

Appendix 4:

Introduction

I continue to work for 12 hours a week for nine parishes including Broomfield, Cannington, Durlleigh, Enmore, Goathurst, Nether Stowey, Over Stowey, Spaxton and Wembdon. Most of my clients are self-referred and I try to maintain a presence in each of the above villages to facilitate this. My current contract ends at the end of this financial year, but there is optimism that funding will be secured beyond that.

The Village Agent Project has grown considerably over the past year and has gained a reputation as a valuable community resource. Some Village Agents now have hours paid by GP practices to alleviate pressure on services where up to 40% of patients present with symptoms of which the underlying cause is social rather than medical – the primary cause being social isolation & loneliness.

The Community Council for Somerset (my employer) has just appointed a Village Agent in South Petherton who works for 12 hours a week funded entirely by South Petherton Parish Council to work exclusively in that Parish.

This past year, the project has further developed to cover urban areas as well as rural. Two ‘Community’ Agents have been appointed in Burnham & Highbridge, one working exclusively with and GP practices, the other working with Adult Social Care. There is also a new Community Agent in Bridgwater working exclusively with Adult Social Care. The latter are funded by SCC Social Services and are integral members of the Social Care team.

We now cover 64% of Somerset. The district of Sedgemoor has total coverage.

Over Stowey and Nether Stowey

In the Stowey villages this past year in addition to a number of self-referred clients, I have received referrals from Quantock Medical Centre and have been attending the Patient Participation Group meetings. I also occasionally get referrals from Adult Social Care, The Taunton Health Interface Service and other organisations. Some of the issues I have encountered, that give a flavour of the scope of my work are

Attendance Allowance and other benefits advice: Advised clients about eligibility and entitlement and referred to appropriate agencies for help completing application forms.

Carers Support: Signposted clients caring for loved ones but who don’t qualify for subsidised help from Adult Social care, to independent micro-providers and in some cases arranged volunteers to give extra help/ support/ respite. I have a directory of local, self-employed care service providers who have all been properly trained and accredited

Domestic support at home: Have assisted clients in identifying and engaging help with gardening, cleaning, and cooking

Adaptive Equipment for making life easier: Signposted to appropriate sources of supply and referred for OT assessment

Food Vouchers: Issued

Grants: Awarded Surviving Winter grants for client in fuel poverty. There grants are also available for helping people engage in social activities to get them out and about.

Isolation & Loneliness: Signposted individual clients to local clubs, groups and activities and accompanied them to attend on occasion. Supported disabled and housebound to get out and about with the help of volunteers. Arranged volunteer befrienders/visitors.

Housing: Supported client to move closer to family by acting as advocate with Housing Association

Consumer: Advised about signing up to gas and electricity suppliers Priorities Services Register, Telephone Preference Scheme (and provided information about other call blocking devices) Have also continued to raise awareness of scams that are doing the rounds. Much of this sort of information is published in my monthly contribution to the Quantock Messenger and other parish mags along with advertising volunteering opportunities and signposted individuals to appropriate roles; encouraging general participation in local clubs, groups and activities; promoting learning opportunities.

Community Clubs/Groups

Part of my remit is to help identify gaps in the provision of services, reporting back to relevant organisations and supporting community action to help fill the gaps – by encouraging volunteers, finding funding sources/grants and making applications, etc. CCS has dedicated team of professionals to support these areas of work

The Stowey Shuttle our Community Car Scheme went live in October 2016. Having initiated the early meetings to get it off the ground, I handed over to the committee, headed by Nigel Phillips, which took on the organisation and running of the scheme.

I attend local groups when I can, and have been invited to talk about my work at a number of these in the past year.

Community Council for Somerset

CCS works to support community groups, organisations and individuals across Somerset. We have a dedicated team of local professional advisers and take pride in offering independent and impartial advice.

Community engagement & consultation: such as community & neighbourhood plans, housing needs surveys, consultations on new facilities. Examples – Priddy Housing Needs Survey, Meare New Hall Survey, Fivehead Community Plan

Project planning & support: guidance and support to deliver key community projects. Examples – Coxley Community Hub Business Plan, Nether Stowey Village Hall new legal structure to access grants

Funding strategy & funding advice: examples Stoke Sub Hamdon Methodist Hall (accessed grant for professional fees for Parish Council to purchase this), Roxy Community Cinema (crowdfunding campaign to replace projector)

See all our work and projects on the website www.somersetccc.org.uk

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like any further information.

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