

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Adult Social Care
Date:	25 May 2012
Title:	Roll-Out of Village Agents Programme
Reference:	3901
Report From:	Director of Adult Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive Member for Adult Social Care of a grant of £170, 000 (over 3 years) to Age Concern Hampshire to fund a three year roll-out of the Village Agent Initiative across the county.
- 1.2. A trial of Village Agents has been running since February 2011 and is due to finish in July 2012. This trial was funded in the form of a grant to Age Concern Hampshire from Hampshire County Council (Rural Affairs and Adult Services), as well as funding from local members.
- 1.3. The Village Agent programme was established to increase and improve the way that older people living in rural parts of Hampshire, find and benefit from information. Through its network of Village Agents the programme attempts to provide better support for older people and to help them access important information in a format they are comfortable with and is therefore a key element of Hampshire County Council's Prevention & Early Intervention Strategy as well as a structured and measurable response to the government's localism agenda.
- 1.4. Age Concern Hampshire, through the Village Agent initiative ,will play a key role in supporting the delivery of the Prevention and Early Intervention / Universal Offer elements of Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Care Strategy 2012-15. The Village Agent concept is designed to help bridge the gap between local communities, in particular older and isolated people, and statutory and voluntary organisations that are able to offer help or support.
- 1.5. Age Concern Hampshire uses funding and other forms of support from Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Fire & Rescue, and relevant borough and district councils to run the Village Agent Initiative. It also engages with other key organisations across the county such as

Hampshire Police, local Neighbourhood Watch groups and Hampshire Association of Parish Councils.

2. Context

- 2.1. The Hampshire pilot for the Village Agent model has created a service based on the idea of localism and volunteering and works through recruiting and training local, trusted members of the community to the role. These Village Agents have strong links to voluntary and statutory organisations, who offer information and support, including Community Independence Teams (CIT), Meals on Wheels services, Better Balance for Life exercise classes, nutrition and IT support, (all provided through Hampshire County Council), as well as to numerous voluntary sector services.
- 2.2. Between July 2011 and January 2012, Age Concern Hampshire, via its existing Village Agents, generated 440 volunteer hours, meeting a total of 1311 people. This resulted in a total of 225 theme interactions and 51 referrals to other organisations. The interactions focussed largely on health and wellbeing, feeling safe at home, energy saving and home insulation, help with computers, benefits and transport. Referrals were made to the DWP, Community Independence Teams, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Safe, Warm, Secure service and the Home Improvement Agency. Full details are listed in Appendix C.
- 2.3. It is envisaged that the scheme will be extended to 25 volunteers in the first year of the grant, then by a further 10 volunteers for each subsequent year, with a total of 45 volunteers in the final year of the grant. The existing Village Agents are working in Kings Somborne (x2) (Test Valley), Froyle (x2) (East Hampshire), St Mary Bourne (x2) (Basingstoke & Deane), Waltham Chase (Winchester), Headley (East Hampshire), Crondall and Ewshot (Hart) and Burley (New Forest). Future locations for Village Agents will be determined by a combination of support from the local community, commitment of local volunteers and the rurality and demographics of the location.
- 2.4. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to providing the training for the Village Agents, to enable them to carry out the remit of the volunteer Home Safety Advisor, which is an integral part of their role. In addition to this training, which is provided at no cost to Age Concern Hampshire, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service will continue to make its fire stations and other facilities available to local Village Agents.
- 2.5. Hampshire County Council is proposing to contribute £170,000 (over the course of 3 years) to Age Concern Hampshire to help support and roll-out the programme for a further 3 years.
- 2.6. It is recommended that a grant is given to Age Concern Hampshire, as Hampshire County Council will not be funding the entire cost of the activities; significant amounts of volunteer work will be leveraged through awarding a grant. The grant will enable Age Concern

Hampshire to host the Village Agent Co-ordinator, who in turn will manage the individual Village Agents.

- 2.7. There are a number of compelling reasons why Hampshire County Council wishes to give a grant to Age Concern Hampshire to help it develop its Village Agents initiative. It is the only locally based, Hampshire –wide, voluntary sector organisation with expertise in both older people and volunteer management. The pilot has been undertaken with Age Concern Hampshire and the organisation is a forceful local champion of the Village Agent concept.
- 2.8. Awarding this grant to Age Concern Hampshire will mean that the Village Agents will have direct access to its Older People’s Area Link (OPAL) project, and its free Information and Advice Service, with ready access to the volunteers and information available as part of this service. This in turn will help strengthen these valuable services and resources, and build on the work that they are already doing.
- 2.9. Voluntary and community organisations, such as Age Concern Hampshire, provide valuable locally based services that are rooted in the communities which they serve. The voluntary activities of Village Agents clearly assists in providing prevention and early intervention initiatives. Grant funding by Adult Services contributes to and helps sustain this activity. Grant funding offers increased flexibility to meet the differing needs of individuals and communities and will allow the opportunity for individual Village Agents to ‘test out’ new ideas.
- 2.10. A grant is defined as a sum of money to support a particular activity. It is legally considered to be a one-sided gift, rather than a payment in exchange for services.
- 2.11. Funding will be required to provide the infrastructure and expenses to support the village agents, and to fund the role of the Village Agent Co-ordinator, who will be employed by Age Concern Hampshire. The Village Agents themselves will remain volunteers; this is the model currently used in the trial whilst other local authorities have opted for salaried Village Agents.
- 2.12. The majority of the benefits, identified to date in the trial have been qualitative (Section 11). However analysis of Village Agents programme in Essex, has determined that there are significant financial benefits for both the local authority and other public bodies (e.g. NHS) as a result of interventions by Village Agents. (See Appendix E for a number of outcome stories from the trial in Hampshire).

3. Aims

- 3.1. Village Agents, via Age Concern Hampshire, will ensure a range of interventions that enable older people to remain living independently in their community, with access to the services they require.
- 3.2. The Village Agent Programme is designed to increase the participation and involvement of older people in their communities, and thus build strong and cohesive rural communities, and avoid social isolation.

4. Objectives

The objectives of the Village Agent programme are:

- 4.1. Enable older people to maintain their independence and maximise their safety, health and well-being and so delay the need for more intensive support in the home and avoid residential care, nursing care or hospital, where possible.
- 4.2. Through prevention and early intervention, avoid more costly outcomes
- 4.3. Create the Village Agent as a community resource for rural communities in Hampshire to develop/publicise community activities
- 4.4. To carry out the remit of the volunteer Home Safety Advisor (Hampshire Fire & Rescue)
- 4.5. Village Agents to help develop the links between rural communities and individuals, their councils and other service providers.
- 4.6. Increase the health and well-being of older people through guidance and information in order to maximise their income; increase community participation and social interaction; source care for self, home and garden; shop and eat well, promote home safety.
- 4.7. Ensure older peoples' wishes, requirements and views are at the forefront throughout the process.
- 4.8. Signposting to a wide range of services as appropriate.

5. Links to Corporate and Departmental Priorities

- 5.1. The Village Agents programme supports each of Hampshire County Council's three Corporate Priorities:
 - *Hampshire Safer and More Secure for All*
 - *Maximising Well-Being*
 - *Enhancing Our Quality of Place*
- 5.2. Village Agents help to deliver the Prevention and Early Intervention element of Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Care Strategy 2012-15.
 - *Universal Offer.*Provision of universal services such as information and advice to the wider community to help prevent or delay the need for more targeted social care interventions.
- 5.3. The roll-out of the Village Agents programme supports the delivery of Hampshire's Older People's Well-Being Strategy 2011-14, particularly in terms of partnership working with voluntary and community groups, including local parish groups, and with district and borough councils. One of the key themes that emerged from the consultation around this strategy, is the requirement for older people to be provided with the right information, in an appropriate format, in a timely manner.
- 5.4. Additionally the programme addresses the priorities of the [Audit Commission/Better Government for Older People] *Seven Dimensions*

of Independence, around which the strategy is structured (see Appendix D).

- 5.5. The expansion of the Village Agents programme supports the key aim of Hampshire County Council's *Rural Delivery Action Plan* (agreed by Cabinet in 2009) to have "rural communities that are resilient and sustainable socially, economically and environmentally".

In particular the programme demonstrates commitment in supporting rural communities by securing more effective engagement between them and partner organisations. It provides improved accessibility to services in rural areas. It supports more effective communication with rural communities through the identification and publication of sources of information and support, both from within and outside of Hampshire County Council.

- 5.6. Village Agents will also be key in helping Hampshire County Council deliver its *Corporate Customer Access Model*. The council is striving to provide consistent and reliable access to services underpinned by Hantsweb. As it maximises effective web access to services for the majority of the Hampshire population it is mindful that there will be people that need to gain access via phone or face-to-face channels. Village agents have already demonstrated how they have shown people (in a face-to-face capacity) to access HCC services via Hantsweb.
- 5.7. The Village Agents initiative closely fits with a number of the priorities of the *Hampshire Open for Business* plan: improving outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; enhancing community engagement and partnership working; developing new models of service provision.

6. Value for Money

- 6.1. The programme is designed to help deliver value-for-money solutions to the challenges of offering greater choice and control to Hampshire's growing number of older people.
- 6.2. In using volunteers as Village Agents, supported by a salaried co-ordinator, the Hampshire scheme offers much greater value for money than other schemes, which use agents employed by the local authority.
- 6.3. Through their use of Hantsweb and PIPer, which allows users with internet access to create personalised pages of information about services they can access, Village Agents operate as a low-cost channel, where older people can access information and determine the outcome that meets their needs without further involvement from Adult Services. This will not involve any additional IT costs; people will merely be sign-posted to additional information.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out, the key findings of which are detailed below:

- 7.1. Village Agents will help alleviate issues of social isolation and exclusion amongst older people, particularly those living in rural communities.
- 7.2. The programme will help address issues around rural deprivation, ensuring older people are aware of how to access services that are available to them.
- 7.3. The Village Agents initiative will be inclusive of older BME communities, and other excluded rural communities. Support to facilitate this may be required from the Community Development Officers.
- 7.4. It is recommended that additional work will be facilitated by the Community Development team to roll out the Village Agents' model to other excluded communities within Hampshire, including the Traveller and Nepalese communities.

8. Option Appraisal

The following options have been considered

- 8.1. Option 1. *Cease funding for the Village Agents programme at the end of the current trial (July 2012).* This option has been rejected on the grounds that the programme delivers significant benefits, in terms of the corporate and departmental priorities, especially prevention and intervention, and supports the national drivers of greater localism in the delivery of services and giving greater choice to individuals.
- 8.2. Option 2. *Extend the Village Agents programme for a further 3 years, bringing the scheme in-house and replacing the local volunteers with salaried staff.* This is the model that is in place in Mid Essex. This option has been rejected on the grounds of the costs involved, and because the existing pilot scheme is currently operating well using volunteers (with expenses, training etc funded from within the programme)
- 8.3. Option 3. *Give a grant to Age Concern Hampshire, to extend the Village Agents programme for a further 3 years, using the same principle of volunteer Village Agents supported by a salaried co-ordinator.* This is the preferred option.

The benefits of the preferred option (option 3) are:

- 8.4. Use of volunteers, supported by a salaried co-ordinator offers value for money for those funding the programme.
- 8.5. Volunteer Village Agents usually live in the communities where they work. They are known and trusted by those with whom they come into contact, and have proved to be suitably qualified and motivated.
- 8.6. The volunteer model is replicable across Hampshire with its large number of rural parishes.

- 8.7. Using volunteers from within communities, means the model is replicable into other communities, specifically BME communities and the traveller community, as well as into urban areas.
- 8.8. This model is already in place through the current trial; links to other teams e.g. Community Independence Teams and local voluntary organisations are already established.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 In exercising its functions an authority must have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

10. Risk Assessment and Management

- 10.1. The provision of grants to voluntary and community sector organisations by statutory bodies always presents a degree of risk. Specific risks that statutory bodies are required to manage include voluntary and community organisations accepting funding without providing a service; organisations not delivering the service as expected; and there being an under spend on the expected activity.
- 10.2. A number of mechanisms have been employed successfully over a number of years to mitigate and alleviate these risks. These include nominating a Liaison Officer from the County Council whose responsibility is to monitor how the grant is spent. A lead officer from the Older Person's Wellbeing Team will take responsibility for this for the Village Agents initiative. As a member of the Village Agents' multi-agency steering group, the lead officer will monitor performance against the planned milestones and desired outcomes.
- 10.3. Village Agents will be covered by Age Concern Hampshire's Public Liability Insurance. Age Concern Hampshire have shared their lone-working policy with Hampshire County Council's Older People's Wellbeing Team which forms part of the training for Village Agents. In order to identify themselves to members of the public, all Village Agents are issued with identity cards.

11. Financial Analysis:

11.1. Funding

The Village Agent pilot has demonstrated that it can reach a lot of people with very little resource. In particular it reaches people who can sometimes struggle to access services and may be isolated. The project is therefore considered to be good value for money.

Adult Services' Departmental Management Team has agreed to fund

the grant from the departmental contingency in 2012/13 (as the budget has already been agreed), with the intention of identifying ongoing funding through the usual budget setting process from 2013/14.

11.2. Cost Analysis:

The costs for the Village Agent initiative are based upon the costs of the current trial. The purchasing of equipment and stationery, the employment of the Village Agent Co-ordinator and other costs associated with the initiative will all be met by Age Concern Hampshire, using the grant provided by Hampshire County Council. There will be no financial risk to the Council, above the cost of the grant. Assumptions have been made around the equipment that Age Concern Hampshire will need to purchase for the Village Agents, as well as other associated costs (office costs, training etc).

12. Outcomes to Date

12.1. The first eight months of the trial of Village Agents has seen significant numbers of interventions and outcomes. During the period July 2011 – January 2012 there were a total of 440 volunteer hours by Village Agents, with them meeting a total of 1311 people. This resulted in a total of 225 theme interactions and 51 referrals to other organisations. (full details are listed in Appendix C).

12.2. The following are examples of some of the outcomes resulting from the Village Agent programme, all of which have increased the health, well-being or independence of the older people affected:

- Arranging charity funding for attendance at a day centre for residents of one village
- Setting up volunteer-led IT and computing courses
- Assisting a family, who care for their elderly father, to apply for both Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance. The family had not been aware that they might be eligible for these allowances
- Raising awareness of the blue badge scheme and supporting people in applying for it
- Liaising with the local bus company and the Council to arrange a temporary bus stop, for market days, to enable local residents to access the weekly market
- Arranging for people to access the Telephone Preference Service in order that they can opt-out of cold-calls via the telephone

13. Qualitative Benefits

13.1 The following benefits have either been identified already as a result of the trial of Village Agents in Hampshire, or from the existing schemes that have been operating for a longer time in Essex and Gloucestershire

- 13.2 Actively seeking people that may need low levels of support, helps prevent or delay the need for more costly critical care services
- 13.3 Improves access to services for those people living in some of the most isolated rural communities within Hampshire.
- 13.4 Encourages community integration and cohesion, through local groups, talks and meetings. This particularly benefits the more older and vulnerable people who are either at risk of becoming, or are already, isolated within their community.
- 13.5 Enables people to continue living independently within their own homes for longer, in many cases avoiding, or delaying the need for costlier interventions or care.
- 13.6 Training of volunteers to recognise trigger points (through local Trigger Tool Training), that may indicate developing problems in terms of health (either physical or mental) or ability to cope, allows for early intervention.
- 13.7 Helps enable the community to enjoy a healthier lifestyle, through improved nutrition, increased exercise and reduction in social isolation.
- 13.8 The preliminary findings of ongoing research that is currently underway in Adult Services, around how customers prefer to access information, shows that older people prefer to receive face to face information, rather than accessing it directly online or via the telephone; indeed for may older people it is the only option.

14. Financial Benefits of Early Intervention

- 14.1. Whilst no specific work to date has been carried out in Hampshire, to attribute specific savings to specific interventions by Village Agents, such work has been undertaken by other local authorities.
- 14.2. Essex County Council has developed a model to evaluate average financial outcomes resulting from the intervention of Village Agents. It should be noted that these are not specific savings to the local authority. The interventions have been broken down into the following categories:

Category	Intervention Type	Average Saving
Community Safety	Smoke detector; safety / security checks	£21.62 (based on working smoke alarm)
Health	Advice (alcohol, smoking); falls prevention; home insulation etc	£39.40 (based on NHS Mid Essex winter admissions)
Income Maximisation	Benefits; pension credits; housing benefits; council tax etc	£885.61 (based on Essex County Council benefits helpline average)

Social Care	Social care direct	£156.49 (based on reduced risk of a fall)
Housing	Accommodation; affordable housing	£17.25 (based on time saving and travel)
Accessibility	Transport; jobs; learning; social interaction; sport and active recreation; volunteering etc	£17.25 (based on travel cost and time saving)
Prevention	Adaptations; telecare; personal and carer support	£156.49 (based on reduced risk of a fall)

14.3. The performance of their Village Agents is monitored on a monthly basis by Essex County Council, and a Performance Report (Scorecard) produced which summarises the results against the different categories of interventions. It is this approach that Hampshire County Council wishes to follow.

15. Performance Monitoring

15.1. The performance of the initiative will be monitored by a Wellbeing Measure that has been developed for Hampshire County Council and is already being used in the trial, and by Age Concern Hampshire. The New Economics Foundation (nef) *Assessing the Well-Being of Older People in Hampshire* Tool contains the following measures:

- Satisfaction with different areas of life
- Socialising
- Coping
- Emotional well-being

15.2. A performance monitoring toolkit will be developed, which will ensure that the measures and attributes listed below are monitored, as well as monitoring financial benefits. In order to minimise costs, it is planned that this will be based on an existing toolkit already in use in Essex and purchased from the same supplier. This toolkit will also be available to monitor the performance of other Prevention and Early Intervention work for example the work of the Community Independence Teams.

15.3. The following key attributes are also measured:

- Numbers of enquiries to information sources, including Age Concern Hampshire, Information & Advice
- Number of volunteering promotions to individuals & groups
- The number of referrals to DWP/CAB/CIT
- The number of Benefit Applications/enquiries
- The numbers of referrals to energy schemes – Hitting the Cold Spots, Home Improvement Agencies & Adaptations Requests
- The number of contacts with Hampshire Fire and Safety Advisor remit
- Number of volunteering hours

16. Key Milestone Dates

Ref	Milestone	Date
1	Funding for roll-out approved	May 2012
2	Agreement on voluntary sector provider	May 2012
3	Recruitment of 15 additional volunteers	By Oct 2012
4	Training of volunteers	May - Oct 2012
5	Current trial ends	July 2012
6	Recruitment of 10 additional volunteers	By Oct 2013
7	Training of volunteers	May - Oct 2013
8	Recruitment of 10 additional volunteers	By July 2014
9	Training of volunteers	Jan - July 2014
10	Review of Village Agent Programme and future feasibility	Jan 2015

17. Resources

- 17.1. There is currently a Village Agent co-ordinator overseeing the activities of, and supporting the individual Village Agents, who are volunteers. This person works 18.5 hours per week. It is proposed that this is extended to 1 full time equivalent (fte) post (37.5 hours per week), as a result of the substantial increase in the number of Village Agents.
- 17.2. The Village Agent Co-ordinator will have access to office facilities, including printing, as well as their own mobile telephone and laptop and printer. These will be provided by Age Concern Hampshire.
- 17.3. An allowance for travel costs, and costs of stationery (paper and ink cartridges) will also be available.
- 17.4. Support for the programme will also be provided from existing resources in Hampshire County Council Older Person's Well-Being team and from the Hampshire Village Agents' Steering Group, consisting of representatives from Hampshire Fire & Rescue, Winchester City Council and other borough and district councils. Monitoring of performance will be undertaken by Hampshire County Council Adult Services.

18. Recommendations

- 18.1. That the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, agrees the funding of a grant of £170, 000 (over 3 years) to Age Concern Hampshire to fund a three year roll-out of the Village Agent Initiative across the county. Funding will commence in July 2012, when the current trial is due to cease. The Village Agents programme will run until June 2015.
- 18.2. That the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, agrees that additional work will be facilitated by the Community Development Team

to roll out the Village Agents model to other excluded communities within Hampshire.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	Yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	Yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	Yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out, the key findings of which are detailed below:

- Village Agents will help alleviate issues of social isolation and exclusion amongst older people, particularly those living in rural communities.
- The programme will help address issues around rural deprivation, ensuring older people are aware of how to access services that are available to them.
- The Village Agents initiative will be inclusive of older BME communities, and other excluded rural communities. Support to facilitate this may be required from the Community Development Officers.
- It is recommended that further work will be facilitated by the Community Development team to roll out the Village Agents' model to other excluded communities within Hampshire, including the traveller and Nepalese communities.

The full assessment can be found at the following link:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/as-equality-ia-archive.htm>

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

The Village Agents programme is designed to work with both Hampshire Constabulary and the Hampshire Association of Neighbourhood Watch Groups.

One of the key aims of the Village Agents programme is to help reduce isolation amongst older people living in rural environments and to build safer and more cohesive communities.

Some of the main areas that Village Agents target include improving home security and the establishment of no cold-calling zones.

3. Climate Change:

One of the key successes of the Village Agents trial to date has been the number of interactions around improving home insulation for older people and energy saving, including *Hitting the Cold Spots* and the *Warm Homes, Healthy People* fund (Department of Health funded) . These will continue to be key focuses for the programme moving forward.

Appendix C: Hampshire Village Agents' Outcomes to Date

JULY 2011 to JAN 2012

VOLUNTEER HOURS	440
No OF EVENTS ATTENDED	93
No OF PEOPLE MET AS A VA	1311

LOCATIONS (No of times)

Church	11
Community centre	60
Shop	4
Pub	7
Phone	21
Home	12
Lunch club	12
Other i.e. e mail	49
TOTAL	176

THEME INTERACTIONS

Transport	19
Benefits	13
Health and well-being	41
Safe out and about	4
Home maintenance schemes	3
Local events and activities	9
Feeling safe at home	23
Gardening support	7
Home help and cleaning	4
Physical activities	5
Help learning computer	28
Energy saving and home insulation	12
Fire surveys for HFRS	5
VA familiarisation	52
TOTAL	225

REFERRALS MADE TO -

Age Concern Hampshire	30
DWP	9
CAB	1
CIT	3
Safe Warm Secure	7
Home Improvement Agency	1
TOTAL	51

Appendix D: The Seven Dimensions of Independence

The Strategy will continue to be structured around the Audit Commission/ Better Government for Older People (BGOP) 7 Dimensions of Independence (2004). These priorities were produced after consulting with older people in 2003/04, and similar themes and priorities have been used since then in research and policy documents. They provide simple and clear headings within which to balance the complex interaction between what individuals can do and what the wider community needs to address in order to affect older people's well-being and quality of life. They are:

1. Housing and home

e.g. be able to maintain the fabric of the house, adequate heating, safety in the home, maintaining the garden, help with household duties.

2. Neighbourhood

e.g. feel safe in ones community, adequate lighting, pavements, relationships across the generations.

3. Social activities, social networks, keeping busy

e.g. a variety of activities available to attend, visitors to the home, activities can carry out at home, able to volunteer, leisure, learning.

4. Getting out and about

e.g. transport, driving, access.

5. Income

e.g. advice available on entitlements, adequate money to live on.

6. Information

e.g. easily accessible information, easy to understand information collated together from a variety of sources.

7. Health and healthy living

e.g. approachable services when required, access to healthy activities and information.

Appendix E: Examples of Outcome Stories**1. Health - Heating, Confidentiality & Trust**

A resident spoke to the Village Agents in confidence. There was great concern that identity be concealed and faith was put in the Village Agents to maintain confidentiality. The person did not want other villagers to know their business.

A heater had broken and was in need of replacement. This would be costly and beyond the capacity of the person. The weather was rapidly turning colder and although the family of the person had helped financially already, still more money was needed to make repairs. The person was not prepared to ask for help of the State. The Village Agents identified two local charitable funds – one did not apply but the other had potential.

The person was signposted to the fund but it was found that the application would have to go before a committee of twelve local people. They required the identity and financial position of the applicant to be revealed to all twelve members of the Committee. The Village Agents discussed confidentiality with the charity concerned and lobbied for a change of the policy. This lobby was successful and a change of constitution has since been agreed. Only two key people will now know the applicants details in instances where a Village Agents is supporting an individual.

This resident was successful in the application and is living in a much warmer home over the winter period.

2. Wellbeing improvements -Day Care Centre Attendance

A Day Care Centre exists in an adjoining town. Attendance requires a GP referral at a cost of £35 per day. People can get some help towards the cost but this takes time. A local charity has agreed that if a Doctor refers a person to the Centre and crucially, the Village Agent has involvement with that individual in a support or referral capacity, then the Charity will consider providing the funding for ONE day per week per applicant. This removes considerable stress from the families of those who can benefit from attendance at the Day Centre as well as offering financial relief and an improvement of the well-being of the individual who is able to attend with little or no delay. It is also significant that the involvement of the Village Agent affords a priority to the request which has not been possible formerly.

3. Financial wellbeing improvements -Allowances & income

Village Agents were spoken to by a resident who had for many years been looking after an elderly father. The resident and carer did not believe they would be eligible for any allowance, despite the carer providing many hours per week of care and support. Following initial contact with the carer, the Village Agent suggested that in the circumstances the family should contact the Department of Work and Pensions and provided the contact details.

The Village Agents went on to put the family in touch with Age Concern Hampshire and Citizen's Advice Bureau to help make an application.

However, with encouragement from the Village Agents, the family made their own online application. Within a short time their application for Attendance Allowance was successful and both the local resident and their elderly father are in a much more secure position financially. Subsequently an application for Carer's Allowance is in train and the value of the Village Agent providing face-to-face, trusted information has been revealed.

4. Independent travel: Blue Badge

One resident known to the Village Agent appeared to be eligible for a Blue Badge for her vehicle but was unaware of the scheme. The Village Agent supported the resident while completing forms for Hampshire County Council. The Blue Badge was duly issued and this led to a cascade effect as a number of other residents have sought similar help from the Village Agent. The provision of the Badge has made a huge difference to the quality of life of the resident who had always walked further than needed when parking.