

4. We have not been neglected at all

I was thinking back and I think I've been going to Wednesday Welcome (Archway social group) sometime 2017, perhaps earlier. It's such a caring and supportive place to go, that's why it's so wonderful to go there and be part of the group. Obviously, with the Covid, sadly the group was unable to continue. I am so much missing it as I live on my own. I feel loneliness all the time and I'm sure I'm not alone with other Archway members experiencing the same. Because it was really the only thing I had in my life, which might sound a bit.... Well I have a very close friend but she suffers with bipolar so she's never very well normally and of course we can't meet anyway. And family wise, I just have a twin sister really who's very... she can be caring but sometimes she can't. She can be very, er, bossy (laughs).

In the now, I have been very suicidal and I have to rely on the Samaritans to keep me alive basically. And so it's been awful actually. I'm waiting for a hip replacement and I have degenerative sclerosis of the spine which means having an operation and as they can't guarantee any success rate I won't have it done. I don't want to risk being in a wheelchair sooner than I have to be and I did have some good news because there is another operation I'm waiting for and I just had a phone call from the JR (hospital) to say they have a cancellation and they have an appointment for me.

My hip means that I've constantly got pain. I struggle doing things around the flat. I've always kept the flat nice and clean and tidy but it's a tip and I find that hard to cope with, but no, it's quite restrictive it really is and I can get quite upset about it when I see people just walking or running or just doing things that I was always able to do. No more running for a bus, not unless I put my stick out and try and wave it down.

The house I live in is divided into two flats and a young family lives above me. It's constant noise until they go to bed at night and I find that very stressful. I don't find there is any peace, I don't have any peace.

Archway is such a wonderful place, it really is and I think me being in the situation I'm in at the moment physically and mentally, it's a great loss to me not being able to go.

Lisa does ring me and so does Janet [staff members]. The Samaritans are really lovely. They are a listening ear and they don't, you know, condemn or say anything, make judgements and they're an incredible organisation, they really are. It's nice when Janet phones. It's just nice to be able to talk about how you feel. You wouldn't believe the Samaritans, and Archway in particular, because I'm not always low, I have my ups and downs. I think just going to Archway (to a pre-pandemic social group), even if you just sit there. I mean you don't just sit there because people talk to you and that's what's so lovely about it. You are never left sitting on your own, it's marvellous, it really is.

I have to say Archway, despite all that's going on with the virus and everything, they are doing their utmost to keep in contact with members. The staff and volunteers are still working hard, and we have not been neglected at all despite all what's going on and I appreciate it so much. And to receive the fortnightly newsletter, *Brightside*, makes you feel good. I always look forward to receiving it. Although we can't actually meet up, it's just the weekly phone call is

another thing. I mean I feel so privileged to have that and I mean I can't find the right words to express. It's the only place, organisation or whatever you want to call it, that I've gone to and - usually if I haven't been somewhere, say for two or three weeks, and because I suffer with depression and anxiety, I probably wouldn't go back - but I never get that feeling at Archway because they are always so pleased to see you again and they are so caring. I've never known anything like it before.