The Dolphin Society

Registered Charity Number: 203142

2026

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

As I approach the end of my year as President of the Dolphin Society, I find myself reflecting on what has been an exceptionally busy, rewarding and, in many ways, eye-opening twelve months.

It has been a genuine privilege to serve as President of a charity that has been helping people across Greater Bristol since 1749. Having made Bristol my home more than forty years ago, I have always believed in giving something back to the City that has given me so much. This year has allowed me to see at first hand both the extraordinary work taking place within our communities and, sadly, the very real hardship that exists alongside.

I was fortunate to inherit the Society in a strong financial position, helped considerably by two generous legacy donations and the excellent stewardship and fundraising of my predecessors. I have been conscious that this presented us with both an opportunity and a responsibility. Rather than simply spending more in the short term, I have been keen to support initiatives over a longer period, providing greater certainty and allowing our funding to make a measurable and lasting difference.

As a result, we have made a number of three-year commitments, including continued support for North Bristol Advice Centre and a Befriending & Connection Service for Older Carers in South Glos. and Bristol.

More recently, we have committed to supporting a three-year Digital Inclusion Project, (see page 7).

Alongside these longer-term commitments, the Dolphin Society continues to support a wide range of individual initiatives across Bristol.



Please take the time to read about them further, inside this brochure.

What has struck me most during my year is the sheer breadth of need that exists within our City. Many of us are fortunate enough to live relatively comfortable lives and it can be difficult to appreciate just how challenging everyday life can be for people and communities only a few miles away.

Rising living costs, loneliness and isolation, together with increasing pressure on public services, mean that the role of the Dolphin Society remains as important today as at any point in our long history. Sometimes a relatively modest amount of money, directed to the right place at the right time, can make an extraordinary difference.

That brings me to my Annual Appeal.

I am writing personally to friends, family, supporters and many others who I hope will consider helping us. Whatever you are able to give, your donation will remain here in Greater Bristol, supporting local people and organisations and helping older and vulnerable members of our community to live with greater dignity, independence and connection.

I am enormously grateful to everyone who has supported the Dolphin Society in the past and to those who will support my Appeal this year. Your generosity enables this remarkable Society, after more than 275 years, to continue doing what it has always done: quietly making a very real difference to the lives of people across our City.

Thank you.

Mike Beesley

Dolphin Society President

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



Never Too Many Cooks

President Mike was intrigued to learn of the **Back to the Kitchen** initiative from the Square Food Foundation's Head of Partnerships, Dan Ford.

The longest running of founder Barny Haughton's projects to transform lives through food and cooking, Dan explained that this group, aimed at local isolated people aged over 55, is all about calm cooking and conversation.

Learning to cook gives people the opportunity to be in control of their health, wellbeing and budgets while feeling better connected to their local community. The weekly classes at The Park Centre, Knowle, not only offer companionship while encouraging people to cook from scratch but builds confidence and self-esteem. Tutors are able to offer alternative options addressing attendees' specific health issues e.g recipes involving reduced sugar or salt. This year the sessions have been extended to include a monthly Lunch Club involving the wider community and batch cooking, enabling a further 500 healthy meals to be delivered locally to food clubs.

"I felt that I knew Bristol and that I had a general idea of the organisations working in it but my Dolphin Presidency has taken me to some areas new to me and given me the opportunity to meet some amazing groups doing so much to support the wider community.

I am delighted to be able to give Dolphin's support to The Square Food Foundation's Back in the Kitchen group."

Mike Beesley



Head of Partnerships, Dan Ford (left) and some members of the Back in the Kitchen group

Gift Aid makes a huge difference

giftaid it

You may have completed our forms in the past, but we include a new form each year not only to ensure our records are up to date but to give you an easy way to communicate with us. Simply return the completed form in the enclosed pre-paid envelope.

Thank you

Striking a chord

In February, President Mike was pleased to accept an invitation to Bristol Beacon's, Dolphin supported, 'Our Music Club' session in Easton Community Centre. Musician Anna explained how the group had grown to up to 30 attendees per session in the space of a few months. Initially the group had met in five-week bursts with a break of a few weeks, but regular attendees felt so supported that they really missed the group, so they now meet every other week consistently through the year.

Mike learned that people get to hear about 'Our Music Club' through Dementia Navigators; GP's social prescribing and other community groups.

The three enthusiastic professional musicians, Anna, Mamadou and Naomi knew exactly the right notes to hit to engage the dementia sufferers in the group. Playing balafon (described as a Ghanaian 'xylophone with gourd udders'); guitar; West African drum and violin they encouraged everyone to warm up with light physical and vocal exercises. In no time everyone was enjoying singing repeated phrases and shaking, clacking, rattling and ringing their own choice of instrument.

Interestingly, the ladies tended to shy away from the proffered conductor's baton, whereas several gentlemen enthusiastically got into the swing of being in control of the tempo of all three musicians. The level of engagement was so high that half of the self-named 'Rhythm Section', was moved to take to the dance floor. As Terrance and Clinton (pictured below) told Mike: "We love coming to the sessions and choosing the sort of music we want to enjoy!



"It was amazing watching people come to life once the music started - despite my lack of skill with the cow-bell!"

Mike Beesley

"We are incredibly grateful to The Dolphin Society for supporting our work with older people, including Our Music Club. Together, we are helping people living with dementia and their loved ones to connect through the power of music. This year, the Society's funding will help us reduce waiting lists and provide consistent support throughout the year, ensuring more people can benefit from these valued sessions.

Thank you for making this possible."

Adrian Riches, Development Director, Bristol Beacon



No Boundaries at Gloucestershire County Cricket Club

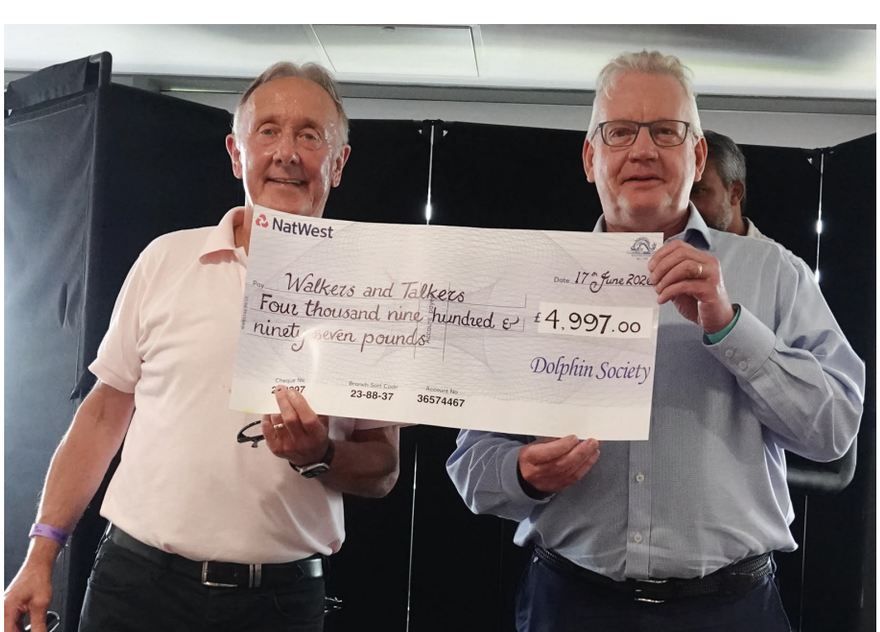
'Walkers and Talkers' was started by former cricketer Andy Brassington, after he witnessed the lasting impact of loneliness within his own friendship group, following the pandemic. It became Andy's mission to get people talking again and to build connections and community – and what better place to do it than in the heart of Bishopston at the home of Gloucestershire County Cricket Club.

That first meeting in 2022 attracted 29 people, who walked around the ground perimeter and afterwards, listened to GCCC President, the great David 'Syd' Lawrence, talk passionately about his life and particularly, his parents. The effect on the small audience of this imposing man's willingness to open up and show his vulnerability was palpable. Andy knew he was on to something.



Fast forward to 2026 every Wednesday morning, three hundred plus people meet to chat as they amble around the ground then head upstairs for the talk. On the day Dolphin President Elect, Amanda Trembath (pictured right) visited, the speakers were players from Bristol City Football Club's glory days of sweltering 1976. Bristol-born skipper, Geoff Merrick, emotionally recounted his pride at being able to fulfil his, and his parents' dreams, as he led the newly promoted Robins onto the turf of "the palace" of Highbury for that first League One game, and victory, against the mighty Arsenal.

Amanda heard from Walkers and Talkers who are carers, and for whom these weekly two-hour sessions are the only time they can carve out for themselves and from recently retired Wendy, a first-time visitor, who had been nervous about coming along and admitted to feeling "a bit overwhelmed by the number of people but it was wonderful. I enjoyed the walk with groups of two or three people. I didn't think I'd enjoy the football talk at all but it was really interesting, enjoyable and funny. It was so human – about emotions and feelings. I'm definitely coming back!"



Walkers & Talkers founder Andy Brassington and President Mike Beesley

"This group is incredibly welcoming. It's all about camaraderie, new friendships, rekindled memories and connections. Dolphin funding will pay for a membership card scheme. This will help with on-site safety and importantly, could flag up if a regular attendee may need extra support."

Mike Beesley

YOUR DONATIONS ENABLE DOLPHIN TO DO SO MUCH…..

"I'm delighted to be able to build on our link with Carers Support – last year Dolphin met a shortfall in their Befriending and Connection Service funding. We have now committed to funding half of the costs of continuing this invaluable service for the next three years."

Mike Beesley



Pauline Edwards-Samuel, ***Carers Time*** *Team Manager and Chief Executive Mike Coe*



Bristol After Stroke *Peer Mentors Andy and Anne-Marie and Peer Mentor Leader, Stella*

"We are immensely grateful to the Dolphin Society for supporting our pioneering Peer Mentoring programme. By drawing on their own lived experience of stroke, our volunteer peer mentors are helping others to rebuild confidence, improve wellbeing and find hope for the future.
It is inspiring to see how this innovative approach is transforming lives - both for those receiving support and for those giving it."

Rebecca Sheehy, Chief Executive, Bristol After Stroke

On hearing of Dolphin's support for Art Together, Redcatch Community Garden's art therapy group for people living with dementia and their carers, participants said:

"If it wasn't for this group, I would be staring at four walls at home."

"It's the most positive thing he does each week. We both look forward to Thursdays - he always leaves the group feeling better than when he arrived."

"...you'll never know what it means."



Redcatch Community Garden CEO Kate and the ***Art Together*** *Session Team*

Three-year funding commitment reaps benefITs

Inspired by Dolphin Members' enthusiasm for work done by North Bristol Advice Centre, President Mike and President Elect Amanda were interested to meet their Director, Katherine and Dolphin-funded Home Visiting Service Advisor, Karen.

Katherine explained that ten years ago NBAC was fully funded by various government funding streams but they now only cover half of the £570k needed annually to deliver services which are in greater demand than ever. Long-term relationships, like that with Dolphin, are critical.

The hard reality is that it now costs twice as much to deliver similar outcomes - cases are more complex and take twice as long; Legal Aid does not cover benefit cases and Local Authority funding has been drastically cut - Bristol City Council can only provide the same funding as ten years ago.

After twenty-six years with the DWP, Karen specialises in welfare benefits. She runs outreach benefits sessions above a GP surgery in Shirehampton and undertakes Home Visiting housebound elderly people, two days a week.

Welfare reforms have made claims so much more difficult: many older people do not use a smartphone for anything more than phoning. They do not use email or camera. They are unable to complete forms and certainly cannot download documents. The NHS App, while useful for booking surgery appointments, does not generate the paper medical evidence required for claims. Karen frequently has to chase GP's for evidence. Astonishingly, at the time of Mike and Amanda's visit, Karen was juggling 43 different cases.



Pictured l-r: NBAC Director, Katherine; Dolphin President Elect, Amanda; Dolphin President Mike; Home Visiting Advisor Karen

"Talking to Katherine and Karen was a real eye-opener. The complexities of making benefit claims and appealing decisions needs significant support. I am so pleased we can fund the home-visiting Advisor for the next three years."

Mike Beesley

"We are grateful to members of the Dolphin Society for providing long term funding for our Home Visiting Advice Service. They are incredibly engaged funders who really understand and value our work.
Their support enables us to deliver excellent outcomes for our most vulnerable older people."

Katherine Tanko, Director

Serving up companionship

In March, President Mike enjoyed a deliciously hearty three course meal at Hotwells' Trinity Lunch Club in the excellent company of five people with a combined age of 445 years.The Lunch Club, which celebrates forty years this year, reacts to local needs, addressing loneliness and isolation.

Proud "ex-stripper" Sheila, now 90, told tales of working life in the Wills factory, leaf stripping, while her 96 year old husband Dennis agreed that during their sixty years in the same house in Hotwells, the area had changed massively. They both love coming to Lunch Club. It reminds them of times when "everyone helped each other" – the only place remaining for them to socialise with old friends and chat about life in old Hotwells when it was "so full of shops, pubs and even an abattoir and slaughterhouse, that there was no need to go elsewhere for anything."

Following the meal, a question in the popular quiz, prompted John (a former Doris Day Fan Club member) to recount adventures in Kentish Town with his idol's son, while she was performing in London. Just a lovely example of how conducive the atmosphere is to the exchange of fascinating anecdotes and memories.

Liz Leaman, Older Persons Lead, explained that, unlike many similar clubs, the Lunch Club is open every Thursday, 51 weeks a year for Hotwells folk aged over 60. Trying to please several generations is not easy, neither is transporting them to the spacious room adjoining Holy Trinity Church. The demise of Bristol Community Transport led to the use of taxis, which proved unreliable, expensive and lacking in the necessary assistance. Thankfully, Kingswood Community Transport are now able to collect 10-12 people who would otherwise be unable to attend this highly popular session.



Liz Leaman, Older Persons Lead; Julia Senior-Smith – Lunch Club Co-ordinator and President, Mike Beesley

Running the Lunch Club costs £44,360 annually.

Dolphin President Mike said, as he made a £7,000 donation:

"Dolphin is only too happy to meet this invaluable local group's funding shortfall."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

STOP PRESS

Very recently, Dolphin Society members agreed to support me in committing to fund a Digital Inclusion project, for three years. This is an issue about which I have become particularly passionate. As everyday services (banking, healthcare, benefits, utilities, and communication) move online, there is a very real danger that some older people are simply left behind. Digital exclusion increases isolation, reduces independence and makes accessing even basic services considerably harder.

It is an enormous and resource-hungry challenge. Through our membership of Bristol Older People's Funding Alliance, we learned of a proposal informed by the findings of St Monica Trust's Digital Inclusion Fund - Impact Report 2026. Rather than attempting to tackle such a significant problem alone, joining forces with other funders gives us the opportunity to combine expertise and resources and, we hope, achieve far greater and more sustainable impact.

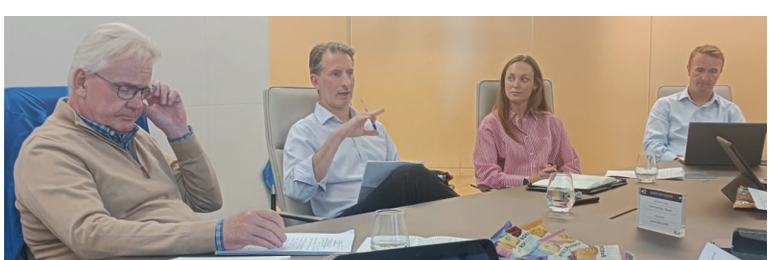
We hope to be able to tell you much more this time next year.

Mike Beesley

Who Cares? WE Care…

The Trustees of the Dolphin Society are delighted to be in the position of being able to help local organisations that are new to Dolphin but our long-standing relationships, like that with **WE Care Home Improvements**, remain as important as ever.

We have supported an **Independent Living Fund** for many years. WECHI can use this to pay for essential repairs to the homes of people who cannot afford to pay to rectify heating or plumbing issues or to keep their homes safe and secure.



WECHI CEO Rob and their Head of Service Delivery, Charlotte up-dating Dolphin Trustees on shared projects

WECHI deliver our **Housing Options** project - supporting elderly people living in inappropriate housing to move to homes more suitable for current circumstances.

This year, on our behalf, WECHI Handymen visited over one hundred isolated elderly people who have relied on Dolphin-funded telecare for many years. Due to the digital switchover, all their old analogue units needed to be replaced to ensure that vulnerable elderly people, living alone, could continue to call for help in the case of an emergency.

Charlotte, WECHI's Head of Service Delivery said:

"We are incredibly grateful for Dolphin's support. The funding enables us to provide practical help and reassurance to vulnerable people across Bristol – whether through essential repairs, telecare services that promote safety and peace of mind, or housing support that helps people make informed choices about their future.
This funding is invaluable in helping people maintain their independence and quality of life for longer."

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
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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
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1995	M R Hill	36,603
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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
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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
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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
2025	Mrs J Palmer	108,036

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