

After the quiet Summer comes the Autumn flood of enquiries. Since my last report I, like most of my colleagues, have been really busy with a variety of enquiries from installing and checking smoke detectors (working in partnership with Wiltshire Fire and Rescue) to the ever present problem of solving transport issues. Working closely with our wonderful Link volunteers, most transport issues can be solved without too many difficulties. Quick plug for the Link Schemes here as they are always seeking volunteer drivers.

The other big issue facing my clients is being lonely. There is lots going on in Malmesbury and most villages have some social activities, but not everyone wants to go out to socialise; not everyone *can* get out and about. Age UK run a befriending service but here in the north it is overstretched. Social Isolation has been linked with many health issues but often people find it hard to admit that they are lonely and that they would like someone to visit them. Raising the profile of this issue could help overcome this and make befriending more acceptable in our community.

As the cooler weather approaches we are again looking at winter costs. Wiltshire and Swindon Community Foundation are again awarding Surviving Winter grants to the most vulnerable in our community to help with fuel costs. I am starting to gather information now so that we are ready for grant payments which start on 17th November. All donations to the scheme are most gratefully received by WSCF.

Perhaps the most endearing tale I heard recently was of a friend who took their neighbour to the GP. Following cataract operations on both eyes, then new hearing aids, this person is now leading a very different life. Rather than being isolated in their own home with poor sight and little hearing, they are now confident to go out and visit the local lunch club, catch the bus to town and do some shopping. The key is information....that the sight problem could be fixed by relatively simple operations and the hearing improved by treatment and modern technology. The Wiltshire Good Neighbour Scheme is designed to provide information so that individuals can take control of their lives. Keep passing the word!

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