



NORTH LONDON CARES

**WINTER WELLBEING
2020/21 EVALUATION REPORT**

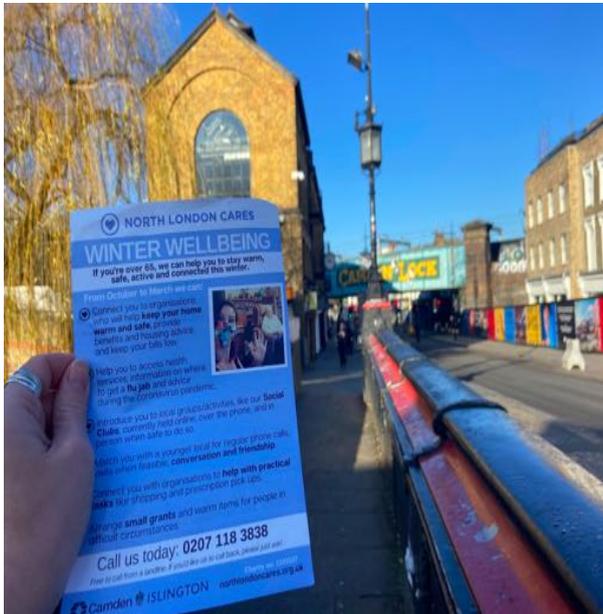


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1. Introduction and objectives

Winter can be a difficult time of the year for older neighbours across Camden and Islington, with cold temperatures and dark days making it increasingly difficult to get



out and about. Faced with a global pandemic, and lockdowns since March, this year was probably the most difficult winter for our network to date. But we rose to the challenge, adapting and inventing new ways of working, enabling hundreds of older neighbours to enjoy community, conversation, connection and practical support during long periods of enforced isolation and shielding.

Camden and Islington are home to over 50,000 people aged 65 or over, with a large proportion of those over the age of 80. More than half live alone, and

many live in social housing or experience income deprivation – four of the biggest determinants of loneliness. Sadly, this problem appears to be worsening, with disconnection across the generations now amongst the highest in the world.

Covid-19 has further exacerbated this issue, as the ONS has found in their analysis of loneliness in Great Britain during the COVID-19 pandemic from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey. They identified one of the groups more likely to be lonely due to the pandemic were adults over the age of 65 who live alone. ¹

An Independent Age survey, conducted from March to April 2020 with 2511 people aged over 65, found that 42% of respondents reported that their mental health has got worse or much worse since the start of the pandemic. A further 66% of respondents said they feel worried or anxious about the impact COVID-19 could

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandlonelinessgreatbritain/3aprilto3may2020#who-is-feeling-lonely/> Statistics in this release have been taken from four waves of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). The OPN is a monthly omnibus survey. In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we adapted the OPN to become a weekly survey used to collect data on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on day-to-day life in Great Britain.

have on their life.² The deaths that have occurred during the pandemic have disproportionately impacted people in later life. Independent Age estimated that up to 98,000 older people were bereaved of a partner during the COVID-19 lockdown between 21 March and 4 July 2020.

As these statistics demonstrate, this project took place in an unprecedented year when those already identified as at risk of loneliness were catapulted into a more extreme form of social isolation, faced with the challenges of bereavement during the pandemic and increased worry and anxiety. The project focused on issues directly related to the pandemic such as the digital divide, access to food, mental health, housing and heating. The project provided a check-in call with many, a space to talk through the very difficult reality of living and shielding through a pandemic. Rather than supporting people to access services and communities outside their home, this year the focus was concentrated on making sure people felt safe and warm at home, bringing the outside world in, through virtual and phone-in group activities, regular phone conversations and activity packs shared in the post.

With last year's Winter Wellbeing project ending abruptly in March 2020 due to the pandemic, North London Cares faced uncertainty over how it could deliver a campaign, one that had historically centred around door-knocking, in the middle of a lockdown. Outreach had to adapt their door-knocking approach to an over-the-phone alternative, our face-to-face clubs quickly became virtual clubs and our Love Your Neighbour programme evolved into 'Phone A Friend' to sustain and build new friendships with our Younger Neighbours at a distance.

We found that many older neighbours were digitally excluded, with no access to the internet. As confidence is an immense barrier in enabling older neighbours to get online, we produced one-to-one tech sessions to help older neighbours connect and worked closely with referral partners to provide suitable devices. North London Cares also created Phone-in Clubs with a 'dial in' option, allowing accessibility for older neighbours without equipment or internet access. For neighbours who were apprehensive to join, we made Cosy Clubs, with smaller groups of just 2-3 individuals. The Outreach Team then worked with the Social Club Coordinators to help support these older neighbours to transition into our larger clubs over time. Now in its tenth year, Winter Wellbeing is the charity's seasonal project. It's a direct response to the strenuous mental and physical challenges faced by older people during the most isolating months of the year.

² They surveyed 2,511 people aged over 65, and from August to September 2020 received 4,978 responses from people over 65.

https://independent-age-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-12/Home%20Truths%20-%20Experiences%20of%20people%20in%20later%20life%20during%20COVID-19_0.pdf?jCbQ7fYZBObPaLVVvxZk5rXMsUt1E1cz=

The project's aim is to keep older neighbours warm, active, healthy and connected. Our key objectives for the project this year were to:

- Ensure older neighbours stayed warm at home through preventative activities targeting fuel poverty;
- Help keep older people informed about local health, housing and benefits services and other provisions;
- Connect people to North London Cares' broader social programmes and networks as well as to other local services and activities provided by the public and voluntary sectors.

To fulfil these objectives, North London Cares offered:

- A phone call campaign, in partnership with Camden and Islington Councils, targeting older neighbours over the age of 65 in areas of known high deprivation and loneliness;
- Warm item distribution, such as blankets, hot water bottles, socks, gloves, hats, hand warmers and thermos flasks;
- Small grants of up to £30 for neighbours struggling to stay connected and support securing external grants for larger sums.
- Referrals to fuel poverty services such as WISH+ at Camden Council and SHINE at Islington Council for advice and support on keeping warm at home, for instance through draught-proofing and insulation tips, and by helping people to better understand bills and payments;
- Direct signposting and referrals to organisations offering advice and support in the areas of social services, tech support, financial support, housing, practical support, mental health, health, transport, and social connections;
- Invitations to North London Cares' Social Clubs, Phone A Friend programme and one to one tech sessions.
- Virtual Outreach in collaboration with community partner staff, GPs, sheltered housing organisations, virtual support groups, community centres and attending existing community events.
- Re-engagement of older neighbours we had met through previous projects.

2. Delivery

Managed by our year round Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator with the support of a temporary Outreach Officer, the Winter Wellbeing project launched on 1st October 2020 and ran until 31st March 2021. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, much of the previous year's activity had been cut short with much uncertainty around how the project might continue. However, preparations were made to rework the model to eliminate physical visits and utilise a phone call based approach.

Despite 10 years of delivering Winter Wellbeing and targeted Outreach via a door-knocking approach, North London Cares pivoted quickly to create a project that could reach more people in the community remotely and be responsive to the changing landscapes and gaps in services Covid had created.



Our Social Clubs were transformed into virtual clubs held over Zoom and over the phone for those without internet access. Love Your Neighbour, a 1-2-1 friendship programme became Phone A Friend, allowing friendships to continue to flourish and develop.

2.1 Phone Calls

Working in partnership with Camden and Islington's Public Health department, we remodelled our usual door knocking model to deliver the project through phone calls.

Camden and Islington Public Health departments identified 600 council tenants (300 per borough) aged 65 or over, who live alone, for us to contact. This data was extracted in conjunction with Age UK's loneliness heat maps, to ascertain where need would likely be highest.

These older neighbours were sent a letter co-signed by the council and North London Cares to introduce the project, along with clear opt-out instructions for anyone preferring not to be contacted. A further 400 leaflets were sent to older neighbours in Camden and Islington, introducing North London Cares should they want to reach out to us for further support.

At the beginning of the project, our team of two aimed to call on average 30 residents a day, and only ever in daylight hours. If an older neighbour didn't answer, we marked the call as unsuccessful and committed to calling them 2 more times leaving voicemails where possible, attempting them on different days and at different times, to ensure the best chance of reaching them.

2.2 Phone Scripts

Initially, our Outreach team designed a Winter Wellbeing Phone Script, following specific questions regarding the older neighbour's housing, heating, health, wellbeing and social connectedness. As calls varied considerably with each older neighbour, the team tailored their approach according to the reception over the phone, taking a person-centered approach. It was crucial for the team to establish trust and a rapport, allowing neighbours to feel comfortable and able to share issues that they were facing. This meant that the calls could take a significant amount of time, ensuring older neighbours felt heard and listened to.

Neighbours struggling with the cold were offered warm items via post. Those with draughty or cold homes were offered referrals to WISH+ and SHINE; many in need of housing repairs, had requests made on their behalf to housing teams within the council. Neighbours were either referred or signposted to organisations identified as the best avenue of support. This included referrals to social services, mental health services, financial services, community centres and organisations like Good Gym and onHand for practical support like food shopping and digital support.

A high percentage of calls resulted in successful conversations to introduce older neighbours to the work of North London Cares. The team offered each individual the opportunity to join our mailing lists and receive further information about our programmes and social activities via the post or email. Those neighbours who were reluctant to seek further support upon our first phone call were given our number and the offer of receiving an introductory letter and Winter Wellbeing leaflet.

The response from residents was largely positive, with many neighbours grateful for the call even if they didn't require deeper support. However, many interactions were demanding, as some residents were highly vulnerable and experiencing complex



North London Cares is a local organisation working in Camden and Islington. We connect younger and older neighbours, so that people of all ages can feel more connected to the world and community around them.

OUR PROGRAMMES

SOCIAL CLUBS
Free social clubs across Camden and Islington where you can spend time with **younger and older locals, laughing and learning new things together**. Our clubs include tech workshops, discos, dances, cultural visits, conversation clubs and creative activities.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR & PHONE A FRIEND
Be matched up with a **younger neighbour** for regular company, chats, cuppas and visits at home (when safe to do so). Friends are currently chatting **over the phone**.

SUPPORT & ADVICE
We can connect you to vital services, including benefits, health and housing advice, practical support, and social activities all year round. From October to March, our **Winter Wellbeing** project will help you stay warm, safe, active and connected.

Join the fun: **0207 118 3838**
Visit: www.northlondoncares.org.uk
Email: tilly.jeune@northlondoncares.org.uk

North London Cares is the public name for NLC Carex Limited, UK registered company, number 07701818 and a UK registered charity, number 1133137. Charity no: 1133137

issues. Our team were frequently involved in prolonged conversations and at times it was difficult to ascertain specific needs over the phone. There was a high volume of calls to make which was difficult to sustain whilst managing a growing amount of intervention work. As staff were conducting this work from home and experiencing isolation and a lockdown themselves, the more complex and difficult conversations consequently took an emotional toll on the team.

2.3 Translation Calls

During our initial Islington Winter Wellbeing calls, the Outreach team identified a need for translation services for residents who did not speak English as a first language. Due to the phone call model of the project we were able to access **The Big Word**, a phone translation service, thanks to Camden & Islington Public Health. This phone translation service enabled us to speak directly to older residents rather than speaking to relatives on their behalf, which had previously been the case. We used the translation service for 13 different languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Cantonese, Farsi, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Somalian, Spanish, Tigrinya, Turkish. 50% of our translation calls were for residents whose first language was Bengali.

The Outreach team were able to support older neighbours by making referrals to community partners that offered language and culturally specific support such as SURMA, Hopscotch and Bosnia and Herzegovina Community Advice Centre (BHCAC). This helped us provide further support for more complex interventions to neighbours unaware of services available to them due to language barriers. The Outreach team regularly found themselves reporting housing issues to the council on the resident's behalf as there seemed to be no clear process for reporting these in different languages.



The poster is titled 'NORTH LONDON CARES WINTER WELLBEING' and is aimed at people over 65. It lists several services available from October to March, such as connecting to organizations for home safety, accessing health services, introducing to social clubs, matching with younger locals for friendship, and arranging grants. It includes a contact number 0207 118 3838 and logos for Camden and Islington.

NORTH LONDON CARES
WINTER WELLBEING
If you're over 65, we can help you to stay warm, safe, active and connected this winter.

From October to March we can:

- Connect you to organisations who will help **keep your home warm and safe**, provide benefits and housing advice, and keep your bills low.
- Help you to access health services, information on where to get a **flu jab** and advice during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Introduce you to local groups/activities, like our **Social Clubs**, currently held online, over the phone, and in person when safe to do so.
- Match you with a younger local for regular phone calls, visits when feasible, **conversation and friendship**.
- Connect you with organisations to **help with practical tasks** like shopping and prescription pick ups.
- Arrange **small grants** and warm items for people in difficult circumstances.

Call us today: **0207 118 3838**
Free to call from a landline. If you'd like us to call back, please just ask!

Camden ISLINGTON Charity no: 1155117
northlondoncares.org.uk

2.4 Community Outreach

In a usual year, the Outreach team would attend GP surgeries, flu clinics, pharmacies, community centres, tea parties, lunch clubs, tenants and residents' association meetings and lunches to promote the Winter Wellbeing project to partners and neighbours face-to-face. This year, it was necessary to adapt quickly, with all engagement taking place remotely, we increased our focus on joined-up and collaborative working locally, ensuring an up to date understanding of local service provision and ensuring that our community partners were well informed of our offers and opportunities and referral pathways.

Outreach hosted three virtual Winter Wellbeing pop up events at the start of the project. We tailored these events for three different groups: Community Partners; Health professions and Sheltered Housing managers. At these events, we delivered our project presentation, spreading the word about our Winter Wellbeing offer, North London Cares Programmes and our referral process. We shared e-versions of our leaflets to be disseminated to residents, patients and older neighbours in the community.

Throughout the project, Outreach delivered Winter Wellbeing pop ups to new and existing community partners, building and strengthening existing relationships. We introduced the project through these virtual pop ups to an array of different community partners:

- Camden Mental Health team
- Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association (ISHA)
- Camden Adult Social Care
- Peabody Housing Association
- Dementia Friends Session at Camden Cares
- Islington Council Housing team
- Groundwork's Green Doctors

We met virtually with a number of different community partners and held 1-2-1 meetings introducing the Winter Wellbeing project, our referral process and North London Cares' adapted offers. These meetings also provided a vital chance to learn about our community partners' services of support during a pandemic and to collaborate. Some of these included; Holloway Neighbourhood group, HealthWatch Camden, Held On Your Doorstep, Centre 404, Queens Crescent Community center and Mind in Camden.

The Outreach team also attended a number of community partner events aiming to tackle specific challenges faced by Camden and Islington residents. They provided a

vital space to learn, discuss and look at cross-organisational ways to provide solutions and support. In a time when outreach on the ground was not possible and community partners' services had shifted in line with the pandemic, these events allowed the team to witness how different organisations were navigating the pandemic and keep updated with the different offers of support available. Attending these events was crucial to understand the landscape of support in both Camden and Islington. These included a Digital Divide event hosted by Voluntary Action Camden, a GP Q&A event by Healthwatch Camden and Islington Social Connectedness Network and a Social Prescribing session hosted by Islington Council.

New Relationships

This year we established new relationships with organisations whose offer of support and services were in line with issues highlighted by the pandemic, such as the digital divide, food support, shopping assistance and mental wellbeing.

Mer.IT is a charity tackling the digital divide through refurbishing donated laptops. We worked together to deliver laptops to five neighbours and we are in the process of providing them to five more. This was a vital partnership, enabling neighbours to start their tech journey as the **Campaign to End Loneliness 'Lessons from Lockdown' report** underlines 'Lack of online access is not just a barrier to connection; it also creates challenges in accessing services, from banking to shopping, compounding the impact of lockdown on people's social relationships'.³

Other new relationships include the **Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association** who offered a virtual Slow exercise programme; **LikeWise** a charity who offer support with wellbeing and independent living; **Feast for Us** who deliver food parcels and hot meals; **onHand** a voluntary group who can assist with shopping, prescription collection, practical support; **SURMA (Bengali**



³ <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Lessons-from-lockdown-FEB21.pdf>

Workers Association) who offer a befriending services, food delivery and shopping assistance and **The Network of Eritrean Women**.

Referrals from partners

Outreach has been able to build trust and strengthen partnerships with Goodgym, WISH+, SHINE, Age UK Camden & Islington, Voluntary Action Camden and Help On Your Doorstep, creating stronger referral pathways and keeping neighbours informed of the brilliant support available in their community.

Below are the organisations we referred and signposted Older Neighbours to:

<p><u>Cold Home</u> Green Doctors - Camden Groundwork SHINE Islington Council WISH+ Camden Council</p> <p><u>Heath Service</u> Age UK Camden Care Navigator Amphill Practice Adelaide Medical Centre Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust Goodinge Medical Practise Healthy Mind Healthy Bodies Highbury Grange Health Centre Independent Age Islington Reach James Wigg Practice London Care Ltd Parliament Hill Medical Centre Regents Park Practice Roman Way Medical Centre Somers Town Medical Centre The Beaumont Practice</p> <p><u>Housing</u> Camden Handyperson Service Camden Housing Repairs</p>	<p><u>Finance</u> Citizens Advice Help On your Doorstep</p> <p><u>Food delivery referral</u> Castlehaven Community Center Elizabeth house Community center Feast With Us GoodGym SURMA Islington Foodbank Maiden Lane Community Centre Queens Crescent Community Association Urban Community Projects</p> <p><u>Mental Health</u> CALM - Campaign Against Living Miserably Cruse Bereavement iCope Psychology service Likewise Mind Camden Silverline</p> <p><u>Practical support</u> Age UK Islington Age UK Camden</p>
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<p>Camden Neighbourhood Housing Officers Hyde Housing Islington Housing Repairs Origin Housing Pest Control Victim Support</p> <p><u>Other Grant</u> Friends of the Elderley Resident Support Scheme, Islington</p> <p><u>Social connections</u> Alzheimer's Society (Islington) Claremont Project Eritrean Women's Network Henna Asian Women's Group Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre Islington Bangladeshi Association Manor Gardens Peel Institute Company Walking for Health Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association</p>	<p>Bosnia and Herzegovina Community Advice Centre British Red Cross Camden Carers Camden Disability Action Goodgym Help On Your Doorstep Islington Carers Hub Kilburn Good Neighbours OnHand The London Irish Center</p> <p><u>Social Services/Occupational Therapy</u> Adult Social Care Camden Adult Social Care Islington</p> <p><u>Tech Support</u> Ability Net Age UK - Gadget clinic Coffee & Computers Goodgym Holloway Neighbourhood Group Mer-IT St Luke's Community Centre - PC Pals</p>
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The North London Cares team also promoted the project within its varied programmes. Our Love Your Neighbour/Phone a Friend team and Social Club Coordinators were proactive in spreading the word and speaking to older neighbours over the phone to see if they needed any additional support.

***'I was also very pleased to have had a chat and would like to thank you so much for your kind understanding of our situation, all your help and the most welcome parcel that will be will be of tremendous help to both my husband and I'
Celia* name changed, 78.***

3.0 Project in numbers

From October 2020 to April 2021 North London Cares:

Overall:

- Supported 467 older neighbours during the project period
- Supported those 467 older neighbours with 1046 interventions
- Supporting 62 older neighbours with 85 ongoing interventions
- Connected 410 of those older neighbours to 110 different organisations, charities and routes of support through signposting and referrals.

Specifically through the council partnership calls:

- Successfully spoke to 582 older neighbours over the phone about the Winter Wellbeing project
- Successfully spoke to 31 older neighbours via the translation service out of 41 older neighbours identified, communicating in 13 different languages
- Supported 280 older neighbours from data supplied by the council with 518 interventions
- Connected 253 of those older neighbours to 77 different organisations, charities and routes of support via signposting and referrals

“It’s been fabulous interacting with the outside world with the social clubs. The project has made me feel that I have not been forgotten. This year and lockdown has been really hard for social people like me, I have really enjoyed the clubs. The draft excluders have also been a great help” Denis , 66

Overall	ONs supported	Interventions
Entire project	467	1046
Council data	280	518

- Phone calls to the residents provided by the council data accounted for **57.82%** of older neighbours.
- These calls accounted for **49.52 %** of interventions through the entire project.

Other:

- **We delivered 112 warm items**, including blankets and thermal socks to older neighbours struggling with the cold, to **45 older neighbours**
- **We signed 176 older neighbours** up to receive our **monthly Social Clubs Programme** via email or our postal pack.
- **63 older neighbours were referred to be matched with a younger neighbour** for weekly phone calls through the North London Cares **Phone A Friend** programme.
- There were 1197 **attendances** of older and younger neighbours at **136 of our social clubs**.
- **We connected 38 older people** to WISH + and **51** to SHINE for support with cold homes;
- **We issued 5 Connection Grants** - **2** in Camden and **3** in Islington for help with buying things such as **electric heaters** and more substantial **winter clothes**. As it was the first year trialling £30 connection grants, as opposed to previous years of £100 grants, fewer connection grants were required. The difference in amount limited the uptake along with the specific criteria outline and neighbours not being able to go out due to the lockdown. Neighbours also needed more substantial amounts to aid in making a difference.
- **We supported 3 Older neighbours** with more substantial grants of up to **£400** from Friends of the Elderly. **These grants supported neighbours with things such as** new duvet sets, mattress toppers, essential winter garments, essential living costs, gas bills. We are supporting a further **9 older neighbours** with ongoing grant applications.

- We attended **53 community groups and events** to collaborate with community partners, spread the message about Winter Wellbeing and help people access a range of support from other organisations.

'I just want to thank you all for being there for me and for caring. You don't realise how important your conversations are for people like me whose family are not here to support. Without people like you speaking and supporting me I don't know what would happen. I really want to say thank you for caring.'

Christine, 70.

Interventions by source

3.1 Phone Calls

Phone calls to the residents provided by the council accounted for **57.82%** of ONs supported during the project, and **49.52%** interventions completed.

	Camden	Islington	Total
Calls made	456	411	867
Successful calls made	323	259	582
Neighbours receiving an intervention	162	118	280
Total numbers of interventions	313	205	518

From October 2020 to January 2021 we attempted to contact **411** Islington residents and successfully spoke to **259**. In January 2021, we concentrated on the borough of Camden, attempting to call **456** residents and successfully spoke to **323**.

A **successful** call resulted in the Outreach team being able to have a conversation with the older neighbour outlining the Winter Wellbeing Project and ascertaining any support required.

- 50% of the successful calls to Camden residents resulted in interventions.
- 46% of the successful calls to Islington residents resulted in interventions.

An **unsuccessful** call was when we attempted to make contact on 3 different occasions with no answer, a wrong number or the older neighbour being deceased. On average we had to call 1.5 times before getting through to speak to an older neighbour.

3.2 Community Events

During last year's Winter Wellbeing project, community events, such as speaking to older neighbours at Sheltered Housing Units, GP and Flu Clinics and attendance at coffee mornings, accounted for the highest source of interventions. This year, the majority came from Winter Wellbeing phone calls and we were able to reach a higher level of older neighbours directly through data provided by the council.

This year, community events looked very different. The Outreach team focused their efforts on spreading the Winter Wellbeing Message through community partners who were speaking directly to older neighbours. We further dedicated time to attending external events hosted by community organisations like Voluntary Action Camden in order to ensure we understood the landscape of support available and collaborated with different organisations.

Outreach Events	We attended 53 community groups and events to collaborate with community partners and spread the message about Winter Wellbeing but also to help people access a range of support from other organisations.
Residents/partners reached at events	Reached approximately 500 residents or partners through these activities and events.

3.3 External Referrals

Since the project began, we received 70 incoming interventions from website referrals. Our Main Referrers include; Age UK Camden, Voluntary Action Camden and Age UK Islington.



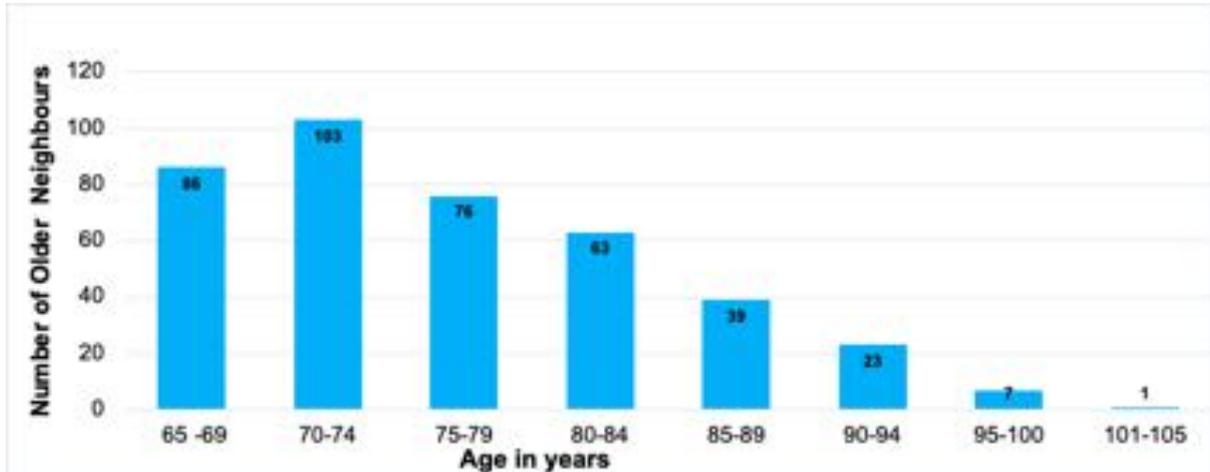
3.4 Types of Intervention

Intervention	Camden	Islington	Other borough	Total
Social Clubs	72	57	6	135 (12.92%)
Housing	50	27	2	79 (7.56%)
Cold Homes	35	41	0	76 (7.27%)
Virtual Social Clubs	35	25	11	71(6.79%)
Phone Social Clubs	33	27	4	64(6.12%)
Practical Support	31	27	4	62(5.93%)
Phone A Friend	31	18	4	53(5.07%)
General Signposting Letter	29	14	1	44(4.21%)
Warm Items	27	17	0	44(4.21%)
Tech Support	24	20	5	49(4.69%)
Social Services	19	14	0	33(3.16%)

Activity Pack	17	4	5	26(2.49%)
Health Service	11	12	0	23(2.20%)
Mental Health	15	6	0	21(2.01%)
Food Delivery Referral	9	9	1	19(1.82%)
Other Grant	8	5	1	14(1.34%)
Love Your Neighbour	2	8	0	10(0.96%)
Social Connections	8	4	0	12(1.14%)
Leisure activities	4	4	0	8(0.77%)
Raising a Safeguarding Concern	2	4	1	7 (0.67%)
Financial	2	4	0	6(0.57%)
Other	3	3	0	6 (0.57%)
Transport	3	2	0	5 (0.48%)
Connection Grant	2	2	0	4 (0.38%)
Age Uk	1	1	0	2(0.19%)
Broken Boiler	0	2	0	2(0.19%)
Medicine Delivery Referral	0	1	0	1(0.09%)

3.5 Age Demographic

Where information about age was given, out of a sample of 398 neighbours, we recorded the following breakdown amongst people who received interventions:



4.0 Case studies

James, 71

We first met James through the Winter Wellbeing calls back in January.

James, living alone, had been fed up with the lockdown and mentioned that he didn't own a laptop and wanted to be better connected, especially with his sister who lives in Australia. North London Cares made a referral to community partner Mer-IT who were able to provide James with a laptop in February and our Outreach Officer safely delivered it to him. As James hadn't used one before, we made a referral to community partner, Holloway Neighbourhood Group, who have provided James with weekly, over the phone, tech support. Since the laptop was delivered, we're in regular contact with James to see how his computer skills are coming on. James has been practicing his emails, doing some online shopping and has even been able to communicate with his sister in Australia via email. James is hoping to come



along to one of our virtual social clubs once he is more confident using Zoom. He is now delighted with his new device and expertise!

“Marvin who helped me was marvellous, he’s a really nice man. Made a difference to my idea of a computer. Got on well really, enjoyed myself. Thank you, pal. I’m really happy.”

Christina, 76

We first spoke to Christina in November through our Islington Winter Wellbeing Calls. She has been living with chronic back pain, which means that she is unable to move around easily. When we spoke, she said that she didn’t have any supportive equipment in her house and she was struggling to do basic daily tasks. The Outreach team made a referral to Islington’s Occupational Therapy team. They were in contact with her very quickly and carried out a mobility assessment. They provided her with a rail in her toilet, a walking stick and a bath lift. Christina says that these adjustments have been and will be a ‘fantastic help’.



The Outreach team was also able to connect Christina to OnHand, a voluntary organisation who could help with shopping tasks when she or her husband were unable to go to the shops. We also applied for North London Cares’ Connection Grant and were able to buy Christina a fluffy warm scarf and a neck heater for her back pain. Christina told us that speaking to Outreach throughout the project has given her a lot of faith.

“I am very grateful for the day North London Cares called me. I am extremely happy to know about North London Cares, thank you for all your help, you’ve been brilliant.”

Gay, 93

We first met Gay through a website referral made by community partners, Age UK, back in October. Gay lives alone and is registered blind. Gay told North London Cares that she missed the stimulation of talking to other people. After discussing our different programmes, Gay decided she liked the sound of the Phone-in-club. Due to her visual impairment, we

dialed her into our Phone-in Clubs and since October, Gay has attended an incredible 24 'Phone-in- clubs!

"I really enjoy the clubs. I always come away feeling happier than when I went in. It's strange, but I always have the feeling I have been out of the house somehow and have met some nice new friends. It takes your mind off yourself and always gets us talking about ourselves in an outgoing way. I'm gradually getting to know people. Even though I find it hard to hear, I am starting to recognise people's voices. Everyone connected (to NLC) is so kind. Sinead always has time for a chat and Andy and Hannah, too."

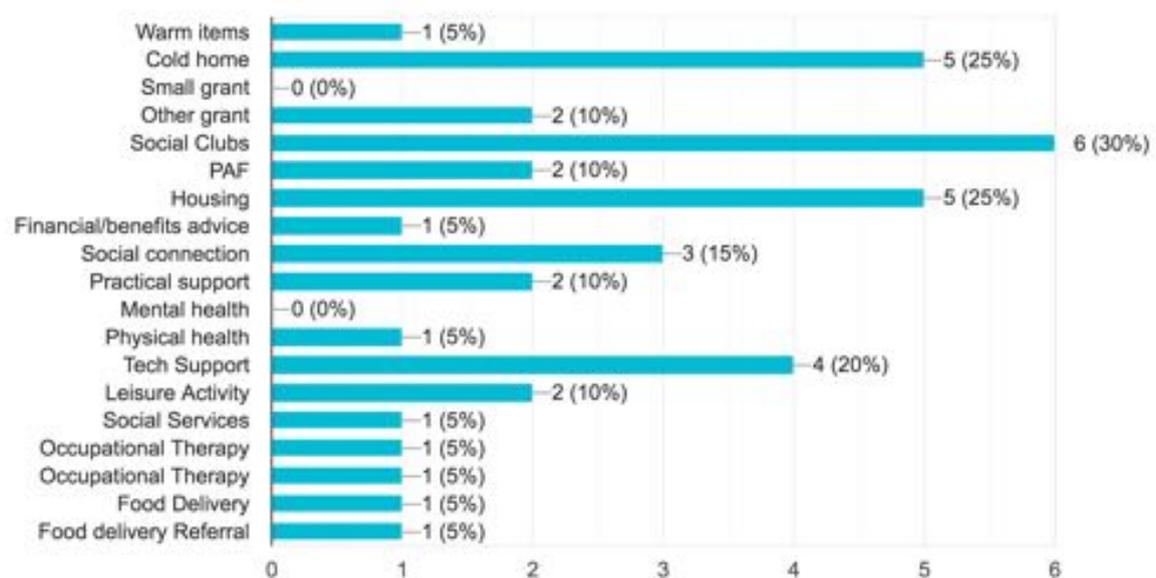


5.0 Evaluation

5.1 Survey results

Interventions received by those surveyed

20 responses



During April 2021, we completed 20 over-the-phone surveys with older neighbours who had benefited from the Winter Wellbeing project through a diverse range of interventions. We conducted the surveys to help us interrogate the successes and gaps in the project and provide a greater understanding of the impact of our work.

Our survey found that:

- 55% agreed or strongly agreed that their original concerns had been addressed; whilst 35% were neutral due to the issues being ongoing or more complex.
- 70% felt that the project had improved their health and wellbeing;
- 70% felt that they were now better connected;
- 30% saw improvements in their housing issues;

- 60% said their financial issues had improved.

However, limitations were also highlighted:

- One person felt their issues were more complicated than the support available could solve;
- Three people felt that the help they accessed did not resolve their issue;
- One person said the housing team didn't resolve the issues;
- One person didn't follow through with the signposting information we provided;

We also asked neighbours we surveyed, “in your opinion, what is the most valuable aspect of the Winter Wellbeing project?”

- 70% valued the reassurance that the community is there for them;
- 25% valued finding out about social clubs;
- 60% valued signposting to other local services;
- 15% valued warm items or financial help;

*“It's been a really helpful project. It has steered me down avenues of help that I never knew about...” Dave, 66 **

5.2 Re-engagement Calls

We attempted **61 older neighbours** for re-engagement calls. Out of those 61 calls, **47** calls were successful.

Through these calls we were able to find out the outcome of **63 interventions**. We spoke with older neighbours from previous interventions made as a result of the Winter Wellbeing calls to find out if they had received or accessed support.

Interventions explored included; Social Services, practical support and housing.

- Out of 12 Interventions for Social Services, we found that 16.6% were successful, 8.3% were unsuccessful and 75% were ongoing.
- Out of 17 Housing interventions 47% were successful, 35.3% were ongoing and 17.6% were unsuccessful.
- Out of 9 Practical Support interventions, 33.3% were successful, 11.1% were unsuccessful and 55.5% were ongoing
- Out of 24 other interventions (mental health, health service, transport, food delivery, financial) 32% were successful, 40% unsuccessful and 28% ongoing.

When re-engaging with older neighbours, we found that a number of interventions were ongoing or unsuccessful as neighbours hadn't been able to access the service yet or it was ongoing due to waiting times for occupational therapy. One of the major challenges this year was the **reduction in services due to the pandemic and increased waiting lists** as a result of the pausing of face to face services. We also found that due to the offers of support being virtual or over the phone, this resulted in missed calls or ineffective modes of communication.

5.3 Project strengths

This was the first year that the Winter Wellbeing project had been conducted over the phone, enabling us to use an over the phone translation service to speak directly with older neighbours for whom English is not their first language. Often these older neighbours have required the most support. Outreach was able to connect these neighbours to community groups, as well as alert and liaise with housing teams about ongoing issues that hadn't been raised due to language barriers.

We have developed new relationships with community partners tackling Covid-19 specific issues, such as; the digital divide, shopping support, practical support and mental health support.

During the pandemic, many neighbours that we have spoken to have felt more isolated than ever, as their normal day to day activities or community centres weren't available. Our calls were a very welcome check in, many people appreciated feeling like the community was looking out for them during this time, and that they could call us if they needed support. Neighbours were also grateful to have non judgemental conversations, talking through their issues or worries at the time, whilst feeling heard and listened to.



‘Indeed, I felt so much better after speaking with you - and better still after receiving your words of encouragement.’ *Larry, 80

Outreach was able to support a high number of new neighbours to join our virtual social clubs. Due to the virtual nature of these clubs, Outreach dedicated much time to supporting older neighbours to gain access, either through digital support or organising cosy clubs for neighbours who were reticent about joining larger groups. We welcomed 31 new older neighbours to our virtual social clubs, Phone-in clubs, Cosy clubs and first face to face Garden club. Thanks to the dial in option for our Phone-in Club, where we could dial in neighbours to the club so that they did not need to enter the zoom codes, we were able to make our programmes as accessible as possible.

Outreach hosted three virtual Winter Wellbeing Pop-ups at the start of the project.

We sent out targeted emails to contacts working in/as; Sheltered Housing, GPs, Nurses, Health practitioners, Community centres and Charities. We were able to introduce the Winter Wellbeing project, our regular programmes and clear referral pathways. This laid the path for more referrals when the weather turned colder.



These pop-up events also resulted in further virtual meetings with the Islington Intensive Housing and Camden Mental Health teams. In total, we completed 53 different engagements during project delivery, collaborating with community partners and spreading the message about Winter Wellbeing, opening up the door to many new neighbours.

Outreach learned from our first months of calls that mental health, social care and language barriers were the major challenges facing older neighbours. They proactively sought to establish stronger relationships & links with Social Services, mental health charities and organised the over the phone translation service to ensure support to older neighbours.

'Invaluable service to elderly people like myself, and the fact that there is a voice and person on the telephone that I can contact or will contact me. Not all elderly people have internet access or smart phones that people can communicate with. I support the work you are doing.' Clare, 81

5.4 Challenges and Recommendations

The Winter Wellbeing project remains unique. North London Cares continues to improve the project year-on-year and to respond to changing contexts, including the Covid-19 pandemic, and to learn from our sibling charities across The Cares Family. However, there are adjustments that can be made to improve the project in future years.

Many of the challenges faced were a direct result of completing the project in a year like no other - during a pandemic with intermittent national lockdowns. Not only were the nature of the calls more difficult with older neighbours facing acute social isolation but many regular avenues of support and face to face services were not



available. There was a marked frustration and exasperation from many neighbours over the virtual nature of much of the support available.

High Volume of Calls and Staff Capacity:

Throughout the Winter Wellbeing project, the Outreach team spoke to older neighbours who were facing a nexus of complex issues in relation to their health, housing, wellbeing and finances. These cases demanded a deeper level of support, time and energy in

order to liaise with different organisations whilst also providing reassurance throughout the referral process. We learnt that this deeper support is ultimately more fruitful for older neighbours' wellbeing rather than a broad approach. However due to the high volume of calls, the Outreach team of two did not have the capacity to offer this in-depth support to every older neighbour.

Recommendation:

Reduce the volume of Winter Wellbeing calls so that the Outreach team are able to spend more time and energy on each case. Ensure the project is more flexible and responsive, so that we can slow the project down in accordance with how many interventions the Outreach team are dealing with at one time.

Housing Concerns:

One of the main challenges was to deal with issues around housing. The Outreach team often made housing repair requests on behalf of older neighbours. This was due to the quicker response time via the website and email which many older neighbours did not have access to. However, many issues were not resolved by the initial repairs visit. The Outreach team had to follow up multiple times for these cases to be resolved. This was a very time consuming process due to housing phone lines being busy during the pandemic and we were not always able to resolve the issue. In part this was due to the housing teams privileging emergency repairs due to the Covid Pandemic to ensure the safety of their residents, but this did mean that issues such as damp, mould, plastering and other housing issues that would improve residents wellbeing were not addressed in the same capacity as in previous years.

Recommendation:

For future projects, we would allocate more time to building relationships with housing teams in order to deliver a coordinated response to older neighbours needs. Outreach often liaised with neighbourhood housing officers in Camden. Prior to the project starting it would be beneficial to establish stronger ties with these housing officers and the Islington Homes and Communities teams that can support older residents with complex housing issues.



Translation Calls:

Though the translation calls were successful, they revealed the acute social isolation that derives from being unable to access services or communicate independently due to language barriers. Outreach supported these residents to access services that offered appropriate support in different languages, however many of these organisations were at high capacity. Many of these older neighbours expressed frustration at being unable to communicate directly through official channels. A further issue was a lack of clear process for reporting and communicating with the housing teams when English is not your first language.

Recommendation:

Dedicate more time to establishing better links with organisations that support residents in different languages and working more collaboratively to provide support. Liaise with council housing teams to establish a clear route for residents with little English language to report their housing issues.

Mental Health:

Due to the pandemic, older neighbours were facing an acute form of isolation that took a toll on many people's mental health. Many of the Winter Wellbeing conversations were very challenging and took an emotional toll on the North London Cares Team who were completing this project from their homes during a lockdown. The Cares Family provided Mental Health Training and Samaritans training during the project. They also set up free and subsidised counselling services for the Cares Family staff. However the challenges faced by the team arose from the time pressures of conducting a high volume of calls during this period, making it difficult to make full use of this service.

Recommendation:

Ensure the project protects the wellbeing of its staff through a more flexible timetable that allows time for staff to take care of their own wellbeing and reflect on difficult calls.

Establishing trust over the phone:

Though phone calls were largely effective, many older neighbours were wary of speaking to us, citing that they didn't recall receiving our introductory letter. This was a big barrier to providing support as neighbours were initially reticent to speak about issues they were facing. In some cases the Outreach team were able to send more informal letters introducing themselves to these residents and then calling again, however we did not have the time capacity to do this for each older neighbour.

Recommendation:

To create a less formal and more personable introductory letter to residents, introducing the Outreach team with pictures and names. To decrease the quantity calls which would enable the team to send further introductory letters to neighbours.



Community Partners Relationships:

This year's project was undertaken by a freshly assembled Outreach team. Though we were able to allocate time to meet community partners, such as WISH+, SHINE, Adult Social Care Camden and Islington, we were unable to familiarise ourselves with the plethora of relevant statutory organisations, charities, community centres and groups in London in advance. This meant we were establishing new relationships with external community groups and learning about services and offers of support whilst managing a high volume of calls. Though we established good relationships with many of the amazing organisations in Camden and Islington, we would have benefitted from more time at the beginning of the project, or prior to the project starting, to nurture these relationships and strengthen more integrated and collaborative ways of working together.

Recommendation:

To allocate a month before the Winter Wellbeing Project begins to set up established relationships with community centres, charities and community organisations, introducing the project, learning from already established organisations about how best to deliver the project. Finally this would allow us to open up the conversation and facilitate more collaborative ways of working together to serve the community. To regularly assess these partnerships to ensure that we are sharing our learning and evaluate the best ways of working together.

7.0 Conclusion

In comparison to the Winter Wellbeing Project in 2019/20 there was a 33% increase in the number of older neighbours that we were able to support throughout the project. With a 20% increase in the number of interventions made on behalf of those older neighbours. This can be pinpointed to the success of the phone calls as a more effective delivery method than our previous approach of door knocking. For the borough of Camden the phone calls resulted in 200 more conversations with older neighbours than last year's door knocking with 123 more people receiving an intervention as a result. For the borough of Islington there was a similar trend with 172 more conversations with 72 more people receiving an intervention than door knocking.

As the surveys and re-engagement calls revealed, the pandemic clearly created some barriers to accessing the available housing, community and health support. This was as a result of increased waiting lists for occupational therapy and other care services. Although many local organisations were doing amazing work supporting communities, this was often conducted virtually which excluded those

without internet access. Housing concerns that were not considered essential were not dealt with in the same manner as in previous years. We intend to continue working with many of the older neighbours we have spoken to over the last months especially as we transition to more face to face activities and work to reduce waiting lists. Though the Winter Wellbeing project ends in March, we continue throughout the year to check in with neighbours that have joined our network as a result of this year's campaign. Many of the issues raised in our first calls are more complex than this project allows for and the journey towards feeling well and connected can take many months, if not years.

With the help of the translation service, we have enhanced our ability to communicate with residents that speak little or no English, something that has always been a major challenge. In the future, we would like to improve further by building our relationships with grassroot organisations offering services in different languages to create a more collaborative working relationship.

The North London Cares team were able to transform our programmes to offer a wide range of virtual programmes, from virtual workshops to phone clubs for those without internet. We were also able to continue supporting intergenerational friendships through our Phone A Friend programme. We dedicated time to helping bridge the digital divide with devices and tech support. However, the Outreach team faced challenges as in person tech support was limited during the pandemic and helping older neighbours to get online was never a simple journey from A to B and required many conversations. Though the transition to our virtual offer has been long and complex, and has made it difficult to include all older neighbours, we have retained the joy and laughter of our work, bringing the weird and wonderful to the screens and phones of older and younger neighbours .

The success of this project is thanks to the brilliant organisations and services in Camden and Islington through which our older neighbours can access a plethora of support from housing adaptation, benefits advice, mental health support, food parcels, shopping and gardening and tech support, exercises classes and much, much more. **We would like to thank all the organisations who have collaborated with us and hope to further strengthen these relationships in the years to come.**

This year's project took place in an era steeped in uncertainty and dense with figures and statistics. As a country, we watched in horror as fatalities from the pandemic broke into six-figures, the R-rate fluctuated and restrictions tightened, eased then tightened again. Amid a crisis that is taking place on the global stage, we must remember that the effects are often felt most strongly on a level that is not only local, but very much individual.

We appreciate that this report is loaded with stats and figures, but behind those numbers are people with rich experiences and a lot of value to bring to our community. Remembering the individuals behind the numbers, we hope this report brings a sense of optimism and pride, with an opportunity to celebrate the resourcefulness, resilience and compassion that lie at the heart of our community.

As an organisation, we have been forced to adapt, but we have treated obstacles as opportunities. We have embraced new ways of promoting friendship and inclusivity and our neighbours have joined us every step of the way. While the uncertainty is not over, we will continue to learn, to adapt to a changing world and to strive to better understand and respond to the needs of our neighbours. We will continue to help people stay connected in a disconnecting time, reducing the gaps across social, generational, digital, cultural and attitudinal divides. Most importantly, through our staff, our older and younger neighbours and the skilled and dedicated community partners we interact with, we will strive to care for each other to improve our collective wellbeing and strengthen our community for many years to come.

