



Village Agent project

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Hampshire
County Council

Context for the project



The joint Ageing well in Hampshire –Older People’s Well-Being strategy (2011 -2014) objectives:-

- To ensure that older people can obtain the information they need when they need it
- To support access to and increase the range of social & community activity
- To identify opportunities to reach out into communities
- To provide that “bit of help” at the right time
- To help plan for a fulfilled older age



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Definition



The Village Agent Project aims to increase and improve the ways older people find and benefit from information, activities and services in rural areas through the recruitment and training of locally based volunteers



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Because



Older people living in rural areas have **less** opportunity to access information, services and support to enable them to remain living independently at home with a positive quality of life, delay the need for residential care, and avoid hospital stays.



Context



- A successful 15 month pilot (March 2011 –June 2012) funded by HCC Rural Development resulted in
- Funding by Hampshire County Council Adult Services (until July 2015)
- Part of an integrated approach to Prevention and Early Intervention
- The first volunteer based project in the country



Partnership between



- Hampshire County Council
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC)
- Age Concern Hampshire (grant funded to coordinate the project)



Current service



1. County Coordinator – employed by Age Concern Hampshire (ACH)
2. Identify rural locations - promotion and responding to requests
3. Volunteers who provide 4-6 hours service a week in a defined rural community:-
 - Recruited
 - Trained
 - Supported
 - Access to HCC and ACH services



Support from Village Agents



- **Getting out and about** - transport for shopping, organised trips, medical appointments, local activities and events. Finding information on Blue Badge parking and concessionary travel.
- **Help around the Home** - for FREE Home Fire Safety visits, gardening, maintenance, finding reputable trades people, care options, and how to use a computer.
- **Money Matters** - entitlement to claim benefits and how to get debt advice
- **Community activities** – talks, exercise classes, IT groups
- **Influence local decisions**



Examples



Village resident

- *A lady requested a special Home Fire Safety visit by a VA ,as she wears a hearing aid and was worried about not hearing a smoke alarm at night. The VA went onto arrange for the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service sensory team to fit an alarm under her pillow . She said “This has made such a difference to me. I was worried before but now get good nights sleep”*

Village Agent volunteer

- *‘It has been three years since I retired. I felt I had lost my skills. Recently I reflected on how becoming a Village Agent had reminded me that I had not lost any skills and also how transferable they are. I love this role; it makes me feel valued”*



Activities from February – July 2013



31 village agents in 23 rural locations :-

- Provided 1,358 volunteering hours
- Met a total of 2,700 people (individuals and in groups)
- 239 were one to one contacts
- Made 87 referrals to other agencies
- Made 16 Home Fire safety visits



Capturing the Outcomes



- Data collected from volunteers
- Clients stories
- Volunteer feedback
- New economic foundation (nef) wellbeing assessment tool



Conclusion



- The model is replicable e.g. in hamlets
- The model is innovative and cost effective
- Draws on the skills of volunteers and their local community
- Operates as part of a wider framework of statutory and voluntary services
- There are measurable outcomes





Any questions?



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