

Whetstone Good Neighbour Scheme

2nd Annual Report covering period 1st August 2017 to 31st July 2018

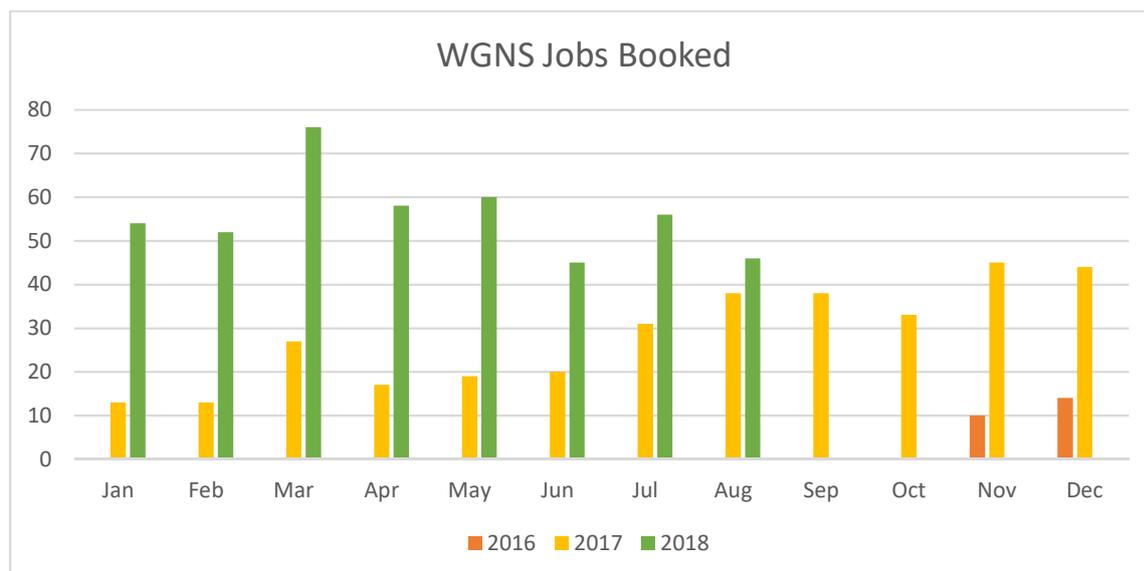
The last 12 months has been a period of achievement, growth and financial consolidation and I would like to thank everyone for their support in achieving this, be they volunteer, service user or supporter of the scheme.

Achievement

An early achievement in the year was being selected as the Best Community Group in Blaby District Councils Outstanding Achievement Awards, a great honour and a big boost. We have received a number of recognitions of the service we provide from both external services but more importantly the recognition by our service users of our importance to them. We set out to make a difference to the residents of Whetstone and I believe we have achieved that. We are an important part of the services available to our community and valued by our service users. WGNS is also recognised as the group to talk to for those new schemes setting up and we are regularly approached and have been pleased to guide a number of new schemes launched or in the process of so doing in Leicestershire. We have also been used as a case study by Leicestershire County Council in a tool kit they have developed for Parish and Town Councils as well as community groups across the County.



Growth



We have grown the service steadily and are rarely unable to provide the support requested. In the last 12 months we have booked more than 600 jobs and have a registered service user base of more than 50 Whetstone residents. Recruitment of new volunteers remains difficult, especially drivers. This could, and will, almost certainly remain one of the limitations on continued growth and maintenance of a high delivery satisfaction rate. As such it will remain a key focus for the team.

Financial Consolidation

We have achieved our financial targets for the year and positioned ourselves to be able to operate the service for another 12 months from the funds already available. A recognition of the importance of the service to its users has been the phenomenal level of donations from the service users, thank you all. The launch of the Blaby Lottery has also helped boost our position and provides a steady monthly income. Our fund-raising events have also proved popular and rewarding. We were able to secure a grant from the Blaby District Community Fund supported by funds from Westleigh to produce our first newsletter and the second to come later in the year. This was our first distribution to the whole village and is likely to remain our regular method of keeping the message about the scheme in the community eye for both service users and volunteer recruitment. Also, we were lucky enough to receive an award from the Asda Foundation as a result of Asda customers selecting the scheme with their green tokens.

Thank you

For schemes like ours to be successful it is reliant on three key factors:

- A need in the community and a willingness of those in need to ask for help
- A level of volunteers in the community who are willing to give of their time and energy
- The support of organisations who are prepared to provide support in whatever way they can

Our success to date is due to all these factors and I would like to express my thanks to all who have been involved in whatsoever way.

The Future

Our future is dependent upon the needs of our service users. We need you to feed back to us your thoughts and ideas. What do we do well? What could we do better? Is there a new service you would like us to try and deliver? As part of the management team in this coming year I would like to have a Service User Champion who can feed in to this and help us to ensure that we are properly focused on the community needs. Ideally, we will continue to grow in both service users and jobs that we are able to complete. We will continue to try and attract more volunteers for both service user facing roles as well as the more back office roles. So, don't be shy if you would like to help, or know someone who would, let's talk about the options and the sort of things you/they would like to be involved with. Let's make the next 12 months another great success and consolidate our position within the Whetstone support community.

Barry Fisher
Chair
Whetstone Good Neighbour Scheme