

December Newsletter 2023



Welcome to the December edition of our Newsletter, where you can read about our 'Lewisham Against Loneliness' campaign, find local resources to support with the cost of living, and more!



On December 1st we proudly launched 'Lewisham Against Loneliness', an ambitious new campaign aimed at tackling the growing problem of loneliness and social isolation across our borough.

From now until the end of February we will be using our social media, weekly drop-in and fundraising activities to raise awareness about the different forms that loneliness can take, its various causes, and the many ways it negatively impacts a person's health. We'll also use them to celebrate volunteer-led Befriending and its positive impact on alleviating the experience of loneliness.

Our Befriending service needs your support!

Over the past year **Community Connections Befriending** has recruited and trained over a hundred local volunteer befrienders. Thanks to their amazing service, 84 residents experiencing loneliness now enjoy a weekly meet up or phone call to chat about anything and everything!



Our staff and volunteers celebrating Befriending Week

"Talking with my befriender is very nice and really helpful. It releases some of my stress talking to someone and letting them know how I'm feeling, instead of keeping it all to myself. I don't know what I'd do without it' ~ Befriender"

Yet the service is now in **urgent need of funding** in order to continue its vital work. So far in this campaign we have raised an amazing **£1578** through our Winter Raffle, Bake Sale and donations to our Just Giving page! A huge THANK YOU to everyone who has supported so far!

Help us reach our £3K target by **DONATING** at our [Just Giving Page](#):

£ 3

pays for a return bus journey

and enables a volunteer to visit a lonely person at home



£ 8

pays for 30 minutes of our Befriending Coordinator's time to check in with a befriender and make sure they are supported in their role



£ 15

sponsors a volunteer for a month to call their befriender once a week for 30 minutes



Other ways to support the campaign:

Refer a lonely person to our service!



Thanks to the diligent efforts of our frontline staff, we currently have a very **short waiting list** and can contact new referrals within 1-2 weeks!

If you or someone you know would like up to 8 weeks support with exploring new groups, activities and services in Lewisham then please refer to us via our [simple webform](#) or by phoning us on **0330 0583 464**

Volunteer



Can you spare 1-2 hours each week to provide some friendly company to a lonely person?

Volunteering as a befriender is a great way to make a meaningful difference to a lonely person's week, as well as to benefit from training and social activities with our fun and dedicated team of volunteers!

To apply, or just find out more, please head to our [Volunteer Application Form](#)

Follow

Stay updated and help spread the campaign by following us on Social Media, where we'll be sharing:

- Client testimonials
- Weekly challenges
- Fundraising updates
- Interesting statistics
- Tips on how to reach out to a lonely person
- News of our Drop-in Loneliness project

...and more!



COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

With the coldest months of the year looming large, we're pleased to be able to share a variety of resources and local initiatives that can help residents with the cost of living over winter.

Christmas Factsheet

Our annual Christmas Factsheet provides an extensive list of free Christmas meals and other food provision available throughout the holiday season, as well as contact details and Christmas opening times for key support services within the borough. Read and download it via our Directory page [HERE](#)

Free Christmas Meals Delivery returns!

We're thrilled to be working in partnership with the Salvation Army and London Fire Brigade, delivering freshly cooked Christmas meals to 100 Lewisham residents on **23rd December**. Like last year, the scheme is particularly for anyone spending the festive season alone. Meals will consist of traditional turkey & trimmings, Christmas pudding and a hot drink sachet. Vegetarian, Vegan diets and allergies also catered for!



How do I Request a meal?

To request a meal simply call Community Connections ASAP on **0330 0583 464**. The deadline for referrals is **Wednesday 20th December**.

Lewisham Warm Welcomes



The Lewisham Warm Welcomes programme is back this winter thanks to the great work of Lewisham Council and our partners at Lewisham Local! Over fifty 'Warm Welcomes' have now opened across Lewisham. These are heated public spaces where residents can come and get warm, enjoy complimentary hot beverages and snacks, get helpful advice, and take part in a variety of social activities, all without the worry of racking up costly heating bills!

Explore the full list of 'Warm Welcomes' venues [HERE](#)

SERVICE UPDATES

Lewisham Services Drop-In Launch

~Multiple support services all under one roof!~

On Thursday 12th October we enjoyed a busy, bustling morning celebrating the launch of our weekly Lewisham services drop-in! A morning of coffee, croissants and chat, the launch provided an ideal opportunity for attendees to meet other Lewisham residents whilst discovering the variety of services now on offer.

Since relocating to the **Lewisham Irish Centre** we've been privileged to have several of our partner groups join regularly (usually on a fortnightly basis). It's great news for attendees, who can now get specialist advice and support with everything from energy saving and benefits to mental health and volunteering!



Attendees enjoying a 'Chair seated Zumba' taster class (held each Tuesday at the Irish Centre)

What our drop-in offers

Group activities table



Regular attendees come along each week to enjoy friendly chat, refreshments, and creative activities like painting, writing and board games

One to one support

How we can support you..

Our team can:

- ✓ Tell you about local groups and activities e.g. exercise classes, lunch clubs, educational courses
- ✓ Help you find local support services and make appropriate referrals e.g. foodbank, advocacy, financial advice, mental health services
- ✓ Help you understand a letter or physically assist you with completing simple forms
- ✓ Tell you about our transport and befriending services

Our team cannot:

- ✗ Provide housing advice
- ✗ Support you with a mental health crisis (we can tell you about organisations that can help)
- ✗ Provide a benefits check or advise you on how to complete application forms
- ✗ Arrange personal assistance or carer support

Have a 20 minute one to one appointment with one of our friendly, knowledgeable team (no booking required!)

Specialist support from our partners



Where: Lewisham Irish Centre, 2A Davenport Road, SE6 2AZ

When: Thursdays 10:30am-12:30pm

*Please note we are now closed over Christmas and will resume on 4th January 2024

Read our [NEW LEAFLET](#)

Monthly Cancer Support Group now running

Earlier this week we launched our Prostate Cancer Support Group at the Glass Mill Leisure Centre. The group, co-hosted by **Cancer Don't Let It Win**, is peer-led and offers a safe, supportive space for anyone living with a prostate cancer diagnosis, as well as those with lived experience such as their partners.

PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

JOIN OUR MONTHLY GROUP MEETINGS

Our support groups offer a **supportive** and understanding environment where participants can **connect** with others and share their experiences, find encouragement, **share** coping strategies, receive **emotional support** and access helpful information

WHO

Our group is open to all individuals and families affected by prostate cancer

WHEN

We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 2pm-4pm

WHERE

Glass Mill Leisure Centre, 41 Loampit Vale, SE13 7FT

FIND OUT MORE

www.cancerdontletitwin.org.uk

info@cancerdontletitwin.org.uk

0333 3355 916
0330 0583 464 (CCL)



Join our next meeting

Join our next meeting on **Wednesday 10th January**. You can register to attend via our [Eventbrite page](#) (or just turn up!)

The group is free to attend and open to both Lewisham and non-Lewisham residents. Sandwiches and refreshments are provided.

One to one support available

Through our dedicated Cancer Project Worker we are now offering 8 months of tailored one to one support to any Lewisham resident with prostate cancer. Support will include weekly check-ins, helpful signposting and an opportunity to shape the patient-led support group.

Read more about the project [HERE](#)

Refer yourself or someone you support [HERE](#)

Get in touch

Tel: 0330 0583 464

Email: communityconnections@ageuklands.org.uk

www.communityconnectionslewisham.org

Community Connections Lewisham is a service run by Age UK Lewisham & Southwark, registered charity number 296862