

West of England Rural Network

Access Issues in Rural Bath & North East Somerset

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SWAN – the South West ACRE Network

Rural Access Issues

- We're all affluent communities aren't we?
- Yes (mostly) but.....
- Even Chew Magna has a significant number of people who may be isolated or vulnerable...
- ...By age, infirmity, condition or even origin
- Transport issues magnify disadvantage
- But conventional deprivation measures don't drill down far enough



Some Issues

- Isolation – off the radar
- Lack of services – shops, health
- Social exclusion
- Unnecessarily poor Quality of Life
- *Particularly (but not exclusively) older people*



Statistics on loneliness and social isolation

- **12%** of older people feel trapped in their own home
- **6%** of older people leave their house once a week or less
- **17%** of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week and **11%** are in contact less than once a month
- **51%** of all people aged 75 and over live alone
- **36%** of people aged 65 and over in the UK feel out of touch with the pace of modern life and **9%** say they feel cut off from society
- Half of all older people say the television is their main company

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk



Who is Responsible?

- Government?
- B&NES?
- Parish Council?
- Community Groups?
- Us?
- *So is this the Heart of “Big Society”?*



Some Solutions

- Improving Access to Services
- Community Hubs
- Good Neighbouring
- Contact and Conduits
- Recognising the Issue – Local Leadership



Access to Services

- Transport is a Key Issue
- Public Transport limited at best – and likely to get worse
- Community Transport
 - Dial a Ride
 - Community Bus
 - Volunteer Car Schemes



Keynsham Dial a Ride Village Service



- Introduced 2008
- Funding from Rural Renaissance
- Serving villages around Keynsham
- Marketed through Parish Councils
- Very disappointing patronage
- Yet still complaints about lack of service

Community Bus

Midsomer Norton & Radstock Community Service Vehicle

Serving groups of older/less mobile people in and around Norton Radstock

Wellow Community Bus – funded by COMMA

Serving the rural area around Wellow

Idea based on evidence from their Parish Plan



Social Car Schemes

- Volunteer Drivers
- Primarily Health related
- Extension of “Good Neighbour”
 - Link schemes
- Mileage payments
- Development needed
 - Chew Valley Transport



The Hallen Project

Small village just outside Bristol

Population very skewed to elderly

Low car ownership

No local services

Little public transport

Community Project – dedicated bus service two days a week

Round trip to local shops & services

Run by Four Towns & Vale Link Community Transport

Funding from Quartet Grassroots scheme



Bringing Services to People

Community Shops

- Bathford
- Wellow
- *East Harptree*
- Freshford



Bathford Community Shop

- Bathford Enterprise for All
- Successful Community Shop venture
- Wider Social Mission
- Planning to establish café serving meals to older residents
- With dedicated pick-up service



Community Hubs

- Village Hall is where it all happens!
- Social Activity
- Outreach Services
 - Health
 - Education
 - Counselling & Advice
- Is everyone positively welcomed?



Social Activity

for people who aren't as physically active as they used to be

- The Monday (Lunch) Club
- Short Mat Bowls
- Age Concern Walks
- Tai Chi (!)



How do we Identify People who need Help?

- Contacts and Conduits
- The Village Agent Project





VILLAGE AGENTS

A pilot scheme in the Chew Valley area
of Bath & North East Somerset

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



Key objectives

- Establish contact with isolated individuals.
- Identify unmet needs and make referrals.
- Bridge the gap between individuals, communities and organisations that are able to offer help or support.
- Signposting and making links.
- Record contacts using “Gateway” forms.

Outcomes

- **64** Cases worked on
- **434** different interactions recorded
- Referrals made to **52** Agencies
- Clients from **8** Parishes
- Most clients were **self referral**
- Majority aged over **70**
- Most clients live within **villages**
- **1/3rd** of cases required no further action





Follow this link for a short film of the Chew Valley Village Agents;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqFRDfoQP04>



Rural Access

- A real problem of isolation and exclusion
- Not picked up by Indices of Deprivation
- Partly caused by Transport (lack of)
- Lots of Good Practice
 - In B&NES
 - Elsewhere
- Communities Need to take Responsibility
- Investing in our Golden Years!



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