

Village Agents Winter Newsletter



Easy access to services and information

The Mid Essex pilot project was launched at three well attended events in Belchamp St. Paul, East Hanningfield and St. Lawrence Bay on the 15th October. The Village Agents team was transported to each location on an old London bus. A superb way to travel through the Essex countryside although slightly draughty at times! The team were on hand for various publicity pictures but more importantly to talk to potential referral partners and clients.

The agents have received training and presentations from a wide range of services and organisations together with information about governance and relevant personal skills development. They have now been released into the rural communities to provide easy access to services and information to support a person's individual or family needs.

An on-line referral system is now fully operational and linked to the new Village Agents website www.villageagentsessex.org.uk where information about the service, news/events and how to contact the agents can be found.



A Christmas card was delivered to virtually every household in the initial locations chosen for the pilot to introduce the service. The agents are actively meeting local groups and building relationships with local residents. They are finding and meeting people on a daily basis.

Dot, an elderly lady in need of a hip operation living near Maldon, was one of the early visits. She was interested to learn more about having a personal safety pendant that she could use to raise help in the event of a fall. The Village Agent contacted the best referral partner and within days Dot had received the pendant, and advice on how to use 'Telecare'. This is one of many referrals relating to a wide range of services such as providing information about church services and welfare benefits to requests for raised

toilet seats and fire safety checks.

'Action for Family Carers' contacted one of the agents in December to see if they could assist in finding a local person to provide respite care for a few hours a week, to support a daughter who looks after her mother. Through her contacts the agent successfully found a volunteer and made all of the necessary links. An excellent

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demonstration of how one referral can support an organisation, a family and a willing volunteer.

Alongside meeting people the agents are helping to promote initiatives through raising awareness, attending events and arranging community transport to events such as the Essex Later Life Expo at the Charter Hall, Colchester. The six agents in Braintree have priority access to a community transport mini-bus and a driver and they are hoping to use the bus for travel to over 50's swimming sessions or to town on a market day.

The next round of stakeholder meetings in each district/borough will be held in late January and early February. At these meetings the initial performance data will be summarised together with a general progress report on the project.

How can a Village Agent help?

Working as a well equipped team the agents offer free confidential personal advice and a link to many services such as:

- Home adaptations and equipment to make your life easier and safer
- Home security, Fire safety checks and smoke alarm fitting
- Housing and getting jobs done around the home and garden
- Healthy living advice and activities such as fitness, weight loss or smoking cessation
- Making sure you are receiving the correct benefits or pension
- Information about all forms of travel and access to community transport
- Support opportunities for your family or carers
- Help you to become a volunteer to help others
- Access to local social groups, leisure activities and learning opportunities

Throughout the year the agents will be working to help people choose the best service and if requested they will also return to ensure you are satisfied. We aim to:

- Provide independent, confidential trusted advice
- Compliment not duplicate existing services
- Reduce confusion and add value to service choice
- Help anyone in need, particularly the elderly and families
- Share information and experience
- Inform future Adult Health and Community Wellbeing strategy

For more information or to arrange a meeting with an agent please call the free helpline on 0800 9775858

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