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LOVING LOCAL

NEWS

‘Window into the world’: Charity connects lonely people through technology

For 80 years a Hornchurch charity has been finding ways to connect vulnerable and lonely people to the world through technology.

WaveLength, High Street, works with domestic violence refuges, young people leaving care, homeless hostels, hospital wards, and day care centres.

The charity provides free tablets, radios and TVs to those who are suffering from loneliness.

For the people WaveLength help, the gift of technology can be a vital lifeline and window to the world.

The national charity began in 1939 as the Greater London Society For Providing Wireless for the Bedridden and was set up by London

APRIL ROACH

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Rotarians to relieve social isolation through the provision of radios.

“The radio is a really good piece of technology because even if people don’t have technology or a TV licence, they can still use it,” said Cherish Watton, communications officer at WaveLength.

“All you have to do is plug in and play. We find people really enjoy the radio and they become very protective of it.”

Cherish shared the story of one of their beneficiaries, an elderly woman who would wrap up her radio every



night before she went to bed as it was so precious to her.

As technology developed over the years, so has the charity. In 2010 it changed its name to WaveLength to encompass the range of technology which the charity now provides.

Cherish described technology as a “window into the world”.

“[Loneliness] affects people across all age groups. A BBC survey showed that it was the 16 to 24 group that self-identifies as being the most lonely.

“Every solution is different



In 1964, a visitor to this lady said: “This is the first present of its kind she has received in her whole life, and how wonderful she felt about. She requested me to thank you, to put it in her own words ‘from the bottom of my heart’ on her behalf.” Below, Ken Hay the chairman, Marmaduke Hussey, chairman of the board of governors at the BBC, the Mayor of Havering, and Bob Tomlin the vice-chairman at the opening of WaveLength’s offices in Hornchurch in 1992.

Photos: WAVELENGTH



NEWS



A family receiving a new television from the Hornchurch charity, WaveLength.

for everyone. I think for young people it could be that transition point where you're moving to university or if there's been bereavement in the family."

Communications officer Ellis Powell added: "A lot of people think technology is a bad thing, but it's all about learning new skills."

"We don't just help the elderly, WaveLength is for everyone."

"I visited a man in Chelmsford who had been homeless, and now with a tablet he is just happy to be able to know what's going on with politics."

"Technology can help people simply be able to start up a conversation with someone else. It brings people together."

The charity works with multiple organisations such as Havering Women's Aid.

A spokeswoman from Havering Women's Aid said: "Women and children often enter our refuge after fleeing

devastating abuse feeling frightened and isolated. Being able to offer them televisions, radios and tablets is something our charity would be unable to provide ourselves."

"These items help the families feel a sense of normality, they can keep up with their television shows and stay in touch with family and friends."

"This really makes their stay more comfortable and eliminates a lot of the feeling of isolation."

People can support the charity either by making a donation or organising a fundraising activity.

In 2016 WaveLength was able to match the Lions Club of Romford's donation and give five TVs, four TV licences and eight tablets to Havering Women's Aid.

Tim Leech, chief executive of the charity, said: "Loneliness can affect anyone at any stage in their life, wherever they live in the

country.

"WaveLength were delighted to help develop the government's loneliness strategy and continue to be a part of the Loneliness Action Group."

"Our research with the University of York, in which Havering Women's Aid were involved, has shown the impact of our work."

"Our gift of technology helps to alleviate loneliness and other negative emotions, while also creating social connections."

To qualify for a piece of technology, applicants must be referred by a third party, known as a referrer.

This can be a friend or neighbour, social worker, care worker, medical worker, housing officer, charity worker, volunteer, a member of a religious or community organisation.

Visit wavelength.org.uk/ apply-for-help/ for an application form.

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