

5. It has been a life line

I've been going to Archway fourteen years, a long time. Now they phone once a fortnight or once a week to see if everything's all right. Judith used to phone and now Barbara phones. Brenda (senior staff member) phoned the other week because they couldn't get hold of me and they thought there might be something wrong. She said 'they have been trying to contact you and they haven't had no response so they passed it back over to me to see if you are all right.' I said, 'I'm fine.' She said, 'as long as you are all right they don't mind but they were getting quite worried' she said, which is fair enough, and then I said to her, 'we got an uncle that's in the Churchill with cancer, that's what the problem is.' She said, 'I'm ever so sorry, as long as you and your brother are all right.' 'He's fine', I said 'and I'm fine' and I said 'thank you for phoning'. She said, 'no, that's our job to phone you.'

It's like in May, I lost my mum in May. I got in touch with Archway because I went a bit funny about it and said, 'how am I going to manage now without my mum and dad?' and they said, 'You will still manage with your brother who's there with you' and I said, 'yes.' She said, 'if you've got any difficulties or anything get in touch with Archway and they'll contact you' and Judith phoned the next day. They've been really good Archway, they phone and see if I'm all right and have I got enough food and things.

It's been a long time this (lockdown), I haven't been out for a long time. I'm getting really fed up with it now. I'm used to going out, that's what the problem is. I just can't go out cos I'm vulnerable at the moment the doctor said, in case I have a fall or anything. I've already had a fall about a month ago in here so I've got to be really careful but I just told Brenda, it will be nice when I can go back to Archway (social group) and see all my friends. She said, 'we understand and we'd love to see you when you can come back, but I can understand what you mean, it is a long time.'

The calls have been reassuring. They've been really nice, they've rung each week and they've really talked to me. It's like Barbara rung last week and she was on the phone for about forty minutes I should think, or even longer than that. She said, 'I don't mind spending the time speaking to you.' I said, 'they've all been nice at Archway' and she said, 'You're a nice person at the end of the day.'

They send all leaflets through once a month about whatever they're doing, and if it's anybody's birthday they wish them 'Happy Birthday.' And then they rung me in September and wishes me a happy birthday. But it's not the same as really meeting the friends like at Archway. I used to go to Archway each week on a Monday. They used to pick me up in the car and take me there and bring me back and I used to think it was ever so nice. It's all stopped at the moment because of the virus. I used to be able to go and visit my friends but now I can't so it's all come hard really.

I only see my brother at the moment cos he lives with me cos he's my carer. Archway calls have made a lot of difference because you just can't go out and mix with people. You can't go to the shops and have a cup of tea, can you, or a piece of cake or a biscuit or sandwiches or can't go to town, can you, or Cowley centre or Headington. I used to love going out. The first time you thought it wouldn't go on so long (lockdown), now they've sent a second lot so

it's come harder now because you can't go anywhere. If Archway hadn't been in touch, it wouldn't have been very good at all cos I wouldn't have been in touch with nobody. You've got nobody else. My family has been in touch and asked me if I'm all right and things but it's not the same as speaking to my friends.

I made a nice friend at Archway. He lives completely on his own. He rings me a couple of times a day because he lives on his own. I used to go to his flat and have a cup of tea with him. Now, I can't go to his flat.

I've enjoyed people phoning from Archway. I've enjoyed it each week. It's helped me with the rest of the week cos it's somebody different to talk to. Not being funny towards my brother but you don't know what to keep saying to him do you? If it's somebody different, you know what to say to them. It has been a lifeline. It's made a lot of difference really because I don't have nobody else to talk to only my ordinary friends. I don't really know anybody else, only the people really from Archway.

If you can't get out it's more hard. I tell people I'm in prison. Well, it's not like prison really, it's just a house. It's just not mixing. It's just mixing with people like people from Archway and going out really that I miss.