



Enriching Lives Project Evaluation 2019/2020

The Story

Initially, the aim of the project was to implement a flexible and accessible volunteering programme to engage socially isolated individuals in volunteering at Gaddum. Thus people with lived experience of social isolation particularly service users from our Carers service could engage in a volunteering role.

Volunteering as an antidote to social isolation and loneliness was based on surveys and reports such as the 2018-19 Community Life survey¹ where 24% of respondents engaged in volunteering to meet new people or make new friends.

The 2017-18 Community Life survey² reports that respondents engaged in formal volunteering felt generally lower levels of loneliness. From this, 4 roles were created for people to engage in. These roles were peer support, outreach, fundraising and events, and social group with one off, short term and long term opportunities available. Examples of these roles included supporting and facilitating a weekly carers coffee morning, former and current carers supporting at outreach events to engage new carers in our services as well as former and current carers befriending the cared for to provide social interaction and respite to the other carer.

The figures below are for the period up to 06/03/2020.

Role	No. of volunteers	No. of hours of support
Peer support	4	16
Outreach	2	8
Fundraising and events	35	113
Social group	2	22
Totals	43	159

However, from mid-March onwards as the pandemic hit and the country went into lockdown based on Government guidelines, Gaddum closed face to face services and moved to a remote model. In line with this the Enriching Lives project was also adapted to a remote model. The face to face volunteering programme became a telephone support volunteering programme offering support to our extremely isolated service users within our Carers service. The objective of this to provide a friendly voice and listening ear to help our service users feel more connected and less isolated during such strange and difficult circumstances. Service users were

¹ Source: Community Life Survey 2018-19,
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820610/Community_Life_Survey_2018-19_report.pdf

² Source: Community Life Survey 2017-18,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-focus-on-loneliness>

identified by our Carers team as those who were particularly isolated i.e. living alone or with no social support network.

Once referred service users were matched with a telephone support volunteer who called weekly for a minimum of 30 minutes at an agreed time.

The figures below are for the period 06/04/2020 to 11/09/2020.

Role	No. of volunteers	No. of carers supported	No. of hours of support
Telephone support	22	39	195

Impact

Evaluation Methodology

In light of the pandemic the impact evaluation is focused on the telephone support element of the project. This has been conducted externally by an independent evaluator. At the beginning of the project a baseline measurement was taken to capture information on feelings of social isolation and loneliness before either becoming a volunteer or receiving support from a volunteer.

An example of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 1. This was then repeated in August 2020 to measure changes.

Questions 1, 4 and 7 are designed to measure loneliness.

Questions 2, 3, 5, and 8 are designed to measure social isolation.

Question 6 is designed to measure overall wellbeing.

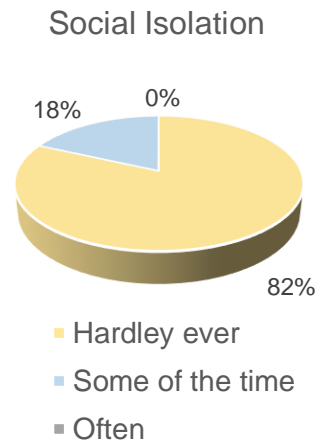
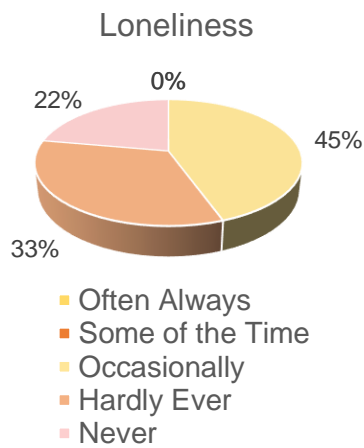
The charts which follow capture the baseline measurement and follow up measurement for volunteers and beneficiaries.

Note: Feedback from carers and volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive but some of them have been very much impacted by the pandemic and subsequent lockdown. It is because of this a lower than hoped for response to the follow up questionnaire was received.

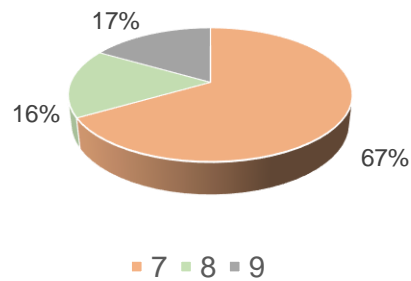
Some people have not wanted to complete the follow up questionnaire because they feel it does not provide a true picture of the support they have received. Carers feel it is hard to measure the difference the project has made within the context of the pandemic and its impact on their lives and those they care for. All of them did state however that the telephone support has been of great benefit.

A Volunteers Perspective

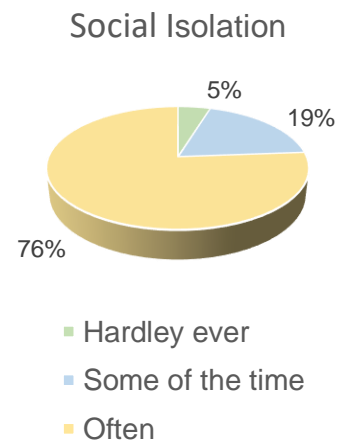
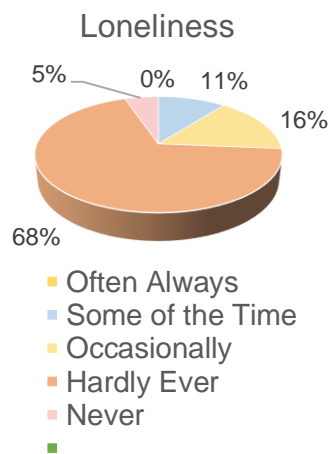
Baseline:



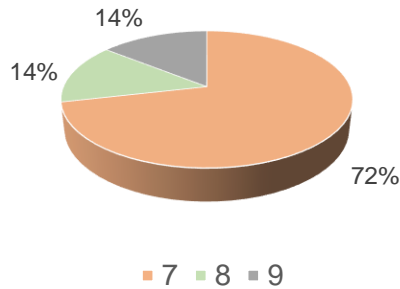
Wellbeing: On a Scale of 0-10 how satisfied are you with your life these days?



Follow up:



Wellbeing: On a Scale of 0-10 how satisfied are you with your life these days?

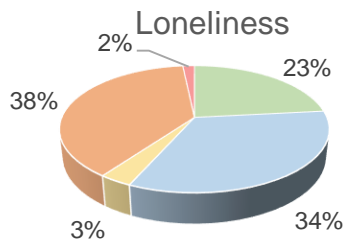


Summary

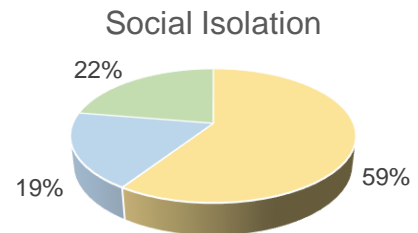
Volunteers tended to score quite highly on the baseline measurements however, it can be seen from the above charts that volunteering has impacted positively on their overall scores in relation to loneliness. The exception has been in relation to social isolation and wellbeing where there is a small shift in the opposite direction. This is due to the impact of lockdown, including the ongoing local lockdown in Greater Manchester.

A Carers Perspective

Baseline:

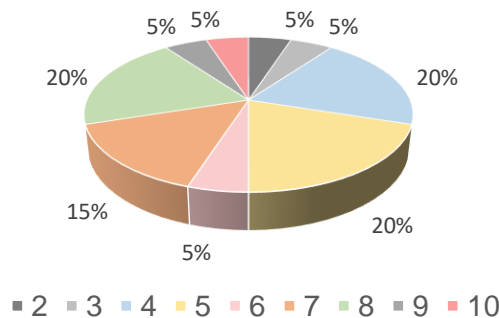


- Often Always
- Some of the Time
- Occasionally
- Hardly Ever
- Never

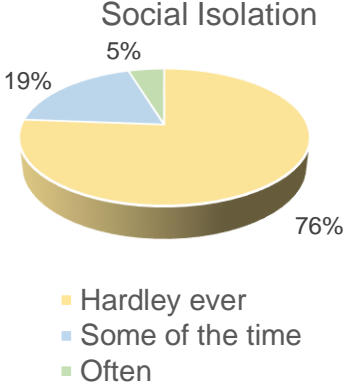
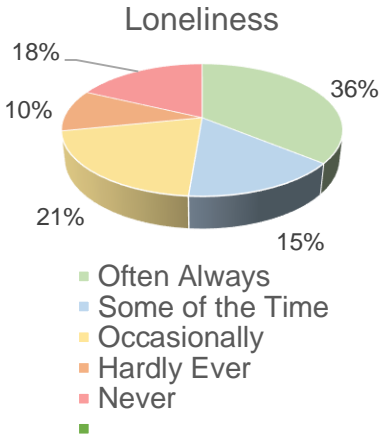


- Hardly ever
- Some of the time
- Often

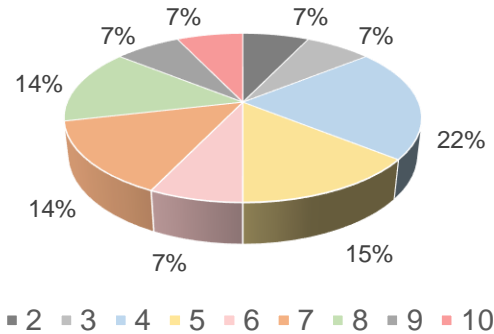
Wellbeing: On a Scale of 0-10 how satisfied are you with your life these days?



Follow up:



Wellbeing: On a Scale of 0-10 how satisfied are you with your life these days?



Summary

Similarly, the findings are affected by the impact of the pandemic although it is interesting to note that for carers there is a significant positive change in relation to social isolation and a small positive shift in terms of loneliness. There has been a downward trend in terms of overall wellbeing but again, this can be attributed to national lockdown and ongoing local lockdown. Based on data trends and subsequent feedback it can be inferred that had the context of the project not been a pandemic we would have seen positive shifts across all three areas.

Case Studies

In addition, some case studies are included below to showcase the work of the project. This has been conducted externally by an independent evaluator.

Case Study 1: Judy, Carer and Volunteer

Normally when interviewing people for a case study I meet up with them as this quickly makes everyone more at ease. Due to Covid-19 this was not possible and we couldn't do it by Zoom or video call on this occasion so I was a bit apprehensive

about how it would go. I need not have worried as Judy very quickly made me feel comfortable, normally that would be my job.

I could also tell that I was talking to someone who is naturally open to others with a very quick mind and real courage in the face of adversity. It is not hard to imagine how much benefit her work as a volunteer brings to others.

As we talked, I appreciated even more her willingness to tell me about herself. Sadly, she lost her brother John fairly recently and the pain of this is still quite raw, so sincere thanks to her for sharing her story with me. John had spina bifida although Judy was keen to point out that he was very independent and part of her own support network.

On leaving school Judy joined Manchester City Council to work in the finance department where she stayed throughout her career. In 2014 Judy's father was diagnosed with cancer and in July that year he was told that his cancer was terminal and sadly he died in 2015.

It was at this time that Judy joined the hidden army of unpaid carers, supporting her dad through his last days and then her mum. Her brother shared this responsibility with her and they took turns to care for mum which allowed Judy time for herself. John became ill in 2018 and was admitted to hospital but after a prolonged stay of 3 weeks, when discharged he was no longer able to get up and around and was effectively bed bound. Judy took early retirement in 2019 around the time that her brother's health began to seriously decline.

As Judy put it so well,

"Suddenly I was dealing with 3 major things happening at once, my retirement, looking after mum without my brother's support and my brother's illness."

It quickly became clear that John needed more support as a matter of urgency and Judy began to look for help with finding carers to assist him.

Initially calling the Bury Social care line but giving up after being on hold for ages, she also tried the GP surgery and they gave her a number to call. This was not a number for social services but in fact Gaddum who provided the Bury carers service at that time.

Not surprisingly Gaddum staff quickly recognised her as a carer and gave her the number of the rapid response team, they also kept in touch with her to see how she was getting on.

The rapid response team did manage to quickly sort out carers for John but there followed a period of frequent relapses and hospitalisation, later John was diagnosed with cancer and sepsis, so Judy was now also dealing with end of life care for her brother.

I always ask carers when they first began to see themselves as such and Judy's answer was fairly typical:

“Well I didn’t really, you know you just get on with it”, “I suppose it was in 2018 when I first had contact with Gaddum.”

This is really important to note as most carers don’t recognise themselves as such it usually needs someone else to recognise them! Once this happens, they are able to access the support they need and deserve. Gaddum introduced her to the Bury support group and she also learned of other support available. Judy continues to care for her mum who is now 94.

We talked a bit about the impact that caring has on the carer, Judy mentioned how although she has some very good friends, “the girls”, as the caring role increases you turn down more and more social opportunities. The friends haven’t gone away but they stop asking....

Before her caring responsibilities increased Judy also loved to travel and was a keen cruiser, this became more difficult as time went on.

Covid-19 has added another dimension to that, we have all had to change our routines but when looking after someone who is shielding that adds another layer.

Judy always intended to do some kind of volunteering on retirement. In early 2020 Judy approached Gaddum and offered her services as a volunteer. They were piloting a scheme to offer a respite/sitting service so that carers could have a break. Essentially sitting with the cared for person so that the carer could go out for a bit, or for an appointment or even just be in another room for a while.

Judy was matched with a couple but shortly after that Covid-19 happened and the service had to change to providing telephone support. Something I have the feeling that Judy is amazing at.

Judy worked on the telephone support line for around 22 weeks. She was typically modest when talking about the support she gives to others but did speak of how volunteering has had a positive impact for her.

“I enjoy taking to people usually it’s very uplifting for me, lots of the carers are very positive”

We talked a bit about the support provided by Gaddum to the volunteers and Judy was clear that she feels well supported by Keisha, the Volunteer Coordinator, and that the training she had has equipped her to deal with any situations that should arise.

“I know that Keisha is there for back-up if I need it, I would be comfortable calling her”

Judy feels that being a volunteer has lessened her own social isolation although it is difficult to say how life would have been without lockdown. It has also given her an appreciation of what is available.

Case Study 2: Sue and Karen, Carer and Cared For

Sue cares for her Mum, Karen as she has a physical weakness in her hip and struggles with her mobility. Karen is an independent lady who lived in her own home until recently. Karen lives in Irlam whilst her daughter Sue lives in Manchester 20 miles away, and works unsociable hours. Sue's caring role has gradually increased over the last few years as Karen became less able to manage at home.

Earlier this year Karen was diagnosed with and recovered from Covid-19 after a short stay in a residential home, as Karen needed additional support following a hospital stay.

During Karen's stay in a residential home Sue was unable to visit due to government guidelines but phoned each day. When Karen returned home it was suggested to Sue suggested that the volunteer telephone support service could contact Karen once a week to offer social support and company, which would also take the pressure off Sue as she was balancing work, childcare for her grandson, maintaining her own household and supporting her Mum.

Sue was happy to hear that there was extra help available to support her to manage the care of her Mum, she mentioned that Karen had previously provided this service for others in the past and worked for a befriending provision, which she really enjoyed. Sue discussed this with Karen, she agreed and began to receive weekly calls from a volunteer which she appreciates and looks forward to each week. Sue says:

"I would like to say how much Mum looks forward to her phone calls from the volunteer, having once been a befriender herself years ago she knows how important the service is and is very pleased to be on the other side of things. She has been isolated for so long now with only her carers to speak to for a short time each day that she welcomes a friendly voice on the other end of the phone. Hope they continue the good work for a long time. Thanks from us both."

Case Study 3: Philip, Volunteer

What drew you to volunteering with Gaddum?

Working at the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce (GMCC), I was contacting chamber members and contacted Gaddum as a member and it was mentioned they were launching a remote volunteering opportunity to support their service users during the pandemic. Once furloughed this was something I wanted to get involved with.

What impact have you noticed on carers from receiving the weekly calls?

I have had some really nice feedback from carers on my calls mainly that they are looking forward to our



conversations each week. I have noticed a positive impact on the wellbeing of one of the carers I call in particular.

What impact has the volunteering had on yourself?

I have wanted to do volunteering for a long time and it's been great for me. I've enjoyed it and it has given me a focus during these difficult times, a focus for the day. It has challenged me as well calling people I have never met or seen before.

How did you progress to fundraising for us on top of your weekly volunteering?

I wanted to do more to help and I thought, "what am I good at and what do I like?", so I set up a fundraising page to do 5k every day of May. I have run 225km and have raised over £800 so far!

Project Feedback

"The calls have kept me sane and have brought some normality to my days Hearing [a] friendly voice each week has made me feel less isolated" **Carer**

"The volunteer calls have been like a good friend. [My volunteer] is good to talk to and helps with information and any questions."

Carer

"We had great chats and I found out more and more each week about their personal lives. I noticed the carers loved telling their stories and it allows them to reminisce on memories" **Volunteer**

"It has made me less isolated in these challenging and difficult times" **Carer**

"Just having someone to talk to and having someone to listen, having that regular call has lifted my mood and helped me feel less isolated" **Carer**

"I have looked forward to my weekly volunteer calls. I feel like a real connection has been made, someone non-judgemental and a shoulder to cry on. I have felt better after talking to him, relieved and more relaxed" **Carer**

"My weekly call has been a breath of fresh air - we have now got a number of things in common and people we know from years ago" **Carer**

"One of my carers, her mum Wendy has been really enjoying the calls. She said she was really sceptical about it at the start as she didn't feel like she had anything interesting to say! But it has gone really well and has been really good for her to have someone to talk to outside of the family and has been great for her confidence" **Salford Carers Staff**

“It has been a great support having a weekly call for 30 minutes. It helps keep me well and my spirits up. A real positive boost to keeping my mood in check. I live with another family member who is out at work so the call has helped me feel less isolated and lonely” **Carer**

“As a carer volunteering with other carers I have been able to share my experiences to help others. It feels good helping other carers like me and allows me to connect with other carers too.” **Volunteer**

“Thank you so much to Keisha and the team, the service from the volunteers has been invaluable. Just the other day I was speaking to a carer who said that she looks forward to her weekly catch ups with her volunteer David and really appreciates his friendly conversation and caring tone”
Salford Carers Staff

“I wanted to use this opportunity to tell you about the great service and support we have received from Keisha around getting a great volunteer service within our project. It has been an invaluable source of support having a great volunteer network around the services and the groups we had in place prior to COVID – our coffee morning where we had over 60+ carers attending - and having a great network of very committed, reliable and socially active volunteers certainly made a massive difference around supporting all the staff and also our carers. During the period of lockdown Keisha and the established volunteers for our service have been an amazing emotional support to our very vulnerable and isolated carers – bringing a positive human warmth into their lives at this very difficult time making regular wellbeing calls to a large number of carers” **Bury Carers Service**

“I have really enjoyed making my weekly calls. I got involved to help people struggling through lockdown but didn't see or expect the impact it would have on me. Volunteering and chatting with a carer every week has helped with my own feelings of isolation and loneliness at this difficult time” **Volunteer**

Community Involvement

Community involvement has been key throughout working with carers themselves to find out what they wanted and needed. By going to carers support groups and consulting with carers as well liaising with the teams that support the carers, the 4 original roles were created.

As part of the Enriching Lives project many community partnerships have been formed allowing for successful collaboration in volunteer referral pathways, service user referrals as well as information and knowledge sharing. These are partnerships that have been essential to the operation of the project and will also continue to benefit Gaddum for the future of the project and volunteering in general. Partnerships have been established with:

- Manchester Mind
- Manchester Cares
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- University of Manchester
- One Million Mentors
- Manchester Community Central
- Salford CVS
- Bury VCFA

Learnings and Changes

The biggest and most obvious challenge during this project was the pandemic and how to adapt the project in light of this. However, a major learning from this has been around remote support and opportunities.

Previous to the pandemic and the circumstances this brought with it a remote opportunity was not part of the project or volunteering offer. However, it proved a popular offer in terms of time needed.

A lot of feedback received highlighted that face to face volunteering was not viable due to time constraints around work and caring responsibilities but a remote opportunity meant volunteers could easily fit it into their day. This is supported by the continuing success of the project even as lockdown has eased. Equally, it has highlighted that volunteers can be successfully recruited and on boarded remotely using technology such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Again, this is something that was not considered previously as all induction and training was completed in person. Despite having not met the Volunteer Coordinator in person volunteers have reported a simple and smooth on boarding journey and feeling supported throughout.

As a result, Gaddum will change the way volunteers are on boarded to the organisation offering the process remotely where appropriate. This will mean Gaddum will be able to utilise more volunteers to support service users and the community.

Another key learning from the project has been around communication and the volunteer's role in that. From informal check ins to formal supervisions with volunteer's, feedback has highlighted the role of telephone support volunteer in some instances was acting as messenger or 'middle person' between the service user and the carers service.

This was a good learning for the organisation and how we communicate both internally and to our service users. This learning led to a change in communication processes and channels internally to allow the volunteer to focus on the social support element of the role.

With the focus of the Enriching Lives project being a volunteering programme the initial stages of the project involved setting up the procedures and processes around the recruitment and on boarding of volunteers to the organisation. This included creating a volunteer journey and the creation of resources such as training and induction, role description templates and supervision and support documents.

This will significantly change the way Gaddum works in the future as volunteering to support the communities we work in can continue beyond the Enriching Lives project leaving a legacy of volunteering support for the organisation, service users and communities we work for.

Overall, the project has been successful in reaching its aims particularly given the circumstances it has operated in. Such is the success of the Enriching Lives project that it is being embedded into our Carers service allowing for its continuation reaching and supporting more people.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Context: Our funders ask us to tell them about whether our projects and support is benefitting people. We send anonymised information to our funders that cannot be used to identify you.

Service User Name:

Date:

These questions are about relationships with others. For each one, please say how often you feel that way.

1. How often do you feel that you lack companionship?

Hardly ever or never

Some of the time

Often

2. How often do you feel left out?

Hardly ever or never

Some of the time

Often

3. How often do you feel isolated from others?

Hardly ever or never

Some of the time

Often

4. How often do you feel lonely?

Often/always

Some of the time

Occasionally

Hardly ever

Never

5. If you needed help, there are people who would be there for you:

Definitely agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Definitely disagree

6. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

←Not at all

Completely →

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Do you feel you like volunteering/having volunteer would help you feel less lonely?

Yes

No

Don't know

8. Do you feel like volunteering/having volunteer support would help you feel less isolated?

Yes

No

Don't know