

BMCN Chairman's Annual Report to 31/12/2024

Brentor & Moor Compassionate Neighbours' *raison d'être* is to provide support to individuals in our local community who are suffering from a life-limiting illness and/or are approaching the end of life. The scheme has been operational since early June 2017, and we have been able to support in excess of 100 individuals in that time.

BMCN's catchment area mirrors that covered by the local surgeries, and also that covered by the St Luke's Hospice Community Team. This area centres on Tavistock, and stretches down to Bere Ferrers in the south, along the Cornwall border to the west, as far as Lifton/Lewdown to the north, and includes Princetown and Yelverton to the east.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on BMCN's operations has thankfully decreased, and has resulted in a steady recovery in referrals in 2024. It is sad to see the continued increase of dementia cases in our communities, and the ongoing lack of domiciliary support in this area. To this end, BMCN has agreed to work more closely with Tavistock Memory Café/Tavistock Dementia Alliance, with the aim of offering increased support to this client group in the longer term. Being a specialist area not specifically covered currently by BMCN, further volunteer training will be needed, as well as more volunteers with an interest in dementia care.

There was a welcome increase in referrals in 2024 as compared to the previous year – 18 in total. The majority of clients were living in the wider Tavistock area, with others in outlying rural areas as far as Princetown and the Bere peninsula.

There were some changes to the BMCN committee during the year: the recently appointed chairman decided to stand down for personal reasons; two other members resigned due to pressing outside commitments. Our founder has returned to the chair, and the committee remains strong, with six members at the year end.

It has proved a difficult year for volunteer retention, with four leaving us for relocation, work, or personal reasons. Although we end the year with just nine active volunteers, we have (just) managed to avoid turning away referrals due to lack of capacity. On a positive note, there are three new volunteers in process of recruitment, and there is a plan for a recruitment drive in the coming months. We would hope to see the number increased to at least fifteen in the course of 2025 if possible – although in the current climate this is known to be a nationwide challenge.

The volunteer training programme has been updated and improved by the Head of Training; we continue to offer a hybrid platform (both online and face-to-face) and this is being well received. As BMCN begins to work more closely with local dementia organisations, so we will need to provide our volunteers with more structured training in this area of care.

As at year end, the care co-ordinator duties are being shared by three individuals; our founder has finally stepped down from this role after eight years. It is hoped to replace him in the coming months. Client records are now all held digitally, and our current co-ordinators are working hard to simplify and rationalise these. Meanwhile, we are most grateful to our Head of Training who has continued to undertake much of BMCN's administrative burden; we continue our active search for a suitable replacement administrator.

A decision was taken in 2024 to employ specialist contractors to design and build a brand-new website for BMCN. Work on this started in mid-summer and continued through to the end of the year. We anticipate that the 'new face' of BMCN will be launched before the end of January – and we hope and expect that this, combined with fresh publicity and a PR push, will raise the profile of BMCN in our local communities, in turn leading to a boost in both referrals and recruitment going forward.

To summarise, BMCN continues to rise to the considerable challenges presented by the current economic climate, ably led by a small but highly professional and committed committee. BMCN remains financially secure, and overheads continue to be carefully managed.

Our aims for 2025 are as follows:

- 1. To maintain and strengthen our working partnership with St Luke's Hospice**
- 2. To continue to work as closely as possible with Livewell, GP surgeries, and Tavistock Hospital**
- 3. To work towards offering more support to dementia sufferers and their carers**
- 4. To increase volunteer numbers**
- 5. To ensure BMCN remains financially secure**

End

Mark.D.Alderson, BMCN Chairman

31st December 2024