



Melksham & District Seniors 55+ Forum

Melksham Area Board February 2018 report.

The last three months has been an extremely busy period as part of Melksham Seniors very active Health and Well-Being programme. We were grateful that earlier in 2016 the Area board made available from their own Health and well -being funding a grant of £450 towards our summer programme costing £3,000 +.

There is considerable wealth of evidence of the mental harm and damage that loneliness can do to a person's health and well-being, which puts a very high cost upon Wiltshire Council to endeavour to tackle. Loneliness is often described as a killer, which is why we place such a high emphasis on Health and Well-being events aimed to target social isolation and loneliness by offering a range of social and other activities for local over 55+ residents. This we managed by extremely hard work to achieve without any direct commissioning funding from Wiltshire Council.

Loneliness is emotionally damaging, so often creating terrible mental health depression and issues that eat away at a persons confidence, self-esteem and physical health. It can significantly reduce sufferers' quality of life and drive them towards seeking the support of health services. Loneliness is a real killer, which is why Melksham Seniors place such considerable emphasis on creating events that will generate a high level of active social interface, aimed at getting older people out and about and making new friends within their own community.

With this in mind we deliberately targeted generating a high number of special events. For instance Melksham seniors held over 40 events in the last financial year, including several Consultation meetings including the (230) on the STP Health and Care plan, Scams prevention (220). (The International Day in October celebrating the Lives of Older People Party (180 Seniors) Our popular Christmas party (Limited to 150 for financial reasons) the highly successful Community Day (in excess of 600 of the public attended). We also acted as the catalyst for launching the Melksham Age Friendly Project at a successful public meeting and for which we seek the full support of Melksham Area Board

It is most rewarding to know that close on 3,000 people attended Melksham Seniors organised events in 2017. Those were in addition to the monthly Film matinee, and the Monday activity club. We also held two well attended general public meetings and our own well attended AGM. We are also half way through a successful six month new project of having afternoon tea and film matinees to small groups of around 12 older vulnerable people in sheltered housing and the villages. These can be very time consuming and dependent on sufficient volunteers but we are slowly making progress.

In addition to promoting the several local community film shows and afternoon tea events in sheltered housing and village venues. We regularly hold our own fund raising events to

help assist disabled and older people without their own transport to attend our events, we spent on average £38 per month on Community transport /Taxi's. We hope to continue the large range of activities, subject to being able to obtain sufficient revenue support for the Health and Well-Being of Seniors in a similar proactive way in 2018 and also commence a series of new additional weekly Health and Well-being activities on a Thursday at the Riverside. These are in addition to the present programme, subject of course to obtaining the right level of equitable support required to achieve success.

To enable these to happen and for the Seniors to remain active, there still needs to be a clear demonstration of support and encouragement shown to our volunteers so they remain most enthusiastic. We trust the Area Board will continue to support Older people in our community and the dedicated work and effort Melksham Seniors undertake to help to reduce depression, mental illness and affect on a persons general health and well-being that social isolation and loneliness creates in our community.

Brian Warwick, February 2018