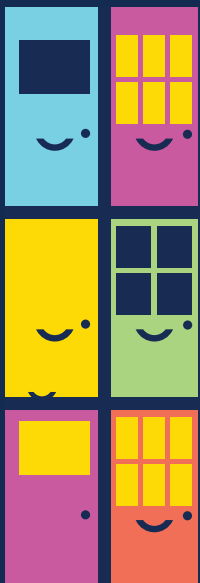


NORTH · LONDON  
HOSPICE

# Compassionate Neighbours in Barnet, Enfield and Haringey

A Guide for Referrers



Compassionate  
**Neighbours**  
in North London



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## Why refer to Compassionate Neighbours?

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There is a widespread need to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst those living with a life limiting illness, with strong evidence showing that loneliness and isolation have negative impacts on someone's health. The **Compassionate Neighbours** project aims to combat loneliness and isolation for people living with life-limiting illnesses, improving their physical and mental wellbeing.

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## What is the Compassionate Neighbours project?

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Compassionate Neighbours is a community-led project that enables and supports local people to be actively compassionate in their communities. **Volunteers are trained as Compassionate Neighbours and provide social and emotional support to people with life-limiting illnesses who are socially isolated and/or lonely.** Support is available to anyone living within Barnet, Enfield and Haringey who meet our referral criteria. Although the project is managed by North London Hospice, and driven by promoting and protecting health and wellbeing (including end of life care) through community efforts, support is available to those with no connection currently to the Hospice and the project sits outside our formal services.

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## What do Compassionate Neighbours do?

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They provide social and emotional support to people who have a life-limiting illness and are experiencing loneliness or social isolation by:

- **visiting regularly (currently phone support)**
- **offering friendship**
- **sharing activities**
- **helping them stay connected to the community as well as to family and friends**
- **empowering them to live their best life**

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## Who may refer to Compassionate Neighbours?

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If you are a health or social care professional, a social prescriber/link worker (or similar role) or work within a voluntary, faith or statutory organisation, we welcome the opportunity to offer those you are working with an extra layer of support.

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## What are the criteria for referring to Compassionate Neighbours?

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- **Loneliness and/or social isolation** (isolation is subjective and a person may feel lonely even if it appears they have a lot of connection with others).
- **A life-limiting condition** (we assess this as broadly as possible: typical conditions include cancer, heart and respiratory conditions, neurological disease, stroke, early Dementia, Parkinson's disease, low level mental health, plus a life-limiting condition, but could also simply be age-related frailty which is limiting the person's life in some way).
- **A willingness to engage with the programme** (the value of the programme is in the truly reciprocal nature of the relationships built, where all parties benefit).

**At the moment we only accept referrals from support-giving agencies in Barnet, Enfield or Haringey** (rather than self-referrals) as this means we know something about the person being referred, may check the project is suitable and liaise with the referrer as needed. Once we receive your referral, we will be in touch to discuss how we may help and then you can leave everything with us! We will keep you updated on progress in matching the person you've referred.

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## How to refer to Compassionate Neighbours

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Once you have identified someone who would benefit from being matched with a Compassionate Neighbour:

- Check they meet all of the above referral criteria. If you are unsure, particularly about what constitutes a life-limiting condition, just give us a call to ask on **020 8343 6805**
- **Please reassure people that feeling lonely is very common.**

It's a miserable feeling and often people feel too ashamed to talk about it and seek support. Covid-19 has, of course, intensified social isolation, with physical distancing particularly adversely affecting those with an existing health vulnerability. Our volunteers offer vital links into the community, helping people to build support networks so they may flourish. We understand people might be unsure if Compassionate Neighbours is the right support for them, so they can try it for a couple of weeks and then decide with no commitment.

- We will also talk through the programme with the person you're referring and make sure we have a clear understanding of their wants and needs before matching them with the right Compassionate Neighbour.
- Whilst there isn't any obligation to carry on if they don't want to, equally, support is not time limited – it goes on for as long as both sides want it. Read our case studies below to show how relationships may work in practice and what people say about the project.
- Once you are happy the person would like to be introduced to a Compassionate Neighbour, there's just a simple form to fill in and email back to us at [cn@northlondonhospice.co.uk](mailto:cn@northlondonhospice.co.uk)

The link to the form is as follows:

<https://northlondonhospice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Compassionate-Neighbours-Referral-Form-2020.doc>

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## Case studies

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### **Evelyn and Janet**

Evelyn and Janet were introduced in June 2019 and have been meeting once a week ever since. Evelyn was referred to the project by another local charity because theirs was time limited. Evelyn explained that she wanted to get involved in Compassionate Neighbours because she likes meeting people. She has few living relatives now. Her parents had left Germany in 1933 because of the impending war.

Evelyn's husband died in the hospice in December 2018. They had been together since she was 25. She had helped in caring for him at home during the last difficult years of his life with Parkinson's. His death understandably left a huge void in her life. She hoped that having a Compassionate Neighbour would give her some 'much-needed company and the opportunity to get out and about locally'. Janet said

that she gets so much from spending time with Evelyn, 'We share similar interests and I am always discovering something new when I am with her'.

Evelyn has been living with Type 1 diabetes since childhood. She recently received a gold medal from Diabetes UK for 70 years of insulin dependency. She recollects the problems of a diabetic diet when food was in short supply and rationed after the war. When Evelyn and Janet meet, they sometimes go for a walk in a local park or attend a talk if there's something that they're both interested in. Being severely sight-impaired Evelyn feels unable to venture on such walks alone. Janet acts as her 'guide dog', she laughs. Evelyn remarked, 'We hit it off really well despite the differences in our ages and backgrounds – she's great.'

## **Florence**

Florence had been supported by our Health and Wellbeing Centre, but she no longer fitted the criteria for specialist palliative care. The nurse felt that she would however benefit from some emotional support and was referred to Compassionate Neighbours. This gave the nurse the peace of mind she needed to safely discharge her from the Hospice's care.

In addition to Yasmin's visits, Florence was also linked in with another local organisation, Reach and Connect, who helped her to set up a Dial-a-Ride account and a taxi card and introduced her to the Irish Centre day centre which she now attends twice a week.

During a follow-up call Florence explained that she was not looking forward to Christmas because she would be alone as her family were going away. I asked if she would like me to find out what was going on locally that day and she agreed. I spoke to Jackson's Lane, a theatre in Archway who run an event for older people who would otherwise be alone on Christmas Day and added her to the waiting list. I followed up the week before Christmas and Florence had made it to the top of the list. I called Florence on Boxing Day and she reported that the Jackson's Lane event was 'quite good actually'.

Since then she has been talking about the future and things that she

would like to do and although she still has days when she feels very low, Yasmin's regular visits give her something to look forward to.

### **Virginia**

Virginia found out about the Compassionate Neighbors project from a friend and as she had recently retired she thought that she'd join the training to find out more. She was looking for a flexible, local volunteering opportunity and thought that it would be a nice thing to do.

She really enjoyed the training and went on to be matched to a community member, Nora, who is a 93-year-old Irish woman and lives within walking distance of Virginia's home. They hit it off from the moment they met, quickly establishing an Irish connection so they had plenty to chat about. Virginia describes their relationship as being really easy. She places no demands on Virginia and they usually spend about 1.5 hours together chatting every fortnight.

### **John**

John is 91 and is housebound, isolated, intelligent, alert, chatty gentleman. Previous stroke diagnosed with prostate cancer and unable to leave his home because of his limited mobility. John has been seeing Rosemarie, a Compassionate Neighbour, since May at least once a week. John is independent and does not want to feel a burden. As a result of his stroke he has lost use of his right side and has to do everything with his left hand. Rosemarie was concerned that he would have difficulty cooking and would consequently not get enough food. She therefore delivered homemade meals to him twice a week. John was very reluctant to get "meals on wheels" or make similar arrangements.

Rosemarie: 'It seems to me that he needs to talk and to get rid of months/years of stored up loneliness.'

### **Cathy and Tamsin**

Complications after being in hospital at the beginning of 2020 meant that Cathy suffered with anxiety and depression. Cathy was referred for a Compassionate Neighbour by a social prescriber in her GP practice who suggested that it would be of benefit to have someone to talk to. Cathy lives alone. She occasionally speaks to people on the phone

and has one person who helps with her shopping. She finds it difficult to make new friends, especially as an adult, and finds that this “takes courage”, which she doesn’t always have.

Cathy was introduced to Tamsin, who she was told was a very lovely lady and about the same age as her. Tamsin, a recently retired social worker, had just started volunteering for Compassionate Neighbours. Cathy and Tamsin have now been in contact for around 8 months. At first they enjoyed walks around a park together, but Cathy has injured her ankle and so this is not currently possible. They now chat every Thursday afternoon by video call. Cathy says that she really looks forward to these calls as she finds it helpful to talk about her worries and that Tamsin “connects me with the outside world and stops me feeling lonely and cut off”. She is glad of the friendship that she has found and said that Tamsin has given her cooking tips, talked about family and they share jokes. Tamsin has also offered to shop for her during the pandemic. This has not been necessary, but Cathy says she feels reassured knowing that the support is there. Cathy was hoping to visit a family member on Christmas Day 2020 but due to Covid related restrictions in place this was not possible. As their usual day for chatting fell on Christmas Eve Tamsin had suggested that they share a remote cup of tea or glass of wine together. Cathy reported that she was looking forward to this and was also touched that Tamsin had made this offer “even though she has a family of her own she’s still made time for me to have a Christmas time”.

The greatest benefit to Cathy has been for her emotional health which she said had been suffering following her hospitalisation, isolation due to Covid and subsequent injury. She has someone to talk to and has also found her self-confidence rising; Tamsin had shared with her that she had had a hip operation and “she’s shown me that it’s not weak people who have injuries and her telling me that she had injuries makes me know it’s OK”. Tamsin says that she enjoys her new friendship and chats with Cathy and “if I can offer a bit of time and that makes a difference then I find it rewarding”.

**All activities are currently undertaken in line with government guidance regarding Covid-19. This means the majority of our support is now via the phone but face-to-face meeting out of doors may be possible. Please contact us to discuss further if this is of interest.**

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**Serving the Boroughs of Barnet,  
Enfield and Haringey**

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Registered Charity No. 285300

v1 Printed:

Feb 2021