



Registered Charity No: 1144729

Reducing loneliness and isolation for vulnerable and older people in Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale

Good Companions Annual Report 2024

Sarah Cox, Lead Co-ordinator

Dee Stirland, CFP Co-ordinator

Gwyn Eyre, Silverdale Co-ordinator

Clare Ashton, Chair, Management Committee

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Background

Good Companions was established in 2001 in response to a survey carried out within the Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale areas of Nottingham by the Social Action Research Project. The survey identified many older people living alone and socially isolated due to lack of available support from family, friends, statutory or voluntary services. A Health Action Group was set up by the local Nottingham City Council Area Committee, which undertook further consultation with older local people, statutory services and other interested parties. As a consequence, a decision was taken to set up a Home Visiting scheme for these areas to address this unmet need and Good Companions was established. It was supported by an initial 3-year grant to fund a part-time co-ordinator and set up costs. The visiting scheme arranged for volunteers to meet with service users in their own homes on a regular basis for conversation, friendship, and support.

In 2003, the Visiting Scheme was supplemented by the formation of a weekly friendship group. This was in response to requests from service users themselves, as well as the recognition that older people would benefit from making new friends outside their own homes, increasing their independence, self-confidence, and social interaction, thus reducing their social isolation. We now have five weekly friendship groups – four in Clifton and one in Silverdale.

Aims of Good Companions

To reduce loneliness and isolation for vulnerable and older people in Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale. We do this by offering the opportunity for people to attend one of our 5 friendship groups or by providing a home visiting service for those in our community who are housebound.

Over-view of 2024

During the last year, Good Companions has focussed on its key activities of organising and running 5 weekly Friendship groups and its Home Visiting service. It has also organised a number of social and fundraising events for service users, their families and others in the local community to enjoy. One of the key tasks undertaken by the Management Committee towards the end of the year has been the restructuring of the organisation to include 4 part-time posts- an Operational Co-ordinator responsible for 2 Co-ordinators, and an Administrative Officer. Interviews, as appropriate, were held in November for implementation of the new structure at the beginning of 2025.

Management Committee 2024

Officers and Trustees

- Chairman Clare Ashton
- Vice Chair Allan Breeton
- Treasurer Christine Breeton
- Secretary Vacant

In Attendance

- Sarah Cox Lead Coordinator

Members

- Alma Davies Volunteer
- Cllr Andrew Rule Volunteer
- Cllr Kevin Clarke Volunteer
- Jacky Holmes Volunteer
- Adrian Conway Volunteer

The Management Committee met 4 times during the year in addition to the AGM.

Subgroups

To support the Management Committee, 2 subgroups have continued to meet regularly either in person or via Zoom, as follows:-

- Events & Local Fundraising (led by Sarah Cox)
- Strategic Finance (led by Clare Ashton)

Events & Local Fundraising Subgroup

Members

- Sarah Cox (Lead)
- Clare Ashton
- Kevin Clarke
- Dee Stirland
- June Walker

The group met on nine occasions in 2024 in order to develop and plan events and fundraising ideas for the benefit of Good Companions and our service users.

The table below shows all events planned by the subgroup in 2024. A total of £5,225.88 was raised through these events.

Month	Activity	Event type
January	-	
February	-	
March	Easter event including tombola & lunch	Social event & fundraiser
April	Ruddington Village Market	Fundraiser
May	Film & popcorn afternoon at Holy Trinity Church Holy Trinity with St. Francis Church	Social event
June	Volunteers' Week 2024 – article in Clifton News	Promotion
July	Nottm Young Lawyers' Garden Party	Promotion & fundraiser
	Joint charity car wash at WB fire station	Fundraiser
	Jigsaw & book swap plus lunch	Social event & fundraiser
August	Summer grand raffle	Fundraiser
	Cllrs 'Summer in the Park' event (stall)	Promotion
	Summer garden party for volunteers	Social event
September	Table-top sale at Holy Trinity with St. Francis Church	Fundraiser
	Quiz & supper event including tombola	Fundraiser
October	Film & popcorn afternoon at Holy Trinity with St. Francis Church	Social event
November	Jigsaw & book swap plus lunch	Social event & fundraiser
	Pantomime	Social event
December	Clifton Lights switch-on (including tombola)	Fundraiser
	Christmas party	Social event & fundraiser
	Christmas grand draw (licensed raffle)	Fundraiser
	Christmas get-together for volunteers	Social event

Strategic Finance subgroup

Members

- Clare Ashton (Lead)
- Allan Breeton
- Christine Breeton
- Cllr Andrew Rule
- Andrew Price

This subgroup is to provide a strategic overview of the charities' finances- setting the budget; monitoring its income and expenditure; producing a financial plan to support the ongoing and future activities to ensure sustainability; identifying opportunities for fundraising through grants and other sources and ensuring implementation of any agreed action; and ensuring compliance with Charity Commission requirements and with good financial practices and regulations. During the year, the group met formally approximately every 3 months. Its activities support both our Treasurer and Fundraiser.

The function of the previous Social Media group was to use the reach and influence of social media for the benefit of Good Companions. Its focus was on maintaining and updating the Good Companions website and Facebook – highlighting forthcoming events, celebrating recent events and providing useful information. This has continued on an informal basis with Adrian Conway updating the improved website and the Facebook page being updated with the assistance of Kim Ward and Alma Davies.

Other Group Representation

Good Companions is represented on other Committees, as follows:

- Clifton Town Board
- Clifton Advice Centre Management Committee
- Age Friendly Nottingham Steering Group (AFN)
- Volunteer Co-ordinator and Managers Network (NCVS)
- Clifton Collective Impact Initiative

Staffing

The official base for Good Companions is the Clifton Cornerstone in Southchurch Drive, located on the first floor within the NCC Neighbourhood Team. However, most of the Co-ordinators' time is spent in the local community or working from home. The desk phone is checked for messages four times each week by the Co-ordinators, and the mail is checked/collected at least once a week.

At December 2024 Good Companions currently employed three part time staff.

- Sarah Cox is the Lead Co-ordinator, is employed for 22 hours per week, and has been in post since May 2019. The role remit includes running the Rivergreen and Simone Gardens friendship groups, the Home Visiting Scheme, as well as being responsible for the recruitment and support of volunteers, and events and activities.
- Delia Stirland is one of the Co-ordinators, is employed for 16 hours per week, and has been in post since January 2020. The role remit includes running the Clifton Community Centre and Parkgate friendship groups, events and activities and administration of the database.
- Louise Compton commenced as the Silverdale Friendship Group Co-ordinator at the end of January 2022 working 7.5 hours per week. Her remit was to run the Silverdale Friendship Group, cover for other groups as necessary and support with events and activities as part of the Events subgroup. She left this post towards the end of January 2024.

- Gwen Eyre was employed as the new Silverdale Friendship Group Co-ordinator on 9 hours per week commencing in February 2024. Her role is to run the Silverdale Friendship Group and to lead at the Simone Gardens and Parkgate Friendship groups on an alternate weekly basis.

Volunteers

We commenced 2024 with 36 volunteers, and ended the year with 39. Over the course of the year we said goodbye to volunteer Lisa Swaithe who sadly died in July 2024, and welcomed four new people to join the volunteer team: David Bainbridge, Adrian Conway, Villma James-Davis, and Joe Wilcox.

All volunteers who either support at a friendship group or offer home visiting receive a Basic DBS check which is processed and paid for by Good Companions. This is re-checked every 3 years.

Support to volunteers includes twice-yearly volunteer meetings, periodic mini-meetings/debriefs within friendship groups, and social calls. We also organise two annual volunteer social events: a summer garden party and a pre-Christmas get-together with buffet. We believe that we offer a positive and supportive volunteering environment; our volunteers tell us that they find the experience enjoyable.

Recruitment

We continue to advertise for new volunteers through our Facebook page, on our website, inclusion in the 'Do It' and 'Ask Lion' web pages, Nottingham Community Voluntary Service (NCVS) database, Nottingham Trent University student volunteering bulletin boards. In addition, our promotional leaflet invites people to contact us if they wish to volunteer. Good Companions is very grateful for additional volunteers who join us to support at special events; these are generally found through word-of-mouth or through their historical support.

All prospective volunteers complete an application form and attend an informal interview with two people - usually two of the Co-ordinators; this gives an opportunity to get to know each other and ask questions. Before they commence volunteering with us the following is undertaken:

- Two references are requested,
- An induction meeting is arranged (volunteers are given an induction folder)
- The volunteer signs and returns a volunteering agreement and a confidentiality agreement
- Issued with an ID photo card
- An agreement is made as to which part of our services the volunteer will be supporting within

We continue with the use of a volunteers' WhatsApp chat group to which the Co-ordinators have admin responsibility for. This allows the volunteers to have informal contact with each other outside of the friendship groups should they wish it, and enables Co-ordinators to inform volunteers of new events and check availability for specific activities. Email is used as the primary way to disseminate information to volunteers.

Training

Volunteers

Training was offered to volunteers in the following areas:

- **Adult safe-guarding** (Monday 3rd June 2024). The management committee have agreed that any volunteer who comes into contact with service users should attend this course every three years.
- **Dementia awareness** (March 2024). This was provided by Bev Pearson of the Radford Care Group.

Staff

- **Emergency First Aid** Sarah Cox, Gwen Eyre and Dee Stirland attended this training course with St. John's Ambulance in 2024 and now hold the Emergency First Aid Certificate. This is valid for two years.
- **Dementia awareness** All Co-ordinators attending this awareness session alongside volunteers.

Good Companions continue to be open to be providing such training to volunteers as is beneficial to the provision of our services.

Referrals

The Process of Making a Referral

All referrals receive an email acknowledgement to the referring professional, and an introductory phone call to potential service users, from the Lead Co-ordinator. In the event of a referral to the home visiting scheme, or when potential new service users have additional support requirements, a meeting at home is organised in order to more fully explain services and answer questions.

We received 61 referrals for services in 2024 compared to 68 referrals in 2023. This is comprised of 44 for friendship groups, 16 for home visiting, and 1 that was indeterminate. *Please see Table no.1 for the origin of these referrals.*

Receipt of referrals was not spread evenly throughout the year, with January, February and September seeing 44% of referrals for the year (44%). *Please see Table no.2 for a breakdown of referrals by month.*

Of the referrals received in 2024, 35 progressed to receiving a service (57%) and 26 did not receive a service (43%). Reasons for this high level of none take-up of services following the referral process include individuals changing their mind, individuals no longer needing the support, lack of engagement by individuals or their families, being out of area for home visiting, or potential new service users being too unwell or passing away during the period between the referral being received and services being put in place. *Please see Table no.3 for a breakdown of reasons for services not being put in place.*

Origin of referrals received (2024)

(Table no.1)

Referral submitted by	2024
Social Services (including Re-ablement, mental health, community care, Community Connector)	19
Social Prescribers	5
Nursing/home care agencies	7
Relatives/family friends	10
Self-referral/walk-in at a friendship group	18
Other (Age UK)	2
Total:	61

Breakdown of referrals by month (2024)

(Table no.2)

MONTH	REFERRALS RECEIVED				OUTCOME	
	Total	Categorised into:			Services provided	Services not provided
		Friendship group	Home Visiting	Non-specific		
Jan	10	8	2	0	7	3
Feb	9	6	3	0	5	4
March	6	5	1	0	4	2
April	6	4	2	0	6	0
May	4	3	1	0	2	2
June	3	3	0	0	2	1
July	3	3	0	0	1	2
August	4	1	2	1	2	2
Sept	8	6	2	0	2	6
Oct	4	3	1	0	3	1
Nov	3	1	2	0	1	2
Dec	1	1	0	0	0	1
Totals:	61	44	16	1	35	26

Breakdown of reasons for services not put in place (2024) (Table no.3)

MONTH	Categorised into:					
	Total	Service declined	Non-engagement	Out of area (for HV)	Not needed	Other
January	3	1				2 (1 x family felt group not suitable for parent) (1 x individual too frail to attend group, HV not suitable)
February	4	2	2			
March	2		2			
April	0					
May	2			1		1 (lives too far from a group)
June	1	1				
July	2		1			1 (moved into a care home)
August	2	1			1	
Sept	6	2	2		1	1 (too unwell)
Oct	1					1 (Didn't want HV, only wanted assistance to complete a form)
Nov	2	1				1 (deceased)
Dec	1					1 (wanted to attend a social group in Wilford)
Total	26	8	7	1	2	8

Friendship Groups

Our five Friendship Groups follow a similar format:

- Welcome, drinks served, chat and completion of quizzes or word searches
- Activity session, this might include seated health qi gong (aka tai chi), crafting or attendance by a guest speaker
- Announcements including birthdays, raffle and quiz answers
- Bingo or 'sticky 13s' called by one of the service users or volunteers

Taxi use for service users is booked via an account held with one of two local taxi firms - Southside Cars or NG11. We charge service users a subsidised fee of £2.50p each-way for this service, with the remainder being paid from general funds. Refreshments are charged at a nominal fee; whilst biscuits and cakes are provided by Good Companions, it is not unusual for service users to bring cakes or chocolates to mark a special occasion.

In 2024 the friendship groups were open for 49 weeks; one closure week was due to the January planning week, one week for the Christmas party week, and the third for the Christmas week when staff take annual leave. The friendship groups do not meet on bank holidays.

All of our friendship groups are lead by one paid Co-ordinator plus a number of volunteers. Good Companions would not be able to provide our weekly groups in the same format/cost without the support of these exceptional volunteers and their attendance, enthusiasm and support is very much appreciated.

Clifton Community Centre Friendship Group

The group meets weekly on Monday from 11am to 1pm in the more relaxed bar area of the Community Centre. The location of the venue is excellent with both a regular bus service and tram stops directly outside.

In 2024, the group met 45 times, closures were due to bank holidays and Good Companions closures. The average weekly attendance at the group was 22 service users, which is an increase on previous years. We also have 5 regular volunteers who work hard to make the group an enjoyable occasion for everyone in attendance. The register for 2024 contained 45 names, of which 24 attended regularly. The group continues to generate a reasonable income from service users paying for refreshments, bingo etc.

This year we have put in place Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) for all service users who may require assistance when an evacuation situation arises. We also used this opportunity to look at individual needs and make any adjustments that were required in the groups to better support people.

Service users are actively encouraged to get involved with activities and the group do so, particularly enjoying sessions that involve music of any kind (groups or singers, music quizzes, and impromptu singing sessions). This is a lovely group with some real characters and a pleasure to organise and run, and I confirm this again this year.

Parkgate Friendship Group

This group meets weekly on a Friday at the Parkgate Community Centre from 11am to 2pm. For 2024, between 12th January and 13th December, the group met 48 times closing only for Good Friday and Good Companions holidays. Other dates of closure were due to public holidays and Good Companions closures. The average weekly attendance was 20 service users, 3 volunteers and the Co-ordinator. The register for 2024 contained a total of 46 names, of which 22 attend regularly. The group continues to generate a reasonable income from service users paying for refreshments, bingo etc.

It continues to be a lively and very friendly group, participating in fundraising, social events, trips, celebration and activities organised by Good Companions as well as Parkgate Community Kitchen. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) are in place for all service users attending this group.

We have a close working relationship with staff and volunteers at the centre and as part of our collaborative activities, our service users join other members of the public for lunch, prepared and served by staff and volunteers from the Parkgate Community Kitchen. This enables them to meet up with other friends and family members who live in the area. Good Companions volunteers assist with the serving of hot meals in between the group's activities on a Friday.

There has been some level of uncertainty about the centre remaining open due to cuts in council support. Discussions are taking place about how to move forward with the possibility of council support ceasing completely and local users taking over the running and financial management of the centre but these plans are still at an early discussion stage.

Rivergreen Friendship Group

This friendship group meets each Tuesday morning at the Clifton Methodist Church, 10.00am to 12 noon. Good Companions continue to liaise closely with the church staff and we have a positive working relationship.

At the start of 2024, the register for the Rivergreen Friendship Group contained 38 names; by the end of 2024 there were 37 on the register, with 28 service users regularly attending. Weekly attendance ranged from 15 during a week of snow in November, up to 32 people during the summer. Rivergreen friendship group continues to be very well supported by volunteers, with between four and eight assisting each week. The average number of volunteer attending was five.

An example of the positive impact which Rivergreen friendship group has on attendees would be that of Mrs H and Mrs R; they were introduced to each other at this group and always sit together. The ladies have subsequently formed a close friendship and regularly socialise outside of the friendship group.

There are no recurring issues or concerns with this friendship group.

Silverdale Friendship Group

The Silverdale group has been running since February 2022, with Gwen becoming the coordinator in March 2024. The group meets Monday afternoon at the Silverdale Community Centre, 1.15pm to 3.15pm. The first hour is refreshments and quizzes with the second hour consisting of Hoya and Bingo compered by one of our service users. There are also regular activities such as crafts, singing, Qi Jong and occasionally live music.

At the start of 2024, the register for the Silverdale Friendship Group contained 24 names; currently there are 20 service users on the register with an average of 16 attending each week. However, weekly attendance has ranged from 9 during a period of icy weather, up to 18 people in April 2025.

Silverdale friendship has a brilliant group of 5 regular volunteers, plus an additional 2 who cover in the event of illness and holidays. The weekly average for volunteer attendance is 3-4 with an additional helper for setting up tables and tidying away at the end.

There are some challenges to sharing the space with the pre-school including balancing the needs of the children with the needs of our service users and the temperature of the building. However, the bus service for Silverdale is limited and many of the residents are reluctant to leave the estate to access other groups so for many of the service users this is the only group they consider accessible.

A highlight of the group is the "men's table". This regularly has 6 service users on it and strong friendships have been formed.

Simone Gardens Friendship Group

This group meets each Thursday morning, 10.00am to 12 noon, in the community room at Simone Gardens complex. Good Companions has a positive working relationship with the Independent Living Co-ordinator for this site, Rob Hickling. Nottingham City Council do not charge Good Companions for the use of the community room. We continue to promote services to each other for the benefit of both Simone Gardens residents and Good Companions' service users. The register for the Simone Gardens friendship group started the year with 17 names; by the end of the year, we had 23 names on the register, with a regular attendance of 12 people. Weekly attendance ranged between 6 and 18 over the course of the year. We also regularly have support workers and/or care workers from the local care homes attending with one or more of their residents.

Historically this has the smallest of all of the friendship groups. Attendance is limited by the size of the room but this has the positive effect of creating a supportive and nurturing environment which all service users are able to engage with each other. Simone Gardens' and Lakehead House residents are encouraged to attend the group, by placing posters on the main corridor notice board, and leaflets being posted through the mailboxes of individual flats. This is done in conjunction with the ILC, Rob Hickling.

Volunteer attendance at this group is between one and four per week. The weekly average number of volunteers present is two.

An example of good practice would be our support of Mrs F; she started to attend this friendship group after a long period of convalescence. Initially very anxious, she settled well into the friendship group but remained reluctant to attend our other groups. After around 9 months of attendance Mrs F said that she felt brave enough to try another group.

Home Visiting Scheme

Our home visiting scheme provides a regular visiting volunteer for people who are not easily able to leave their own home. The usual expectation is that a volunteer will visit the service user once a week, for around 60-90 minutes. Since mid-2022 we have operated a 'one out/one in' approach to new referrals; this is due to a reduction in the number of volunteers available to undertaking visiting. Consequently the scheme consequently has a waiting list.

After a referral is received, the new service user will be visited for the initial assessment paperwork to be completed. Due to the frailty or confusion of some potential service users a family member is often present for this meeting. Once a volunteer has agreed to a new visiting arrangement, an introductory meeting is set up between the service user, the volunteer and the Co-ordinator. This provides an opportunity to discuss expectations and arrange the first visit.

Volunteers complete a report each month which details the number of visits and the main discussion points but they are instructed to report concerns to Co-ordinator immediately. The Co-ordinator contacts volunteers on alternate months (by phone call, email or text) to discuss the service user they support and concerns are passed on as appropriate.

The table below shows statistics of the home visiting scheme in 2024 in comparison to the years before.

Fourteen service users were supported by the home visiting scheme in 2024. We received a total of 16 referrals for this service, of which four were set up. See the second table for reasons why the service was not set up in the other cases.

Good Companions' Home Visiting Scheme	2022	2023	2024
No. of people who received Home Visiting support	19	17	14
No. of volunteers providing the service	10	6	7
New referrals to the Scheme	17	14	16
No. of these new referrals who received a service:	9	8**	4
Waiting list at end of the year:	4	4	6

Reasons for non-set up of home visiting:

**Out of the 16 referrals home visiting referrals in 2024 who did not receive support, the reasons for non-carry through comprised of:

Referred service users who did not receive HV support by the end of the year	12
• Individual wished to attend a friendship group rather than home visiting	3
• Deceased or became too unwell between receipt of referral and setting up home visiting	2
• Individual changed their mind regarding receiving a volunteer visitor (only required assistance to complete a form)	1
• Individual lived outside the Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale area	1
• Added to waiting list	5

Service User Feedback

In January 2025 we distributed feedback forms to service users at all friendship groups. This asked for views on the services and support which they had received from Good Companions in the preceding year, 2024.

Approximately 85 forms were distributed, with 43 completed responses being received; this represents a 51% return rate. A report was then produced which collated the responses to each of the seven questions.

The following questions were posed:

- Q1 Please could you tell us what we are doing well in the friendship groups.
- Q2 Are there any areas of our service which you feel could be improved upon?
- Q3 Please let us know what you thought about our 'big' events in 2024.
- Q4 Any ideas for other activities within friendship groups?
- Q5 Suggestions for events or talks in 2025.
- Q6 The aim of Good Companions is to reduce loneliness and social isolation. If you wish to share, please tell us a little about whether receiving our services supports you in this area and, if so, how.
- Q7 Anything else to add?

Overview of the 2024 report

- There has been some useful feedback received as part of this audit process; it is great to hear that Good Companions continues to be seen as being so positive and enjoyable an experience in the lives of our service users. Some of the 'areas of improvement' are ongoing (lower temperatures experienced by service users at a couple of our venues during the colder months; the need for announcements to be louder).
- Where suggestions have been made for other activities within the friendship groups these are generally requests for an expansion of activities that are already in place. For example, more crafting activities, other exercise/ movement events in addition to the existing health qi gong sessions, more live entertainment.
- Having service users taking the time to explain how much the friendship groups positively impact on their mental health and lives generally is lovely to read and a wonderful reminder of the benefit of our friendship groups to those who attend.
- Service users taking the time to tell us about how they feel our services support their mental health is a helpful reminder of the benefit of what Good Companions provides. Responses indicated that regular attendance at a friendship group can give service users the motivation to get out and about, reduces loneliness and provides a forum to socialise with friends, as well as giving an opportunity to interact with friends on an equal footing outside of the confines of being 'cared for'.

Just a few of the quotes from service users:

- 'Group is very good, I come for a cuppa and a natter. Staff are friendly and helpful. I find the group great'. JR 2024/37
- 'Everything is always done with feeling and consideration for our needs'. FM 2024/33
- 'Get's me out of the house. It's the only thing that does'. RA 2024/02
- 'Best thing that's ever happened. Look forward to it – near my home. Relaxed, welcoming and have a laugh. Not sitting at home feeling sad and lonely. Something to look forward to'. AB 2024/06
- 'I live on my own and I enjoy the group, it's nice to talk and have a laugh'. JR 2024/37
- 'Attending Good Companions really does help with loneliness and isolation. I look forward to going every week'. SH 2024/26
- 'Meeting other people twice a week is good for me'. KB 2024/05
- 'Major support, helps with loneliness, Alzheimer's – remembering things in quizzes. Friendships develop'. PB 2024/08
- 'Attending Good Companions really does help with loneliness and isolation. I look forward to going every week'. SH 2024/26
- 'Brilliant club, helps to get us out and socialising'. MN 2024/35
- 'It gets me out and allows me to have time with friends on my own!!' TA 2024/03
- 'Gives me a chance to keep in contact with other people outside the family'. JH 2024/25
- 'Making friends. Nice to get out on your own'. IJ 2024/28
- 'Thank you for all you do'. TG 2024/23
- 'Keep up the good work'. WEW 2024/43

Marketing

Good Companions has continued to retain a presence on the 'Do It' website via the Nottingham Council for Voluntary Services (NCVS) as well as on the Nottingham City Council's (NCC) 'Ask Lion' website. Our own Good Companions Facebook posts are regularly shared on local Facebook pages – 'This is Wilford'; 'The Clifton Community Group'; 'NG11 Community Page'; 'Silverdale Wilford & Clifton'; and 'Clifton/Barton Green Community'. Our website has been improved and is regularly updated.

Regular articles have been produced and printed in our Clifton Local News, promoting our services and seeking new volunteers. In addition, verbal reports on Good Companions have been given at meetings of the Clifton Town Board and the AFN Steering Group, when the opportunities arise, which are held online via Zoom/Microsoft Teams or in person. It has also been promoted at various events including the annual conference organised by the UK Network for Ageing Better, the AFN Event in Nottingham Market Square, the Nottingham Trent University Volunteer Fair, and at the AFN International Older Person's Day event, the Clifton 'Fun days' in the Clifton Flower Park, and at various fundraising events. Marketing materials used have included leaflets, a 'flag' for external use, and banners for internal use. In addition, the 'Keep the Change' donation collection boxes, located in a wide range of venues throughout the local community, have continually promoted Good Companions and raised awareness of our charity, organised by Alma Davies and Jacky Holmes.

A regular Good Companions newsletter is produced and circulated to all service users, volunteers, key stakeholders and individuals in the local community. This promotes our activities and keeps everyone informed of future events.

Funding

This has remained a constant area of concern, particularly with the increasingly difficult financial climate, with cuts to voluntary and social services and increases in rent and taxi fares. The charity is constantly looking at different ways of reducing our overheads as well as increasing income. Consequently, we have continued with monthly bulk purchasing for refreshments and other items for our Friendship groups, which was introduced 2 years ago.

We continue to be very grateful to those businesses in Clifton, who have regularly provided items for refreshments, raffles, tombola's and bingo prizes for our Friendship Groups and for use at fundraising events. Many of them have also taken a 'Keep the Change' donation collection box, which has raised a significant amount of money for Good Companions each year.

Whilst the significant grant from People's Health Trust came to an end during 2023, we have been fortunate to obtain a number of grants with the help of our Honorary Fundraiser, Andrew Price. However, these were fewer than the previous year but all have contributed to the general running costs of Good Companions, which have been much appreciated. These include grants from the Peoples Health Trust, the Grocers Hall charity, Co-operative Local Community Fund (Members Choice), Nottingham Community Foundation (CRS Fund), A W Lymns, Nottingham Junior Law Society, HSKS Accountants and the Clifton Community Family Support Group. In addition, we have received generous donations from service users, volunteers, local individuals and businesses.

A number of planned fundraising events took place during the year, which have significantly contributed to our income with grateful thanks to the Events and Local Fundraising sub-group, our Co-ordinators and volunteers.

The experience of working with the Independent Examiners, CA Plus, to produce our accounts for the last 3 years made the process for the 2024 accounts so much easier – with thanks to our Treasurer supported by Cllr Andrew Rule.

Conclusion

The past year has been very busy as we have continued to focus on delivering what is clearly a much-needed service to people in our local community.

The hard work and support of our Co-ordinators and volunteers, and many in our local community, has been very much appreciated by our service users. It has enabled Good Companions to continue to support so many people, to enrich lives and we hope, to make a positive difference to someone's day. It is a privilege to hear how much Good Companions means to people who may be struggling to manage with health issues, with social isolation and with loneliness.

Whilst our funding position has reduced by the end of the year, we are still in a good financial position to take us into 2025 due to all those involved with raising funds. However, more will need to be done to ensure our income is continued for the future, particularly with the demand for grants from so many charities like our own.

We look forward to implementing the new Management Structure in 2025 and the impact this will have on Good Companions in the coming years.

Good Companions
(Registered charity, number 1144729)
Financial statements
for the year ended 31 December 2024

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**Good Companions
Trustees' annual report
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

Full name Good Companions

Registered charity number 1144729

Principal address

Clifton Cornerstone
Southchurch Drive
Nottingham
NG11 8EW

Trustees

Clare Ashton, Chairman
Christine Breeton, Treasurer
Allan Breeton, Vice Chairman

Independent examiner

John O'Brien, employee of Community Accounting Plus, Units 1 & 2 North West, 41 Talbot Street, Nottingham, NG1 5GL

Governance and management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted 01/01/2000 and most recently amended 05/10/2011.

As set out in our governing document, membership is open to individuals over eighteen or organisations approved by the Trustees.

Objectives and activities

The relief of elderly persons, being over 60 years of age, and those below that age who have need for such services, living in the Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale areas of Nottingham and the surrounding area by such means as are recognised as charitable within the law of England and Wales as the Trustees shall determine and particularly but not exclusively by:

- The provision of a Befriending and Visiting Service;
- The provision of advice, information and support for such persons and their carers;
- The training of volunteers.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit

Our main activities undertaken for the public benefit include:

1. Provision of a home visiting service and friendship groups;
2. Provision of activities, events and trips;
3. Recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers.

Good Companions

Public benefit statement

The charity reduces the isolation and loneliness of vulnerable and older people in Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale areas of Nottingham and the surrounding area which improves their health and wellbeing.

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, 'Charities and Public Benefit'.

Summary of the main achievements during the period

The charity has continued with its key activities - organising a Home Visiting Scheme and 5 weekly Friendship Groups in Clifton, Parkgate and Silverdale Community Centres, Simone Gardens and Rivergreen Methodist Hub. Service users have enjoyed a wide range of activities including Health Qigong, pamper sessions, 'sing alongs' and talks from the police and fire service, events, trips, including a Cinema afternoon at a local church, and the annual visit to the pantomime.

Referrals for our services have continued to be received from a wide range of sources but particularly from social prescribers and community connectors. These have been followed up and potential service users assessed for either home visiting or attendance at a Friendship group.

Volunteers have continued to be recruited, trained and supported, and invited to a Volunteer's garden party and Christmas gathering.

Fundraising activities have focussed on grant applications, raffles, donation appeals, tombolas, market stalls, a car wash in conjunction with the local Fire Station, and 'Keep the Change' donation collection boxes, as well as very successful and enjoyable social and fundraising events - a Quiz and Fish & Chip supper evening, a Christmas party, Easter and Harvest themed events, and jigsaw and book swaps with lunch.

Communication and promotion has been achieved through a regular newsletter, leaflets, local Facebook pages, as well as our own Facebook page and website, articles in the local Clifton news, Zoom meetings and WhatsApp groups. Promotion has also been facilitated through representation on a variety of local groups.

The Management Committee has met regularly supported by a number of subgroups.

A more detailed report with statistics will be produced for the AGM incorporating this information.

We are very grateful to all our grant funders, to those who support us in the local community financially with donations or gifts in kind or have one of our collection boxes, attend our fundraising events or give their time through a variety of volunteering activities as well as the invaluable hardwork of our part-time Co-ordinators and volunteers, all of which enable us to make a real difference to the vulnerable and older people in Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale.

Good Companions

Financial review

Despite the increase in the cost of living and increases in rent and taxi fares, we have managed to maintain our income although we have not received as many grants as we have done in the past.

The charity's policy on reserves

We maintain a designated reserve of £12,000 to provide cover should we be unable to attract grants or raise sufficient funds through fund raising activities.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed CC Ashton
Clare Ashton, Trustee

Date 24/2/25

**Independent examiner's report to the trustees of
Good Companions
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Good Companions (the charity) for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed  Date 25/02/2025
John O'Brien MSc, FAIA, FCIE
Employee of Community Accounting Plus

Good Companions
Receipts & payments account
for the year ended 31 December 2024

2023				2024	
Total			Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Funds			Funds	Funds	Funds
£		Note	£	£	£
	Receipts				
27919	Grants & donations	2	8169	4624	12793
7496	Fundraising		5501	-	5501
20132	Friendship Group income		20784	-	20784
2350	Taxis		2967	-	2967
648	Bank interest		836	-	836
342	Sundry receipts		112	-	112
<u>58887</u>	Total receipts		<u>38369</u>	<u>4624</u>	<u>42993</u>
	Payments				
27873	Wages, NI & pension		29125	3804	32929
141	Training		-	916	916
985	Professional services		1260	-	1260
477	Insurance		536	-	536
1395	Printing & stationery		987	-	987
1077	Equipment, IT & comms		907	-	907
350	DBS & ID		291	-	291
4780	Friendship Group expenditure		1902	2703	4605
4788	Room hire		5255	-	5255
116	Sundry payments		276	-	276
3890	Taxis		4104	-	4104
-	Rent		628	-	628
<u>45872</u>	Total payments		<u>45271</u>	<u>7423</u>	<u>52694</u>
13015	Net receipts/(payments)		(6902)	(2799)	(9701)
<u>66347</u>	Cash funds at start of this period		<u>76563</u>	<u>2799</u>	<u>79362</u>
79362	Cash funds at end of this period		69661	-	69661

Good Companions
Statement of assets and liabilities
at 31 December 2024

2023			2024
£	Cash assets	Note	£
79271	Bank accounts		69561
91	Cash in hand		100
<u>79362</u>			<u>69661</u>
	Other monetary assets		
306	Debtors	4	1350
<u>306</u>			<u>1350</u>
	Liabilities		
(552)	Creditors - Independent examination fee		(612)
<u>(552)</u>			<u>(612)</u>

These financial statements are accepted on behalf of the charity by:

Signed CBreton Date 22.2.25
 Christine Breeton, Trustee

Good Companions
Notes to the accounts
for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. Receipts & payments accounts

Receipts and payments accounts contain a summary of money received and money spent during the period and a list of assets and liabilities at the end of the period. Usually, cash received and cash spent will include transactions through bank accounts and cash in hand.

2. Grants & donations

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
	£	£	£
Grocers Hall Charity	-	3720	3720
Nottingham CM NCF	-	465	465
A.W. Lymn	257	389	646
Rivergreen Medical Centre	50	50	100
Co-operative	1970	-	1970
Nottingham Junior Law Society	625	-	625
Gift Aid	522	-	522
CCFSG	400	-	400
HSKS Accounting Ltd	280	-	280
Sundry grants & donations	4065	-	4065
	8169	4624	12793

3. Funds analysis

	Opening balance	Receipts (Payments)		Closing balance
	£	£	£	£
Restricted funds				
Clifton Friendship Project	1000	-	(1000)	-
Wellbeing	1799	-	(1799)	-
Lead Co-ordinator salary	-	3720	(3720)	-
Christmas parties	-	904	(904)	-
	2799	4624	(7423)	-
Unrestricted funds				
General	57563	38369	(45271)	50661
Reserves	12000	-	-	12000
Restructuring	5000	-	-	5000
Equipment replacement	2000	-	-	2000
	76563	38369	(45271)	69661

Good Companions

The Clifton Friendship Project – These funds are specifically for covering the cost of the Clifton Friendship Project.

Wellbeing – These funds are for covering the cost of Health & Wellbeing events.

The Lead Co-ordinator salary fund - These contribute toward the Lead Co-ordinator salary.

Christmas parties – These funds were to cover the cost of Christmas parties.

4. Debtors

	£
Insurance - prepayment	343
HMRC - Employment Allowance claim	1007
	<u>1350</u>

5. Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in this period.

6. Trustees' remuneration

Trustees received no expenses, remuneration or benefits in this period.

7. Glossary of terms

Creditors: These are amounts owed by the charity, but not paid during the accounting period.

Debtors: These are amounts owed to the charity, but not received in the accounting period.

Prepayments: These are services that the charity has paid for in advance, but not used during the accounting period.

Restricted funds: These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.

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Employee of Community Accounting Plus