteer work and how this differed for them as volunteers. They said some one to one work, in the older person's home, could be really challenging, and people could really take the work home with them. It can be hard to say no to someone on a one to one basis, but within the group setting the responsibility is shared and the work slightly easier.

Concluding Thoughts and Themes... Analysis of each section

'there is not one typical volunteer, all bring something different and all do things differently'

What works well for the volunteers

All participants in this audit were clearly able to reflect on what they perceived worked well within their volunteering. A frequently made point here, refers to the level of organisation put in through the Co-ordinator in order to ensure all the services run as smoothly as possible. It was evident that much attention had been paid in a range of key areas that would contribute to this happening. These included:

- Evidence that, over time, the Group has developed routines and systems that work to stabilize the activities, enabling the volunteers to feel more secure in their roles. There is a clear sense that much of the work of the organisation is very well-established, and this longevity of activity, Co ordinator and some volunteers, means that many challenges that could have been problematic have been ironed out over time.
- The matching of volunteers to the role to ensure skills were used effectively. i.e. finding the best possible 'niche' for each volunteer, which may not involve being in the area they originally signed up for or thought they were best suited to.
- The more thoughtful matching of volunteers to clients where off site one to one work was being undertaken, like the driving or visiting to ensure the best possible chance of the relationship developing and being sustained.
- Volunteers being given very detailed, honest and specific information about clients and tasks, which illustrates a very accurate picture of what to expect and minimizes potential for frustration and failure.
- A strong perception that many of the group based services involving many volunteers are very effective, giving the appearance of a 'well-oiled machine'. A contributing factor has been the co-ordinator assessing the need for well-established volunteers who can lead the way in a low key manner, are 'solution-focused' and therefore, when challenges present themselves they are able to find ways to over-come them effectively. Also they help instill confidence in others that there is always someone around who knows what they are doing.

Challenges

As referenced above, yes, the differing groups could find challenges but in the main the volunteers are able to seek their own solutions to the organisational challenges within each of the roles. I observed a large number of volunteers who reflected a high level of emotional intelligence that they used within their work.

Some challenges were simply about dealing with 'people' full-stop, not anything specific to older-people. For example, people being grumpy about pick-up times or not being ready for being picked-up, people wanting to sit with the same people all the time in the groups, and the challenges of not having those seats taken!

A different concern raised was how sometimes the office is too busy to accommodate volunteers who want to give immediate feedback and time would have to be made at a later date.

Finally, there were a significant number of volunteers who spoke about the real challenge of working with older people as it made them:

- Face the reality of ageing, seeing themselves in the future and how they might be.

- Confront changes in the people they were working with, recognizing their declining health, both physical and mental, and seeing the pain they were in.

Support

As a group of volunteers, a commonly held view was that they knew that the support was there if needed and solutions would be sought together. There was a sense of confidence that should they need support it would be provided well.

A number of conclusions could be drawn from this analysis. Clearly there is a high number of independent, self-reliant volunteers within the group. However, others who may have struggled in some volunteering roles are carefully placed in situations where their contribution can be made in a more supported way. It is evident that the co-ordinator gives a lot of thought to the matching of volunteers to their role, based on both their skills and needs, and any challenges are limited by being placed with volunteers and/or staff who can mentor and support these people. Many spoke about how they valued the support they gained from experienced volunteers and this aspect works particularly well in group based activities.

Finally, the well established nature of the care group (it has been in operation since 1967), together with its good local reputation, appears to instill a level of confidence in the volunteers and is in itself a source of support.

Personal Gains

This section on personal gains clearly demonstrated that volunteers had no difficulties in expressing their thoughts in an intelligent and insightful way and these gains help contribute to a significant number of volunteers remaining committed to the care group over a long period of time.

The gains were broad reaching in their areas and whilst it is difficult to fully categorise them, they loosely fell as follows:

- Developing and increasing their insight into the experience of older-age. The work is helping break down ageist assumptions and reduce stereo-typing of older people. Many felt pre-warned, most felt inspired and many were reflecting on how they may approach older age.
- Improved perspectives on their own lives and increased gratitude for what they have. The work for many is providing a stark contrast between their own lives which may be rich regarding health, family experiences and social connections in comparison to many of the clients of the group.
- Gaining inspiration from what the clients have told them about their lives and what they have achieved as they learn from stories they hear.

- Learning new skills in the volunteering, particularly learning better interpersonal skills from working in the group activities and also from other experienced volunteers. These skills can extend to learning to be more non-judgmental through the experience of working with a very diverse range of people.
- Significant emotional gains. For many being able to provide a service that resulted in seeing older people happier, enjoying themselves, having more involvement in the organisation that then brought changes to their well-being, really benefited the volunteers. They also valued that they were appreciated.
- Increased motivation to get out and do what they had committed to doing, giving a structure to the week, particularly for the older volunteers, alongside a sense of feeling valued.
- Expansion of their own social networks, which further enhances neighbourhood resilience. The volunteers found their experience of volunteering helped them develop friendships within the group, and many felt a greater sense of community as a result of it. They enjoyed the fact that they could stop and chat to more people when out and about, having met them through the group's activities.
- Pride in having the connection to the group. It has a good reputation locally which they felt pleased about.
- Ultimately they felt enjoyment and fun from their volunteering.

Over- arching Observations..... Debra McCallion

The organisation has a large team of highly committed volunteers with a significant percentage of 76% being willing to actively participate in the survey.

They were an articulate and insightful group who found no difficulty in analysing the questions and giving well thought through and informative answers.

Here are some key observations:

1. How volunteers perceived support.

From my observations many volunteers related 'support' to the direct provision of support for them to perform their roles, e.g. they didn't need the co-ordinator to give in-depth guidance and direction/be there with them/do lots of joint visits/be expecting a report after each task or visit. However, in this care group as with many other voluntary groups, there are a lot of volunteers who received extensive support from their co-ordinator through more subtle ways. Voluntary Group Co-ordinators have to invest in their volunteers in a way that can significantly differ from working with paid staff. For

many volunteers there are needs being met via conversations about their well being, an interest paid in their lives generally and in their day to day trials and tribulations which they would not themselves recognise as support. In addition they have the opportunity to call into the group base and have a chat and socialize with other volunteers. These are obvious ways through which their emotional well-being is being supported.

In addition, volunteers are encouraged and offered opportunities to give plenty of feedback about the visits and tasks. This serves a dual purpose of giving the co-ordinator valuable information for discussion with other health and social care professionals when necessary as well as demonstrating interest and support to the volunteer. Although this is a subtle method of support it helps keep volunteers engaged and aware that the group is concerned about their well-being.

2. **The value of bringing all the volunteers together.** This process alone, irrespective of the report being produced, proved so beneficial and could be a consideration on an annual basis. It gave the group time to come together, share their views and feelings on the work, and continue to focus on good practice. In addition, good practical outcomes came out of the meetings which didn't form part of the audit report, such as writing up new guidelines for the Tuesday group.
3. **Acknowledgment of the organisational resilience of the group based activities,** e.g. coffee mornings/Sunday Teas/Tuesday Parent and Toddler Group/Trips. This is achieved by the co-ordinator and one or two key volunteers having the overview of what needs to be done. This is undertaken with sensitivity and there being no sense of hierarchy. On a similar note it was also clear that new volunteers need to be given a 'role' to undertake within these activities as well as being able to go with the flow and use their skills to chat to people.
4. **Recognition of the differences and challenges faced by volunteers in group based activities as opposed to off site, one to one community work.** The visitors, out of all the focus groups, appeared to benefit most from getting together. It was in these meetings that it became evident that of all the volunteering roles this is by far the most isolating and the most challenging. Whilst contact is maintained with the co-ordinator, this group clearly appreciated speaking with other visitors to hear their stories and for many, be re-assured that all were experiencing similar challenges and celebrations. As explored and highlighted within the Home Visitors section, this team showed exceptional levels of emotional intelligence and perseverance. They had to head into the homes of strangers and use their skills to carve out relationships in 'un-natural' circumstances. They showed they had key skills to ensure these relationships could be both successful and be maintained.
5. **Strategies for New Volunteers.** Where possible new volunteers should be offered the opportunity to work in a group-based setting prior to undertaking the more challenging one to one support. The benefits to be gained from this approach are:

- This reduces an initial sense of responsibility for the volunteer.
- A group setting offers them a mentoring opportunity with other, more experienced volunteers.
- They get the space to cement being part of the volunteering team.
- The potential limited experience of new volunteers with being with older generations outside of their families is helped in the groups, as they can gain a better understanding and insight into the realities of life as an older person prior to and/or alongside the more demanding one to one visiting.
- This setting gives them the opportunity to build more natural relationships with some of the service users to then develop them further into home visits.

'I feel a sense of purpose volunteering with Chorlton Good Neighbours, it's so nice to be able to give something back, especially to the community and especially the elderly. It is nice to be a part of something bigger than yourself. It makes a huge difference to so many people's lives and is so worthwhile I hope it is something that continues'

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