

Growing Compassionate Communities

Charity number 1176047



Annual Report 2020/2021

**“Working towards inclusiveness of all
diverse groups and people“**

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Foreword

I was delighted to be asked once again to provide a foreword to the Growing Compassionate Communities annual report.

We have seen over the past year the importance of communities, not just in practical support – delivering prescriptions and shopping – but in simply reaching out and checking in with those around us. Loneliness presents a huge challenge, particularly now, and exploring ways to reduce this has never been more vital.

A compassionate community may look like a neighbour helping with the shopping, it may look like a Zoom call once a week for a virtual coffee, and when we recommence in-person socialising again it may look like a game of bowls in the village hall.

Whatever it looks like in the future, the work that GCC is doing will be incredibly important in delivering the compassion and support we all need in our lives.

Now more than ever do we need to see Compassionate Communities across our county, and I thank Peter and all those involved in GCC for their hard work at this incredibly important time.

Michael Tomlinson MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Dorset and North Poole
House of Commons | London | SW1A 0AA

Chair's Report

It has been an incredibly challenging year for many of the people and communities we seek to serve. The COVID 19 pandemic has highlighted some key agendas that requires our attention and action. It has provided some significant challenges to all communities.

However, challenges can sometimes offer significant opportunities to serve communities in different and more creative ways. The pandemic has gone some way to highlight some important blind spots in relation to community need, ones that we need to respond to proactively to support and engage marginalised groups who sit on the edge of our communities.

This recent pandemic has sharpened our focus of the deep need of these marginalised groups and communities of the loneliness and associated mental health issues emerging from this fog of despair. Its key that we are adequately prepared to respond to and meet the emerging significant needs of these people and communities in the post pandemic world.

Loneliness and isolation have been central to the vision and mission of the Growing Compassionate Communities charity largely because it is often at root of many mental health issues. This theme will be a key agenda for 2021 going forward.

To get to grips with some of the challenges facing organisations and communities it is important to listen to our communities. This figured high on our agenda at our inaugural conference in March. We conducted a pivotal listening exercise at the conference on the 7th March. What emerged was a Strategic document that not only gives us a roadmap but also an evidence base to draw from to underpin our journey.

This year we have been pleased to welcome Wimborne, Blandford and Broadstone dementia friendly communities under the GCC umbrella.

We have been leading on a befriending Scheme in partnership with social prescribers located in GP practices. This has provided a window into the lived experience of lonely and the isolated.

A quote that sums up this year

“Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality.” – Jonas Salk

**Peter Jones
Chair, Growing Compassionate Communities**

Treasurer's Report

Prior to its registration as a Charity the Charity received a grant of about £7,000 from the Co-Operative Group. The balance of these funds is intended to be spent primarily on the Charity's works in the Corfe Mullen and Dorset area.

The larger items of expenditure have included paying for the BSO to play at an event for the public paying for some branded marketing materials and for general fund-raising purposes at public events, the relevant insurance, and website renewal.

These items have helped the Charity in running and participating in events reaching out to the local communities providing knowledge, information, and support as required

A monthly carpet bowling event for people with memory loss and their carers has been undertaken at Corfe Mullen at a modest profit and we now support a second carpet bowling group in Corfe Castle.

Weekly drop-in sessions have been held at several local libraries and other public spaces with support groups for carers held regularly.

We have overseen a poetry / reading group in Broadstone and a monthly tea dance.

Moving forward it is anticipated that further good works will be mirrored within other communities in the Dorset area.

We ran an event At Poole Lighthouse where members of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra played.

We have now absorbed dementia friendly groups in Broadstone, Corfe Castle and outside this time also in Blandford Forum and Wimborne and more recently Ferndown community.

Anthony Webber

Treasurer Growing Compassionate Communities

Community Reports

Wimborne Dementia Friendly Community

What we have done during lockdown

The Steering Group has been unable to meet but we have kept everyone informed by email. Sue (Chair), Liz (Secretary) and Steve have met in person to discuss the way forward and financial matters.

Step Outside (the gardening project) has continued whenever possible under the direction of Sarah Rampton. She also organised Jolly Postal Service, where children and young people have been writing letters to the elderly and lonely.

The Magic Table is being used in Streets Meadow.

Future Plans

We put together an Action Plan before the lockdown. We aim to support the following projects:

- Step Outside
- Jolly Days at Wimborne St Giles and CLARC Wimborne (organised by Sarah)
- Cake Concert in 2021
- Magic Table (possible use in other venues)
- Just as I am services in St Michaels Colehill

We also aim to raise even more awareness of dementia in the community by encouraging local businesses and service providers to become Dementia Friends.

Stepping Stones

A Broadstone Project supporting older people and people with dementia and their carers

We started this year with all our activities fully booked.

The monthly inclusive Tea Dances became extremely successful and were enjoyed immensely by all the participants.

At our monthly 'Drop In' at Broadstone Methodist Church, we started the year talking about our wishes for 2020 and we created a 'Wishing Wall'. Peace and good health featured strongly; little did we know what was about to happen across the world.

The Book Group, meeting every Monday in Broadstone Library, started a novel about the First World War. Members took turns to read aloud or chose just to listen. The monthly advice surgeries were well attended, representing the widespread need to talk about dementia.

Since March, all our activities have been suspended. There have been many sad events involving our former attendees, including two becoming infected with COVID-19 whilst in hospital for other reasons. Others have moved into nursing homes for their own safety. We have aimed to keep in touch with former regular attendees of the 'Drop In' and the Reading Group. Isolation has been a big problem for many and the desire to get back to a more 'normal' life is intense. Carers have had challenges with dementia patients not able to comprehend the enforced changes in our lifestyles.

With a vaccine in sight, we hope that we can begin to look forward to reaching out again in our local community and giving much more support to older people and people with dementia and their carers

Blandford Dementia Action Alliance

Blandford Dementia Action Alliance exists to create a dementia friendly community in Blandford by turning understanding into action. We aim to achieve this by tackling five distinct sections of the community by tailoring the support offered to meet their needs:

1. Businesses
2. The General Public
3. People Living with Dementia and their carers
4. Community Groups
5. Providers of health & Social care Services

Over the past year we have worked together to support people living with dementia and their carers in our community as well as raising awareness of dementia in our local businesses. Naturally, we have all been impacted by COVID-19, but our mission has remained firm. This has mainly been focused on the support provided to people living with dementia and their caregivers through our members, mainly our GP surgeries who have provided excellent befriending and support services for people living with dementia.

As we look to 2021, we will continue to focus on demonstrating a high level of public awareness and understanding so that people living with dementia and their carers are supported by their community. Likewise, we will continue to support our members to provide inclusive dementia services in Blandford

Corfe Castle

We continue to engage fully with the Corfe Castle Community. We provide a monthly carers support group, and a carpet bowls group who meet monthly.

Overview of Groups

Carers Lead Report

The dementia carers support group which was meeting at the library once a month has gone from strength to strength and provided a haven for discussion and sharing of information. Topics have included young onset dementia, Alzheimer's, care homes, benefits, and legal rights.

Sadly, due to lockdown we have not met for many months but look forward to resuming in the new year.

Carpet bowls has been an extremely popular activity for carers and dementia sufferers and attracted folk from other areas of Dorset.

Tea cake and laughter help to raise the spirits and provide friendship. Again, we are looking forward to bowling again next year.

Amanda Rowberry

Carers lead

Corfe Mullen Dementia Friendly Community

Dementia Health Walks

Our health walks in Corfe Mullen take place each Tuesday morning, starting and finishing on the BH Live Health Club steps. We meet just before 10:15am and the walk starts at 10:15am and finishes at 11:15am.

We have nominated walk leaders who usually go out in the days prior to the walks and plot a route. They try to choose a walk that will fit in with current weather conditions. e.g. if it has been really wet in days leading up to the walk, the route is more likely to be on paths around Corfe Mullen. Whenever possible the walks are off road which we all like much better.

We have got a lovely number of men and women who participate, the number is nearly always above twenty and has quite often reached mid to late 30s. Of course, we then have not only a leader, but another person will also be in the middle of the group and somebody will be at the end. If somebody feels it is a bit too much, there is always someone who can guide them to cutting their walk short.

The Corfe Mullen Group is extremely friendly and welcomes new people when they join. Nobody feels lonely or left out. The walks lift your spirits, helps to keep you fit and helps to make new friends. These walks are not difficult so most people whatever age can manage them if they have moderate to good fitness, come, and join us and see.

Wendy Percey

Dementia Health Walks lead

Overview of Projects

GCC Befrienders scheme

I have been fortunate to work closely with the GCC to continue delivering support to people in the area with linking them to befriending telephone support, transport and help with shopping and prescription collections.

As a Social Prescriber, tackling social isolation/loneliness is an important part of the role and it is great to hear this is part of the Growing Compassionate Communities strategy.

The conference was an unbelievably valuable and informative opportunity especially as I was able to network with different people, services and organisations to then take with me within my role to provide further information and awareness of support available to people in the community.

Becky Sultana
Social Prescriber

Now and Then Project

Identified Group: Dementia and memory impairment patients.

Challenge: With rural isolation and memory impairments, the target beneficiaries can experience loneliness. Alongside this is the identification of the digital skills gap across Dorset

Solution: Digital lockets to serve as memory cues & awareness of the condition to the users and those they meet it.

Need: Then looking back on long term memories, the participants gain the confidence to engage with now.

Growing Compassionate Communities: For governance, project measure and to provide an asset lock to the community.

Key Impact: Promote local history and raise awareness of the impairments, in turn, create a legacy memorial in their own voice the way they want the story told.

Purpose: Through my passion for a good yarn. This project through its cathartic journey serves as a catalyst for both viewers and storytellers, in turn, establishing retention.

Local ownership: Like plaques on a park bench, the digital lockets connect the work to a special place for the storyteller

Local Resources: By drawing on the associated projects of GCC we have access to participants with stories to tell

Revenue: A goal for the project is to collect public contribution financing via a pay it forward model. [Aviva crowdfunding](#)

Dan Julian
Now and Then Project Lead

Highlights of the year and achievement's

Corfe Mullen marked World Mental Health day in October this year with a very special event. Corfe Mullen Demetria Friendly Community joined forces with members of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for a 'Cake Concert' held in St Nicholas church. The event was attended by over 60 people who are living with dementia and their carers and were treated with music from baroque to more modern day, by some of the best musicians in the country playing harp, flute and cello.

The concert was very much a community event with The Douch Family co-ordinating, as well as baking, helping, and serving alongside those from the local community including church members from St Nicholas, Prama care and Coles Miller solicitors LLP. Plenty of hands were needed for the many cups of tea poured and the numerous servings of different cake selections that were offered through the morning.

The concert was a truly joyful event and I think all the guests felt they had been treated to a special morning out, meeting old friends and making new ones, and relaxing with the most beautiful music. Smiling faces were certainly plentiful.

A highlight for me was the closing song Danny Boy where guests spontaneously joined in. The event encouraged us to begin exploring how we might begin a community dementia-friendly choir here in Corfe Mullen.

Jane Burgess
Rector Corfe Mullen Parish

Growing Hope in our Communities Conference - 2020

When Peter approached us to partner Growing Compassionate Communities, in pulling together the first ever GCC conference, we were only too pleased to help.

The brief was to pull together representatives from community groups, businesses & volunteers from as many towns and villages as possible in Dorset. To listen and collect information on what people were doing well in their communities, where people needed support, and where we could all pull together and learn from best practise.

A plan for the day was formed, including organising the venue, lunch and refreshments, SWOT analysis challenge organised, and speakers invited and booked for the day. We were thrilled to have Sarah Rampton from In Jolly Good Company, Joanna Keats from Dorset Community Action and Anthony Weber from Coles Miller Solicitors booked as our 3 speakers.

Dame Annette Brooke – a trustee of the charity opened the event and the day begun.

With information collected throughout the event from all 37 delegates we created 'Growing Hope in our Communities' strategic document highlighting the results of the SWOT analysis and next steps for the coming year.

Little did we know on the day of the conference that the pandemic would stop play to a lot of our plans, but we have been working hard behind the scenes to be able to move forwards in the coming months. A new steering committee has been formed – one meeting via Zoom has already taken place, a GCC newsletter was issued, and events already being pencilled in for 2021.

The Growing Compassionate Communities website – www.growingcompassion.org and social media pages both on Facebook and Twitter are being updated – so keep dropping by for updated information & future events.

I would like to end by thanking Peter for his vision, my colleagues Wendy and Lakeisha at Douch Family Funeral Directors for their help with the organisation of the conference and on the day, St Nicholas Church, Corfe Mullen for the venue and their hard work with lunch, the speakers for their excellent and informative talks, and lastly to all the delegates that took time out of their weekend to attend and make our first conference such a huge success.

Emma Regan

Community Engagement & Development Manager

Douch Family Funeral Directors / Secretary of Growing Compassionate Communities

Parliamentary Petition

We have instituted a Parliamentary petition around loneliness in rural communities

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my team who have journeyed with me over the last year and for their support without whom none of the above would not have been possible.

Peter Jones

Chair Growing compassionate Communities charity

Charity number 1176047

Aims and objectives for 2021

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible." - Jonathan Swift

This section will seek to outline some key aims and objectives for 2021

Trauma Centre

The Growing compassionate communities' charity will plan and open a trauma centre to support rural communities and promote mental health wellbeing in local farming communities.

Mental health awareness and wellbeing project

A public health model to promote mental health wellbeing. We will seek to purchase a minibus with a view to engage with rural communities to promote mental health awareness and well-being.

GCC 2nd Annual Conference. Growing hope in our communities Conference

Plan and deliver the 2nd GCC Conference. This is planned to go ahead on 22nd May 2021 at St Nicholas Church Corfe Mullen.

Loneliness and Isolation Workshops

GCC will plan and deliver 3 workshops to inform and raise awareness of loneliness and isolation in communities.

Create a community allotment

This is well under way in Corfe Mullen and will be open to all diverse groups and people around April time.



We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.

— *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

GROWING COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES

Working towards
inclusiveness of all diverse
groups and people



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