

## **Appendix 4 – The LINKages Scheme**

LINKages is a social prescribing scheme operating in Old Moat/Withington and the surrounding areas, which is focussed on helping people over 50 connect with local activities and support. It forms part of Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) project developed by Southway Housing Trust and is delivered in partnership with three local GP practices, Borchardt, Bodey and Ladybarn.

Working collaboratively has created opportunities to link isolate people who are hard to reach people into activities and reduce the significant amount of time GP's spend dealing with non-medical issues. Southway operates as the link agency acting as a connection between the practice, patients and local community based support/activities and services

### **Case Studies (names have been changed)**

Pearl, who is 84 lives alone in Withington, is very anxious and worries about her health. She had been a frequent attender at her GP's surgery. The GP felt that one of the key issues was social isolation, which was creating time for Pearl to focus on every minor symptom of ill health. They suggested that a referral to LINKages may be of benefit. During the assessment visit Pearl acknowledged visits to her GP were not always appropriate but she had felt lonely. Pearl has begun regularly attending events held in Old Moat and Withington. This includes a weekly tea dance organised by older people at a local church, the pub lunch club arranged by the Peer Support Network and attending activities club organised by ASSIST a local voluntary sector organisation. Pearl says she feels less anxious and really enjoys getting out of the house and meeting new people. The GP confirmed there has only been one appointment request since their referral to LINKages, which related to planned surgery.

Jean who is 81 lives alone, in Old Moat, following a bereavement she was feeling isolated and wanted to get out of the house and make new friends. After repeated visits to the surgery, with no real medical need, Jean's GP offered a referral to LINKages, The key issue for Jean was a loss of confidence after being a stay at home carer. Transport was arranged for the first visit to an activity and a 'buddy' identified at the NORC Coffee Club sessions to welcome them. Jean is now regularly attending the NORC Coffee Sessions and information events. She has undertaken a six week Silver Savvy IT course, which has allowed her to connect with others and shop online. This has helped in the winter months, as Jean has a chronic chest condition. Jean is now active in the Old Moat NORC Peer Support Network. Jean said 'reconnecting with the local community has improved her confidence and she feels happier.' The GP said they have not seen the patient since they became reconnected through LINKages.