



befriended

A quarterly newsletter from the heart of Befriended

Registered Charity no. 1175623

Spring 2026



Gail's Gossip

*Hi there,
I really do hope this newsletter finds you well.
I am writing to you from my new desk in our office at the Befriended HUB in Ditchling, with the hubbub of people chattering, laughing and playing games in the background - a special moment!
Along with the HUB, we have given our newsletter a freshen up, it will now be quarterly, still full of stories, information and news.*

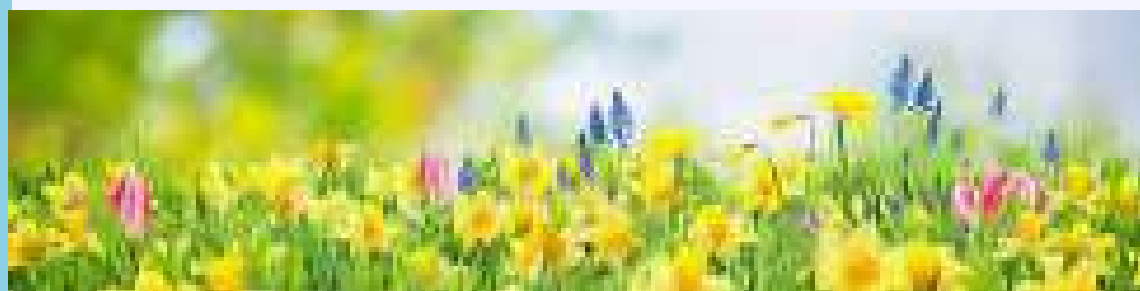
*A very special welcome to you if you are new to Befriended. Thank you for being part of our community,
God bless you
Gail x*

Spring has sprung

The winter may have felt long and dreary for you but spring is now here. The longer days, some warmth and sunshine are on their way.

We have a spring in our step as we step into a new chapter in Befriended. In this, our new quarterly newsletter, we have stories to tell of **new volunteers**, a thank you for two special volunteers, and the impact one of our volunteers has made on Befriended.

It is wonderful to be part of a **community** of people in Ditchling, we have been given a very warm, and friendly welcome. We have met lots of people already and we look forward to getting to know more. Whenever the flag is out - someone is home so you can pop in for a cuppa and chat. Our programme of activities across Sussex has grown, there is so much we have to offer both throughout the week and special occasions. In May we are looking forward to our official launch at Befriended HUB and our first Befriended Break - taking 50 Befriended friends on holiday to the Isle of Wight - WOO HOO



Volunteer Spotlight

Cathy Middleton
David Armstrong

Cathy and David are very much looking forward to joining Befriended as volunteers and will be helping at the new Café Neuro in Ditchling which opens on Monday 2 March 2026

Cathy

I started nursing in 1975, qualified as an enrolled nurse in 1977 then qualified as a staff nurse in 1998. I've mostly worked in hospitals, but when I ventured into the community in 2010 as a sister, I found I enjoyed the palliative care side of my job. I then moved to hospice work in the Hospice at Home team in the community which I really loved. Knowing I could support a patient, their loved ones and their carers in their own home felt such a privilege. Treating them with compassion, empathy, kindness and dignity felt very rewarding although sad at times.

I retired after 50 years of nursing in December last year and already knew I wanted to volunteer for something. I have known Gail for quite a few years now and about 3 years ago at a village fair she handed me a little card about Befriended which I kept. I found out some more information about Befriended and applied to join the team.

After raising a family and becoming a grandma which I love I'd like to try and make a difference in the community. Loneliness can be so isolating, debilitating and distressing. I can be quite a chatter box but I'm also good at listening and I'm a very patient person and will help anyone I'm able to.

David

I have worked in Local Government in Belfast for over forty years in Administration, Payroll and Human Resources. After taking retirement I moved to Brighton around four years ago to see my grand children growing up and to help with grand parent duties. I met Cathy just over two years ago and as a couple we decided that volunteering would give us an opportunity to strengthen our relationship and spend time together outside of the daily home routine which hopefully will provide new opportunities and experiences to enrich our relationship moving forward. This will also offer a renewed sense of purpose in our retirement by helping in the community. Volunteering in retirement has offered us as a retired couple a unique opportunity to transition from the workplace and so strengthening our relationship and individual wellbeing.



The joy of being a volunteer

Graham Childs



Never did I imagine attending a bereavement course changing my life for the better. Last year I was in a very sad place having lost three close members of my family including my wife Rose. I met Gail and Sally through Compassionate Conversations course and it was wonderful. I was able to talk and be set free from pain, guilt, loss and grief.

BUT then my life became full of purpose. Befriended wanted to take on a disused chapel and make into a HUB but they needed a lot of work done. I offered my skills, knowledge and time and it has filled my life with joy. I cannot wait to get to the HUB each day and contribute to the wonderful work Befriended does. Befriended, Gail and Sally have changed my life!

New local Volunteer

Louise Evatt

I was on a dog walk and wandered past the Befriended HUB and was drawn to the colourful banner and seeing the word Befriended and decided to go and ask if they were looking for volunteers. I was so delighted that they said yes, I was happy for the rest of the day and it has just got better and better.

I have since found out more and more about Befriended and it is astounding. Every town and village needs a Befriended. There are so many lonely people and something like this, with the drive and passion that Befriended has, makes all the difference.

I and so many people living in the village of Ditchling are thrilled and excited that Befriended has come to be part of our community.

As a volunteer I am really looking forward to helping at your events and activities, helping with PR, hosting and generally helping wherever I can. I want to learn and piggy back on the back of the incredible work that you have done Gail, it is so inspiring!

Having met the team, some of the clients and other volunteers - everyone is so nice, kind, thoughtful but also fun. I can see my life being so enriched through helping at Befriended. I am looking forward to experiencing one of their tea parties and hope we can have our own one in the village soon.



The reward of being a Befriended volunteer



Befriended has been honoured and rewarded for their voluntary commitment and impact to the community. As a way of saying thank you an invitation has been given to attend a [Buckingham Palace Garden Party](#) in May. As a way of recognising and showing our thanks, this invitation has been awarded to two exceptional, valuable and committed Befriended volunteers - David Chewter and Mary Cox.

Dave is a trustee for Befriended but he is also a very hard working and generous volunteer. He has given hours of hard work towards the renovation of the HUB, he has hosted the vintage day at his farm and has offered to do so again this year. Dave attends many of our tea parties as well as our special occasion events.

Mary, who is an absolute bundle of energy for a 79 year old, helps with the catering at all of our tea parties, she makes well over 300 scones a month and countless numbers of sandwiches. Mary is always willing to help at Befriended activities such as holiday at home and outings, she also fundraises for Befriended in hosting 'Open Gardens' in her village, providing delicious lunches.

Mary said "Oh my goodness that is wonderful, I cannot wait to have a look around the royal gardens"

Dave said "I am so honoured to represent Befriended, thank you for asking me, I am so looking forward to it"



Sally's Snippets

Spring brings new growth, fresh energy and plenty of exciting activities at The Hub! As the days get brighter, we're delighted to share that we'll be continuing our popular activities — Café Neuro, Choir, and Balance — in Burgess Hill, and we'll also be replicating these at The Hub.

In addition, Board Games and our Bereavement Support Group will now be based at The Hub, offering even more opportunities for connection, friendship and support.

We are all so excited about our upcoming Befriended Break to the Isle of Wight in May, where we are sure many happy memories will be made!

I'm also very pleased to share that I now have the privilege of looking after our wonderful Befriended volunteers. Over the next few months, we'll be holding training events to support and strengthen this amazing team.

Our volunteers are truly at the heart of Befriended. The incredible gift of time, kindness, and compassion they give makes the charity what it is today — and we couldn't do it without them.

Cinnamon Network

Gail and Sally had three wonderful days at the incubator residential, spending time with other pioneers of social action projects. Three days to learn, listen, apply and network with inspirational people. Befriended will bear the fruit of our time away in the coming weeks, months and years.

We were given an award for the Outstanding Impact of Compassionate Conversations



Story from one of our 'friends'

"This prayer thing works!"

We recently attended a tea party where Gail gave out beautiful prayer cards to each one of us, encouraging us to write prayer requests.

I am not religious and do not attend Church but have the utmost respect for Gail, her faith, her team and all they do through Befriended. The day after the tea party I found a lump in my breast and was instantly fearful that the breast cancer I had 12 years ago had returned. For the first time in my life I prayed, I prayed every day, all day. A week later I had an appointment with a consultant and after numerous tests and investigations, I was told all was ok. I believe God heard my prayers, I am so thankful to God and Gail for answering my prayers, I rang and told Gail and asked if it was ok for me to continue saying my prayers, to which Gail said 'Absolutely'.



befriended
be thankful

Prayer is the heartbeat of Befriended

Join us to give thanks and pray for the people and partnerships of Befriended

"I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."
Psalm 121

Befriended Hub, 20 South Street, Ditchling, BN6 8UQ

0300 772 7703
www.befriended.org

Our next prayer meeting is April 22nd 7.30pm. all are welcome

An explanation of some of our activities

Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy is all about relationships - relationship with the care home, with the residents, the staff, the families and with God.

We visit care homes to spend unhurried time with residents, listening to their stories, offering spiritual support, sharing moments of reflection and simply being a friendly face. For many residents who don't have many visitors, this can be a real highlight.

Chaplaincy brings comfort, joy, reassurance, and encouragement. Whether through prayer, singing, conversation, or a friendly chat over a cup of tea, we aim to create space where each person feels heard and valued.

We love chaplaincy, because it's a privilege to walk alongside people in this season of their lives. The wisdom, humour, honesty and resilience we encounter in care homes constantly inspire us. It's never "just a visit" — it's a friendship and friendship is at the heart of everything we do and the heart of God.

We currently offer chaplaincy at Furzefield - Sayers Common, Heath Court, Wellington House, Bletchingly, Adelaide - Haywards Heath and Keymer Hall - Burgess Hill.

Bringing church to you
faith, hope and love for later life

befriended
chaplaincy



befriended

"Gail is truly treasured in our local community for the incredible work she does supporting and connecting people. Her warmth, compassion and positivity shine through everything she does — and we feel incredibly lucky to have her with us so regularly."

The chaplaincy gatherings are open, welcoming and filled with kindness — a lovely opportunity to pause, reflect and share special moments together.

Caring for heads and hearts – a family affair

Let me introduce my beautiful daughter - Sarah, she is the resident hairdresser at Keymer Hall and I am the resident Anna Chaplain, so together we care for heads and hearts.

It is so wonderful for us both to be supporting the management, staff, and carers in providing exceptional love and care for all the residents at Keymer Hall.

You are always welcome to pop in to the Bistro at Keymer Hall, enjoy a drink and someone will always be willing and available to chat with you, and if it is a Tuesday come and say hi to Sarah or I.



Time to chat

Safe Space

Welcoming

befriended

Cafe Neuro

A drop in cafe offering support, signposting and a listening ear for caregivers and those they care for, living with dementia and other neurocognitive disorders.

Activities



Refreshments



Signposting



EVERY Monday morning 10:30 am- 12:00pm
Befriended HUB, South Street, Ditchling

*except bank holidays

For more information contact office@befriended.org
www.befriended.org 0300 772 7703



If you are caring for a loved one, supporting a friend or neighbour, or living with memory loss, recovering from a stroke, managing Parkinson's, or facing any condition that affects your independence — Cafe Neuro is a place where you will be warmly welcomed.

The kettle is always on, the coffee is brewing, and there are cakes and pastries to enjoy. More than that, it's a space where you can relax, share honestly, and spend time with others who truly understand.

Our amazing team of volunteers are trained, experienced, and knowledgeable. They will listen — and listen some more. They're also happy to help with practical matters, whether that's signposting you to further support, assisting with form filling, or making sure you're receiving all the benefits you're entitled to.

We meet every Monday morning from 10.30am–12pm (except Bank Holidays) at: The Salvation Army, Burgess Hill or The Befriended Hub, Ditchling

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

“Cafe Neuro is a life line for us, we look forward to every Monday morning where we know we are welcome” S

bit's and Pc's

written by Stuart Millar

Befriended will be launching bit's and PC's at the Hub in March 2026, but what is that all about ... ??

Why are computers so complicated?, maybe you think an iPad is an 🤖 the amount of RAM in your computer means you should count 🐣, or maybe you just have some simple issue, question or problem with your phone or laptop or other IT device.

Is your laptop running slower then it used to?

How do you keep a note and organise important web pages ?

Why do I keep getting annoying messages saying my computer needs something ? .. does it ?

Is Spam just a cold meat or what you can do about annoying emails you don't want ?

Has a Nigerian King really offered you a million pounds ?

What is kept in your downloads folder ? (I have a what folder ??)

Why are computers and phones so complicated (sorry can't help with that one !)

Come along on a Wednesday morning to the Hub and see if I can help you with any gadget / IT issues or questions. Even if I can't, I may be able to find out for you as you have a cup of tea p.s. sorry but I cannot support or help with social media issues. I am convinced that TikTok is just the noise my 🕒 makes but maybe I can help with some other bits and pieces.

befriended


bit's and PC's

(bits and pieces)

Wednesday mornings 10-12


at Befriended HUB

20, South Street, Ditchling, BN6 8UQ



Refreshments available

www.befriended.org
0300 7727703
Charity No. 1175623



Whats next?

Befriended Trustees

Befriended has eight trustees and we meet bi monthly to pray, discuss and oversee all of the governance of running Befriended Charity.

We are so grateful for all the work that Gail our CEO does (with the incredible support of Stuart), she is an inspiration to us all and we do all we can to support and encourage her in her vision and passion while at the same time ensuring all the necessary policies, procedures and practices are in place.

Once a year we meet to discuss a strategy for the next year, 3 years and 5 years and put a plan in place to work towards that strategy.

Having taken over the Hub this year our most immediate plans are to

1. apply for planning permission for
 - replacement of the main roof
 - replacement of windows
 - garden room
2. create and launch a new web site
3. recruit the right staff for the right roles to ensure support, sustainability, growth and development of all our current activities and the HUB
4. Ensure a financial plan is in place to secure funding for next 3 years

We love to be involved In the work and ministry of befriended also as volunteers, you are welcome to meet with or chat with any one of us. One of us are often at the tea parties, compassionate conversations, or dropping into the HUB If you have any skills or experience that you feel you could offer to the governance and development of Befriended, please do get in touch via office@befriended.org

Current trustees

George Baxter - Chair

Will Kemp

Dave Chewter

Pat Johns

Gail Millar

Julia Crook

Emma Lambert

Ingrid Marson

Patron

Bishop Ruth Bushyager - Bishop of Horsham



Many of our visitors to the HUB do not have a garden, we will be putting in planning application for a temporary garden building to enjoy crafts, garden activities and socialising at our Holiday clubs. This is an artist impression

1

Volunteer

As little as one hour a week would make a world of difference

2

Pray

Join us in praying for and end to loneliness and isolation in Sussex

3

Give

Support us with either a one off gift or regular donation



Activities at the HUB

What: Our weekly programme of activities

When: Start 2nd March 2026

Where: Befriended HUB, 20 South Street, Ditchling, BN6 8UQ

Thank you

Because of your generosity and kindness we have been able to do all of the renovations, upgrading, installation of heating, carpets, furnishings without using any of our normal funding. We received over £25,000 in specific donations for the HUB. **Thank you.** We also are incredibly grateful to BREWERS for a grant of £4000 for all of the decorating materials, scaffold tower, ladders etc. Thank you to every volunteer who cleaned, painted, scrubbed, built, and contributed to the creation of the HUB. Your contribution is priceless

Fundraising

Brighton College Prep Handcross

The teachers at one of our partner schools are running the Brighton Half marathon on 1st of March. If you would like to sponsor them to raise money for Befriended please use the link below and encourage them. https://www.justgiving.com/page/brighton-college-prep-handcross-3?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=WA

London to Brighton Bike ride. 21st June

Watch this space - Bacon butties and cakes at the HUB

Regular givers

Thank you so much to all of you support Befriended through your monthly giving. We are deeply grateful and appreciated every penny you give which enables us to do all that we do. We thank God for you and we ask him to bless you abundantly. For all our 'friends' who so generously give each week at all our activities, tea parties, outings, etc. We could not provide for you what we do if it were not for your commitment and support. We promise always to give you our very very best.

If you are a tax payer please do fill in a gift aid form and we can claim another £25% on your donation.

If you would like to give a one off gift please see bank details below.



Befriended
Number 67281668.
Sort code 08 92 99

You are part of this story

We couldn't do any of this without you. Every donation given, every cake baked, every prayer said, every cuppa served makes a real difference. Thank you for standing with Befriended — your generosity helps us to fulfil our dream and vision - to bring an end to loneliness and isolation.

Together we are building community, connection, one conversation after another, making friends, enjoying adventures, making the world in which we live in a better place. Enjoy a read at the Befriended Story - so far

A Befriended Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace

befriended



Open day at Befriended HUB

What: Official opening of the Hub with special guests

When: Wednesday 6th May 3-5pm

Where: Befriended HUB, 20 South Street, Ditchling, BN6 8UQ

THE BEFRIENDED STORY..... so far

written by Gail Millar.

2016-2026

2016

Having worked for 20 years pioneering and managing a holiday and retreat centre for people with sight loss, the common factor was not sight loss, it was loneliness and isolation.

We had a call from a lady in the village who had a problem with her door bell. In going to help her, it was clear that the issue was not really the doorbell not working, she had not had a conversation with anyone for weeks.

Over the coming months and with having been appointed as the older persons specialist for the Salvation Army, I began to see a much bigger picture of this epidemic - loneliness and isolation, that was crippling thousands of peoples lives across the country.

I embarked on doing some research across Mid Sussex to see what was being done to address this issue in my own locality, only to find that there was a huge need. A number of church leaders had recognised the need and so a meeting was convened at Centre Church in Burgess Hill. The conclusion of that meeting was to set up an umbrella charity that would work with all the local churches to address this huge issue. We had input and help from a befriending charity called Linking lives, they had experience in setting up one to one befriending schemes. We applied for funding to the Cinnamon Network and received £2000 seed funding. We used this money to invest in a name, branding, charity set up costs, research - the name BEFRIENDED was born.

Key people were involved at this time as trustees - Will Kemp, Helen and Jim Watkin, Stuart Millar, Nick Baldwin, Helen Watkin was the operations director, Joy Dawes as administrator and Margie Fford as bookkeeper

121 Befriending

Launch date of October 1st 2017 which was also international older peoples day, over 250 people at the launch and a number of people responded to be one to one volunteers. A huge number of hours, days and weeks had been spent on the preparation of documentation, processes, constitution. Huge thanks to Helen and Jim Watkin for their dedication.

Helen with Gail proceeded to recruit volunteers, receive referrals and match people together. One of our first matches was Rachel and Evelyn, which was a friendship that lasted for over seven years.

I was working full time for the Salvation Army gleaning a lot of helpful knowledge, sitting on boards and attending conferences about loneliness and isolation. I met with Helen in the evenings and weekends but also spent many a car journey on the phone discussing Befriended matches and potential volunteers.

We learnt alot during this period of time and very soon we had up to 50 matches of volunteers and clients. We also provided a Community Christmas day lunch in partnership with HOPE

Local churches
bringing
people
together



Pandemic

By the time the pandemic hit, alot of changes had happened within Befriended. Helen and Jim who had been central to the team, moved to Nottingham to be near their family, new trustees joined the team - Tafrina Styles, Lizzie Lamont and Diane Watts. I was put on furlough from my job which meant I was able to go to Cheltenham to care for my Mum who was terminally ill, I also completed my bereavement counselling qualification.

We had to postpone all our one to one visiting but launched a couple of new projects.

Acts of kindness - cream tea in a box, easter in a basket and Christmas in a bag.

Befriended Buddies - encouraging children to write to older people

In March 2021 I was made redundant from my role at Salvation Army

In April 2021 Befriended took a leap of faith and the decision was made to employ me as part time CEO.

My first three months included research into the causes of loneliness and isolation and utilising a CRM system, zoho.

Katie Wooding Jones joined us to help with admin. We began to run the HTB bereavement course online and then in person.



Three main causes of loneliness and isolation

Research shows three main causes of loneliness and isolation. These were to become the foundation on which were were to build the future of befriended.

1. Bereavement and loss
2. Change in your health circumstances
3. Change in your living circumstances

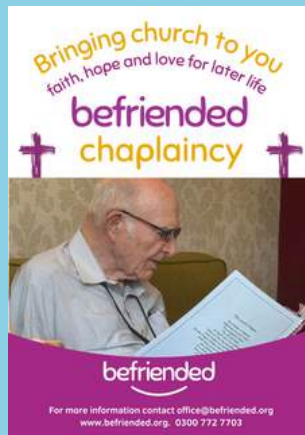
Everything we were now to do was to address one or more of these.

2021

A Monthly tea party

In October 2021 four of us were commissioned as Anna Chaplains under a licence with Befriended. Bishop Ruth our Patron licenced us and Debbie Thrower came to the licencing service. Will Fletcher, Clare Hobbs and myself began visiting care homes on a regular basis - Heath court and Martlett Manor in Haywards Heath.

The first thing after lock down was to get people together, build social confidence and have fun at a monthly tea party. We started with 20 or so people meeting at Gateway Baptist Church. Working 20 hours a week I began to network with Churches, local organisations, social prescribers and GP's

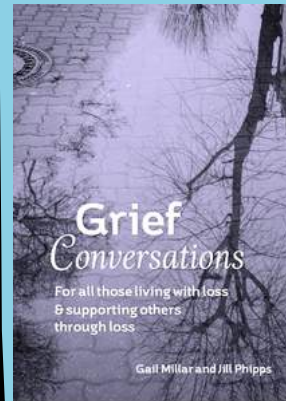


2022

Falls prevention exercise class

A meal with Will and Helen Fletcher led to the launch of Befriended Balance. Helen was a falls prevention balance instructor and Will was the Methodist Minister in Hurspierpoint. So a partnership was formed and classes commenced. We saw very quickly the difference these exercise classes made to peoples stamina, strength and stability. We also formed a partnership with students from Worth School who would come every Wednesday and join in with the classes. People who came to these classes started to come to tea parties. Attendance at our tea parties was growing rapidly.

I was commissioned by BRF to write a book - grief conversations with a wonderful woman Jill Phipps.



2022

Bereavement

Having run the HTB Bereavement course online both during the pandemic and afterwards, we began to run it in person. The seven week course was very well attended with sessions during the day time and in the evening. Many people who attended these courses spoke of the significant impact it had on their lives. .

We embarked on volunteer campaigns as we had lost a lot of volunteers during the pandemic.

Lucy Winter joined the team to help us with admin.

We delivered 163 "Easter in a Basket" gifts as part of our Acts of Kindness campaign

The numbers attending our monthly tea party had grown to 45. Balance was a regular 10 people with four students. There were 14 matches of one to one clients and I increased my hours to 30 hours a week.

We welcomed The Rt Revd Ruth Bushyager, Bishop of Horsham as Patron of Befriended

George Baxter, Dave Chewter joined the trustee board and we had a number of successful grants.



2022

Blankets and bus trips

The Winter of 2022 brought a cost of living crisis. Befriended trustees wanted to respond to this and raised funds to give away 360 thermal blankets to older people living in Mid Sussex. Each person was given a blanket, a gift card and 10 top tips for cost saving.

The project was a huge success and for years afterwards people still say how much they appreciate their blanket.

Through this project we introduced and encouraged those we connected with to come to our tea parties and special occasions.

We did our first Befriended Bus trip to the theatre in response to so many people saying they hadn't left their town or village in years. 52 people enjoyed a day trip including lunch and theatre

Our income and expenditure increased by 100% My hours increased to full time.



2023

Coronation Champion and Cafes

In 2023 I was awarded a Coronation Champions award in recognition of my voluntary contribution to the community. We were invited to a garden party at Buckingham palace two days before the Kings Coronation.

It was an absolute honour and privilege. The garden party was an experience I will never forget.

In celebration with all the friends and volunteers of Befriended, we had a big Coronation tea party with over 120 people in attendance

In response to requests from attendees at bereavement course we launched a monthly bereavement cafe to provide ongoing support and for supportive friendships to flourish.



2023

Choir – sing for joy

At one of our tea parties we had a visiting choir. a number of our guests said “Can’t we have our own choir?”

I contacted my ex colleague from the Salvation Army and in Sept 2023 Befriended Community Choir was born. A Tuesday morning was to become a joy filled space in partnership with the Methodist Church.

Ira Thomas our choirmaster was skilled and superb at including people of all abilities to sing, including people living with dementia. The choir became very quickly a special inclusive community singing songs from musicals, church and old time songs.

Our clientele grew due to the choir which led to an increase in outings- day trips, theatre trips and panto’s



2024

Compassionate conversations

Christmas 2023, leading a carol service in a care home led to a discussion with two older people living with dementia who had both lost their loved ones. This led to me writing a new bereavement course called Compassionate Conversations - a three week course looking at loss in life. Six facilitated conversations - past and present, grief and gratitude and bereaved and believe.

In April of 2024 I was invited to enter a competition with Cinnamon Network and presented Compassionate Conversations in Nov 24 and became a finalist. This led to becoming a winner of the Incubator programme which was a place on a two year mentoring and training programme learning how to grow and replicate your project.

Early 2024 I ran two pilot courses, six further courses and then a pilot facilitator course. This led to one lady - Sally Allison, who attended the course, becoming a volunteer facilitator of Compassionate Conversations.

Alongside the course we launched Compassion Cafes. This course was to become the key to unlocking numerous opportunities and growth for Befriended. Susan Dyke joined the team as Operations co-ordinator.



2024

Holy Trinity and Holiday clubs

In 2024 a new partnership was formed with Holy Trinity Church, Hurstpierpoint. Easter 24 we held our first dementia friendly Easter service. In Sept 24 we launched a new tea party on the third Sunday of every month, held at Court Bushes Community Centre. We started with an attendance of 20-30 people and within a few months the tea party attendance grew. The volunteer team was established from Holy Trinity and local people including the Rector of Holy Trinity.

During the holiday periods throughout the year many regular activities take a break. For older people who rely on routine and regularity, this can plummet people back into loneliness and isolation. Summer 24 we launched Holiday at Home - a three day holiday club. Holiday at home includes quizzes, singing, games, exercise and lunch held outdoors in a homely and friendly environment. Over the three days we had over 120 people attending.

The summer also included a social gathering for all those who had attended bereavement courses and cafes.



Games and gardens

Befriended growth has only come about through responding to requests and gaps highlighted by our 'friends'. At Holiday at Home attendees said how much they enjoyed playing games and could they meet and play them more often. Befriended board games was born led by volunteer Derek Guildford.

A new tea party was launched with a pilot tea party in June 2025. This was very successful with over 100 people in attendance. St Andrews monthly tea party, to be held on the first Sunday of the month, began in September with a great team of volunteers from the Church.

In the summer we hosted our first ever fundraising event sponsored by Chailey vintage tractor Club. It was held in the garden (farm) of one of our trustees and the day was a huge success with over 500 people attending. The day raised over £4000

befriended board games
An afternoon of games, giggles and good company
The first and third Thursday of every month 2.30-4.30pm
The Millar's, Hurstpierpoint
Tea and cake provided
making life better one smile at a time

befriended Afternoon Tea party
with St Andrew's Burgess Hill
3pm-5pm
1st Sunday of every month
at St Andrew's Church, Cants Lane Burgess Hill, RH15 0LQ
A traditional afternoon tea, games, friendly conversations, making friends, laughter, and all the great entertainment
All are welcome
Our next afternoon tea is on Sunday 2nd November
For more information contact office@befriended.org www.befriended.org 0300 772 7703

A Vintage Charity day for befriended
The Chailey classic and vintage tractor club is proud to sponsor
A great afternoon with classic motorbikes and cars, vintage tractors, mini steam railway, pop up charity shop and a wonderful vintage tea tent serving afternoon tea
Saturday 9th August 2-5pm
Springfield Farm
Lewes Rd, Scaynes Hill RH17 7NQ
For more information contact office@befriended.org www.befriended.org 0300 772 7703

Support and services

Many of our 'friends' are living with dementia or are carers of loved ones living with neurodiverse conditions e.g. Parkinson's, stroke, dementia. Following research, we discovered there were a number of groups around the area but they were once a month. The gap showed a need for a weekly group offering support, signposting, encouragement and advice.

Cafe Neuro began with a soft launch in April 2025 with an official launch in November. Regular attendance has grown from 6 to 36 every Monday morning.

Another highlighted support need was for short term care, support for people who have come out of hospital, or had a fall, or been unwell or to support carer for any of the above. Befriended Back up was launched in partnership with Penny Herbert.

To support our bereavement service we launched our time to remember service

befriended Cafe Neuro
A drop in cafe offering support, signposting and a listening ear for carers and those living with dementia and other neurocognitive disorders
EVERY Monday morning 10:30 am- 12:00pm
Befriended HUB, South Street, Ditchling
For more information contact office@befriended.org www.befriended.org 0300 772 7703

befriended Time to Remember
A special service to remember our loved ones
Sunday 10th November 3pm
Presented by tea and cake
St Andrew's Church, Cants Lane, Burgess Hill, RH15 0LQ
For more information contact office@befriended.org www.befriended.org 0300 772 7703

befriended back up
Short term help from Penny Herbert supporting Befriended 'friends' with care, kindness and compassion
Penny offers years of experience, she comes highly recommended and is available to respond in an emergency
£20 per hour which includes a donation to Befriended
For more information contact office@befriended.org www.befriended.org 0300 772 7703

All age activites together

Partnership is key to all of Befriended activities and growth. We partner with local churches, schools, people and organisations. One of our most exciting partnerships is with Brighton College Prep Handcross. As well as building strong links with the school and enjoying reciprocal visits and outings, the Befriended Book Buddies project is beautiful. Having older people spend time with pre prep students regularly is one of my favourite projects. The relationships forming are very special.

Sitting chatting with 'friends' having come back from a holiday led to a revealing conversation that many of our older people had either never had a holiday or if bereaved not had one for many years and had no hope of having one. So when a holiday to `Isle of Wight was proposed within 24 hours 51 people had booked a place. The first Befriended breaks was launched.

So many of our 'friends' struggle with `IT, phone issues, ipad issues and dont know where to go to get some simple help. When my husband retired he said he would offer IT support to our 'friends'. BITs and PC's was birthed offering a weekly drop in help but also regular training in basic issues .

befriended bits and PCs
Wednesday mornings 10-12
at Befriended HUB
30 South Street, Ditchling, BN26 7JG
www.befriended.org 0300 7727703
Charity No. 125618

befriended book buddies
where storytime becomes friendship time
"every child deserves a GRANDFRIEND"
In partnership with Brighton College Prep Handcross
www.befriended.org 0300 7727703
Charity No. 125618

befriended breaks
A holiday to remember
18-22 May 2026
www.befriended.org 0300 7727703
Charity No. 125618

Befriended HUB

The biggest change in the last 10 years is Befriended now having its own home. In Jan 2026 we took on a lease of a building in Ditchling which we have renovated and refurbished, creating a HUB to house our office and to replicate all the activities we run throughout Sussex.

In March 2026 we launch another choir, balance class, BITs and PC's, bereavement support, drop in cafe, tea party.

Our new HUB is where we can host our volunteer training, trustee meetings, interviews, special occasions. We are building new volunteer host teams, and will be recruiting new staff to support our growing charity to bring and end to loneliness and isolation in Sussex.

This story is not yet finished but there would be no story to tell if it were not for amazing people who have been a part of the journey. The most significant person for whom I am forever thankful to God for is Stuart Millar! He is my best friend, greatest supporter, encourager, co worker, he brings me joy and makes me laugh. My wise women - Diane and Clare, Helen Watkin, Befriended trustees, staff , volunteers, church partners, local organisations, schools and above all else GOD! God makes all things happen and I trust in him for all that's to come.

befriended hub
ending loneliness
connection
community
conversation
www.befriended.org
0300 7727703

Befriended Monthly Diary

March 2026

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Sun | Afternoon Tea Party St Andrews Church, Burgess Hill 3-5pm | 16 Mon | Cafe Neuro Salvation Army Burgess Hill 10.30-12 Cafe Neuro Befriended Hub Ditchling 10.30-12 Befriended Balance Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 |
| 2 Mon | Cafe Neuro Salvation Army Burgess Hill 10.30-12 Cafe Neuro Befriended Hub Ditchling 10.30-12 | 17 Tue | Community Choir Methodist Church Burgess Hill 10-12 Chaplaincy Keymer Hall 11am Community Choir Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 |
| 3 Tues | Community Choir Methodist Church Burgess Hill 10-12 Community Choir Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 Chaplaincy Furzefield 3pm Befriended Trustees strategy meeting 6pm | 18 Wed | BITs and PC's Befriended Hub Ditchling 10-12 Befriended Balance Gateway Baptist Church 2-3.30 |
| 4 Wed | Befriended Balance Gateway Baptist Church 2-3.30 | 19 Thu | One Stop Shop Salvation Army Burgess Hill 11-1 Board Games Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-4 |
| 5 Thu | Bereavement Cafe Befriended Hub 10-11.30 St Andrews Church Burgess Hill 12-1.30 Board Games Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-4 | 20 Fri | |
| 6 Fri | | 21 Sat | |
| 7 Sat | | 22 Sun | |
| 8 Sun | | 23 Mon | Cafe Neuro Salvation Army Burgess Hill 10.30-12 Cafe Neuro Befriended Hub Ditchling 10.30-12 Befriended Balance Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 |
| 9 Mon | Cafe Neuro Salvation Army Burgess Hill 10.30-12 Cafe Neuro Befriended Hub Ditchling 10.30-12 Befriended Balance Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 | 24 Tue | Community Choir Methodist Church Burgess Hill 10-12 Chaplaincy Wellington, Bletchingly Adelaide 10-12 Community Choir Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 |
| 10 Tue | Community Choir Methodist Church Burgess Hill 10-12 Community Choir Befriended Hub Ditchling 2-3.30 Chaplaincy Heath Court 2.30-4pm | 25 Wed | BITs and PC's Befriended Hub Ditchling 10-12 Befriended Balance Gateway Baptist Church 2-3.30 |
| 11 Wed | Befriended Balance Gateway Baptist Church 2-3.30 | 26 Thu | |
| 12 Thu | | 27 Fri | |
| 13 Fri | | 28 Sat | |
| 14 Sat | | 29 Sun | Afternoon Tea Party Gateway Baptist Church, Burgess Hill 3-5pm |
| 15 Sun | Afternoon Tea Party Court Bushes, Hurstpierpoint 3-5pm | 30 Mon | Cafe Neuro Salvation Army Burgess Hill 10.30-12 Cafe Neuro Befriended Hub Ditchling 10.30-12 Easter holidays - Sorry no Befriended Balance today |
| | Please contact Befriended for your copy of April's monthly diary | 31 Tue | Easter holidays - Sorry no Community Choir today |