

Update from Age Concern in relation to services which complement local NHS podiatry services.

Age UK Wiltshire has run a basic nail cutting service for the last seven years. This is not a podiatry service but aims to offer the kind of support that a caring relative or friend might offer an older person who is experiencing difficulty with this task. Toe nails that are too long can mean that a person may end up wearing poorly-fitting footwear which in turn can contribute to falls. The risks of falling to older people are well known and any service that can contribute to reducing that risk is valuable.

Older People themselves campaigned for an affordable nail cutting service through their older people's forums, as the eligibility criteria for the NHS Podiatry Service became tighter and the cost of using private podiatry services for simple nail cutting were considered excessive. Age UK Wiltshire has worked in partnership with Housing Associations and the Order of St John Care Trust who have provided premises for the running of the nail cutting clinics. The service was supported in the start-up phase by the NHS Podiatry Service who provided training in nail cutting techniques for staff and volunteers, but with the additional pressures they now experience Age UK Wiltshire now have to source this training from a private podiatry practice.

Age UK Wiltshire run clinics in 14 different locations, either fortnightly, three-weekly or monthly. The cost is £10 per attendance, in addition there is a one-off cost of £7 when people start to use the service for the clippers and file which each service user will bring with them to their appointments. The service is supported through Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire. Age UK Wiltshire currently has approximately 350 people using the service attending on average every 8 weeks. They are not able to cut the toe nails of anyone who is diabetic or for people who are taking warfarin or certain other anti-coagulant drugs.

The feedback from service users show that they appreciate being able to access the service and how much difference it can make to an individual when their feet are comfortable. Further information about the service can be obtained from the main office in Devizes 01380 727767.