

## **Well-brahams Mental Health & Well-being Group**

### **Report for year 2020 - 2021**

This has been a strange, difficult and distressing year for so many people – certainly, none of us could have predicted that we would find ourselves in this situation. So this report from the Well-brahams group will reflect the uncertainties of the past year, but will hopefully offer some optimism for the year to come.

The pandemic has sadly resulted in a loss of coping mechanisms for many people, as well as reduced access to mental health treatment. However, we have done our best to provide support where we can despite many of our activities having been understandably curtailed, due to the ongoing situation with Covid. We obviously haven't been able to offer our talks on a variety of subjects relevant to mental health, or to continue with craft activities or the Youth Group, and this has been a source of frustration to us all.

But we have still been active behind the scenes, working closely with the Community Volunteer group to support people in the village who may have been struggling with the lockdowns, and with increased levels of anxiety and social isolation. Several of our group have been making regular contact by phone with those in need, as well as checking up on neighbours with informal (but confidential) ‘chats over the wall’, or with more formal discussions about their concerns. We have also supported the weekly Virtual Coffee mornings organised by the Volunteer group.

We funded a ‘free warm drinks’ stall at the December Farmer’s Market, partly to provide some relief from the appalling weather, but also as a chance to discuss our planned social gardening project. In the end, the weather won!

There is increasing evidence that gardening and being outside in nature has a strong and positive impact, increasing our physical and mental wellbeing. With this in mind, we have been discussing a gardening project for many months now, and were fortunate in 2020 to receive a number of shrubs from a local supplier who wished to support the project. In addition, the Co-op Community Fund have also donated a healthy sum for the purchase of plants and bulbs. Despite some delays we are pleased that the Parish Council have approved our plan to go ahead and plant our first site. This will be a border adjacent to the new play area fence by the Parish Council noticeboard in Church Street. There has been a lot of interest in the project by local residents and we hope that this community project will help to bring us together, taking responsibility for our surroundings as well as providing some much needed social contact (distanced of course). Meanwhile, some of the group, assisted by a couple of volunteers have already managed to plant a selection of native species daffodils and bluebells on the village green along the wall by the churchyard, and these are now making an appearance.

The Well-brahams website and our presence on social media continue to provide support and advice. But we hope that as restrictions start to ease, we will be able to begin offering more group activities in support of the residents of Great Wilbraham in what continues to be an unprecedented and challenging time.

April 2021