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**Attached: Photograph one shows shows Anne, a local resident, with one of the Open Doors volunteers, Vivien Fitch. The second photograph shows Lamyae (who was initially a beneficiary and is now a volunteer) at the Open Doors weekly community café session.**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**25 May, 2018  
003/18**

**More vulnerable families to benefit from project to combat loneliness as Allchurches grant helps Open Doors to extend its reach**

Open Doors, a project run by charity Community Resources, has this week been awarded a grant by Allchurches Trust, providing vital funding that will enable them to expand their work in combating loneliness to more locations throughout the UK.

The Allchurches Trust award is a welcome boost for Open Doors, which has been working for over 10 years in the Barking and Dagenham area, placing volunteers alongside vulnerable individuals and families to help increase their confidence and self-esteem, develop their skills, and reduce their feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The grant from Allchurches will help Community Resources for Change to build on the positive impact it has made in the Dagenham area by providing funding towards piloting Open Doors through local churches in four new settings, with a view to developing a model that can then be replicated in settings across the UK. Chosen churches will be those with experience of working with vulnerable families and recruiting volunteers.

Isolation is a 'hot topic' currently, particularly since the publication of the Jo Cox report earlier this year, which highlighted the adverse effects of loneliness on people's health and well-being. Open Doors wants to expand its proven volunteer-led approach in order to enable people to work through their problems and find a place of belonging in their community. The grant will enable more volunteer families to be trained and get alongside others.

James Laing, Grants and Relationships Director at Allchurches Trust, said: "At the heart of our grant-giving is supporting people, particularly those in greatest need, to reach their full potential within their communities. The Open Doors project is making a huge difference to people's lives in Dagenham, reducing isolation, strengthening communities and brokering positive relationships between families, helping them to help each other. We're delighted that our grant will enable Open Doors to be piloted in four other locations, enabling more vulnerable families to benefit."

Sally Dixon, Open Doors coordinator, said: "Loneliness is an increasing problem and can affect anyone from any walk of life. You can feel isolated for so many reasons, for example you might be new to the area, have lost your job, maybe you're elderly or have just had a baby - whatever the reason, it's very debilitating. We're thrilled to get this grant so that we can get alongside more struggling families and help them feel that they belong."

Someone who has benefitted from Open Doors support is Beata Polokovs, 39. She said: "I was very ill. One of my doctors referred me to Open Doors. I was looking for nice people, I wanted a community... [Open Doors] has changed my life and I feel that I live now. All my members of my family, my husband and my baby, we're very, very happy."

Allchurches Trust is one of the UK's largest grant-making charities and gave £15.6 million to churches, charities and communities in 2017. Its funds come from its ownership of Ecclesiastical Insurance Group.

## **Ends**

### **Notes to editors:**

- 1.) Allchurches Trust is one of the UK's largest grant-making charities.
- 2.) In 2017, Allchurches Trust gave £15.6 million to churches, charities and communities.
- 3.) Established in 1972, Allchurches Trust funds come from our ownership of Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, which was founded in 1887.
- 4.) Our grants further our charitable objectives of promoting the Christian faith and other charitable causes. We welcome applications from all parts of the UK and Ireland, particularly from areas of social and economic deprivation.
- 5.) We fund projects that tackle homelessness, poverty and social exclusion, enabling individuals and communities to thrive. We also support the repair, restoration and wider community use of churches and cathedrals of all denominations.

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### **More about Community Resources:**

Community Resources grows creative solutions to local issues – solutions provided 'By the community, for the community'. We are a group of volunteers from all walks of life who want to bring people together to realise that they can make a great contribution to their community.

The 'connecting places' we create provide environments where people can start friendships, develop skills and confidence and discover what they can contribute.

Our 'connecting places' include: Castle Point Community Hub on Bennetts Castle Lane, Dagenham and The Corner Coffee House on Green Lane, Dagenham.

For further information about Open Doors contact co-ordinator, Sally Dixon on 07960 050202

For further information about LifeLine Community Resources contact Director, Avril McIntyre on 020 8597 2900

[www.communityresources.co.uk](http://www.communityresources.co.uk)