

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

Lifelines 



Lifelines Impact Report 2023-24

The impact of the Lifelines Project in Brighton & Hove.

Lifelines volunteers host activities for those over 50 in the city, helping to reduce loneliness and isolation by supporting people to improve their health and wellbeing.

What is Lifelines?

Lifelines has been supporting people over 50 in Brighton & Hove since 2007. A city full of energy, diversity and heart - our work here is all about supporting people to live healthier more connected lives. Helping to tackle loneliness and isolation by focussing on social connections, health and wellbeing - and having fun.

A lot of our work is in supporting senior housing schemes to help engage residents in communal activities. Through our work we know that many older people miss connecting with younger people, and are also interested in knowing more about different cultures. In this report we focus on three areas where Lifelines volunteers help build communities by:

- hosting activities that give purpose to communal spaces
- bringing together locals and residents from other housing schemes
- sharing experiences with young people and those from different nations

How we work

We have a dual approach to arranging engaging activities to bring people together. It can be a led by volunteer with a particular passion they want to share, or by a place where people tell us what they want and we try to find someone to make it happen.

We recruit, train and support volunteers to start and run the groups, encouraging people to get involved. Activities include exercise, dance, making things, being creative, trying new things, quizzes, or simply spending time with others.

We host activities in community spaces across the city, often working with with local senior housing schemes run by the council and private groups.

We also partner with local organisations to deliver activities like Sing Well singing sessions with **Annie Whittington**, or Pilates sessions with **John Rignell**.

We recently became an Associate Partner of the local council's Ageing Well initiative, delivered by local charity Impact Initiatives, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of older people in the city.



*Lifelines Volunteer, Elaine,
and support dog, Bentley*

Our Impact

Our Lifelines volunteers regularly hosted activities in community centres and senior housing schemes - activities like seated exercise, dancing, games, art, card-making, world culture, social, and digital support.



74 volunteers hosted or supported **31** regular activities in **12** venues in the city - including online.

On average, **200** people regularly attended almost **700** sessions, with a total attendance of over **6,600**.



Taking part in activities has...

... helped me to be more physically active

29% 'strongly agree'
43% 'agree'

71%



... made me feel more confident about taking on new challenges

23% 'strongly agree'
66% 'agree'

89%



...made feel more connected to my local community

43% 'strongly agree'
48% 'agree'

91%



... helped me to pick up new skills

29% 'strongly agree'
66% 'agree'

94%



... helped to improve my wellbeing

49.5% 'strongly agree'
49.5% 'agree'

97%



Responses taken from a survey of 35 Lifelines Beneficiaries 2023/2024

Case Study: Lavender House

Lavender House, a council-managed senior housing scheme in East Brighton, has been revitalizing its communal lounge activities post-COVID. Scheme Manager, **Shehnaz Faulkner**, has been instrumental in this effort, recognizing the crucial role that active involvement plays in the wellbeing of both residents and locals. We've collaborated with her to help make this happen.

Card Making & Crafting

Lifelines volunteer, **Elaine**, introduced a card-making and crafting group to the communal area at Lavender House. While some residents eagerly joined in, others, particularly the men, preferred to sit and watch. However, with a bit of encouragement and a little time, they began to participate. One in particular really made an impression on her.



“ One resident in his 70s, Ray, had never tried card making, like most of the men, and despite struggling with cataracts and needing a lot of support, he decided to give it a go. He made a card for his young granddaughter, something he had never done, and was delighted when she made her first card for him in return. Now he regularly participates in the group. After his recent cataract surgery, he was amazed to see just how good his cards truly are.

Elaine Moore, Lifelines Volunteer

“ My name is Ray. I've been in Lavender House for about four years now. We have a lot of things going on, you know, we have art classes, arts and crafts classes, and we do quizzes, and we do all sorts of things like that. I join in because I enjoy it so much. I make cards for my daughter and my granddaughter, we make Christmas cards, birthday cards.

We come down and have a nice chat with everybody and it's quite entertaining, and the people that do it are very good, so we all join in and have a good time.

Ray, Resident



Tea & Tech



Frank

When residents asked for help with their phones and tablets, we started a weekly Tea & Tech drop-in hosted by volunteers **Frank** and **Byung Su**. They created a welcoming space for residents and locals to get help with their devices and helped people with emails, registering for online services, using WhatsApp, creating Spotify playlists, and much more. The tech volunteers also arrive early to support the online communal quiz, making sure it runs smoothly.

The Big Quiz / Communal & In Person

Some residents found it difficult to join our online quiz, so our quiz volunteers, **Sue** and **Avril** - with the help of our Tech volunteers - piloted a communal quiz in the lounge, so residents could join in without needing a device. It took time to get the technical side setup, but it soon became a popular weekly activity. As they got to know the attendees, the quiz volunteers tailored the questions to the residents, choosing topics they were particularly interested in or based on the attendees' names.

And when residents requested a face-to-face quiz, our volunteers happily agreed. Now, Sue and Avril deliver an in-person quiz every month, with a bell to prevent eager quizzers from shouting out the answers.

What's next

At the residents request we have recently introduced a weekly Bingo session delivered by international student volunteers, and are currently working on a regular games afternoon.

Impact

This approach emphasizes the value of regular activities, giving individuals room to overcome reluctance and engage at their own pace. These activities foster social connections, helping to reduce isolation and strengthen community ties. Residents have built strong bonds, creating a true sense of community, and the lounge has become a lively space where people frequently gather and enjoy each other's company.



Quiz Volunteer, Sue, and residents

“ Lifelines is a lifeline it breaks isolation. It helps to make friends, gives purpose to my week.

“ Lifelines have been hosting group activities and events at Lavender House for many years, evolving with tenant involvement. The scheme is vibrant, and tenants enjoy learning new things and the social impact. They look forward to it and love interacting with new members from outside. Lifelines provide this invaluable service, and we hope to continue for many more years. Thank you very much!

Shehenaz Faulkner, Scheme Manager - Lavender House

Case Study: World Culture

Inspired by our work at Lavender House, we developed a new activity that brings together local residents and international volunteers for cultural exchange and social interaction.



We recruited **Mai, Haruka and Hirona**, Japanese students from the University of Sussex who were eager to meet local people and share their culture. Because of our relationship with Lavender House, we piloted our first World Culture session there. The students prepared a 2-hour presentation featuring videos about life in Japan, a quiz on lesser-known facts, and a Q&A session where residents could ask their own questions.

The students shared insights about Japan's different regions and how seasons influence food and traditions. A highlight was the Origami lesson, where they taught residents to fold paper cranes and boxes. The session ended with a tasting of Japanese food and drink, and a song.

The residents thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the students and learning about their lives back home. It made such an impact on the residents that they invited the students back for another session, so that they could give the students a card and small gifts to express their gratitude.

Due to such positive response from the residents, we arranged for the the students to deliver these sessions at other local senior housing schemes in the city.

“ When the students come from a different country, I always enjoy that very much. It shows a good insight to how they live, how these different people really live in their country.

Resident



Hirona and Haruka, with Scheme Manager, Shehnaz Faulkner, and her residents.

South Korea

South Korean students, **Sehyun** and **Seunghui**, developed and presented their own World Culture sessions exploring Korean cities, traditions, and language, teaching residents to a traditional game. A Lavender House session was attended by former Mayor of Brighton & Hove, Jackie O'Quinn and Head of Senior Housing, Peter Huntbach.



L to R: Sehyun, Jackie O'Quinn (former Mayor of Brighton), Nayeem (Lifelines employee) and Seunghui.

Indonesia

Four Indonesian students, **Atiqoh**, **Fatimah**, **Paul** and **Dalin** hosted sessions on Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in the world and the 4th largest by land mass. They shared insights about their country and culture, introduced residents to a traditional board game, Congklak, and a chance to try some delicious Indonesian food. As it was the time of Ramadan, the students delivered special sessions explaining what Ramadan is and how it's celebrated, giving residents a deeper understanding of their cultural and religious practices.



Atiqoh, Fatimah, Paula and Dalin sharing Indonesian food with residents.

What's next

We have Chinese students leading sessions about their home country and are developing sessions with other international students.

Impact

The World Culture sessions require substantial preparation and support from international students and have become our most requested activity. The residents and locals love the sessions and praise them for their fun and educational approach. The sessions bring great benefits students themselves, strengthening connections between generations and cultures. This activity has become one of our most requested. We continue to develop it with other students to enhance the experience for residents and locals.

“ This experience was truly nothing short of rewarding. It reminded me that impact doesn't always come from grand gestures; sometimes, it's simply about showing up, listening, and sharing your time. To Volunteering Matters and Lifelines, endless gratitude for giving us the platform to contribute meaningfully. A big shout-out to Nayeem Zulkar, who introduced us to this program and supported us throughout and everyone involved. To the wonderful Lifelines participants, thank you for your warm smiles, open hearts, and for welcoming us and our culture with such kindness and curiosity. Your engagement made every session unforgettable.

Paula de Fretes, Indonesian Student Volunteer

Case Study: Boccia Tournaments

We have been working with Leach Court and Patching Lodge, local senior housing schemes, for many years and in 2024 we brought their residents together by reintroducing the popular sit-down sport of Boccia - and creating a regular tournament between the two.

Boccia is a seated game designed for people with disabilities or mobility issues. It offers numerous physical, cognitive, and social benefits for participants and studies show it improves physical health, mental wellbeing, and social interaction. It can also be used as a rehabilitation tool, aiding in the development of motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

Leach Court

We recruited volunteer, **Jacob**, an asylum seeker in Brighton who was eager to get involved. He started a weekly Boccia group at Leach Court, encouraging participation, teaching new players how to the game, and most importantly, making it an enjoyable experience. The group gained popularity and often had more players than needed for a game, so people would take turns.



Jacob



Rion, scoring a game

We then recruited international student, **Rion**, to look after the Leach Court sessions, whilst Jacob switched his focus to starting a group at Patching.

Patching Lodge

Using the same model, Jacob developed the sessions at Patching Lodge to build a resident team. This was easier as residents were aware and had visited the Leach Court sessions. They were keen to have their own group and a chance to competitively against their neighbours.

“Being a lead volunteer coordinating Boccia sessions last year was amazing. Apart from offering my free time to doing something positively impactful thing to the residents of Leach Court and Patching Lodge, I had fun. I enjoyed every minute of it. I always look forward to Thursdays weekly. The residents are lovely people and they showed me respect. They where passionate about the activity and they took every session seriously, as if it was a competition. When the actual competition took place. They played like professionals and they praised me for training them well. I was filled with pure bliss.

Jacob, Lead Boccia Volunteer

The Derby

In April 2024, we organized the first competitive match between the two groups, to be hosted at Patching Lodge. It was a fantastic event, with both teams excited to compete and supported by enthusiastic residents from both schemes that came to watch. It was a tense finish, but the home team won the inaugural event by two points.

These derby matches continue, alternating venues to create a home-and-away experience. To add to the excitement we introduced a trophy for the winning team to display in their scheme until the next match. Both schemes have won the derby and displayed the cup at home.



Some of the Patching Lodge team with the Derby Winners' Cup

Impact

The Boccia games have been a great success and are highly anticipated, fostering camaraderie and enthusiasm among both groups of residents. Participation is lively, and the friendly competition brings joy and a sense of community. We're thrilled with the positive impact this activity has brought to these neighbouring schemes.

“ They enjoy it. They look forward to it. Some of them can't get about so just get down and it's a bit of socialising as well. There's not a lot that goes on in here. If it weren't for Lifelines there would not be a lot.”

Dave, Resident and Boccia Participant



The Leach Court team celebrating their recent win, with current volunteers Nico, Yuki, and Ahmed (far right), and Scheme Manager, Tracy Boegli-Taylor (at the front)

Our other activities

We have focused some of our helping to build and bridge communities, but we have many volunteers hosting activities across the city and online. We also have volunteers providing 1-to-1 digital support, and helping people with shopping.



Healthy Hub



Friday Music Social



Pilates



Art Class



Bridge



Bingo



Line Dancing



Mah Jong

What our Beneficiaries say

“ I go to Dance of Awareness and it is a joyous class with lovely warm people and tremendous music and a venue that is only a minute's walk from a cafe. Terrific!

“ Lifelines is a lifeline it breaks isolation. It helps to make a friends, gives purpose to my week.

“ I nursed my husband for nearly 4 years. During that time I very rarely got time to myself and even less to go out. I was becoming depressed and unfit. Lifelines really became just that. My thanks to all.

“ I enjoy the quizzes, particularly those that encourage conversation. Anything that promotes communication with others is a bonus.

“ I go to the Art Class and I've found my old skills coming back, I look forward to the classes every week and it's a way of getting to know other residents in the building.

“ I love coming here to the Tuesday group and Bingo, I really look forward to seeing everyone and don't know what I'd do if I didn't have these to go too.

“ Meeting others who enjoy Mah Jong and getting to practice & improve and have fun.

“ Please keep funding it, helps lots of people who are stuck indoors.

“ Lifelines were incredibly helpful to me when I moved here.

“ When the students come from a different country, I always enjoy that very much. It shows a good insight to how these different people really live in their country.

“ I can't stress enough how wonderful it is to have these activities available. They create a sense of community and belonging. Something that's increasingly important in our times.

“ Exercising in my own home, John is an absolute hero. He is clear and friendly. He keeps up the pace and interest just right for me at 82yrs. This has helped me access other zoom meetings. I live alone in a rural area.



Next Steps & Challenges

We are pleased with the success of our groups, and the impact our volunteers are having on these communities, but we are struggling with capacity. We are a small team and getting more requests from schemes and beneficiaries than we can currently support. Getting additional staff time will be a big priority in 2025.

Our main focus in 2025

- Develop a partnership with local universities to support World Culture sessions, ensuring more people experience the benefits of intergenerational and multicultural activities.
- Introduce Boccia to other housing schemes, arrange regular matches between sites, and build to a tournament and Boccia league. This activity could help many beneficiaries across the city and support the city's Healthy Ageing campaign.
- Expand the online/communal quiz pilot to other housing schemes, encouraging friendly competition and socialisation across schemes, helping to reduce loneliness.
- Secure funding for more staff time to increase our capacity to recruit, train and support volunteers to deliver these activities to support the people that really need it.
- Deliver on our new Ageing Well partnership.

A huge thank you to all our volunteers!

Contact us



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Find out more about Lifelines,
how to join our groups,
or how to become
a volunteer.

Lifelines is a local project supporting those over 50,
run by national charity Volunteering Matters.



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