

Assist



Charity Number. **1062675**

Annual Report

2024-2025

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Chairs report

BARBARA ASTON

Chair, Board of Trustees

Time flies when we're having fun, and we've had another successful year at Withington Assist! The membership continues to grow, and to meet the needs of our community we have worked hard to increase our capacity. Groups are well loved, and attendance is high.

We have welcomed a new member of staff, Mark Thomas, who has joined as an Outreach Worker and Befriender, to support those living in the community who are unable to come and see us in person. Each week he sees around 12-15 older people, and an independent evaluation has demonstrated that it provides an important lifeline to those who are socially isolated. Overall, the outcomes, on a small budget, are very good and we will be seeking funding to continue this important work. You can also meet Mark at the Tuesday Lunch Club, where he calls the Bingo- hopefully you will hear him call your winning number...! Meanwhile, we have been grateful for a cost-of-living grant from Manchester City Council that has enabled us to increase the hours of Jamila to run a new, weekly, drop-in advice session to help members with forms, benefits and admin, that can become so difficult with older age. This has been warmly welcomed and very successful, with over 30 people helped this year.

The members of the board of trustees remain the same and we are grateful for all their hard work and dedication, attending meetings and supporting staff and volunteers.



I would like to thank Vicky, Sarala, Jacqueline, Pip, Gavin, Meena, David, Emma and Gemma for their continued support as Chair. Withington Assist is an important asset in our community and hopefully members feel a sense of belonging and look forward to our events. I hope there is something for everyone to enjoy but do approach staff or the board of trustees if you have new ideas.

Remember, you can turn up to a group, and everyone is made to feel welcome and there is always someone to chat to. Once again, I'd like to thank the staff and volunteers who continue to make such a difference to people's lives and to the elderly members themselves who come together to make Withington Assist the wonderful place it is.

What is Assist?

Withington Assist is a charitable organisation based in Withington, South Manchester. Supported by a wonderful team of volunteers, our priorities are to reduce social isolation amongst older people living locally, provide volunteering opportunities, and to support older people to continue living independently. The majority of our members (and many of our volunteers), live alone.

We do this by working with our community to provide social groups and volunteer support services that keep people busy and provide opportunities to spend time with others. Growing older can be a lonely business, but at Assist it's possible to find friends, connection and a feeling of family. We are very proud of the work we do and the people who make it possible.



SOCIAL GROUPS

- Lunch Club
- Coffee Group
- Exercise classes
- Positive Living sessions
- Older men's snooker
- Digital Drop Ins
- Film club and Tea and Talks
- Walking and Talking group
- Day trips and Events
- Simply cycling



Running since 1969, we currently connect with over 230 older adults, supported to do so by 50 volunteers. We receive referrals for older people who may benefit via GP practices, social workers, district nurses, social prescribers, friends, relatives, neighbours, mental health teams and through word of mouth.

As a registered charity we receive a grant from Manchester City Council towards our work that covers just under 50% of our costs, with the rest raised through fundraising, grants and donations.



VOLUNTEER/STAFF SUPPORT SERVICES

- Befriending
- Volunteer lifts
- Signposting and advice
- Form filling and advocacy
- Digital Support
- Wheelchair pushing
- Odd jobs
- Wheelchair/walker loan
- Emergency shopping
- Lawn mowing/hedge trimming



Who runs Assist?



Withington Assist is governed by a voluntary, elected board of Trustees who support the Assist staff and oversee the running of the charity. They meet every other month to check over the finances, provide direction and guidance and ensure the charity is continuing to meet the needs of its members and operate according to charity law. Being a trustee is an important and valuable role and in 2024/2025 we had 10 skilled and dedicated board members.

STAFF

Our skilled staff team carry out the day-to-day running of the charity, coordinating volunteers, taking referrals, planning the activities, managing finance providing specific services and much more.

- Jamila Naseem (Activities and Admin worker/Cost of Living Advisor)
- Mark Thomas (Outreach visitor)
- Amelia King (Coordinator)
- Debbie McGowan (Cook)
- Ruby Usher (Exercise Instructor)
- Debra McCallion (Positive Living Coach and Volunteer Trainer)

TRUSTEES

- Barbara Aston (chair)
- Pip Cotterill (Deputy chair)
- Gemma Glennon
- Sarala Gunawardena (secretary)
- Emma Horridge
- Jacqueline Kirkby
- David Lamb
- Meena Shah
- Vicky Wharmby
- Gavin White

Our volunteers



For the year 2024-2025 we had 51 volunteers on our books doing everything from gardening to driving to befriending to serving lunches, to fixing phones to picking up washing to being that friendly face for someone who needed it. The dedication, kindness and hard work of our volunteers make such a difference to people's lives in the community, and their time, skill and commitment is so appreciated. Alongside social get togethers, we run regular training including moving and handling training, safeguarding, emergency first aid and mental health awareness.

LIST OF VOLUNTEERS

- Pauline Ainscough
- Heloise Allan
- Dan Ashton
- Barbara Aston
- Brenda Barnett
- Rosalind Blackman
- Paul Borger
- Jane Brown
- Skylla Baily
- Jackie Callow
- Deborah Coombes
- Pip Cotterill
- John Crocker
- Alexandra Davies
- Elisabeth Diamant
- Faith Escreet
- Rosalind Evans
- Karen (Fez) Fairhurst
- Patricia Ferreira
- Gemma Glennon
- Rose Godkin
- Lucy Goodman
- Sarala Gunawardena
- David Holmes
- Emma Horridge
- Baharak Jooshandeh
- Tate Johnstone
- Michael Kelly
- Susan Keyworth
- Bethany King
- Jacqueline Kirkby
- David Lamb
- Ray Lavelle
- Simbur Hasibuah
- Annie Mines
- Joyce Murphy
- Pattie O'Donovan
- Brendan O'Dornan
- Trina Palmer
- Rebecca Payne
- Heather Steward
- Stephney Tait
- Benji Varghese
- Vicky Wharmby
- Bernie Whittaker
- Gavin White
- Tom Williams
- Geraldine Yorke
- Meena Shah
- Tang Zhengyang

“Volunteering with Assist has been the most joyful and rewarding experience! I love seeing new and familiar faces each week, and I’ve made some wonderful friends amongst the other volunteers.”

– Skylla Baily



What our members say: 2024-2025



Sue P.

“I don’t see myself as old unfortunately, but my husband [Bob] died two years ago now. I’m not over it. I never really will be, we were together for 56 years and he was so kind I think it must be more difficult when they were kind. After a while I needed to get out of the house, I was going downhill. I hate living on my own it’s lonely. The more I can go out the better it is. First I tried the coffee group and now I come all the time. I find **kindness** here, the feeling of the place. It’s for us. I come to the positive living (mental health wellbeing), to the films, the talks, the day trips. It’s all the extras that make it so good here. I love coming to Assist, I’ve made real friends here. **It’s changed my life again really.”**

“We come here because it is a home from home! You feel a part of a family again. I do live on my own but I get out to places like this and it keeps me going. We have a laugh and a sing.”

Val (84)

“I’ve been coming for years and years. I was a volunteer first for 6 years but now it’s my turn to be waited on! We always sit in the same places and save seats for our friends. The meals are nice and the staff and volunteers. It makes a difference, I look forward to it. When I wake up and it’s Tuesday I think ooh yess it’s Tuesday!”



“I live on my own, so it’s a nice to share a meal with people. Saves me cooking. The food is always fresh. It’s a welcoming and warm environment. It’s a good service, There must be so many people out there on their own I wish they’d come here instead. There should be more groups like this. It makes such a difference to people, to me.”

**Peggy (92) -
Left**

**Pauline (76) -
Right**

“I have had two helpings of the 1st course, two helpings of the second course, two cups of tea and probably two (maybe more) biscuits! It’s very good for me. I live on my own but I also live here, it is my second home! I come to coffee group, exercise class, digital drop in, sometimes the film, tea and talks, trips. I’d feel very lost without Assist. I’ve been coming for 40 years! I started being a volunteer, a driver, then a trustee.

Elisabeth (91)



"[Coffee group] is good to meet new people and it's easy here because everyone is so friendly, the quizzes are interesting and walking here keeps me fit! The whole place is fantastic, everyone is always welcome, and everyone is always having a good giggle"

John

"I'm always learning something, when you are on your own you're not always sure about things so it's a place to come and get advice, to get other people's ideas, so you are not just managing on your own you have the support of others."

Pam



It's very helpful for me to attend [the walking group] When you are in a group you have confidence that people are supporting you. That's how I have felt attending the group, that I've been supported. I feel safer. I look forward to it- even if I don't want to go out, I remember that I need to join the group, and people notice if you don't go. You are going at your own pace but you are part of something bigger, I can see the improvements; my balance has improved.

Claire T

I have been volunteering since June, visiting people in their homes to help them with technical issues, wifi, laptop, tablet, phone etc that they aren't able to do on their own. I am so pleased to be able to use my skills and experience to help people who really need it, having worked in IT for the NHS for 20 years. I've made at least 20 visits since I started, as well as helping people in the office at the drop ins, and the staff team with maintaining their laptops. It's good for me as well, to meet people, be part of the team.



David H, Digital Volunteer

I'm not on a direct bus route I'd have to catch two buses to get here and I just wouldn't manage it, I'd be too tired to do the exercises. Taxis are too expensive and the volunteer drivers are always kind and patient with us moving slow. I enjoy the social aspect, seeing everyone and doing the exercises together. It's done a lot for me, and I've started coming on the Wednesdays for knitting now and the day trips too, it's something to look forward to."

Audrey

Note from the coordinator

AMELIA KING

Assist Coordinator

When I started work at Assist 10 years ago, I knew straight away what a special place it was. A quiet goldmine of fun and friendship and people working together to support each other. Facilitating this work is great pleasure. This year we have had many successes and some sad losses of members who had been coming for many years. We have been on day trips to Southport (such a lot of rain to fall on one day..), Morecombe, Chester and Oswaldtwistle mill. For some members, this is their only chance to get out of the city and it is a privilege to spend the day with them. We have celebrated birthdays, visited people when they are unwell, taken the time to listen, share stories and jokes. We have solved problems, sorted out benefits and accompanied to hospital appointments. We have invited speakers in to share information on scams awareness, fire safety, stopping smoking, reducing falls, saving energy. We have kept our donation charges low, and run accessible, reliable and consistent services all year round- including a Christmas eve lunch and a new years eve buffet.

We are here to cheer people up, to be there for people, to help people feel part of a community and to empower people to feel able to cope with the challenges that growing older can present... long may it continue!



MEETING CLLR JOANNA MIDGELEY)

Details from our financial accounts

Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

	Notes	31 March 2025		31 March 2024		Total funds £
		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	
Receipts:						
Grant, donations and contributions	2	22,257	30,724	19,839	28,248	48,087
Local Authority Contract		37,892	-	37,892	-	37,892
Total		60,149	30,724	57,731	28,248	85,979
Payments:						
Direct Charitable Expenditure	3	17,928	29,474	16,830	19,740	36,570
Management and Administration	4	45,816	-	35,314	-	35,314
Total		63,744	29,474	52,144	19,740	71,884
Net receipts/(payments)		(3,595)	1,250	5,587	8,508	14,095
Cash funds at 31 March 2024		72,152	28,294	65,528	20,823	86,351
Transfers between funds		4,751	(4,751)	1,037	(1,037)	-
Cash funds at 31 March 2025	5	73,308	24,793	72,152	28,294	100,446

3) Direct Charitable Expenditure

	2025		2024		Total funds £
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	
Befriending	-	11,620	-	1,063	1,063
Book Launch	-	629	-	-	-
Citizens Advice	-	2,081	-	-	-
Coffee Morning	1,036	-	671	-	671
Day Trips	3,992	-	4,488	-	4,488
Digital Drop in	28	-	-	-	-
Exercise Club	4,163	2,244	2,214	2,590	4,804
Film Club	2,295	-	217	725	942
French Class	-	-	630	-	630
Gardening Services	96	-	20	-	20
Positive Living	1,095	2,081	-	9,082	9,082
Snooker	21	750	36.00	-	36
Tea & Talks	717	-	826	-	826
Tuesday Club	4,443	5,043	6,191	2,323	8,514
Walking Group	42	1,342	-	3,957	3,957
Xmas	-	-	1,537	-	1,537
Funds held as agent	-	3,684	-	-	-
Other grants	-	-	-	-	-
	17,928	29,474	16,830	19,740	36,570

4) Charity Management and Administration

	2025		2024		Total funds £
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	
Running Costs	8,044	-	8,011	-	8,011
Staff Costs (not allocated to specific activities)	35,711	-	26,682	-	26,682
Volunteer Costs (not allocated to specific activities)	2,061	-	565	-	565
Trustee Costs	-	-	56	-	56
	45,816	-	35,314	-	35,314

Notes to the financial statements

1) Receipts and Payment accounts

Receipts and payments accounts are statements that summarise the movement of cash into and out of the organisation during the financial year. In this context "cash" includes cash equivalents, for example, bank accounts where cash can be readily withdrawn to pay for debts as they become due.

2) Grants and Donations

	2025			2024		
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Befriending	17	-	17	-	5,000	5,000
Book Launch	-	-	-	-	640	640
Citizens Advice	-	7,537	7,537	-	-	-
Coffee Morning	1,753	-	1,753	1,424	-	1,424
Day Trips	4,090	-	4,090	4,068	-	4,068
Digital Drop in	-	-	-	45	-	45
Exercise Club	4,956	1,200	6,156	3,691	2,590	6,281
Film Club	570	-	570	613	725	1,338
French Class	-	-	-	13	-	13
Gardening Services	460	-	460	537	-	537
Positive Living	192	7,360	7,552	211	9,160	9,371
Snooker	274	750	1,024	257	-	257
Tea & Talks	396	-	396	331	-	331
Tuesday Club	5,899	5,924	11,823	5,070	3,778	8,848
Volunteers	1,302	600	1,902	-	-	-
Walking Group	-	1,342	1,342	-	4,200	4,200
Xmas	-	-	-	1,741	-	1,741
Funds held as agent	-	4,915	4,915	-	-	-
Other donations	2,348	-	2,348	1,838	-	1,838
Other grants	-	1,096	1,096	-	2,155	2,155
	22,257	30,724	52,981	19,839	28,248	48,087

And finally; A BIG THANK YOU to our Funders, to the Withington Methodist Church for housing us so supportively, and for all donations from members, friends and family. Without this financial support, Assist would not exist to provide the support and care to all those who use its services.

We are very grateful for every pound we receive and spend it wisely.



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