

Moving Stories from Housing Options

Housing Options, delivered by WE Care Home Improvements, is Dolphin’s major project for the next three years. There are many people in Bristol living in housing which is totally inappropriate for their current needs. Houses that were once perfect for a family may well have become a prison for a now isolated, older individual, who may not be able to afford to heat or maintain the property but just doesn’t know how to access the services necessary to make changes.

Moving house usually requires down-sizing but how is that possible if you don’t drive or use the internet? Even going to the Recycling Centre requires both. Without local family, who would you trust to help make such major life changes?

Fortunately, thanks to Dolphin, the Housing Options team at WECHI have the knowledge of the sector and the resources to make changes possible. Tracey, Jenny and volunteer, Nicola, are there to support people, in very many different circumstances, to consider all the options.

Tracey said: “Everyone is different so no ‘one solution’ works for all. We must take into consideration every aspect of someone’s life, needs and expectations, to work bespoke to them. The team works with other organisations throughout Bristol, aiming to get the best outcome for our clients. Any move should be the one that enables them to live their life safely and happily. We try to match people with their required accommodation and encourage them to seek properties that will help their mobility, alleviate social isolation, address care needs, move closer to family and much more.”

Dolphin met Tony, a once active 67 year old, who talked of training with the British Judo team, boxing and being an Aikido practitioner. He explained that a few years ago, he had blacked out while opening the front door of the St Paul’s house where he has a privately rented third floor flat. He fell backwards down the stone steps, breaking his back. Since then he has had a diagnosis of osteoporosis and has fallen several more times in his flat, breaking both hips. He is now unable to manage the four flights of stairs to his flat, or even the short flight of steps from his kitchen to his living room. With no family, he relies on another tenant in the house, a young lady in the ground floor flat to help him.

Tony told Tracey and Nicola how he loved his neighbourhood and how he feels: “Desperate and frustrated. I should be in a park, reading a book.... not stuck inside.”

Tracey asked for his permission to share information with other agencies e.g. Home Choice and carefully explained the difference between Council housing and assisted living. Tony was prepared to have all options explored, while noting he would prefer to remain in St Paul’s but adding: “Yes. Yes to anything that enables me to get out of here...!‘I do **anything**... I’m pathetically pleading!”

It is not just those looking to move that receive support from Housing Options as Jenny explained: “Some clients love their existing home but have a range of support needs which mean they are struggling to maintain their independence. Identifying and supporting access to additional at-home services enables them to remain at home safely and confidently for longer. Furthermore, WECHI’s Information and Advice Worker is able to provide factsheets and advice to clients who wish to gather information now, to be able to plan for the future.”



WECHI’s Housing Options Team, left to right: volunteer Nicola Wright and Project Managers Tracey Tate and Jenny Hudson

LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP
YIELDS BIG RETURNS

President Jane enjoyed attending North Bristol Advice Centre’s AGM and 40th Anniversary Event in Lockleaze, enabling her to hear of the organisation’s plans for the future and to meet Karen, their hugely experienced Home Visiting Service Advisor.



North Bristol Advice Centre aims to promote social justice and combat poverty by providing free and independent advice and support, enabling people to develop skills, improve wellbeing and make positive changes in their lives and communities.

Dolphin has funded the Home Visiting Service for the last three years. Karen helps housebound older people to maximise their income through benefits checks and helps with completing benefits forms for Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance and Council Tax Reduction among others. Home visits also mean that other issues such as cold homes and food poverty are also picked up. People can be signposted to other support e.g home adaptations or bereavement counselling.

The aim has been that 60 home visits are made annually. In the first half of Jane’s Presidency, 26 people were supported to access a total of £138,543 in previously unclaimed entitlements.

Jane was interested to learn of NBAC’s work across North Bristol and South Glos. They work in areas of high deprivation, characterised by social exclusion through poverty, mental ill-health, long-term health conditions, low skills and/or literacy, disability and digital poverty. The majority of clients (60+%) have physical and/ or mental health problems and almost half are over 50.

People seek NBAC support due to unexpected changes of circumstance, such as unemployment, long term illness, bereavement or disability, which can plunge them into sudden and severe financial difficulties.

For their digital inclusion work, the majority of NABC’s clients are over 55, with a third disclosing a physical and/or mental disability. Over a quarter do not have internet access in their homes, while some 14% have never used the internet before.

Former Presidents

1982	Sir James Tidmarsh, KCVO	17,645
1983	G E McWatters	13,085
1984	M R Clarke	20,076
1985	A M Reid	22,588
1986	T P Durie, GM, OBE	19,273
1987	A R D McArthur	34,006
1988	M R Flook	26,104
1989	J A Heaford	31,265
1990	R A Pollitt	35,547
1991	M O Davies Jones	35,907
1992	A G O’Leary	31,958
1993	R W Smedley, MBE	37,868
1994	Sir Robert Wall, OBE, DL	36,582
1995	M R Hill	36,603
1996	H A C Densham, CBE	51,532
1997	C J Curling	70,456
1998	A K Bonham, MBE, DL	72,002
1999	D A S Burn	62,135
2000	R M McKinlay, CBE	51,354
2001	R C L Feneley	80,035
2002	S R Parsons, MBE, DL	80,288
2003	T E Pyper	70,004
2004	T Smallwood, OBE, DL	64,095
2005	Mrs F Densham	104,241
2006	C G Clarke, CBE, DL	92,000
2007	Mrs M Prior, CVO, MBE, LL	102,248
2008	A C Morris, CBE, DL	90,118
2009	R N Baird	82,923
2010	J H Moule	73,276
2011	Ms H Moss, OBE	82,884
2012	T S Ross	128,387
2013	Mrs S Foxall-Smith	76,000
2014	M Lea	73,907
2015	R Bourns	98,180
2016	Mrs L P Marshall	84,095
2017	J A Hollingdale	87,700
2018	Ms V L Moon	82,600
2019	F C T Smith	93,000
2020	Miss F M Avery	150,000
2021	D J Pople	153,923
2022	Mrs J Sarangi	111,000
2023	E J Corrigan	100,218
2024	P W Brown	165,590

Helping elderly people to live independently with dignity in their own homes



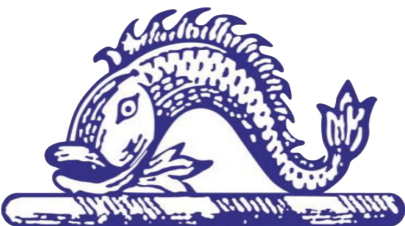
Being born and raised in Bristol, it has meant so much to me to play a part in this historical organisation with such a clear mission.

The Dolphin Society supports older residents of Greater Bristol to live safely and independently in their own homes by providing funding to trusted local partner organisations which deliver services that enrich the lives of disadvantaged elderly people.

Due to last year’s record-breaking Appeal, we have been able to do so much more in 2025! Hence the increased size of this newsletter, which showcases the many projects we have been able to support.

There are a few themes that run through our funding, the main one is addressing isolation...be that through living alone, financial disadvantage, digital exclusion or memory loss.

The other theme this year is “ageing better” - making positive connections in lots of different ways through taking part in social groups and exercise.



The Dolphin Society
Registered Charity Number: 203142

2025 Appeal

I have really enjoyed being President of Dolphin this year, being part of a Society that has enriched so many people’s lives has been an honour.

We have supported four Tai Chi volunteers to be trained so that they can run groups across Bristol. The one I attended was packed with enthusiastic people enjoying the class.

Supporting St George’s ‘Community Ticket Club’ has been so worthwhile, enabling free entry to attend some outstanding musical events, bringing joy to so many.

The musical theme continues with the support we have given to the ‘Our Music’ community sessions for people suffering with the cruel diseases collectively termed as dementia. Taking part in one of the sessions was incredibly humbling and moving...the music really does reach parts that seemed closed off for ever.

I hope you will feel able to support the Dolphin Society by giving whatever you can to help us continue to enable disadvantaged older people to live happier, independent lives in our City.

Thank you

Jane

Jane Palmer
President 2024-2025

Make a Donation

Bank Transfer:

Metro Bank: Dolphin Society
Sortcode: 23 05 80
Account: 47393655

JustGiving:

www.justgiving.com/dolphinsociety
or use the barcode below

Post:

Cheque made payable to ‘Dolphin Society’ returned in the pre-paid envelope or posted to:

Dolphin Society
Bramford House
23 Westfield Park
Bristol
BS6 6LT



Funding awarded by
Postcode Local Trust and
raised by players of
People’s Postcode Lottery.



Do they know it’s so much more than Christmas?



President Jane was intrigued to learn more of the Marmalade Trust’s work when she presented Training Manager, Alice Cunningham, with a cheque for £5,000 for this King’s Award winning local charity at their St Paul’s HQ.

Surrounded by posters detailing the first ten years of the Marmalade Trust’s work, Jane heard how that initial aim to deal with loneliness on Christmas Day has developed into the Connections Project. December 25th may be a great day to meet people but it is the fifteen week, tailored ‘companions’ scheme where life-changing connections are made.

Jane, having personal experience of volunteering at a food bank, understood the difficulty in getting volunteers who are able to sign up to the lengthy Connections Project. “Phoning a stranger once a week for fifteen weeks is a huge commitment” explained Operations Manager, Xanne Carey, “and the amount of triage work, matching isolated people with like-minded volunteers, is also huge, but the quality of our Companion volunteers is excellent.”

These extraordinary volunteers discuss project members’ interests and social needs, research local opportunities and activities and then discuss possibilities and barriers, often volunteering to accompany on that difficult first visit. This incredible support enables previously lonely people to make long-lasting connections that bring joy far beyond the programme.

Go with the Flow!

In conjunction with St Monica’s, Dolphin already fund Age UK Advice Hubs in Bristol and South Glos., largely to help elderly people access benefits due to them. **In Bristol alone, an additional £2.4m in entitlements was secured for 2,000 people last year.** Thanks to your generosity to last year’s successful Appeal, we have been able to support Age UK Bristol to provide so much more e.g. facilitating telephone groups for housebound, digitally excluded over 50s; a disco for ‘Friends Ageing Better’ a community of over 2,000 older people and delivering Tai Chi exercise sessions.



President Jane went along to the Ardagh Centre on Horfield Common to experience Tai Chi in action, enjoying the exercise with around 35 other enthusiastic participants.

Dolphin has funded 4 volunteers, aged over 50, to be trained in Tai Chi who will deliver sessions in Knowle West; Bishopsworth; Horfield and Speedwell. Retired Registered Nurse, Jane, said: “I am delighted that Dolphin has been able to support this popular and worthwhile activity for older adults in Bristol. Tai Chi improves balance which can only help with falls reduction while physiological and psychological benefits improve health and well-being. Everyone clearly loves exercising together – there is such enthusiasm and a real sense of community here. Brilliant!”

Up Beat!

The Dolphin Society was approached by Bristol Beacon, requesting £15,200 to support the delivery of their 2025/26 Older Peoples Programme. This comprises ‘Our Music’ sessions, ‘Pulse’ weekly music and movement sessions in Southmead and Community Music- taking live music to Bristol’s most isolated and vulnerable communities, in public spaces, dementia homes and Memory Cafes. This entire programme will cost Bristol Beacon in excess of £90k.

Delivered in collaboration with Bristol Dementia Wellbeing Service, Bristol Beacon’s ‘Our Music Club’ provides free weekly music sessions in Knowle West and Easton, for adults living with dementia, be they in care or still managing at home supported by their spouses.

The project receives referrals and ongoing support and guidance from the Bristol Dementia Wellbeing Service, sharing the opportunity for participation more broadly across the dementia and older people’s networks including Age UK, Singing for the Brain and Alzheimer’s UK. Bristol Dementia Wellbeing Navigators often refer people who may benefit and are then advised on positive changes in participants, so that the person can be considered ‘in the round’.

President Jane visited Filwood Community Centre in May and enjoyed a great morning with the Creative Learning and Engagement team who run ‘Our Music Club’, supported by three professional musicians, providing a joyful and connective opportunity for those attending.

This joint music making leads to positive mood changes in the participants, encouraging reminiscence and increased word usage and making interactions more joyful and relaxed.



Jane said: “It was amazing to see how this music group was able to unlock the imagination of the beneficiaries who happily joined in with the music - the staff were amazing!

I am delighted the Dolphin Society are able to support this extremely worthwhile project with the full amount requested - this has real impact on this group of older people.”

A cup of tea and a slice of culture....

Early this year, the Dolphin Society donated £5k to St George’s Community Ticket Club enabling the purchase and distribution of 500 free tickets for lunchtime concerts. These tickets are given to older people in communities across Bristol, enabling access to concerts showcasing some of the brightest young classical musicians currently performing in the UK.

President Jane attended a lunchtime concert at St George’s Hall at the beginning of April, thoroughly enjoying a performance by early music ensemble ‘Ceruleo’.

Chatting with recipients of the tickets, Jane was told: “I have been looking forward to this all week”; “It’s very uplifting”; “I love it, a cup of tea and a slice of culture, what more could you ask for?”

Jane is delighted that Dolphin is able to support such a worthwhile and impactful scheme.



Supporting Care for Carers



President Jane was fascinated to meet (pictured left to right) Camilla Qureshi, Debi Amor and Pauline Edwards-Samuels, part of Carers Support ‘Carers Time’ Team and earlier, three of their seven extraordinary volunteer Befrienders at their Vassall Centre base.

Since April this year, Dolphin (with The Grateful Society) have co-funded the Befriending Service – six weeks of up to 50 minute long phone calls to isolated Carers in Bristol and South Glos. There are over 57,500 unpaid Carers across both counties, nearly 14,000 of whom are registered with Carers Support.

Crucially, each new client is carefully triaged by Camilla, who explained, “Every Carer is different – some want emotional support; some are so isolated they just want a conversation. Carers don’t have time to think about their own needs and often they cannot leave the person they care for even for the duration of the phone call”.

In the first instance, Camilla talks to the Carer about their goals and aspirations and matches each with an appropriate Befriender. She could not speak highly enough of “our brilliant Volunteers who regularly take on three or four Carers each, rather than having people waiting on a list.”

Carers do not need to explain their situation. Volunteers understand – they have all been Carers themselves and want to put that lived experience, knowledge and understanding plus listening skills to good use. As one described: “We acknowledge personal goals and are always focused on the end of the six weeks...what can be achieved and what other options are available?”

Another said: “we give time for the Carer (who may only just have recognised that they are a ‘Carer’) to step back and take stock.” At the end of the six weeks, each case is reviewed and the carer signposted to further internal or external support if required.

Jane asked who cares for the Volunteers’ well-being? The three volunteers acknowledged that they are sometimes triggered by hearing Carers’ experiences. They praised the Management Team for the robust training and enduring support given, making them feel valued. This twenty-eight year old organisation is very proud of its volunteer retention.

Pauline explained that Carers Support is quite well-known and Carers self-refer and get steered to them from GPs, Social Prescribers, Sirona and through our local hospitals. She also identified a definite shift, with many more very elderly Carers (in their eighties and nineties), particularly men, reporting that they have never talked about their feelings before. They can talk to an unidentifiable stranger, safe in a non-judgemental conversation about feelings that they often feel unable to share with close family.

Often Carers are unable to talk honestly to other members of their own communities because of the pressure of cultural expectations.

The Befriending Volunteers, who remain anonymous to their Carer clients, encourage them to continue to use that ring-fenced call time for themselves after the six weeks. As one said: “We are planting seeds: exploring options, providing encouragement, tips and ideas.”

The Team all acknowledged the huge difference Dolphin’s funding had made to the continuation of the Befriending Service – and Jane commended the commitment of this dedicated team.

One Volunteer summed it up, saying: “My heart is here.”