2019 Our year in numbers

- 4,312 driving and escorted journeys
- 734 older people
  - 20% over 90 years
  - 60% over 80 years
  - Average age 82
- 26 groups meeting 709 times over the year
- 76 gardening and DIY jobs
- 23,887 hours of volunteering, worth £252,008
- 207 befriending matches
  - including 72 new matches
- 4 groups for people with dementia and their carers
- 451 dedicated volunteers
- 239 new older people joined us
- 2019

1/ These are our figures for the financial year ended 31st March 2019.
2/ We have based this sum on the London Living Wage value of £10.55 per hour.
This year has been a really exciting year for our charity. We successfully completed refurbishment works on our new disabled-accessible offices in Tell Grove. Although we have many fond memories of our time in Dulwich Community Hospital, it was wonderful to cut the ribbon at our office-warming party and welcome into the new space people of all ages who are helping us make Southwark a place where older people thrive.

We are very grateful to all the friends who helped make our new offices happen, especially Dulwich Grove United Reformed Church, Lightbox, Smith & Brooke Architects, Patchwork, Clothworkers’ and Grocers Charities, and all the local people who generously donated to the refurbishment works.

This year, our charity received 26% more referrals than last year, as the number of older people living alone continues to rise, and many of them experience lonely and isolated lives. The challenge of raising enough funds to meet demand for our services remains real, but our amazing volunteers gave an incredible 23,887 hours of their time, worth more than £250,000, to our charity’s work. In 2019, we supported more older people than ever before in our charity’s history.

We successfully developed our support for people with dementia and their carers this year. The award of a grant from the Big Lottery Community Foundation is already helping us grow this small pilot project into a high quality service that is making a real difference to people’s lives.

We were especially proud when our former Chair, Katharine St. John-Brooks, won Trustee of the Year in this year’s Southwark Stars Awards. After ten years of service on our Board of Trustees, Katharine has agreed to become our new President, and we really look forward to working with her in this new role. Caroline has also enjoyed her first few months as our new Chair.

We could not have achieved any of this without the wonderful support of our volunteers, donors, and community partners large and small, including Southwark Council and the COPSINS consortium.

Thank you to all of you for helping us make Southwark a great place to grow old in!
Who we are

Link Age Southwark is a vibrant local volunteering charity with an impressive track record of supporting older people to thrive in later life. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation. They and our small staff team have been helping make Southwark a better place in which to grow old since 1993.

We recruit, train and manage volunteers to deliver services to older people across the London Borough of Southwark. These services reduce isolation and loneliness, improve older people’s quality of life, their physical and mental health, and enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

Our services are free to everyone aged over 60 and people with dementia and their carers who live in Southwark. The average age of the people we support is 82. Our volunteers come from across Southwark and beyond.

We pride ourselves on being rooted in the local community, and on working to deliver our values in all that we do. Through our connecting communities model, we harness the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers and local partners across the Borough to create a vital connection between older people and the local communities in which they live.

Our mission and vision

Link Age Southwark’s vision is of friendly, vibrant local communities where older people thrive.

Our mission is to help older people stay connected with their communities, alleviating loneliness, improving health and wellbeing, and making communities stronger through volunteering.

Our values

WE ARE POSITIVE
We bring joy, vitality and warmth to every setting we enter.

WE HAVE A ‘CAN DO’ ATTITUDE
We encourage everyone to share their unique skills, talents, passions and experience with each other.

WE ARE ALWAYS CONNECTING
We know that connecting with other people is critical to everyone’s wellbeing.

WE RESPECT EACH INDIVIDUAL
We see the person, not their age, and always truly listen to the person in front of us, seeking to understand their point of view.

WE ARE NOT ALONE
We work in strong partnerships and link older people with our volunteers, and with other services which will help them and their communities thrive.

Our history

LINK AGE SOUTHWARK... was founded 26 years ago as two separate charities, Dulwich Helpline and Southwark Churches Care, which merged in 2012 and became Link Age Southwark in 2015.
Our work alleviates loneliness and isolation, supports people to maintain their independence, connects our community, improves people’s health and wellbeing, and helps to create a happier and healthier society.

We have enabled 451 volunteers to support 734 older people this year. The average age of the older people using our services is 82 years. 20% of them are aged over 90 and 60% are over 80 years old. 45% of the people using our services are from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. A majority of them are women, but the proportion of men is increasing over time.

We have continued to make significant progress in expanding our services this year. We have matched 72 older people to a new volunteer befriender, which brings to 207 the total number of befriending relationships supported. We launched three new social groups, bringing to 26 the total number of exercise and activity groups our charity offered in community settings across Southwark. Our groups met 709 times over the course of the year.

We organised 4,312 journeys delivering door-to-door transport to help ensure older people with mobility problems were not excluded from attending our groups and parties. These were carried out through volunteer drivers, a community minibus service, and our staff. Our volunteers also completed 76 gardening and DIY tasks for older people.

We have delivered innovative intergenerational activities including launching a new group bringing together parents, toddlers and older people.

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**Experts in connecting communities**

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**How we work**

- We receive referrals from GPs, other health professionals, social workers, charities, older people themselves, and from their friends and family.
- Our team of experienced staff assess older people in their own homes and connect them to services and activities provided by Link Age Southwark, our volunteers and other partners.
- We provide a volunteer befriending service, matching isolated older people with a friendly, trained volunteer to visit them once a week.
- We run regular exercise and activity groups in community settings, ranging from Bridge to Yoga, from Singing to Reminiscence, and many more.
- We provide volunteer and wheelchair-accessible transport to ensure older people can access activities outside their homes.
- We work with local schools, linking generations together to share and develop new knowledge and skills.
- We provide practical support including light gardening and odd jobs so that people can live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.
- We have a specialist programme of activities for people with a confirmed diagnosis of mild-moderate dementia and support for their carers. This includes peer support, reading and music groups especially designed for people living with dementia.
Why we are needed

Southwark is a thriving London borough with a growing population. The need for our services continues to increase as the number of older people living locally grows, and more of them live alone. There is particularly high demand for our services amongst people aged over 80, people living with dementia, and older people with mobility problems who find it difficult to get out and about in the community.

- 35,600 people aged over 60 live in Southwark.
- Over 9000 people over 65 live alone in the Borough.
- The number of older people living alone in Southwark is projected to increase by 11,000 by 2033 and the increase will be largest amongst the over 75s.
- 846 people have a confirmed diagnosis of dementia in Southwark, and this number is rising year on year.
- Southwark is ranked sixth highest for loneliness amongst people over 65 out of 32 London boroughs, and 13th highest out of 326 local authority areas nationally.
- The number of older people living in deprived households in Southwark is the 7th highest in England and poverty is closely correlated with loneliness.
- 19% of Southwark’s older population is from BAME groups and research indicates problems of ‘hidden loneliness’ amongst these groups.
- A quarter of the older people we support chat to somebody in their neighbourhood no more than once or twice a month.
- Two out of three of the people we support need help with some tasks to manage living in their own home and one in six get out of the house no more than once or twice a month.
- One in five did not feel at all positive about life yesterday and one in six say they don’t really enjoy life and often or always feel lonely.
- Chronic loneliness is a health risk factor comparable to tobacco, alcohol and obesity. It increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, premature death, depression and dementia.
- Lonely people are more likely to visit their GP, enter residential care early, and use A&E independent of chronic illness.

Vera was born in East Dulwich and has lived in Southwark her whole life. She is a wheelchair user and needed some assistance getting to and from Link Age Southwark’s weekly groups on the Kingswood Estate which she wanted to attend.

Link Age Southwark quickly put her in touch with Tim and a great friendship began.

“Coming here is fantastic, they are like my family and it’s the only chance I get to go out unless Tim takes me out”

Although Tim has many interests and is a keen gardener, he knew he wanted to do some voluntary work when he retired and saw a notice in a local magazine looking for drivers. “I had tried volunteering with a few charities but then I went to Link Age Southwark and was really impressed with their professionalism.”

As well as being a volunteer driver, Tim also attends local events to help publicise our services within the community and has become one of our GP Champions who liaise with GP Practices to promote volunteering opportunities with Link Age Southwark.

Vera really enjoys coming to the groups every week and has made some great friends. “Coming here is fantastic, they are like my family and it’s the only chance I get to go out unless Tim takes me out.”

They sometimes take trips to their local parks or cafes and it is clear that a great friendship has developed, beyond befriending and driving. “He’s never allowed to retire, he’s my lifeline, I won’t have it!” she jokes. It is clear that their friendship has become very important to her and both of their lives are all the richer for it.

“He’s never allowed to retire, he’s my lifeline, I won’t have it!”
The difference we make

We pride ourselves on being a small local charity that makes a big difference. We take time to understand the impact of our work. We have clear goals and a theory of change to help us understand what we do and why. We use a range of qualitative and quantitative tools and approaches to measure the changes that result from our work. These include annual surveys, focus groups, independent evaluations, social return on investment studies and using our database to monitor activities.

In May 2019 we surveyed the older people using our services to gather their feedback on the impact our support is making on

“I now know that there is help available in Southwark for someone who lives alone”

“They enrich it. I know that without Link Age Southwark my life would not be as happy and fulfilling as it is now”
“I hadn’t been out of the house for a year before I came here”

“Link Age Southwark provides a means of making the most of life.”

“I feel positive towards life and able to cope better, mentally, physically and socially”

“It’s a great comfort to have such helpful and friendly people around. Thanks”

“The area is very lucky to have Link Age Southwark. There was nothing like this where I lived before”

94% are happy or very happy with our services.

As a result of using our services:

77% enjoy life more

70% feel better connected to their local community

64% get out of their house more

65% are better able to manage living in their own home

77% enjoy life more

70% feel better connected to their local community

64% get out of their house more

65% are better able to manage living in their own home
their lives. An independent specialist data company analysed the results for us pro bono and they were extremely positive again this year.

Our service users reported feeling less lonely and enjoying improved mental wellbeing as a result of the support we provide. They are better connected to their local community, getting out more and better able to manage living in their own homes.

This year, the older people we support used on average two to three of our services, and we saw clearly the impact this support is having on their lives. The more of our services a person used, the greater the improvements they reported to their mental wellbeing. They reported feeling less lonely, more positive and enjoying life more.

The impact of our services seems to be felt most keenly by the most socially isolated and vulnerable older people. A higher proportion of our older service users who chat to somebody no more than once or twice a month told us that our services help them feel less lonely, compared to those who have more social contact in their lives.

Older people who have been with us for at least a year were also much more likely to report that they felt less lonely, enjoyed life more and got out of the house more as a result of using our services. Our approach of working to ensure befriending relationships and groups last for the long-term is clearly the right one!

We also asked people to tell us in their own words the main difference our services have made. They spoke about the joy of meeting new people and making new friends, getting out of the house more, having something to look forward to and enjoying the company of someone who listens.

96% are happy or very happy with our newsletter
95% are happy or very happy with our groups
91% are happy or very happy with our parties
90% are happy or very happy with their volunteer befriender
87% are happy or very happy with our gardening and odd jobs
81% wouldn’t change anything about our services
83% are happy with our regular transport service
Our exercise and activity groups for older people are central to our vision of friendly local communities where older people thrive.

The groups meet during the day in venues provided free of charge by community partners such as care homes, sheltered housing units, churches, libraries and pubs. They are delivered by our dedicated volunteers, working alongside professional tutors if required. As well as offering activities ranging from exercise to reminiscence, from arts and crafts to bridge, music and more, the groups have a strong social dimension. Each is a circle of local friends meeting regularly.

Spotlight on our social groups

“Spotlight on our social groups”

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“It gets me out of the house and the brain box going”

“We have a jolly good time and try to keep fit at the same time!”

“I enjoy everything about the group”
for conversation, often over a cup of tea.

We offer a transport service to ensure no older person is excluded from attending our groups because they are disabled or have mobility problems. More than 75 dedicated volunteer drivers offer a door-to-door service, and we also use a disabled-accessible community minibus to bring people to the groups. This year, our volunteer drivers made more than 2400 journeys escorting older people to our groups, parties, and on visits to the shops and hairdressers.

We are however struggling to recruit enough volunteer drivers to meet demand for this service, and would love to hear from you if you are interested in becoming a driver, or supporting the service in other ways.

This year, we launched three new groups, bringing to 26 the total number of groups we offered during 2018/19. Our new groups were a Creative Dance group, a Stay & Play group bringing toddlers and older people together, and a Musical Memories singing group for people with dementia.

Our groups met 709 times during the year. 202 older people attended the groups and between...

“It makes me feel younger”

“After the exercise we’re fully charged!”

“I never go out unless I come here”
The results of these evaluations were extremely positive. The social aspect of the groups was mentioned as the most important reason for coming. For many, it was their main reason to get out of the house and a very important feature of their lives. People reported that the group made them feel less isolated because the atmosphere was so friendly, and they had made new friends. They said they look forward to coming beforehand, and feel happier and more energetic afterwards.

All those who attended our exercise groups reported specific health benefits including feeling more active, being less stiff, being more mobile, and experiencing less pain.

All our group volunteers were singled out for special and warm praise for the work they do to ensure the groups run smoothly. As well as preparing and delivering activities, and setting up and clearing up the venue, they were described as being extremely caring. Examples included them calling group members individually to encourage them to attend and checking in on them if they had been unwell. Volunteer drivers were also consistently praised for being punctual, reliable and very helpful.

When asked how we could improve our groups, the main feedback was that people wanted them to meet more often. Most of our groups already meet weekly, and we are committed to making our fortnightly and monthly groups meet more often as soon as we have enough volunteers and funding to make this happen.

Overall, our groups are clearly achieving our aims of reducing social isolation and loneliness, improving people’s physical and mental health, and improving older peoples’ quality of life.

100% of group members would recommend it to a friend
99% said the location was convenient and they liked the refreshments
98% said the group increased their social contact
86% said the group increased their energy
Golden Oldies

Golden Oldies is one of Link Age Southwark’s regular social groups for older people. This small group meets weekly at St Mary’s Church in Peckham and includes some carers who accompany the person they look after. Gentle exercise and board games and quizzes are offered on different weeks.

The same member of our staff team calls group members who are unable to travel independently to remind them that their volunteer driver will be coming to collect and drop them home, and this plan is confirmed back to the drivers. This call is also a chance to encourage them to come back and rejoin the group if they have missed a session due to ill health.

The people who come to Golden Oldies have a range of complex needs, including mobility difficulties, visual and sensory impairment, lung problems, and dementia. The focus is not on defining people by these disabilities, but rather on ensuring everyone is supported to participate in the activities and conversations.

Volunteers play a vital role in running the group. Angela, who leads the group, has been volunteering with Link Age Southwark for more than 20 years, and she is ably supported by two other volunteers, Liz and Flora. These three amazing women work all year round with members to plan activities in advance, help set up and clear up the space, serve tea and biscuits, and ensure everyone feels at home.

In our most recent evaluation of Golden Oldies, members said they look forward to coming to the group to have a chat, meet up with other people and get out of the house. One member said “It has helped my arthritis. I can walk better.” Another reported improved “ease of movement”. The volunteers running the group were described as “fantastic”, “all very nice” and “knowing us all and remembering what we like”.

“It has helped my arthritis. I can walk better”
Befriending – at the heart of what we do

Recent research suggests that befriending not only has a positive impact on the lives of older people, but also delivers important cost savings by helping to meet their health and social care needs.10

Link Age Southwark has been running a befriending service in Southwark for 26 years and this year we experienced more demand for this service than ever before, especially from older people who are housebound and living alone. We successfully matched 72 older people to a new volunteer befriender, bringing the total number of befriending relationships we supported to 207.

When an older person is referred to us, a member of our experienced staff team visits them at home for a face-to-face assessment to fully understand their needs. We then carefully match the older person to a vetted and trained friendly volunteer. The befriending volunteer visits the older person at home once a week for a chat, outings or focused activities like playing board games or reading the newspaper.

As we grow our befriending service to reach more people, we also want to ensure it remains of the highest possible quality. This year we introduced a new and improved approach to checking in regularly with both older people and their volunteer befrienders, to ensure we are doing all we can to ensure both sides remain happy and supported, and to maximise the chances of the friendship lasting for the long-term.

In this year’s annual survey of older people using our services, 90% told us they are either happy or very happy with their volunteer befriender. They also told us in their own words how much they enjoy the time spent together. Befriending is so much more than a service delivered by one person to another. Our volunteer befrienders tell us the experience often enriches their own life as much as that of the older person they visit each week. In this year’s volunteer survey, they told us in their own words about the benefits of being a Link Age Southwark befriender:

“Cheerful, lots of discussions, have a tea and chat, brings the outside in my house.”

“My weekly visits from your volunteer are great. She is a beautiful young lady and we have a great time over tea etc. Thank you so much.”

“My befriender is such a lovely person. She is so polite and friendly. I really enjoy her visits - she’s funny and very kind and patient. I really look forward to her visits.”

“I feel more engaged with the local community and enjoy having the chance to chat regularly with someone who is older than me and has a lot of interesting stories to tell!”

“You get a lot of it, laughter, loyalty, and memories”

Sidney and Cristina

“I take my hat off to Link Age Southwark” says Cristina’s daughter Marion, “They could really see the opportunity for mum to become a befriender. She did try and volunteer for someone else but they thought she was too old.”

Cristina and Sidney are a wonderful example of why you are certainly never too old to make new friends. Both in their nineties, they soon discovered that they had plenty in common, including both moving to Southwark a few years ago to live closer to their children.

Cristina was born in Italy and moved to England with her husband, a radar engineer in the army, when she was 21 years old. Sidney fought in the Second World War as a submariner in the Navy until he was 21 when he left to get married. Cristina and Sidney also lived in the same part of London when they were younger and so share many memories of the area from that time.

Over the last two years their friendship has become such a success that it has even extended to their children, Marion and John, and often all four of them will get together to socialise.

Cristina has always enjoyed volunteering and was keen to get involved with Link Age Southwark as an opportunity to meet new people when she moved to the area. During her visits with Sidney they have plenty to talk about and she has even helped encourage him to take short walks with her.

“At first he wouldn’t walk down to the gate. He said he can’t, but he could really,” she smiles “and now he takes me all the way down to the bus stop and puts me on the bus!”

Cita and Velma

These two ladies have an infectious zest for life. Their friendship was clearly always meant to be. Long before they made contact with Link Age Southwark they both attended the same primary school at different times when they were young girls growing up in Jamaica. Cita came to England in 1957 and Velma a few years later in 1961. London has been their home ever since and one where they have helped to raise three generations of their family, including children, grandchildren and more recently great grandchildren.

When Cita’s husband sadly passed away, she wanted the chance to meet new people, but having had two knee replacements over the years she sometimes struggles with her mobility and so she got in touch with Link Age Southwark to find out about joining our befriending scheme.

She was introduced to Velma, who used to work as a nurse and once she retired knew she wanted to give something back and become a volunteer befriender, a role which she thoroughly enjoys: “I love to go and see them because they really look forward to you coming. It’s so good to go out into the community and see people. People need people you know!”

It is clear that Cita and Velma really enjoy each other’s company and are very fond of each other.

There is plenty of chatting, laughing and joking during their visits and having Velma in her life allows Cita to maintain some of her independence for as long as she possibly can.
The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recently published new guidance on person-centred support for people with dementia.\(^\text{11}\) These guidelines stressed the importance of recognizing the person’s individuality and relationships and social contact for their wellbeing.

At Link Age Southwark over the last six years we have developed specialist expertise in providing exactly this sort of person-centred support for people with dementia. Our service is open to people living in the community who have a confirmed diagnosis of mild-moderate dementia, and to their carers.

We run three specialist groups for people with dementia and people with dementia are also welcome to attend many of our other groups. Our groups offer a range of physically and mentally stimulating activities that are proven to slow the progression of dementia and also provide a place where people can exchange practical tips on how to cope with memory loss. New friendships are forged and plenty of fun is had along the way.

We provide a door-to-door escorted transport service to support people with dementia to attend our groups, parties and outings. We also match volunteer befrienders to people living with dementia for weekly visits at the person’s home for conversation and other activities chosen by the person with dementia, from walks to board games and more.

Our service is delivered by a small but dedicated staff team who are skilled and experienced at supporting people with dementia. They visit individuals and their carers at home to understand their needs and capabilities before connecting them to our services and others available locally. They also

Supporting people to live well with dementia

“I look positively to life and I’m more confident”

“Family knows that I am with people who understand my needs, who can be patient and help keep me safe.”
remain in touch afterwards to ensure the person continues to benefit from our service, and support them and their carers to access new services as their dementia progresses.

This year, we supported 114 older people living with dementia. 43 of them enjoyed weekly visits at home from a volunteer befriender. 36 of them attended our exercise and activity groups, including our three specialist groups for people with dementia. Others received our newsletters and attended our parties and outings.

We know our dementia service is having a positive impact on the lives of people with dementia who are living in our local community. In this year’s annual survey of people using our services, 90% of the people with a dementia diagnosis said they feel more positive and 89% of them said they feel less lonely as a result of the services they are receiving from Link Age Southwark.

Link Age Southwark is a founder member of the Southwark Dementia Action Alliance in which we play an active role in working to make Southwark a dementia-friendly borough. We also host regular Dementia Friends sessions in partnership with Alzheimer’s Society to promote awareness and understanding of dementia. This year our sessions resulted in 18 members of the local community becoming Dementia Friends.

“It is an essential service which enables me to continue living at home in familiar surroundings.”

Musical Memories Group at Lime Tree House
In May 2018 we launched our new weekly singing group that particularly welcomes people living with all forms of dementia. Our experienced tutor leads the singing which includes warm-up exercises, rounds, themed sessions and requests from our varied repertoire of songs. The group is very popular, as shown by the large numbers attending each week. Everybody leaves with an increased sense of wellbeing and a smile!

Peer Activity Group at St Barnabas Church
This sociable group meets fortnightly for friendship, support and tailored activities that are creative and stimulating.

This year’s activities have included: a collaboration with a theatre company culminating in the performance of 4 short plays at a local theatre, one of which was inspired by our group; intergenerational sessions with children from local schools playing traditional and modern games with young and old teaching one another; a performance from a children’s choir; a community carol event at a local theatre; a reminiscence session and creative and storytelling workshops led by two local art galleries.

Grow Group at Walworth Garden
This year we have been taking a small group of people with dementia along to a local community-based garden to enjoy outdoor nature activities as part of a therapeutic social horticultural project. It has proved both enjoyable and beneficial to their wellbeing.

Reading Group at Dulwich Library
In this fortnightly group our members take turns to read or just listen to a variety of short stories and poetry covering many themes which appeal to all tastes. Interesting conversations often result with members sharing life experiences amongst the group.

11Dementia: Assessment, management and support for people living with dementia and their carers (NICE Guideline 97).
Jon first heard about befriending through a friend who was already a volunteer befriender and recommended the experience to him as both fun and rewarding. He is originally from Wolverhampton but has lived in London for eleven years and now works in the charity sector.

After completing his volunteer induction, Jon was introduced to Graham and they have been meeting weekly for over a year. They make a lively pair and enjoy lots of banter, as well as the occasional outing to the pub for a coffee or for a walk, but their big project is Graham’s garden, which they are clearing together.

“It’s great fun visiting Graham”, says Jon. “I enjoy our chats and I love gardening so it is a pleasure to work with Graham on this”.

Graham has led a rich and varied life, having worked as a bricklayer and locomotive engineer, and spent time in Australia before settling back in Southwark. He has exciting stories to tell about growing up on a farm in Zambia, including racing a lioness on his bicycle in the bush and hand-rearing two lion cubs as pets. They also love to talk about what is going on in the world and about family.

As well as his visits from Jon, Graham also comes to Link Age Southwark’s Peer Activity Group for people with dementia and to our parties. He says this “gets me out and about, being sociable meeting other people, something I really needed after retiring”.

In addition to visiting Graham, Jon has generously volunteered to do gardening for other people supported by Link Age Southwark. When the garden is cleared, Jon and Graham plan to plant flowers there, so Graham can enjoy sitting outside and relaxing.
Link Age Southwark is committed to working in close partnership with others to make Southwark a place where older people and people living with dementia can thrive. We work with local businesses, charities, community groups, housing providers, the NHS and Southwark Council whenever we have the opportunity to make more of a difference together.

We are a proud member of COPSINS, the Consortium of Providers of Older People’s Services in Southwark. We have been working with our COPSINS partners – currently Age UK Lewisham and Southwark, Blackfriars Settlement, Southwark Carers, Southwark Pensioners Centre and Time and Talents – since 2012. Together, we deliver high quality services, sharing expertise and best practice, and ensuring that we collectively have the best possible impact on the lives of local older people.

We are also a member of the Campaign to End Loneliness, a nationwide network of organisations and people working together to ensure that loneliness is acted upon as a public health priority.

We are incredibly grateful to our network of local businesses who have partnered with us through our Business Patrons Scheme, supporting our work through donations and in-kind contributions, and helping us to create age-friendly local communities where older people can thrive.

Connecting with our community in 2019!

With support from our community partners, we organised some fabulous parties and outings for Southwark’s older residents this year.

Our parties included a 25th birthday party to celebrate a quarter of a century of Link Age Southwark at St Faith’s Church, a Christmas Party at St Mary’s Church, and Christmas lunches at the East Dulwich Tavern, Eastern Cuisine, and the Prince Regent, hosted by Heineken Brewing Good Cheer.

We arranged eleven outings for older people. These were to the Clink Restaurant in Brixton Prison, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Dulwich Park, East Dulwich Picturehouse, Southwark Playhouse, and to the National Maritime Museum supported by volunteers from Marks & Spencer, Lordship Lane.

A full list of all the individuals and organisations who have supported our work this year is given at the end of this Impact Report. Thank you so much for your generosity!
Gentle exercise groups

Our gentle exercise groups are extremely popular with older people in Southwark, though younger visitors to the groups have been known to break out in a sweat and complain that the ‘gentle’ label is rather misleading!

Two of these groups were started in 2016 and meet regularly in local sheltered housing units, Jack Jones House and Harry Lamborn House. Each has around 12 older members. Some live in the sheltered housing and others either travel independently to the group or are transported door-to-door by our volunteer drivers.

Both groups are led by Shakila, a professional exercise tutor. In our most recent evaluations, group members told us “she’s really helpful”, “jovial” and “very excellent”. Shakila takes care to advise each older person on how to adapt the exercises to their own health conditions, while also ensuring everyone participates to the best of their abilities.

Our volunteers who support these groups also received plenty of positive praise in the evaluations. Cass, our volunteer at the Harry Lamborn group, knocks on the doors of residents to encourage them to attend and helps them to and from the room.

Paula volunteers at the Jack Jones group and knows every single member personally. As well as helping to set up and clear up the room, she keeps everyone hydrated with water, and ensures new members receive the warmest of welcomes.

Older people reported significant improvements to their health and wellbeing as a result of attending these groups. They spoke of feeling “free”, “relaxed”, “livened and loosened up”. One person told us “If I don’t come, I am sitting doing nothing”. Group members with arthritis said “the exercise is doing me good” and “it helps my aches and pains”. One member said “I come for help with my balance” and another reported “sleeping better” as a result of the group.
At Link Age Southwark, our volunteers are central to achieving our charity’s mission of supporting older people to thrive in later life. Our fantastic team of volunteers generously give up their time to help combat isolation and loneliness amongst older people by providing one-to-one support, helping at our groups, ensuring our community fundraising goes from strength to strength, and so much more.

Our surveys and group evaluations sing the praises of all our volunteers: our group volunteers for their dedication and care; our befrienders for providing a social boost in the homes of people who cannot get out into their community; and our volunteer drivers for providing that vital link from home to being socially active at our groups.

This year, we supported 451 volunteers. Over 200 of them were befrienders making weekly visits to an older person at home. 55 volunteers helped to run our regular social groups. Others did volunteer driving, helped in the office, organised fundraising events and represented us at community events. 37 volunteers carried out gardening and odd job tasks for older people.

Together, our volunteers gave 23,887 hours of their time, worth in excess of £250,000, when calculated using the London Living Wage rate of £10.55 per hour.

The vital work of our volunteers has an enormous and positive impact not only on the lives of older people, but also on their own lives.

**Our fantastic volunteers**

96% of volunteers recommend volunteering with Link Age Southwark

92% feel they make a positive contribution to their local community

92% are more aware of issues facing older people

88% said volunteering is good for their own wellbeing

79% are more confident in supporting older people

“Fantastic, gentle, kind and thoughtful”

“They always try and help if you need anything”

“They put a lot of thought into planning what we do”
Norma is one of our longest serving volunteers and has been supporting older people through Link Age Southwark for more than fifteen years.

When she retired from nursing in 2004 she was keen to keep herself busy and heard an appeal from the charity for volunteers at her local church. She has befriended many different older people over the years so it is no surprise to hear her say that she has forged some wonderful friendships, not just with older people but often with their families as well.

“They all have such different personalities and it was so nice to talk to them. I loved them all and we got really close”.

The two ladies Norma is currently befriending both have dementia. Norma is a fantastic addition to their support network of carers and family members. She visits them both every Monday and hopes that they enjoy the visits as much as she does.

“You become a good friend and they talk to you about their life and you don’t pass judgement but you might sometimes give a little bit of advice”.

She genuinely loves meeting and talking to people and intends to carry on befriending for as long as she possibly can. She is even considering taking on a third friendship if she can manage it.

“I have such a laugh and it often reminds me to be very grateful for what I have got. So many people are lonely but we just don’t know about it.”
We’re always looking for people to help us by joining our diverse and dedicated team of volunteers from across Southwark and beyond. By volunteering your talents you will enrich your life and the lives of older people in your community. Everyone has something to offer. Our team will match your skills, train and support you in any of the following roles:

**Befriending** – regular visits to an older person at home

**Driving** – helping older people get out and about to maintain a social life in the wider community

**Helping at groups** – making refreshments, running activities, and enjoying the company

**Odd jobs** – assisting with light practical tasks e.g. changing a light bulb or hanging a picture

**Gardening** – helping with tidying and other light gardening

**Fundraising** – leading or helping at our fundraising events

**Admin support** – regular or ad hoc help in our office

**Remote working** – writing funding bids or case studies, delivering training, designing publications, writing copy, photography and illustration. Whatever your skills, we’d love to hear from you!

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**What volunteers say about volunteering with Link Age Southwark:**

**“Thank you for all that you do and for giving me the opportunity to be a part of something amazing.”**

**“I feel proud to be part of the Southwark community, and to do something that makes me feel I am giving back.”**

**“Wonderful to meet so many varied people and share in their life experiences.”**

**“I have thoroughly enjoyed my time volunteering at the group. It has been amazing to meet so many new faces and spend time with everyone! Thank you so much for the opportunity.”**

**“Makes me feel I’m being useful”**

**“It means I get to spend time with people I wouldn’t ordinarily meet.”**

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**Join us & make a difference**
Jonathan

Originally from Sutton Coldfield, Jonathan has lived in Southwark for 40 years now and definitely sees London as his home. He has done lots of different volunteering roles over the years, including working with a local homeless shelter, a community nursery and victim support so when he retired three years ago and came across Link Age Southwark he thought it looked like a great idea and a very valuable service.

“Although London is such a lively, vibrant place anyone can feel alone here and I was conscious that one day I might well need their support!”

He meets once a week with an older gentleman who loves playing board games. Initially they played draughts “but he wiped the floor with me!” laughs Jonathan, so they have since switched to Scrabble and it has been a great success. “I thought I might need to step back and not be too competitive but I really don’t need to, very often he beats me!”

Over the last two years he has definitely seen the relationship grow and it is clear that he finds befriending very rewarding. He is full of praise for Link Age Southwark and has also volunteered at local community events to help spread the word about their work. “I find it’s a very well run charity. They are very well organised and very good at keeping us in touch and involving us in all sorts of ways and I think that’s why it is such a success.”

“Although London is such a lively, vibrant place anyone can feel alone here and I was conscious that one day I might well need their support!”
Link Age Southwark has a strong focus on value for money. As a local charity, we recognise the value of every penny that is donated and every hour of volunteer time that is contributed to support older people in our local community. Our income for the financial year ending 31 March 2019 was £533,488, an increase of £124,417 on the previous year. This large increase was mainly due to funds raised towards our new offices refurbishment project and one-off fundraising events held to celebrate our charity’s 25th birthday, especially our Gala Dinner.

We were fortunate to receive very strong support again from the local community including individual donors, Patrons and Business Patrons. Our community fundraising volunteers also had their best year yet, celebrating our 25th birthday through cake sales, concerts, beer tasteings, parties, and the Big Give Christmas appeal.

Our income also included substantial grants from funders including the London Borough of Southwark, and the first instalment of a five-year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund (formerly Big Lottery Fund) for our dementia service.

With careful budgeting, we were able to use these funds to complete our new office refurbishment and continue growing our services for older people in Southwark.

Our total expenditure for the year was £449,346, an increase of £88,518 on the previous year. This increase was mainly due to creating a new post on our small staff team to support the expansion of our dementia service, professional services and other preparations for our new office refurbishment, and the increased costs of tutors and transport for our social groups for older people.
Income and Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Financial year ending 31/3/18</th>
<th>Financial year ending 31/3/19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>£409,071</td>
<td>£533,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>£360,828</td>
<td>£449,346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are planning a budget with a deficit of £10,500 for the financial year 2019/20 because our annual grant from the Council is at risk due to being replaced with the opportunity to bid competitively for a five-year contract to run an older persons’ services hub. We are submitting a joint bid with other charities in the COPSINS consortium to win this contract.

Our charity remains focused on building a fully diversified funding base by securing grants from a range of trusts and foundations, growing our individual donor and Patrons schemes, increasing our community fundraising income, and seeking continued statutory funding from the London Borough of Southwark.

How we raised it

- Community fundraising events: £88,490 (17%)
- Donations and other voluntary income: £110,402 (21%)
- Grant income: £210,387 (39%)
- Funding from Southwark Council: £123,250 (23%)
- Bank interest: £959 (less than 1%)

Total: £533,488

How we spent it

- Older people’s services: £414,030 (92%)
- Fundraising: £35,316 (8%)
- Total: £449,346

12 Income by source 2018/19.
13 Expenditure by category 2018/19.
Thank you

To our funders

The Arthur Foundation
Bankside, Borough and Walworth Community Council
Bring Joy Foundation
Camberwell Community Council
The Clothworkers’ Foundation
The Drapers’ Charitable Fund
The Dulwich Almshouse Charity
Dulwich Community Council
East End Community Foundation
The Elizabeth and Prince Zaigar Trust
Garfield Weston
The Goldsmiths’ Company
Good Things Foundation
The Grocers’ Company
The Henry Smith Charity
The John Horseman Trust
The London Borough of Southwark
London Community Foundation
The Mercers’ Company
The Merchant Taylors’ Company
The National Lottery Community Fund
The Northwick Trust
Peckham Community Fund
Peckham and Nunhead Community Council
Peckham Settlement
Postcode Support Trust
Southwark Charities
St George the Martyr Charity
The Topinambour Trust
United St Saviour’s Charity
The Wakefield & Tetley Trust
The Worshipful Company of Actuaries Charity

To our Business Patrons

D&T Operations
Home Instead Senior Care
Kerry Taylor Auctions
Lightbox
Michael O’Mara Books
Myla & Davis
SE Magazines
Southwark Brewing Company
Suzanne James
WaterBear Design
And to all our business patrons who wish to remain anonymous

To our Patrons

Noel & Caroline Annesley
John Baldwin & Barbara Kolator
Sarah Banner
Piers Barclay
Vivian Bazalgette
Sir David Beamish
Ailsa Brown
Jean Cary-Elwes
Bob & Myra Chapman
Pat Cox
Linda Craig
Andrew Cullen
Neil Ellis & Stephen Henden
Juanita Fan
Brian & Penelope Foord
Brian & Genevieve Gosschalk
Caroline Havers
Pippa Hawkesford
Olivia Holmes
Charmian & Timothy Hornsby C.B.E
Jean Howell
Rebecca Howell
James Hughes
James Jarrett & Alan Montgomery
Aidan Jones
Chris & Charlotte King
Morton & Dianne Lim
Michael & Susan Merifield
Nicholas & Lindsay Merriman
Victoria Moore-Gillon
Ian Morgan
Lesley O’Mara
Jane Onslow
Katherine Opie-Smith
Robin & Amanda Osmond
Anne Parker
Michelle Pearce
Jeremy & Jackie Prescott
Charles & Celia Randell
Barbara Richardson
Jenny Salmon
Katharine St.John-Brooks
Susan Sternglass Noble
Dame Valerie Strachan
Anne Sullivan
Hugh & Diane Taylor
Philippa Tudor
Tony & Sue Wadsworth
Helen Watson
Andrew & Catrin Waugh
Tom & Brenda Wells
John & Barbara Wheen
Simon White
And to all our patrons who wish to remain anonymous

To our Ambassadors
Jenny Eclair
Iain & Charlotte Glen
Robert Glenister & Celia de Wolff
Helen Hayes MP
Sally-Anne Huang
Dr. Rosemary Leonard
Lady Katya Lester
Jane Lyons
Lesley Sharp
Angela Spence
Dr Joseph Spence
Pip Torrens
Lord Andrew Turnbull
Edmund de Waal

To our partners and supporters
Abbeyfield House, Herne Hill
Age UK Lewisham & Southwark
Alleyn’s Head Pub
Alleyn Park Garden Centre
Alleyn’s School
Alisha Rouse
Amott Baptist Church
Anne Marie Briscombe
The Alzheimer’s Society
Bell House
Blackfriars Settlement
Bluebird Care
Bob’s Wines
Bridget Furst
The Charter School, East Dulwich
The Charter School, North Dulwich
Chris Kent
Clare Hanson
The Co-op Food Lordship Lane
The Co-op Funeral Care
Community Southwark
The Crown & Greyhound Pub
Deborah Roslund
Derek Fordham
The Deptford Wives
D’Eynsford Sheltered Housing
The Dot Collective
Dulwich College
The Dulwich Festival
Dulwich Luncheon Club
Dulwich Picture Gallery
The Dulwich Society
The East Dulwich Tavern
Eastern Cuisine, Gipsy Hill
Elaine Broadbent
Emily Hinchcliffe
Eva Arnold at digital-roots.co.uk
The Fox on the Hill Pub
Friends of Brunswick Park
GoodGym
The Grange Pub
Harry Lamborn House
Heineken Brewing Good Cheer
Herne Hill Forum
Hilary Sutcliffe
Jack Jones House
James Allen’s Girls School
James Beedle
Jeremy Gilliard
Jo Baddeley
John & Pat Wright
Juanita Fan
Just Williams
Karen Reys
KETRA (Kingswood Estate Tenants and Residents Association)
King Charles Court
Kingswood House
Kirsty Gould
Lesley Leale Green
Lew Evans House
Lime Tree House
The Lordship Pub
Love My Human, Chelsea
Majestic Wine, West Dulwich
Manuel’s Italian Restaurant
Marks & Spencer, Lordship Lane
Martha Hiles & Michael Brooke, Smith and Brooke Architects
Master of Malt
Oliver Bonas
Paxton Green Surgery
Peabody Housing
Pearspring, East Dulwich
The Pee Gees
Pembroke House
Polly Birrane
Poor Michelle
Postcode Support Trust
The Prince Regent Pub
The Proud Sow
The Railway Tavern
The Real Greek, Dulwich Village
Ristorante Olivelli, Dulwich
Roast Restaurant
Roberta Downey
Rocca, Dulwich Village
Sally Bridgeland
Samantha Haigh
Shotley Crue
The South Circular Orchestra
South London Gallery
South London Music
Southwark Carers
Southwark Cathedral
Southwark Library Services
Southwark Pensioners Centre
Spinach Restaurant
St Barnabas Church, Dulwich
St George the Martyr
St James’ Cloister
St Mary’s Church, Nunhead
St Philips Church, Avondale Square
St Stephen’s Church, Dulwich
Stephen Henden & Neil Ellis
Sue Marsh
Sue Wadsworth
Sweaty Betty
Tesco Southwark
Time and Talents
The Trills
Dulwich Grove United Reformed Church
Walworth Garden
Willis B Salons
Yang-May Ooi
Yogarise Peckham
People

President
Katharine St. John-Brooks

Trustees
(as of 1 September 2018)
Caroline Havers (Chair)
Adrian Greenwood (Deputy Chair and Company Secretary)
Tim Roberts (Treasurer)
Tim Devine
Juanita Fan
Rebecca Kendall
Nicholas Merriman
Lesley O’Mara
Susan Sternglass Noble
Rebecca Torry
Mary Woodman

Staff Team
(as of 1 September 2018)
Ruth Driscoll – Director
Jennie Linnett – Senior Volunteer Coordinator
Hilary Payne – Senior Service Coordinator
Melissa Kent – Volunteer Coordinator
Gemma Kern – Service Coordinator
Sue Yeomans – Service Coordinator
Saira Quli – Dementia Service Coordinator
Nicky Rothwell – Service Coordinator
Robert Larkin-Frost – Operations Coordinator
Cynan Williams – Volunteering & Services Officer
Laura Fitzpatrick – Fundraising & Marketing Officer
Lucilla Graham – Assistant to the Director
Louise Lear – Assistant to the Director (freelance)
Parisa Herbert – Community Outreach Worker (freelance)
Pamela Saunders – Bookkeeper (freelance)
Rebekah Kelly – Dementia Service Assistant (freelance)
Anne Williams – Dementia Service Assistant (freelance)

Thank you to
All our tutors, to our volunteer drivers, administrators, office support, befrienders, gardeners, fundraisers, DIY-ers, designers, donors, and to the older people of Southwark for making this such a wonderful place to live!
For 26 years, we have been providing friendly volunteer support to older people across Southwark. We reduce loneliness and isolation, improve health and wellbeing, and support people to live independently for as long as possible. Our friendly and diverse volunteers connect communities in ways that enable older people and people with dementia to thrive in later life.

We are so grateful to our volunteers, Polly Birrane who produced the case studies and individual portraits, and Anne Marie Briscombe who took the photographs of our group. We also want to thank Janet Lowe and Mike Wright at D&T Operations for their pro bono expertise in measuring the impact of our work independently.

www.linkagesouthwark.org
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Registered Company No 05189161

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