

## **ELDERLY BEFRIENDING AGM REPORT - 2011**

The Elderly Befriending project aims to reduce social isolation in older people by helping them to form new relationships, which helps boost self-esteem and confidence. Having a friend visit regularly can help combat loneliness and the opportunity to take part in the local community, with the help and support of a friend, has positive effects on the mental and physical wellbeing of the individual.

We continue to receive referrals from various sources for elderly people in need of this service. We have had requests for help as far afield as St Andrews and Rosyth and although we are unable to help, we do pass on any information or details of other agencies who may be able to. However, as there is a lack of befriending projects in Fife, it is evident that there is a need for our service. We provide our core one to one service, matching a befriender and befriended within the Lochgelly area. Our plan is to now expand into the wider Cowdenbeath locality area and we are actively looking for funding for the longer term, going into 2012 and beyond.



Our social events continue to be a big part of the Elderly Befriending project as it offers the opportunity for our elderly to socialise both with their peer group and volunteers. Due to funding constraints, we had to curtail the social aspect for a short time, however we have tried a variety of different events including traditional tea dances, a trip to Pettycur Bay for coffee, lunch at Lochgelly golf club and our most recent 'event' was a fundraising coffee morning in Lochgelly. This gave us the chance to raise money and our profile along with providing a venue to bring the community together. It was a very successful and well attended event and our plan is to hold two fundraisers per year, in spring time and the autumn. The generosity of local businesses was fantastic as they donated raffle prizes ranging from family tickets for Vane Farm to a steak pie at Fife butchers! We had a great response to the tombola and home baking. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who contributed and to those who helped on the day and came to support us.

Our intergenerational work continues to run successfully and has been a lot of fun. The children are so enthusiastic, really getting involved in the projects and asking lots of questions. They mix well with the older people and with each other. I personally find these really enjoyable as it gives our volunteers and myself the chance to work with young people as well. Their enthusiasm is infectious and our elderly always enjoy spending time with them and trying out new things. We have had various intergenerational events including a visit to Kirkcaldy museum to reminisce and compare toys that were played

with many years ago to the more modern toys. We all had a chance to play with the wooden toys and have a laugh. It was surprising how many 'old fashioned' toys are still in use today, albeit in plastic! Some other experiences we have shared are a wii playing afternoon, traditional dancing and arts and crafts. It is a pleasure to hear them all saying goodbye at the end of the day as if they are old friends!



We would not exist without our volunteers and they continue to give their time every week to visit their befriender and provide this much needed service. They also continue to support me and provide help whenever it is required, for example at intergenerational events and the coffee morning. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their time and enthusiasm, but also for being so supportive of our work at TIBAL.

When someone, who has not been out of their house for 2 years (except for hospital appointment's) thanks you for taking them out for a few hours, then we have been successful. Some of our elderly people may not see anyone, apart from carers for days at a time, but if they know that they have a visitor every single week who chooses to be there and spend time chatting, then it makes it all worthwhile. One of our ladies commented about her volunteer, "I don't know what I would do without her." She would manage to cope, but she really looks forward to that weekly visit to chat to a friend. That makes this project so worthwhile and enjoyable to run.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the project: staff, volunteers and committee members. Thank you to our funders who continue to support us and all the organisations and individuals who provide support and advice.

Suzanne Wight  
Elderly Befriending Development Manager